

**BIG BONUS COUPONS WORTH 300 POINTS—INSIDE!**

# *The* **MAGNET** 2<sup>D</sup>







# Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:  
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**S**TILL collecting our gift coupons? Good! You've got another 300 points to add to your collection this week, so you're well away now. The more you collect the better chance you stand of winning one of our 10,000 splendid prizes. In our companion paper, the "Gem," you will find another coupon value 50 points, not to mention a magnificent long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, which will grip your interest from first line to last. Get a copy to-day, and be sure you cut out the coupon and add it to your collection.

I had a little surprise the other day in the shape of a letter which came from a reader in Maritzburg, Natal. And this enterprising reader had sent it along by air mail, so that it would reach me all the quicker. Well, I quite appreciated that, and I have sent the envelope back to my reader, so that he may keep it as a memento of the Capetown to London Air Mail.

This reader has one or two questions to ask. The first concerns

## THE ORIGINAL FAT BOY

of the Companion Papers. Who was the first in the field—Billy Bunter or Baggy Trimble? Well, although the stories of St. Jim's commenced a little while before those of Greyfriars, Billy Bunter graced Greyfriars with his podgy form long before Baggy Trimble entered St. Jim's. Be that as it may, however, Billy and Baggy run a neck-and-neck race in the gluttony stakes!

The next question deals with

## THE "MAGNET'S" BIRTHDAY.

When is it? asks this reader. It has gone for this year, but on February 15th, 1933, your favourite paper will be no less than twenty-five years of age! That's a record for you, isn't it—a quarter of a century of regular publication! And here are a few figures which may surprise you! If you have read every issue of the MAGNET since it was first published, you have read nearly forty million words of first-class boys' school and adventure stories! You have looked at somewhere about fifteen thousand illustrations—and if you had a complete collection of MAGNETS bound into one volume, that volume would now be about eight feet in thickness!

If a copy of each issue of the MAGNET since its commencement were placed end to end, they would stretch for nearly a quarter of a mile! But if every copy printed was placed end to end, the line would reach from London Bridge to the mouth of the Thames!

The MAGNET started 'way back in 1908, and has been going strong ever since. And, take my word for it, it's going to keep on going strong!

**H**ERE is another most interesting letter. This one comes from T. C. M. Fletcher, of Lawrence, New South Wales, who sends along a paragraph for my collection of

## THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

Here is the yarn in his own words: "We have 'things you'd hardly believe' in 'Aussie.' I killed a snake, a black  
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one, and very venomous, with exactly twenty young ones in it, each about fifteen inches long!

"They were very lively, too, and I am sure that they had been about quite a lot before I opened up the old one and let them out! Of course, I killed the lot, and what a wonderful sight it would have been for one of our wonderful 'Jackasses.' The old snake was five feet long, and as big round as a cup."

Well, all your Editor can say is thank goodness it wasn't in my back garden! One poisonous snake is bad enough, but twenty-one—phew!

Many thanks for your letter, T. C. M., and the complimentary things you say about the old paper. Write again soon, won't you?

The next letter is a "winner." It comes from A. G. Goves, of 79, Dashwood Avenue, High Wycombe, Bucks, who gets a splendid Sheffield steel pocket-knife for the following joke:

Customer: "Are those binoculars any good?"



Shopkeeper: "I should just say they are, sir! See that chapel over there?"



Customer: "Yes."

Shopkeeper: "Well, they bring it so near you can hear the organ playing!"

Fire ahead, you other chums, and see if you can't follow the example of this prizewinner. Don't forget the old saying: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!"

**H**ERE'S an amusing little trick to pass on to you this week, which will enable you to keep your chums guessing! I call it

## GREYFRIARS THOUGHT-READING,

because it enables you to give the name of any Greyfriars character of whom your chum thinks! Some stunt, eh? Well, here's how to do it:

Get five ordinary blank postcards. On the first one, copy down the following list of celebrated Greyfriars characters:

1. Harry Wharton.
2. Bob Cherry.
3. Hurree Singh.
4. Frank Nugent.
5. Johnny Bull.
6. Billy Bunter.
7. Horace Coker.
8. Vernon-Smith.
9. George Potter.
10. William Greene.
11. William Wibley.
12. Peter Todd.
13. Fisher T. Fish.
14. Tom Brown.
15. Lord Mauleverer.

Be sure you get them in the right order, and with the correct numbers alongside each one. This card is called the "key" card. Hand it to your chum, and tell

him to think of one of the characters whose name appears on the card. Then take the key card back, and hand him four others, which must be written out as follows:

1.  
Harry Wharton.  
Hurree Singh.  
Johnny Bull.  
Horace Coker.  
George Potter.  
William Wibley.  
Fisher T. Fish.  
Lord Mauleverer.

2.  
Bob Cherry.  
Hurree Singh.  
Billy Bunter.  
Horace Coker.  
William Greene.  
William Wibley.  
Tom Brown.  
Lord Mauleverer.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.<br/>Frank Nugent.<br/>Johnny Bull.<br/>Billy Bunter.<br/>Horace Coker.<br/>Peter Todd.<br/>Fisher T. Fish.<br/>Tom Brown.<br/>Lord Mauleverer.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8.<br/>Vernon-Smith.<br/>George Potter.<br/>William Greene.<br/>William Wibley.<br/>Peter Todd.<br/>Fisher T. Fish.<br/>Tom Brown.<br/>Lord Mauleverer.</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

Now ask your chum to hand back to you all the cards on which the name of the chosen character appears. Within a couple of seconds, you can tell him the name!

Here's how it's done: At the top of each card you will see a number. Simply add up those numbers, and their total will correspond with the figure alongside that character's name on the "key" card!

Suppose, for instance, he picks Horace Coker. He will then hand you back cards number 1, 2, and 4; the total of which is 7—the number corresponding with Coker's name on the key card! If he picks Harry Wharton, he will only hand you back one card—that with number 1 at the top. But if he should pick Lord Mauleverer, he will have to give you back all four cards—and their total is 15.

Try it on your chums. You're sure to puzzle them!

Now, just a few

## RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to various queries sent in by my readers.

**Why not a Cricket Serial?** (L. C., of South Africa): Thanks for the suggestion. I will bear it in mind, and see what I can do. What do other readers think of this suggestion?

**Is Greyfriars an Actual School?** (P. Eastwood, of Rochester): The Greyfriars stories are based upon an actual school, although of course all names, etc., have to be altered, and there is a certain amount of "author's license" in the stories.

**Are Both Sides of a Person's Face Alike?** (C. M. H., of Hampton Court): No! In two cases out of five the eyes are out of line. In seven cases out of ten, one eye is stronger than the other, and the majority of people have their right ear higher than their left!

**Why Do Some Telegraph Wires Have Corks on Them?** (Sid D., of Stockport): You will generally find corks on telegraph wires in areas where pheasants and partridges are preserved. It is to warn the birds and keep them from dashing into the wires and injuring themselves.

**What Are the Doldrums?** (Percy Haines, of Preston): Patches of sea in the tropics where the sea is usually calm, and there is little wind. In the old days of sailing ships, captains tried to avoid getting caught in the doldrums, otherwise they had the greatest difficulty in getting out again.

(Continued on page 28.)



# THE SECRET OF THE PRIORY!



By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Bob Cherry Asks for It!

**B**OB CHERRY opened the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove, stepped in rather quickly, and closed the door after him, with hardly a sound.

There was a grin on Bob's cheery, ruddy face, and he was a little breathless.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, who were in the study, stared at him.

It was not like Bob to enter a study quietly.

Bob Cherry had many qualities; but the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere was not numbered among them.

Generally he banged open a door, and tramped in rather like the "huge earth-shaking beast" mentioned in Macaulay.

Now his movements were not only quiet, but almost stealthy. For the first time on record he moved noiselessly.

"What——" began Harry Wharton.

"What the thump——" ejaculated Nugent.

Bob put his finger to his lips.

The two juniors were silent, in sheer astonishment.

From the Remove passage outside came a sound of footsteps. They came along from the stairs, approaching the door of Study No. 1, which was the first study in the passage.

Bob listened intently. Wharton and Nugent listened also. They realised that something was "up."

The footsteps passed and faded away up the passage.

Bob suppressed a gasp of relief.

"Safe!" he murmured.

"But what——"

"It's Loder of the Sixth."

"After you?"

Bob chuckled.

"I hope not! But I fancy he's looking for the chap who dropped an orange over the banisters."

"What rot!" said Nugent. "Loder wouldn't take the trouble to come up to the Remove for that."

"You see, the orange dropped on his face!" explained Bob.

"Oh!"

The two juniors had been busy in the study when Bob arrived so suddenly. Nugent was writing lines, and Wharton was oiling a cricket bat. Both tasks were suspended for the moment.

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**His cousin's folly makes Bob Cherry the unwilling keeper of a grim secret—a state of affairs which becomes almost unbearable when Bob realises that the Bounder of Greyfriars knows that secret, too. Yet the Bounder, in his usual peculiar fashion, does the right thing when least expected!**

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Bob Cherry took the bat from Wharton.

"Leave this to me," he said. "You get on with lines or something. Better all be busy if Loder looks in."

"You silly ass!" said Wharton. "What did you drop an orange on Loder's face for?"

"Well, I thought it would surprise him. It did."

There was a chuckle in the study.

Loder, the bully of the Sixth, was not popular in the Remove. There was no objection, in principle, to dropping an

orange, or anything else, on Gerald Loder's features; but it was undoubtedly a risky proceeding. Loder was a prefect, and prefects had to be treated with awful respect. Loder had a bad temper, and a heavy hand with an ashplant.

"You see, he was standing down there, under the banisters, and I had the orange in my hand," explained Bob. "It seemed too good a chance to lose. Never let your chances, like the sunbeams, pass you by, you know."

"If Loder saw you——"

"He didn't. He sat down when the orange tapped his boko. I didn't wait for him to get up——"

Bob broke off.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's coming back!" he breathed.

Footsteps were returning along the Remove passage.

Bob Cherry's retreat, after his exploit, had been swift. He had dodged into the first study he came to. Loder probably had lost no time; but a few seconds had been enough for Bob. Loder had found the Remove passage empty.

"Get busy, you men!" murmured Bob.

Frank Nugent resumed lines. Harry Wharton hurriedly opened a Latin dictionary. Bob Cherry proceeded to oil the cricket bat with earnest intentness. There was a scene of quiet, orderly, and meritorious industry in Study No. 1 to greet any eye that might glance in if the door was opened. Certainly no fellow there looked as if he had just dodged in, after dropping an orange on a Sixth Form prefect's nose.

The footsteps stopped at the door. Loder had drawn the passage blank, but he was quite likely to look into Study No. 1. He knew that study of old.

The door opened.

Loder of the Sixth looked in.

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Loder was frowning, his eyes glinted. His nose, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw.

"Lacrymæ!" said Harry Wharton, his eyes on the Latin dictionary. "I say, isn't there an 'h' in lacrymæ?"

Wharton was so busy with the dictionary, Nugent with lines, and Bob with the cricket bat, that they did not seem to observe Loder for the moment. He stared at them unnoticed.

"There's an 'h' all right," said Nugent. "L-a-c-h-r-y-m-æ."

"Well, there isn't an 'h' in it in the die!" said Harry.

"Optional, I think," said Bob Cherry gravely. "You can put the 'h' in if you like, and you can leave it out if you like. I'm not sure—"

"I'll ask Quelch," said Harry. "I—hallo! Is that you, Loder?" He became aware of the Sixth Form man's existence. "I say, Loder, would you mind telling us if there's an 'h' in lacrymæ? I suppose a Sixth Form man would know, and you're a whale on Latin."

"Oh, Loder would know!" said Nugent confidently. "Precious little Loder doesn't know about Latin."

Gerald Loder, as a matter of fact, was not a "whale" on Latin. He knew a lot about horses, and a lot about cigarettes, and rather prided himself on his skill at billiards. These various interests had not left him the time to absorb so much Latin as a Sixth Form man was expected to absorb.

Still, he did not dislike being appealed to as an authority.

"Yes, Loder knows, of course!" remarked Bob Cherry, with a nod. "Loder's a jolly old oracle in these things."

It is said that soft words butter no parsnips. On the other hand, a soft answer turneth away wrath.

Loder's frowning brow relaxed.

Even a bully like Loder could not help feeling a little pleased by the admiring confidence with which these juniors looked to him.

Moreover, it was hardly possible to suspect one of the three of having, only a minute or two ago, dropped an orange on his nose, when he found them so busy and industrious in the study, and trying to ascertain whether there was, or was not, an 'h' in lacrymæ.

Loder's knowledge of Latin, of course, was equal to the test. The rival interests of geegees, cigarettes, and billiards, had not left his mind a blank on the subject.

"Oh!" said Loder awkwardly. "Oh, I'm glad to see you kids trying to learn something, instead of playing the goat, as usual. You'd better leave the 'h' out of that word, Wharton, though it would not be incorrect to put it in. Leave it out."

"Thank you, Loder!" said Wharton gratefully. "That's awfully decent of you. Just a word from a Sixth Form man is such a help to a junior."

"Not at all, kid!" said Loder, quite politely, and he stepped back and shut the door after him, proceeding farther in his search for the person unknown who had dropped an orange over the banisters.

Three studious faces remained perfectly grave till the door had closed. Then three faces relaxed into grins, and there was a subdued chuckle in Study No. 1.

Loder of the Sixth was gone.

"Safe as houses!" murmured Bob Cherry.

But a few minutes later there were footsteps in the Remove passage. Again

they stopped at the door of Study No. 1. Again that door opened.

This time it was Trotter, the House page, who looked in.

"Master Cherry 'ere?" asked Trotter. "You're to go to the 'Ead's study at once, sir!"

"Oh crikey!"

Trotter grinned and departed. Trotter was well aware of the feelings of a junior when he was summoned to the presence of his headmaster.

Bob Cherry blinked at his chums in dismay.

"Rotten!" he groaned. "That brute Loder must have tumbled, after all! I thought he was beautifully stuffed!"

"Hard luck!" said Harry.

"What about putting some exercise books in your bags?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, blow Loder! I almost wish I hadn't got his boko with that orange! Bless him!"

And Bob Cherry, not looking so merry and bright as usual, lugubriously took his way to the headmaster's study.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### A Slight Misunderstanding!

**D**R. LOCKE had an extremely grave expression upon his face. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was in the study with him. Mr. Quelch looked as grave as the Head. Both the masters turned very serious glances on Robert Cherry of the Remove, as that youth presented himself.

Bob's heart sank.

He had rather expected to see Loder in the study. But Loder was not there. He would rather have seen Loder than his Form master, however.

"Ah, Cherry! You may come in," said the Head.

Bob came in.

He stood before the two beaks in considerable trepidation. Their gravity was rather alarming. Dropping an orange on a prefect's nose was rather a jest, in the opinion of a junior, though a risky jest. But in the eyes of authority it was a much more serious matter. It might even be characterised as an assault on a prefect! It might be considered an example of reckless indiscipline! Such were the ways of beaks!

Certainly, both the Head and the Remove master looked as if something much more serious had happened than the dropping of an orange on Gerald Loder's "boko."

"I have sent for you, Cherry," said the Head, with portentous gravity, "on a—er—very serious matter—an extremely serious matter!"

"Very serious indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, with a nod.

"I considered it best, Cherry, to refer to the matter in the presence of your Form master," continued the Head. "I have received—er—certain information, with which I have acquainted your Form master."

Bob Cherry suppressed a groan.

Really, if he had dropped a brick, instead of an orange, on Gerald Loder's face, the two beaks could not have been more portentously solemn.

Bob had expected "six." Now he wondered whether it was going to be a Head's flogging!

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir!" blurted out Bob, growing red in the face.

"Eh?"

"I know I oughtn't to have done it, sir! But—but I didn't stop to think—"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Both the masters had looked awfully grave already. Bob's stammering words produced an unexpected effect on them. They looked startled now, as well as grave—their looks expressed, in fact, something like consternation.

"You—you—you have done it! You—you know you ought not to have done it! Certainly, you know that, Cherry!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Although you are only a junior boy, and, I believe, a rather thoughtless boy, you must certainly have been aware that you ought not to have done it."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Quelch.

"The matter is more serious, then, than we dreamed, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "Why did you do it, Cherry?"

"I—I didn't stop to think, sir!" stammered Bob in dismay.

"In such circumstances, you should have stopped to think!" rapped the Head. "You must have been aware that your action would be disapproved of by your headmaster."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bob.

Assuredly he had never expected the headmaster's approval of dropping an orange on a prefect's nose.

"You must have been aware," continued the Head, still more sternly, "that your action was actually illegal."

"Illegal, sir?" gasped Bob.

"Certainly! Were you not aware of that, Cherry?"

"Oh! No, sir! I knew it was against the rules, of course!" stammered Bob. "But—but I never meant any harm, sir—"

Both masters stared at him grimly. Really, it might have been supposed that Bob had dropped a bomb instead of an orange!

"Possibly you meant no harm, Cherry," said the Head dryly. "But you may have done a great deal of harm."

"I—I think not, sir—"

"Do not argue with your headmaster, Cherry!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! No, sir!"

"Is it your opinion, Mr. Quelch, that this boy in your Form is so stupid as to be unaware that what he has done is against the law?"

"Certainly not, sir!" answered the Remove master. "Cherry must have been perfectly well aware of that."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bob, quite bewildered. "I can't make out why—why you put it like that, sir! It was really only a jape—"

"A—a—a what?"

"I mean a joke, sir!"

"A joke!" ejaculated the Head.

"Yes, sir, that's all. When I saw him standing there under the banisters—"

Dr. Locke gave quite a jump.

"You—you saw him where, Cherry?"

"Standing under the banisters, sir."

"In this House?" almost shrieked the Head.

"Yes, sir," answered Bob, in amazement.

"Bless my soul! In this House! It is almost incredible!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Is he still in this House, Cherry?"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"I can hardly credit this! Such audacity—such effrontery! Cherry, answer me implicitly. How long is it since you saw him?"

"About ten minutes, sir."

"And where?"

"He came up to the study—Wharton's study, sir."

"You saw him there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was anyone else present?"

"Wharton and Nugent, sir."



"Wharton and Nugent! Are these boys in your confidence on the matter?"

"I—I told them about it, sir."

"Did they know who he was?"

"Eh! Yes! Of course, sir!"

Bob wondered whether he was dreaming. Wharton and Nugent could hardly have failed to know who Loder of the Sixth was.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Cherry! Answer me carefully! You say you suppose that he is still in the House. Are you sure of this?"

"He may have gone out, sir, but I don't suppose so," said the bewildered Bob. "I haven't seen him since he came to the study."

"If this statement is correct, sir, we

Mr. Quelch was stepping to the headmaster's telephone, and already stretching out his hand to the receiver.

"But—but—but, sir!" gurgled Bob helplessly. "Wha-a-at do you want a—a bobby for, sir?"

"Can you not understand, Cherry? I am sorry for you, in the circumstances, but I have no choice in the matter."

"But—but Loder wasn't hurt, sir!" gasped Bob. "It was only a tap on the nose—"

"WHAT!"

"I—I assure you, sir, there was no harm done!" gasped Bob. "Just a tap on the boko—I mean, the nose, sir! He was all right when he came to the study—only his nose was a bit red—"

"Have—have you dropped an—an orange on—on—a Sixth Form prefect, over the—the banisters, Cherry? I was not aware of it."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

The Head stared at Bob's crimson face. Mr. Quelch stared at him, his own face twitching a little. Perhaps Mr. Quelch saw something slightly comic in this extraordinary misapprehension.

"But the boy said distinctly that he had done it, and that he knew that he ought not to have done it, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "What did you mean by that, Cherry?"

"I—I meant about dropping that orange on Loder, sir—"

"Pish!" said the Head testily.



"I say, Loder," said Harry Wharton, after scanning the dictionary, "would you mind telling me if there's an 'h' in lacrymæ? I suppose a Sixth Form man would know, and you're a whale on Latin." "Oh!" said the Sixth Form man awkwardly.

"Leave the 'h' out—though it would not be incorrect to put it in."

had better lose no time," said Mr. Quelch. "Shall I ring up Inspector Grimes at Courtfield now?"

"It will be better, I think," assented the Head. "It will be painful, very painful, for an arrest to be made in the school; but we have our clear duty to do. We cannot be instrumental in allowing a malefactor to escape justice."

Bob Cherry staggered.

"Dr. Locke!" he gasped. "You—you're not going to—to—to call in a policeman—"

"Certainly I am!" rapped the Head. "You will remain in this study till Inspector Grimes arrives, Cherry."

"But—but—but—" gurgled Bob.

Bob Cherry felt as if his head was turning round. "Six" from a cane would have been an adequate punishment for dropping an orange on Loder's nose over the banisters. A Head's flogging would have been more than adequate. But calling in a policeman—

It seemed really impossible. But

"Is this boy insane, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head.

Mr. Quelch's hand dropped from the receiver without lifting it. He spun round towards Bob Cherry.

"Cherry, what do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"O—only what I say, sir," stammered Bob. "I know I oughtn't to have done it, but—but it was only a lark. I—I assure you, sir, that Loder wasn't hurt—I wouldn't have hurt him, sir! Just a tap—"

"Is this boy in your Form wandering in his mind, Mr. Quelch?"

"I—I think there must be some misunderstanding, sir," said the Remove master. "Cherry, for what did you suppose that your headmaster had sent for you?"

"For dropping that orange on Loder's nose over the banisters, sir," stammered Bob. "Is—is—is there anything else? I—I haven't done anything else, sir, that I know of."

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke,

It dawned upon Bob that it was a more serious matter—a much more serious matter—than the tap on Loder's nose, that he was called on the carpet for. Both the masters looked annoyed; but at the same time Bob could see that they looked relieved. It was a relief to them to find that Bob had not done what they had supposed, from his words, that he had done. He wondered what on earth it could possibly be.

"Then—then the—the person is not in this House, after all!" exclaimed the Head. "This foolish boy was speaking of Loder, of the Sixth Form."

"Certainly, sir!" said Bob.

"It would appear, sir, that Cherry has not, after all, seen him!" said Mr. Quelch.

"It would appear so, Mr. Quelch, and I am very thankful for it. But the matter must be cleared up beyond doubt. Have you seen him, Cherry?"

"Who, sir?" asked Bob blankly.



"The boy has not yet been told, sir," hinted Mr. Quelch gently.

"Oh! Ah! Quite so! Cherry, you have wasted time, and caused an absurd misunderstanding—due, apparently, to the fact that you had played a disrespectful trick on a Sixth Form prefect, and fancied that you were sent for on that account!" said the Head sternly. "Now answer me directly—have you, or have you not, seen anything of a man named Paul Tyrrell, who is, I understand, a cousin of yours?"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Trouble for Bob!

"PAUL TYRRELL!"

Bob repeated the name mechanically.

It was the name of his scapegrace cousin—the wastrel of the family—who had always been in some trouble or other ever since Bob could remember.

It was not a connection of which Bob was proud; and he never spoke of his cousin at Greyfriars, though his chums knew about the man.

So far as Bob knew, Dr. Locke had never heard of the fellow, and it amazed him to hear the name from his headmaster. Instantly it rushed into his mind that Paul was in some trouble again, and he wondered whether the wastrel had at last brought disgrace on his name.

"Answer me, Cherry! The subject is, no doubt, painful to you, but you must answer me with absolute frankness," said Dr. Locke.

"I've not seen him this term, sir," said Bob.

"When did you see him last?"

"Last term, sir. He met me one day outside the school."

"For what reason?"

Bob's colour deepened. He wished fervently that it had been a licking, instead of this. But he had to answer.

"He's a—a bad hat, sir. My father got fed-up with him, and refused to have anything more to do with him, and he—he thought I might put in a word for him with the pater." Bob's face burned. "I told him I couldn't give my father advice, and didn't want to, either. That's all, sir."

"You have not seen him since?"

"No, sir."

"Or heard from him?"

"No, sir."

"I am glad of that. The matter is not so serious, Mr. Quelch, as this thoughtless boy's rambling statements led me to suppose," said Dr. Locke.

"Quite so, sir. Cherry appears to know nothing—"

"You have heard nothing about this man, Cherry, from your father, or anyone else?"

"No, sir. The pater never mentions him."

"Then you are not aware that—that—" The Head paused. "I regret, Cherry, that I must give you some—some painful and unpleasant news. The police are searching for this man Tyrrell."

"Oh!" muttered Bob, setting his teeth.

"You must not think, my dear boy, that the conduct of your relative reflects on you in any way," said the Head kindly. "Nevertheless, it would be—hem!—judicious not to mention the matter in the school."

"I understand that, sir," said Bob bitterly.

"Although this man is your cousin his name, fortunately, is not the same as your own, and therefore the connection may never transpire when he is

arrested," said the Head. "I should not have allowed this painful matter to come to your knowledge at all, Cherry, but for a very important reason. I have received a telephone message from Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield."

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Bob.

"This wretched man, it appears, has committed a crime—the crime of forgery," said Dr. Locke. "A warrant is issued for his arrest. Hitherto he has escaped, but he has been seen and traced. According to Mr. Grimes, he has been traced in several places, and on each occasion further from London and nearer to this school. He was last seen at Lantham, which is about ten miles from here. Mr. Grimes has ascertained that he has a relative at Greyfriars, and the suspicion has entered his mind that Tyrrell is seeking to open communication with that relative—yourself."

"Oh!" breathed Bob.

"Mr. Grimes suspects that the man may be seeking assistance—perhaps money—to aid him in his flight. It is understood that he fled with little or nothing in his possession. It seems to me improbable that such a man would seek assistance from a schoolboy. But"—the Head paused—"I am bound to take note of the information Mr. Grimes has given me. I shall be glad to be able to tell him that you have seen nothing, and know nothing, of the man."

"That is the truth, sir," said Bob.

"Very good! Now, Cherry, you must understand that if you should receive any communication from this man it is your duty to place the matter before your Form master at once."

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"You may feel a—hem!—natural disposition to help a relative whom you may regard as unfortunate. You must not do so."

"Oh, no, sir."

"You must never see this man, and must never give him any kind of help. Your thoughtless words a few minutes ago led me to suppose that you had done so. I am only too glad to learn that that was an error. If the man is lurking in this neighbourhood, Cherry, you must make no attempt to see him—you must refuse to see him if asked."

"Certainly, sir."

"If you hear from him you must go to your Form master at once. No doubt he will soon be taken, and the whole unhappy matter will come to an end. In the meantime, Cherry, you must be upon your guard."

"Very well, sir."

"I need hardly point out, Cherry, that if you should get into touch with this man your connection with him would become known, which would have very unpleasant results for you at Greyfriars."

"I understand, sir."

"Very well, Cherry! I recommend you to keep your own counsel. You may go, my boy!" said the Head gently.

Bob Cherry left the headmaster's study. He had come there in anticipation of a licking. But the severest licking would not have made Bob look so gloomy as he did now, as he tramped dismally away down the corridor.

The wastrel of the family had gone over the limit at last. Reckless, idle folly and dissipation had led to the inevitable result—crime! Bob knew little of his cousin Paul, who was ten or twelve years older than himself, but all that he knew of him was to his disadvantage. He knew that the scapegrace had been a burden on his father, Major Cherry, for many years, till at

last the old major's patience had become exhausted, and he had turned the wastrel down. And this had followed! Idle, dissipated, selfish. Determined, by hook or by crook, to live on the labour of others, Paul had sunk into crime at last, and now the police were looking for him.

Bob gritted his teeth.

The Head doubted whether the wretched fugitive had come skulking near Greyfriars in the hope of getting into touch with Bob. But Bob did not doubt. He knew that the astute police inspector at Courtfield had read the rascal's intentions aright. Paul would not shrink from bringing disgrace on his schoolboy cousin. He was more likely to threaten him with the very disgrace, to induce him to give aid. Hunted, penniless, at the end of his tether, Paul was not likely to leave a stone unturned. Bob had little or no doubt, that the rogue was seeking to get into communication with him. He dared not write, lest a master should see the letter. Most likely he was skulking in the neighbourhood, watching for a chance to see his cousin out of gates.

"Oh, the rotter!" muttered Bob.

He tramped up the Remove staircase with a moody brow.

On the Remove landing, the other members of the Co. were waiting for him. Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. They were anxious to know the result of the visit to the Head.

"Licked, old bean?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The esteemed Bob looks as if the lickfulness has been terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, sympathetically.

"Oh! No! That's all right!" said Bob.

"Not a whopping?" exclaimed Wharton.

"N-no! It—it wasn't about Loder, after all!" stammered Bob. "The Beak wanted to see me about—about something else. It—it's nothing!"

He passed his friends, and tramped on to his own study. They stared after him. Bob looked as if he had been through it rather severely. But he had said that it was not a whopping. Naturally his chums expected him to explain what the Head had wanted him for. But he left them without another word, and the door of Study No. 13 closed on him.

"What on earth's up with Bob?" asked Nugent.

"The upfulness appears to be terrific!"

"Looks like a man who's taken a knock!" said Johnny Bull, in wonder. "What the jolly old dickens—"

But the door of Bob Cherry's study remained closed, and his chums were left to wonder.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### Billy Bunter is Sorry He Spoke!

BILLY BUNTER pricked up his fat ears.

Bunter was interested. Three Sixth Form men, standing near the stairs, talking, did not even observe Bunter. But Bunter observed them.

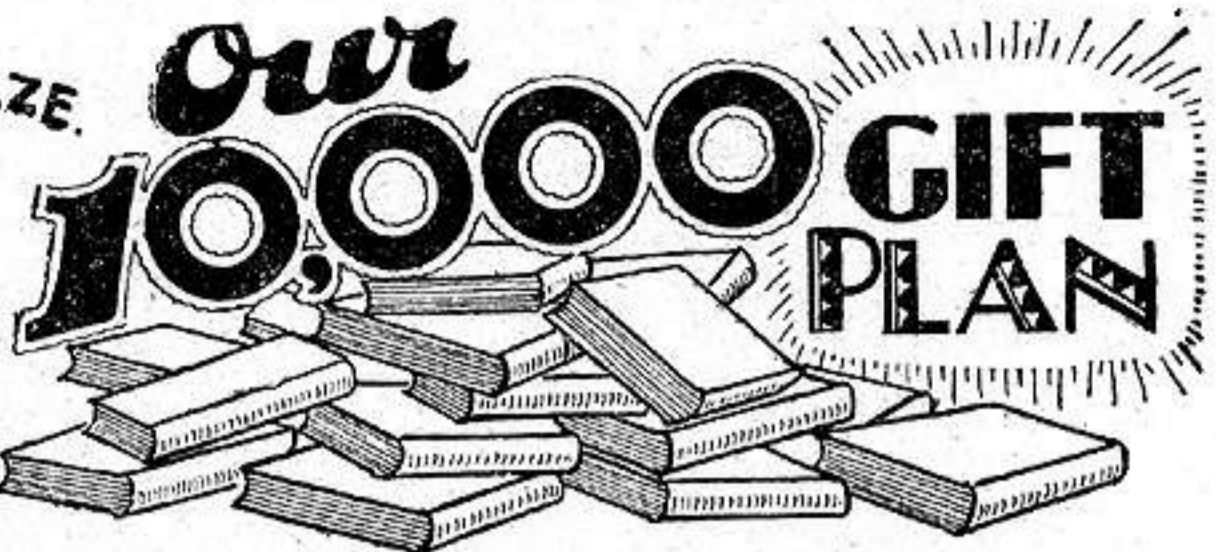
It was one of Billy Bunter's little ways to lend a fat ear to conversation that did not concern him. Still, as a rule, Bunter would not have bothered to listen to Loder, Walker and Carne

(Continued at foot of next page.)



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*(Continued from previous page.)*

when they chatted. On the present occasion, the topic was an interesting one.

Loder held in his hand a large, ripe, red, juicy-looking orange. Bunter liked oranges—and anything else that was edible. And he gathered from what Loder was saying that that particular orange had no owner—that it was going begging, as it were. Nothing of an edible nature was likely to go begging for long when William George Bunter was in the offing. Bunter drew nearer, his fat ears drinking it in.

"I can't find the young sweep!" Loder was saying. "I've looked along the Remove passage—nobody there! Can't make out that any of the young sweeps were out of the studies. But one of them dropped this orange over the banisters. I want to know which!"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles. This was a chance for Bunter.

Some Remove fellow, apparently, had dropped that orange over the banisters. For reasons utterly inexplicable to Bunter, he had not come down after it. Still more inexplicably, Loder had concerned himself about the matter. Loder clearly wanted to find the owner of the orange—to return it to him, so far as Bunter could see!

"I—I say, Loder!" squeaked Bunter.

The three seniors glanced round, and became aware of the fat existence of the Owl of the Remove.

"You know anything about this, Bunter?" asked Loder.

"Yes, please, Loder!"

"Good!"

Loder's eyes gleamed. There was rather a pain in his nose. He was undoubtedly anxious to find the person unknown who had dropped that orange.

"It—it—it's mine, Loder!" squeaked Bunter.

Loder started. Walker and Carne stared. It had seemed improbable that the dropper of that orange would be discovered. But it had seemed still more improbable that he would own up of his own accord.

Bunter, of course, did not know that the orange had been dropped on Loder's prefectorial nose! He supposed, from what the seniors were saying, that some fellow had dropped it carelessly and left it where it fell. In those circumstances, Bunter saw no reason for not laying claim to the orange. Truth and Bunter had long been strangers.

"Yours?" ejaculated Loder.

"Yes, please, Loder!"

"You—you—you dropped this orange over the banisters?" exclaimed Loder, in astonishment. It was not like Bunter

of the Remove to ask for it in this way.

"Yes, please, Loder!"

"Well, my hat!" said Walker. "Blessed if I should have expected the young scoundrel to say so!"

"I—I want my—my orange, please!" said Bunter, blinking at the surprised Sixth Form men. "M-m-may I have it, Loder, please?"

"You—you—you want your orange?" gasped Loder.

"Yes, please!"

"My only summer hat!" Loder fairly gasped. "You've got the check—the neck—to come up to me and ask for your orange back, after chucking it at me over the banisters! Well!"

Bunter jumped.

"Oh crikey! W-a-was it chucked at you, Loder?" he ejaculated. "I—I never knew that! You—you said dropped—"

Loder slipped his ashplant into his hand.

"Bend over, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'! I—I say, Loder, I—I never dropped that orange over the banisters!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've never seen it before!"

"What?" roared Loder.

"I mean—I—I—oh lor'! I—I thought you were looking for the chap it

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belonged to to—give it to him!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never knew—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Walker and Carne.

But Loder did not laugh. Loder had a pain in his nose.

"I've told you to bend over, Bunter!" he snapped.

"But—but I didn't do it!" wailed Bunter.

"You've said that you dropped this orange over the banister, Bunter!"

"That—that was only—only a figure of speech, Loder! I—I—I really meant that—that I hadn't—"

"Bend over!"

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

From the bottom of his fat heart, Billy Bunter wished that he had never laid claim to that ripe, red orange. It was a nice orange—a ripe orange—quite a succulent fruit. But it was clear that Bunter was not going to get it. He was going to get something much less agreeable.

Loder swished the ashplant with a grim expression on his face. In the lowest of spirits, Billy Bunter bent his fat person over to receive what was coming to him.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Whooooooooooooop!"

"Don't make that row, Bunter!" said Loder. "Next time you may think twice about dropping an orange on a prefect's face. What?"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" groaned Bunter. "I didn't! I wouldn't! I wasn't! Wow!"

Billy Bunter rolled away dismally. Loder slipped the orange into his pocket. Evidently it was not to be returned to the owner—though Loder was satisfied that he had found the owner.

The fat Owl came up to the Remove passage, wriggling with anguish. Four members of the famous Co. on the landing stared at him.

"What's that game, Bunter?" asked Nugent. "Something new in the contortionist line?"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" groaned Bunter. "Wow-wow! That beast Loder! Wow! I've had—wow!—six! Wow! Some beast chucked an orange at him—wow!—and he made out it was me—yow-ow!—because I said it was my orange! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" howled Bunter. "I've got a—yow-ow!—pain! I thought some fellow had dropped the orange, you know—ow!—so I said I'd dropped it. Yow! And it turned out that it had been dropped on Loder's face. Ooooooh And so—"

"Hinc ille lacrymæ!" chuckled Nugent. "Hence these jolly old tears."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Serve you jolly well right for telling whoppers, old fat man!" said Johnny Bull. "I say, this is rather luck, you men. Loder won't be after Bob now."

"Good egg!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Loder will be satisfied now that he's licked somebody. Good man, Bunter!"

"Right man in the right place!" said Nugent heartily.

"The rightfulness was terrific!"

"Couldn't have happened better, old fat bean," said Harry. "You've saved a better man from a whopping!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you beasts!" gasped Bunter. He gave the chums of the Remove a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. "You—you frightful beasts! Think I wanted to get another fellow's

whopping, you silly idiots? I shan't be able to sit down to prep now!"

"Well, if you can't sit down, sitting up is the next best thing, and Loder's made you sit up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter rolled dismally on to his study, leaving the Removites chortling. Loder at the same time, in his study, was eating a nice, ripe, red orange. There was no orange for Bunter. Bunter, it seemed, only had the pip!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Smithy Scents a Secret!

**H**ERBERT VERNON SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, sauntering down to the school gates, with his hands in his pockets, paused. He fixed his eyes curiously, and rather sarcastically, on the clouded face of a Remove fellow who was loafing about in the quad. It was unusual to see Bob Cherry looking clouded, and unusual to see him alone. Bob was a gregarious fellow, and had heaps of friends as well as his own particular chums. But there had been rather a change in Bob the last day or two, and the Bounder, whose keen eyes noticed most things that went on in the Remove, had noticed that.

It was a couple of days since Bob had received that unexpected and distasteful news in the Head's study. During that time the thought of Paul Tyrrell had been on his mind.

He had said nothing to his chums. It was not a matter he liked to speak about even to his most intimate friends. The Head had warned him to keep his own counsel, and Bob knew that the advice was good.

But Bob's nature was anything but secretive, and he hated having a secret to keep. His usual cheery spirits were dashed. He did not look now much like the thoughtless fellow who, in sheer exuberance of spirits, had dropped an orange on a prefect's nose a couple of days ago.

His friends realised that there was something "up" with Bob, but as he said nothing about it they forbore to question him. It was in Bob's mind all the time that he might hear at any moment of the arrest of the wretched man whose folly led him into crime. He had little compassion to waste on a slacker who was unwilling to earn his daily bread. But, after all, blood was thicker than water. The man was his cousin. And he feared, too, getting some appeal from Tyrrell—an appeal to which he could not possibly accede, but which he would find it very difficult to refuse.

It was for that reason that Bob was still within gates on this particular afternoon when his comrades had gone out. He had no doubt that Paul was lurking in the vicinity, watching for a chance to speak to him, and it was obviously wiser, though extremely irksome, to keep within the precincts of Greyfriars.

The Bounder watched his clouded face for a full minute without Bob being aware of his scrutiny. Since Smithy had become captain of the Remove there had been plenty of trouble between him and the Famous Five; and had the "feud" been still on, probably the Bounder would have been glad to see a member of the famous Co. looking down on his luck. More or less friendly relations had been established, however, and even at the worst of times Smithy could hardly have nursed a

grudge for long against so cheery a fellow as Bob. So it was with quite a kind feeling that the Bounder stopped on his way out to bestow his attention on the fellow who looked as if he had suddenly collected most of the troubles in the universe.

He grinned as Bob was passing him, unconscious of his steady stare. Bob went as far as the open gateway, looked out into the road, hesitated, and turned back. That brought him face to face with the Bounder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoyin' life?" asked Smithy, with an imitation of Bob's own cheery greeting that made Bob start.

"Oh! Yes—no!" answered Bob rather confusedly.

"Tell your Uncle Herbert all about it!" said the Bounder.

"Eh, what?" Bob stared at him.

The Bounder laughed.

"You're not goin' to be hanged, are you?" he inquired.

"What do you mean, you ass?" grunted Bob gruffly.

"I mean that you look it," explained Vernon-Smith.

"No bizney of yours!" said Bob, with increased gruffness.

The Bounder's eyes gleamed for a moment. He was not a fellow slow to take offence. But his resentment was only momentary. Bob Cherry, as a rule, had a cheery word for friend or foe. It was quite unlike him to give unsought offence. Smithy did not need telling that there was something wrong with that usually sunny-tempered member of the Remove.

"Well, don't bite a man's head off, old bean," said the Bounder amicably. "Civility doesn't cost anythin', you know."

Bob, without replying, made a movement to pass on. The Bounder dropped into step at his side. He was curious. But it was not only curiosity that stirred him.

"Your friends have gone out?" he asked.

"Yes. They went over to Cliff House after class."

"Not a row, I suppose?"

"Eh? No. I'm not so fond of rowing as you are, Smithy."

The Bounder compressed his lips. Certainly Bob was not his usual cheery self. But he kept his temper.

"You've not gone with them," he remarked.

"You can see I haven't."

"Not gated?"

"No."

"Well, look here," said Vernon-Smith, "I'm going as far as the Redclyffe road to meet Redwing. He's been up to Hawkscliff. Trot along with me, old bean."

"Thanks, I'd rather not."

"You'd rather take your sulky temper for a walk round the quad?" asked Smithy, his irritation breaking out at last.

Bob gave him a grim stare. "If you don't like my temper, Smithy, I haven't asked you for your company, that I know of," he said curtly. "You can leave me alone."

"I'll do that fast enough!" snapped the Bounder. And he turned. But he turned back again.

"Look here, Cherry—"

"Well?" muttered Bob restively.

"You're up against somethin'," said Smithy quietly. "Every man in the Form can see that. You're a bad hand at keeping a secret."

Bob gave a start.

"A secret? Who's told you that I've got a secret? What the thump do you mean, Vernon-Smith?" he broke out angrily.





"You've got the cheek—the neck—to come to me, Bunter," said Loder, wielding his ashplant, "to ask for your orange back, after chucking it at me over the banisters. Well!" "Oh lor!" gasped the fat Removite. "I—I say, Loder, I—I never dropped that orange over the banisters. I—I've never seen it before!"

"My dear man, I mean exactly what I say. You're up against somethin', and you're keepin' it dark."

"Oh, I—I see! I thought— Never mind," muttered Bob confusedly.

The Bounder's eyes were on him keenly. His chance word had evidently struck home; though what "secret" a fellow like Bob Cherry could have to keep was a mystery to the Bounder. Fellows like Skinner and Snoop and Angel of the Fourth, and Loder of the Sixth, had their little secrets. But Bob was no more like them than cheese was like chalk.

"Now, look here," said Smithy in a low voice. "We're not exactly pals, old bean, but if a man could help—" He paused. "If it's money, I can tell you where to raise a loan. See?"

Bob stared at him again, and then grinned.

The millionaire's son had more money than was good for him, and he only had to ask that eminent financial gentleman, Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, if he wanted more still. Smithy's thoughts rather ran on money, as a matter of fact. He liked opening an expensive notecase and letting fellows see bank-notes therein.

Still, considering the terms he had lately been on with the Co., this was rather decent of him, and Bob acknowledged it.

"If it's that—" said the Bounder.

"It isn't—thanks all the same," said Bob. "I won't rob you of any of your jolly old fivers and tenners, Smithy."

"I shouldn't miss a fiver," said the Bounder.

"It really isn't that—much obliged, all the same. I'm not stony—I've got two bob left out of my allowance, in fact."

"Oh gad!" said the Bounder, appar-

ently almost overcome at the idea of a fellow not being "stony" when his financial resources were limited to two shillings. "What are you goin' to do with it, old scout? Put part of it in the bank and stack away the rest in barrels?"

"Oh, rats!" said Bob. "We're not all rolling in money, Smithy—and I don't know that I want to be, either."

"Well, if it isn't a money trouble, I can't help!" said the Bounder, with a cynical grin. "That's my long suit, you know! Sure you won't trot along with me to meet Reddy?"

"No, I'm staying in gates."

"What on earth for?"

"Oh—er—because—" said Bob vaguely.

"Taking to frowsting in your old age?"

"Oh, rats! Buzz off, and don't bother a fellow," said Bob crossly.

"Well, I hardly like leavin' you, when you're so good-tempered and polite," said the Bounder sarcastically. "But I'll make the effort."

And he walked down to the gates and went out. He frowned as he went. Quite a kind and friendly impulse had moved him to speak to Bob; and the Bounder did not like being snubbed. The fellow could go and eat coko and be hanged to him, was the Bounder's reflection, as he went.

Left alone, Bob Cherry loafed disconsolately about the quad, his hands driven deep into his pockets.

It was a glorious May afternoon; and there was ample time for a ramble before call-over. Already Bob regretted his curtness to the Bounder; and rather regretted that he had not joined him on a walk through the woods to the Redclyffe road. Still, he had let his own chums go out without him, because of his determination to avoid any possible

meeting with Paul Tyrrell. But Smithy had meant well—there were few fellows in the Remove to whom he would have made the offer he had made to Bob. Bob was feeling remorseful.

He walked down to the gates again at last, and stood staring out into the sunny road.

After all, if he took a trot through the wood—it was only about a mile to the Redclyffe road by short cuts—the chances were a hundred to one against seeing anything of Tyrrell—even if the man was hanging about the school, which, after all, was not a certainty. Staying in gates on his lonely own was not agreeable; a trot through the green woods would do him good; and if he rejoined Smithy, it should show the Bounder that there was no ill-feeling.

From one motive and another—but chiefly, perhaps, because he was fed-up with loafing about the school—Bob decided on it. And his face brightened a good deal, as he swung along the shady footpaths of Redclyffe Woods at a rapid trot.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### The Man with the Hidden Face!

"STOP!"

"Eh?"

"Stop!"

The Bounder of Greyfriars stopped, in sheer astonishment.

He was swinging cheerily along a footpath about half-way through Redclyffe Wood. That wood was a lonely place; and it was, as a matter of fact, out of bounds for Greyfriars fellows. Once or twice, footpads on those lonely paths had relieved wayfarers of their watches and their spare cash. The Bounder was not thinking of that, and



would not have cared, if he had remembered it.

It was brought suddenly to his mind as a man stepped out from the trees into the path, held up his hands, and told him to stop.

A handkerchief was tied across the man's face, evidently to conceal the features. His eyes gleamed over it.

The Bounder caught his breath.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated.

The man did not look like a tramp. He was rather well-dressed, in town clothes; but the clothes, though good and well-cut, showed signs of hard usage, as if the fellow had been camping out in rough quarters. The Bounder eyed him sharply, narrowly. He could see, at a glance, that the man was no ordinary footpad; though it was plain that he intended to act like one. Some Johnny, the Bounder reflected, who was down on his luck, and trying his hand at highway robbery—tempted by the sight of a well-dressed schoolboy in that solitary place.

The Bounder's jaw squared. He was not the fellow to submit tamely to robbery. And the Bounder had more to lose than most schoolboys would have had. There were banknotes, as well as currency notes, in his pocket.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Vernon-Smith coolly, though his heart was beating rather fast.

"All you've got about you in the way of money!" was the answer; and the gaunt eyes gleamed at Vernon-Smith over the handkerchief bound across the face.

"Will you have it now, or when you can get it?" jeered the Bounder. His hands were hard clenched.

The man stared at him.

"You had better not resist, Master Vernon-Smith," he said quietly. "You

will get hurt if you do. I am a desperate man."

"You know who I am?" exclaimed the Bounder in astonishment.

"I fancy so! I've seen you before. I should not have stopped a schoolboy to rob him of his half-crowns!" said the masked man contemptuously. "But the son of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire, is worth my while, I think."

The Bounder scanned him. But the handkerchief concealed most of the face, and if Smithy had ever seen him before, he could not recognise him now. It was clear, however, that the man, whoever he was, knew Smithy.

He came a step nearer.

"I don't want to hurt you." His tone was low and menacing. "But I'm a desperate man! Turn out your pockets and save trouble."

"I'll turn out my pockets when I can't lift a finger—not before," said the Bounder coolly. "I fancy, from your looks, that this is a new game to you—and you'd better think twice before you try it on. You won't find it pie—with me."

"Will you turn out your pockets?"

"Not so's you'd notice it!" answered the Bounder with cool mockery.

There was a brief pause.

Evidently, as the Bounder could see, this was a new game to the man with the hidden face; rascal as he was, it was his first essay in the footpad line. It was plain that he hesitated to proceed to extremities.

"Wash it out, old bean," jeered the Bounder. "Wait till you drop on some kid who's scared by a sportsman with a hanky over his chivvy. You seem to know me—and if you do, you ought to know that I'm not a fellow to be scared."

The man with the hidden face breathed hard.

"I've told you I'm desperate!" he muttered. "For the last time—"

"Rats!"

The Bounder leaped back as the man sprang at him. He dodged the fierce grasp, spun round, and raced back up the footpath the way he had come.

He heard rapid footsteps and panting breath behind him. The footpad was racing in pursuit.

It went against the grain with the Bounder of Greyfriars to run for it. But he was a boy against a man; and it was not good enough—if he could help it. He ran hard, with the pursuer panting behind him. The Bounder was swift of foot; but desperation, perhaps, spurred on the man who was pursuing him, and in a couple of minutes his grasp fell on Smithy's shoulder from behind.

"Now—" he panted, whirling the junior round.

Vernon-Smith made an effort to tear away; but the fingers gripped his shoulder like steel. He swung round, his teeth set and his eyes glinting, and drove his clenched fist fiercely and savagely into the masked face.

It was a crashing blow, with all the Bounder's beef behind it. The masked man gave a grunt, and pitched over.

But he did not release his hold; and Vernon-Smith went sprawling in the grass with him.

The masked man spat out an oath. Both his hands were on the Bounder now, and Smithy struggled fiercely but in vain. He was crushed down on his back in the footpath, and a knee was planted on his chest, pinning him there. Savage eyes gleamed down at him over the bound handkerchief. From under that masking handkerchief came a trickle of crimson, the result of the Bounder's hefty blow.

"Now, you cub—" he snarled.

"Help!" yelled the Bounder.

"Silence, you fool—"

"Help! Help!"

It was unlikely that there would be ears to hear, in the solitary woods. But there was a chance; and the Bounder yelled with all the force of his lungs. His yell rang far and wide among the thick trees and bracken of Redclyffe Woods.

"Help! Oh!" panted Vernon-Smith, as a savage fist dashed in his face, to silence him. "Oh, you cur! Oh! Help!"

He struggled furiously. Not while he could stir a finger in defence, was Smithy the fellow to be robbed. Again the clenched fist dashed in his face.

There was a patter of running feet on the footpath.

Unlikely as it had seemed in the lonely woods, there had been ears to hear. Up the footpath came a running figure, covering the ground almost like lightning. And as the footpad caught the sound of running feet, and turned in alarm, Bob Cherry came racing up, and a crashing blow from the heftiest fist in the Greyfriars Remove sent the footpad spinning away from his victim.

#### THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

##### Bob Cherry's Cousin!

**B**OB CHERRY panted for breath. The man with the hidden face sprawled in the grass, gurgling. Bob stood with clenched fists, waiting for him to get up again.

"Oh gad!" gasped the Bounder, scrambling up. "You, old bean! So you came along after all!"

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"Lucky I did, Smithy," answered Bob.

"What-ho!" The Bounder's eyes gleamed at the sprawling footpad, and he stepped closer to him. "We can handle this beauty between us—don't let him get away!"

"He was robbing you—"  
"Tryin' it on," grinned the Bounder. "Robbery with violence—and he would have got away with it if you hadn't bulted in. Get hold of him, and we'll walk him to the police station between us."

"Right you are."  
The man with the hidden face was grasped by either arm, as he struggled up. Rather to the surprise of the juniors, he did not resist. The two of them were more than a match for him; but they did not expect the rascal to give in quietly. But he made no resistance. His eyes, gleaming over the handkerchief, were fixed on Bob's face. "Good gad!" he muttered. "Bob Cherry!"

He stared blankly at Bob. "This sportsman seems to know Greyfriars chaps!" grinned the Bounder. "He knew me, and he seems to know you. Perhaps we shall know him, when we get that rag off his face."  
"We've got him, anyhow," said Bob. "You'd better take it quietly, my man. You're going to the station."  
"I think not." The man was calm now, and there was a mocking note in his voice. "I hardly think you'll care to walk into the station with me, Robert Cherry."

Bob caught his breath. There was a familiar sound in the voice, and he knew that he had heard it before, though he had not heard it often. A startling suspicion shot into his mind, and the colour wavered in his cheeks.

The next moment that suspicion was confirmed, as Smithy jerked the bound handkerchief from the hidden face.

Bob Cherry relaxed his grasp on the rascal. He stared almost in horror at the face that was revealed.

"You!" he breathed.  
It was a rather handsome, dissipated face that was revealed when the handkerchief was taken away. It was a face that Bob knew well. He had told himself that the chances were a hundred to one against falling in with the lurking fugitive, Paul Tyrrell, in that run through Redclyffe Woods. But it was the hundredth chance that had happened.

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "You!" He let go the man.

"You know this merchant?" asked the Bounder. He was still grasping the rascal by the arm. "Don't let him cut! I believe I've seen him before somewhere."

Bob Cherry did not speak. "Who is he?" asked Smithy. "I—I've seen him before," stammered Bob. "I—I know him."

"Well, who is he?"  
Bob did not answer. The Bounder stared from one to the other, mystified. He was still holding Tyrrell; but the man could have broken away from him, now that Bob had let go. But the footpad seemed to have no desire to escape. He stood with his eyes fixed on Bob's pale, harassed face.

"You villain!" muttered Bob at last. "As if what you've done isn't bad enough—highway robbery, too—"

"Necessity knows no law," said Paul Tyrrell, though a flush came into his face. "I'm at the end of my tether, Bob."

"You—you rotter!"  
"What the jolly old thump!" ex-

claimed the mystified Bounder. "You seem to know this merchant all right, Cherry. Not a friend of yours, I suppose?"

"Don't be an ass!"  
"Well, are we getting him to the station?" snapped the Bounder. "What are you getting at, anyhow?"

"I—I—" stammered Bob. He broke off, his pale face crimsoning.

His heart almost died within him at the thought of handing Paul Tyrrell over to the police. The relationship would be announced on the spot—he knew that; the rascal's look told him as much, if he had not known it.

Vernon-Smith looked at him very hard.

What this strange scene meant the Bounder could not guess. But he could read the shame and misery in poor Bob's face. Quietly, he dropped his grasp from the footpad. That there

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was some connection between these two, the rascally footpad and the Greyfriars schoolboy, was clear enough to Smithy, amazing and mystifying as it was. A harder heart than Smithy's would have been touched by the look on Bob's face.

"You don't want to run the rotter in?" he asked.

"I—I— No!" stammered Bob. "Well, I'm not keen on it—and it's for me to say, as I'm the jolly old victim. Let him cut."

"If—if you don't mind, Smithy—" gasped Bob.

"Not at all! In fact, I'd rather get out of the walk with him, and get on to meet Reddy."

"I—I'd rather—"

"Done!" said the Bounder. "Cut, you rascal—take my tip, and go while the goin's good."

Tyrrell did not stir.

"You'd better go!" said Bob hoarsely. "You're getting off cheap—you know that. Get out of it!"

"I'd like to speak to you before I go, Bob."

"Don't call me Bob, you rotter! And get out—I've nothing to say to you."

Tyrrell smiled sarcastically. "I've something to say to you," he answered. "If your friend will leave us to ourselves—"

Bob clenched his hands.

"Do you want me to knock you spinning, you rotter?" he breathed.

"I've been looking for a chance like this, Bob. I'm going to speak—with or without a listener, as you choose."

Bob turned a haggard look on Vernon-Smith.

"Smithy! If you don't mind—"

The Bounder could not have been more astonished. A sarcastic look came over his face, but he nodded.

"I'll cut," he said. "I can see I'm do trop! I'll leave you to enjoy the company of your—friend!"

Bob gave him a fierce glance. But he did not speak. A gibe from the Bounder mattered little enough to him now. Vernon-Smith, with a shrug of the shoulders tramped on up the footpath, and disappeared.

Bob was left alone with his cousin.

Tyrrell leaned on the trunk of a tree, breathing hard, and watching Bob's face. He did not speak till the Bounder's footsteps had died away.

"Rather an unexpected meeting," he said at length. "I've been watching for a chance like this for three or four days, Bob."

"I know that," said Bob, between his teeth.

"How did you know?" asked Tyrrell, starting.

"Because you're known to be hanging about this quarter; because the police-inspector at Courtfield is looking out for you; because he's guessed that you came this way to get in touch with me—if you could—"

"Good gad! Then I'm in greater danger than I thought. Did you come out to look for me, then?"

Bob gave a scoffing laugh.

"I've stayed in gates ever since my headmaster told me you'd been seen in this direction," he snapped. "I've been warned to give information at once if I should come across you."

"But you won't," said Tyrrell quietly. "You won't hand over your own flesh and blood, Bob."

"I—I can't," muttered Bob. "But—get out! Get out of my sight! You know what I ought to do, what I'm bound to do—"

"And I know what you will not do." Tyrrell cast an uneasy glance up and down the footpath. "Come into the wood, Bob. Someone may come along."

"I will not come one step with you, Paul. I never wanted to see you, and now I only want to see the last of you."

"As you choose." Tyrrell shrugged his shoulders. "If I'm taken, all Greyfriars School will know that your cousin has been arrested for forgery. I'll take care of that, Bob."

"You cur!" muttered Bob.

The Greyfriars junior knew only too well that his rascally cousin meant every word, and that the position was indeed hopeless. He could not bear the thought of everyone at Greyfriars knowing that a relative of his had been arrested for forgery.

"Better step into the wood," sneered Tyrrell.

Bob Cherry hesitated a moment, and then, with a black brow, he followed the wasterd from the footpath into the wood.



## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

## Nothing Doing I

**P**AUL TYRRELL sat on a fallen log, among the hawthorns at a little distance from the footpath, and signed to Bob to take a seat by him. Bob did not heed the gesture. He stood with his hands driven deep into his pockets, his brows knitted, staring moodily at the wastrel. Every moment in Tyrrell's company irked him. He felt a loathing for the man, yet, at the same time, a tincture of compassion. Tyrrell's face was worn and gaunt, and it was plain that he had seen hard times since he had been on the run. And, so far as Bob could see, his situation was hopeless. For a few days, perhaps even a few weeks, he might elude arrest, but the end was inevitable. It must come sooner or later. And from the fact that Inspector Grimes was watching for him in the neighbourhood, more likely sooner than later.

"Cut it short, Paul," muttered Bob. "I ought not to be speaking to you at all, and you know it. What good is this?"

"You've got to help me, Bob."

"I can't!"

"There's nobody else. Your father's turned me down. If I showed up at Cherry Place, he would ring up the police at once. You're my last hope. I've been more sinned against than sinning, Bob. I—I signed another man's name to a slip of paper. I dare say you know—"

"I know," said Bob, in disgust. Perhaps it was a sign of grace in the wretched man that he did not like to give its plain name to what he had done.

"I never got the money. It was spotted too soon."

"I'm glad of that."

"I'm penniless, Bob. If I had fifty pounds, I could clear out of the country—across the sea, and never trouble you or your father again."

"I've got two shillings," said Bob grimly.

"You fool! If you hadn't comb up when you did—" muttered Tyrrell. "That fellow had plenty in his pockets. It was a windfall to drop on him as I did; I knew him at once. I've seen him about the school long ago. His father's a millionaire, and he always has plenty of money."

"Do you expect me to listen to his sort of thing, Paul?" asked Bob, between his teeth. "Do you want me to plant my fist in your face? If not, chuck it!"

Tyrrell breathed hard.

"The best thing you can do is to give yourself up, and take your gruel," said Bob. "You've called the tune, and it's up to you to pay the piper. You've been a loafer ever since you left school. Now you're a crook. As for getting abroad, that's all rot! You'd want a passport."

"I've got a passport."

"That's no use to you, if it's genuine. You'd be stopped as soon as your name was seen on it."

Tyrrell's lip curled sarcastically.

"My name wouldn't be seen on it," he answered. "I'm handy with a pen, Bob. It's as easy as putting another man's name on a cheque. You needn't worry about that. I've got that cut and dried already. Passports are a bother to honest men, but they never give rogues any trouble. And I'm a rogue now."

"A rotten rogue," said Bob. "I—I

can't wish you'd be taken, though you ought to be. I—I wish you could get off, I suppose. But I can't help you. I should draw the line at that, even if I could do it. And I can't."

"You must, Bob! I came this way to see you, if I could—to get help from you. I knew it was likely enough you'd refuse. But I'm desperate, Bob. And you're as deep in the mud as I am in the mire, in a way. Do you want all Greyfriars to know that—"

"You're threatening me, then?"

"You've got it. I'm up against it, and you've got to help me. If you let me down, I'll make it as bad for you as I can."

Bob Cherry stood looking at him in silence. His contempt and disgust were beyond words. Even the wastrel was not insensible to it, and a flush came into his gaunt cheeks.

"I'm not saying I like doing this," he muttered. "But I'm at the end of my tether, Bob. After all, we're cousins. I tell you I never got anything by—by what I did—only ruin and danger. Isn't that punishment enough? I've got a chance to start fresh, if I could get out of the country safe. There's a man I know in the States; he would help me through. I swear I've had a lesson—a lesson that will last me all my life, if only I get clear this time. Believe me, Bob!"

"I wish I could," muttered Bob.

"You'd believe me if you knew what my life has been like since I cut and ran from London," muttered Tyrrell huskily. "Hanging about like a stray dog, frightened at a shadow, starving half the time, camping in a stone vault, sneaking out a few hours at a time, lurking about the footpaths hoping to catch sight of you. I've been punished, Bob, if that's what you want."

"Honesty's the best policy," grunted Bob. "But I suppose even you can see that now."

"Give me a chance to get clear, Bob. You're my only hope. You know I'm desperate, from what you saw. You know I'm not the man for that, if I were not driven to the wall. Give me a chance."

"I'm giving you all the chance I can, and more than I ought, by keeping it secret that I've seen you. What else can I do?"

"Money!"

"I've told you I've got two shillings." Tyrrell made an impatient gesture.

"You can get it somehow, Bob. You must. Your father, your relatives, your friends, beg or borrow. That fellow Vernon-Smith is a friend of yours, I suppose. And I know he's reeking with money."

"He's not a friend of mine."

"You've done him a good turn. I should have had all he had about him—enough to see me through. You can ask him—"

"For goodness' sake ring off!" exclaimed Bob. "I shall have to ask Smithy to keep this dark. And I'm ashamed of looking him in the face when I ask him. He's about the last fellow at Greyfriars I care to ask a favour of. As for asking him for money—pah! But even if I could raise the wind, which I can't do, I couldn't do as you ask. Keeping your secret is one thing, breaking the law is another. I can't do it, and won't!"

"You must, Bob!"

"You'll see whether I must," growled Bob Cherry. "You're a precious rogue yourself, Paul, but you won't make me a rogue!"

Tyrrell rose from the log. His eyes glittered at Bob's moody, dogged face.

The junior was making a movement to go.

"That's your last word, Bob?"

"That's it."

"Will you see me again?"

"No!" said Bob stubbornly.

"I've told you I'm camping in a vault—some miles from this spot. You know the ruins in Friardale Wood—the old priory. That's the place."

"What's the good of telling me?" snapped Bob. "You know jolly well that it's my duty to pass the information on. And I've got my headmaster's orders to do so."

"You know the place," said Tyrrell, unheeding. "Any day after dark you'll find me there. I keep away mostly in the day-time, in case there should be a search, or anyone coming along. Come there, Bob, as soon as you've got help for me."

"I shall not come."

"I shall wait for you, Bob, and expect you. It's only a mile or so from the school, through the wood. You can get out of bounds after dark, and come. And lose no time. If I'm taken, I warn you that Greyfriars School will ring with it."

"That does it!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll show you exactly how much I'm afraid of your threats. Go and eat coke."

He turned his back on the man, and tramped away in the direction of the footpath.

"Bob!"

He heard Tyrrell calling, and gave no heed. In a few minutes he came out of the trees into the footpath, and swung on steadily towards the school. It was close on lock-up when he reached the gates, and a good many Greyfriars fellows were going in. Some of them glanced rather curiously at Bob's clouded, gloomy face.

Bob did not heed them—did not even see them. With a glum face and a heavy heart, he tramped into the House and went up to his study.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

## The Bounder Thinks It Out!

**T**OM REDWING glanced at Vernon-Smith several times during prep in Study No. 4 that evening. The Bounder was unusually silent and preoccupied. He was thinking, but evidently not about prep; he hardly touched his work. He rose from the table at last, pushing his books away, and moved about the study. Redwing was finished at last, and he rose, too.

"Penny for 'em, Smithy!" he said, with a smile.

"Eh, what?"

"What's the trouble?" asked Tom. "You're not giving all that cogitation to making up the team for the Highcliffe match? It doesn't come off till next week."

"I wasn't thinking of cricket."

"Or of prep?" said Tom.

"Oh, blow prep!"

"You can't blow Quelch in Form tomorrow, old chap."

"Blow him now, anyhow!"

"But what's up, Smithy?" asked Redwing. "I've fancied that you hit some trouble when you came to meet me this afternoon. You looked as if you'd been through a scrap."

"So I had," answered Smithy.

"You said nothing about it. Who was it?"

"Oh, it was just a scrap!" said Vernon-Smith evasively. "Nothin' to worry about. You going down to the Rag, Reddy?"





Vernon-Smith was swift of foot; but desperation spurred on the man who was pursuing him, and in a couple of minutes his grasp fell on the Bounder's shoulder from behind. "Now——" he panted, swinging the junior round. Smithy struggled in vain to tear himself free.

"Yes. Coming?"

"I'll come later."

Redwing laughed. It was plain enough that the Bounder wanted to be left alone in the study, and Tom, knowing the Bounder's ways, suspected that he was going to smoke a cigarette before he came down. He left the study, and the Bounder was alone.

But Smithy was not thinking of smoking cigarettes. He continued to move restlessly about the study. He had not spoken to Bob Cherry since the scene in Redclyffe Woods, and had seen him for only a few minutes at calling-over. He expected to see him, however, and had no doubt that he would come along after prep. It was better for Redwing to be off the scene if he came.

What had happened in the wood had puzzled the Bounder deeply. He was rather amused, too, in a cynical way. Smithy himself had a good many shady and undesirable acquaintances outside the school, as most fellows in the Remove knew. Nobody had ever suspected Bob Cherry of anything of the kind. But Smithy's most undesirable acquaintance—even Mr. Banks, the bookmaker, or Mr. Cobb at the Cross Keys—was hardly down to the level of the man Bob Cherry knew, and who knew Bob.

A thief—a man who had attempted to rob a schoolboy in a lonely wood—that was the man Bob Cherry knew. It surprised and puzzled the Bounder—and entertained him, too. At the same time he was feeling concerned about Bob. Smithy, with his wary cunning and his phenomenal luck, clambered out of scrapes as fast as he tumbled into them. Bob, who was anything but cunning or wary, was not likely to have the same luck. He knew that Bob was in deep waters.

There was a heavy tramp of feet in the Remove passage. Bob Cherry was coming along from Study No. 13. The Bounder heard the voice of Hurreo Janset Ram Singh in the passage.

"Are you not coming downfully, my esteemed Bob?"

"I've got to speak to Smithy. Cut on, Inky."

"Right as rainfulness!" answered the Nabob of Bhanipur, and he went down the passage; and Bob tapped at the door of Study No. 4 and opened it.

"Trot in, old bean!" said the Bounder, with a grin. "I was rather expectin' to see you."

Bob came in and closed the door after him. The Bounder's eyes rested curiously on his harassed face.

Bob had come in to speak to Smithy. But he did not seem in a hurry to begin. Twice he opened his lips and closed them again, the colour flushing into his cheeks.

"Take a pew, old scout!" said the Bounder affably.

Bob sat on the edge of the study table, his hands driven into his trousers pockets, and swung his legs.

"I—I—I had to speak to you, Smithy," he stammered at last.

"No charge," said Smithy. "Fire away!"

"You—you remember that fellow in the wood——"

"I haven't forgotten yet, as it was only a few hours ago."

"Will you keep it dark?" blurted out Bob. His face was crimson as he asked the question, and he lowered his eyes. Bob, always as frank and open as the noonday sunshine, for once could not meet a fellow's gaze.

"I've said nothing," said Smithy—"so far," he added significantly.

"You mean you're going to?" asked Bob, with a catch of his breath.

The Bounder did not reply immediately. He took a turn up and down the study, and then came to a halt facing Bob.

"Look here, Cherry," he said, "what does this mean?"

No answer.

"It looks pretty rotten, you know," said Smithy.

"Does it?" muttered Bob.

"Don't you know it does?"

"I—I suppose you'd think so," said Bob wretchedly. "I know I've no right to ask a favour of you. We've never been friends; we've been enemies more than once. I know that."

"Not quite," said the Bounder. "We've been at loggerheads sometimes, because you always backed up Wharton against me. I've never disliked you personally—in fact, I've always rather liked you."

"Thanks!" said Bob, with a faint grin.

"We had a row in the hols, and punched one another pretty hard," said Smithy. "But that's over and done with. I'm not on scrapping terms with Wharton now. Ain't we both trying to stand one another without raggin'? I don't know how it will turn out, but we're both tryin' hard to keep the peace. Well, then, in the jolly old circumstances, I suggest that you can look on me as a friend."

"I'd be glad to—in this matter, anyhow," said Bob. "You're rather a blighter in a good many ways, Smithy, but you've always been more or less of a sportsman. You don't want to pile on a fellow who's down."

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(Continued from page 13.)

"And you're down—if ever a fellow was," said Vernon-Smith. "You've got it written all over your face. You're the worst hand at keepin' a secret that ever was. A fellow like you should steer clear of trouble. I saw Quelch lookin' at you in Form to-day. Quelch is a downy bird."

Bob smiled faintly. Mr. Quelch knew the trouble that was on his mind, since his headmaster's communication. He would not be surprised to see signs of it in Bob's looks.

"You'll get spotted," said the Bounder.

"Spotted!" repeated Bob.

"Sure thing!"

Bob stared at the Bounder blankly. He did not even guess what was in Herbert Vernon-Smith's mind.

"Now," went on the Bounder, "I'm goin' to give you the straight tip, old scout. I'm not the man for pi-jaw, as you probably know—comin' from me it would be rather like Satan rebukin' sin. All the same, I'm goin' to give you a word in season, same as Redwing does to me at times. It's wasted on me; I'm past prayin' for, you know. But you're not built my way, you know; you don't hunt for trouble because you enjoy it."

"Blessed if I understand you, Smithy."

"I'll put it in words of one syllable, suitable to your limited intellect, old top. You've played the goat somehow, and got landed. You're expectin' the chopper to come down. You're not the fellow I should have expected to see in a shady scrape, and you're about the last fellow in the world to be able to climb out of it on your own. I've had lots of experience in that line—and I'm willin' to put my experience at your service. Tell me exactly how the matter stands, and I'll help."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

He understood at last what the Bounder was driving at. That he was in a scrape was plain, and the Bounder concluded that it was a scrape rather like his own scrapes—the outcome of some unthinking and reckless folly.

"I've got some friends outside the school myself," went on Vernon-Smith, with a cynical curl of the lip. "But I know how to make 'em keep their distance, and I can keep them in order. You've got mixed up with a man who's not merely shady, like my own delightful friends—but an absolute rascal and a law-breaker. You've got yourself under his thumb. When he says hop, you've got to hop! You can't handle him. I've no doubt that I could. Put it up to me, old bean, and leave it at that."

Bob stared at him.

There was a throb of anger in his heart at the thought that Smithy suspected him of being mixed up in some blackguardly trouble, which might mean the "sack" from Greyfriars if it came out.

But that passed at once. Evidently

Smithy wanted to be friendly and helpful. And, in the circumstances—knowing and suspecting nothing of the real nature of Bob Cherry's secret—perhaps it was natural for Smithy to think as he did. He could only judge by what he saw; and what he saw looked like what he suspected.

"It's nothing of that kind, Smithy," said Bob, at last. "I haven't taken up your games, old man. I haven't done anything that I should mind Quelch or the Head knowing."

"You don't mind them knowing about that man in the wood?"

"Oh! Yes; not that," said Bob hastily.

"I thought so," smiled the Bounder. "You're not denyin' that you're under that merchant's thumb, I suppose?"

"Only—in a way—" stammered Bob. "You couldn't understand—"

"I think I could—and do," said the Bounder coolly. "I'm no fool, old bean. I sized that Johnny up pretty correctly after I'd seen him with the hanky off his face. A sporting man, who lives and moves and has his jolly old being in horses, and cards, and smokes, and night clubs, and things. What?"

"Something of the sort, I've no doubt."

"And he's hard put to it, and takin' to highway robbery to raise the wind. And you dare not let him take his gruel, in case he rounds on you."

"You—you don't understand—"

faltered Bob. "I think I do. Now, look here!" The Bounder dropped his flippant tone and spoke earnestly. "You're not the fellow for this sort of thing, Cherry, and you've come a mucker. You've got to get out of this, and keep clear afterwards. Let me help you out. I'll do it like a shot! The man's got some hold on you. Give me the whole story and let me see you through."

"You don't understand—"

"I've told you I do. That sportsman made you stop and talk to him when you didn't want to. Mean to say that he wasn't stickin' you for money?"

"Not in the way you think."

Bob slipped from the table.

"You've got it all wrong, Smithy! I don't blame you, but you've got it wrong. I—I'm asking you to let that matter drop—to say nothing about what happened in the wood. If you'll do that—"

"I'm not the man to give a fellow away," said Vernon-Smith. "I shall say nothin' about it and let it pass."

"That's all I want," said Bob, in great relief.

"It may be all you want, but it isn't all you need," said the Bounder. "But if you won't unwind, you won't. You're not tellin' me anythin'?"

"No."

"I'm not generally a Good Samaritan," said Smithy, with a grin. "I don't make offers of this kind very often. But I mean it, Cherry. I'll stand by you and see you through if you say the word."

"It's all right," said Bob. He went to the door. "I'm much obliged, Smithy, really!"

"One good turn deserves another," said Smithy. "That rogue would have had thirty pounds off me if you hadn't come up and bashed him in time. I owe you what you've asked."

"Let it go at that, then," said Bob.

"And you won't make a clean breast of it to your Uncle Herbert?" asked the Bounder, half-laughing and half-earnest.

"No."

"That's that, then."

Bob Cherry left the study. But it was some time before the Bounder went down to the Rag. Bob had refused to confide in him—refused his proffered help. They were not friends—and Bob had loyal and devoted chums who would have gone through fire and water for him. But now that he was in trouble—deep trouble—there was no help for him, unless it came from the fellow who had never been his friend, had more than once been his enemy. The Bounder smiled at the reflection.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### A Tip from Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

Four voices gave that instruction in unison. Four members of the famous Co., in Study No. 1, evidently did not want the company of the fat Owl of the Remove. It was, in fact, a case of four souls with but a single thought, four hearts that beat as one.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, had lingered in the study that afternoon when tea was over. Bob Cherry had tea'd with them, but he had left—after having uttered hardly a word during the meal. Even when Wharton started the topic of the coming cricket match at Highcliffe Bob had had nothing to say.

If Bob was losing his interest in cricket, it was clear that there was something very much amiss with Robert Cherry.

His friends were worried.

Almost everybody in the Remove had noticed that Bob was not his usual self, the last few days. Bob was not exactly the fellow to wear his heart on his sleeve. But he was unused to keeping a secret—and the secret he had to keep was a particularly irksome one.

Since his meeting with Paul Tyrrell his mind had had hardly a moment's rest. He dreaded to hear that the fugitive had been traced and captured, and he dreaded to think that the miserable man was still hanging about the school, waiting and watching for the help that Bob could not give him. He dreaded to be questioned by Mr. Quelch or the Head.

If they suspected for a moment that he had met or seen the outcast they would certainly question him; and certainly the vials of wrath would be poured on his devoted head if they knew that he was aware of the man's whereabouts and had said nothing.

Fortunately, such a suspicion did not seem to occur to them, so far. But if it came Bob simply did not know what he could do.

He could not tell lies about it. Even if he had thought of trying such a resource his looks would have betrayed him. But he could not betray the wretched man—his near relative, his own flesh and blood. What could he say if he were questioned?

It was no wonder that poor Bob had a clouded face these days; that he was silent, almost morose; that he was quite unlike his old cheery, sunny self. And, naturally, it worried his friends. They simply could not make him out.

After Bob had left them, abruptly, at the tea-table, that Tuesday afternoon, they discussed the matter. Something was up with old Bob. He did not mean to tell them what it was, but this couldn't go on. So what was to be done? It was into that discussion that



Billy Bunter butted; it being one of Billy Bunter's peculiar gifts to butt in just where and when he was least wanted.

Four voices told Bunter to buzz off—not politely, but very emphatically. Instead of buzzing off Billy Bunter rolled in, and shut the door after him and fixed his spectacles very seriously on the four.

"I say, you fellows! I haven't come to tea—I've tea'd with Mauly. Still, if you're not going to eat those biscuits—"

"Buzz off, fathead!"

"It's rather rotten about poor old Bob," went on Bunter. "Mind, I didn't listen to what you fellows were saying before I opened the door. I never caught a syllable. I came here to speak to you about Bob, not knowing at all that you were talking about him."

"You frabjous owl!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! You fellows seem to have noticed that old Bob's down on his luck," said Bunter. "I hardly thought you would. Too jolly selfish, as a rule, ain't you, to think about anybody but yourselves? Not like me! Well, look here, Bob's my pal, and I've done a lot for him already. Look how I took a whopping for him a few days ago, over buzzing that orange at Loder! You fellows may not know that I did that purely out of friendship for Cherry—"

"The knowfulness is not terrific," chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, that's how it was," said Bunter. "That's me all over—kindest friend and noblest foe, you know, and all that. Well, I know what's the matter with Bob, and my idea is that we ought to put our heads together, as his friends, and back him up, what?"

"You know?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

Bunter winked a fat wink.

"Precious little I don't get on to, old chap," he answered.

"Well, my hat!" said Nugent.

Harry Wharton & Co. had tried in vain to guess what it could possibly be that was worrying Bob and weighing on his cheery spirits. It was rather news that Bunter knew—if he knew! Four pairs of eyes fixed inquiringly on the fat Owl of the Remove.

"Well, what is it, if you know, fathead?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"We don't get enough to eat here," said Bunter.

"Wha-at?"

"They say in the school prospectus that good and wholesome fare is provided," continued Bunter, blinking at the astonished juniors. "That's all my eye! We never get enough. Look at the way Quelch watches a man at table! Like a hawk! He stopped me having a fifth helping, only to-day!"

"You howling ass—"

"It's not much I eat, as you know," went on Bunter, "but even I don't get enough! Now, Bob's a healthy, hefty chap with a healthy appetite! He feels it! Don't you fellows think so?"

The chums of the Remove gazed at Bunter. In all their surmises as to what was "up" with Bob, certainly they had never thought it was a food question. But the Owl of the Remove's fat intellect had worked it out. The subject was one that lay near Bunter's heart!

"Believe me, that's what up!" said the fat Owl. "I never really get enough to eat—and I'm no great eater—"

"Ye gods!"

"So if I feel it, it stands to reason that Cherry does! I've thought it out, you know," explained Bunter, "and

you can depend upon it that that's it. He's sort of pining, you know—"

"You—you—you benighted bandersnatch!" gasped Wharton.

"I don't think you ought to call a fellow names, Wharton, when he's feeling anxious about a pal. My idea is this. Let's stand the chap a jolly good spread! Not an ordinary study spread, you know—but a regular blow-out!" Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles at the mere thought of a "regular blow-out." Possibly the fat Owl was putting in one word for "poor old Bob" and two for himself! "We pool resources, you know, and get in plenty of stuff—a real feed! I'm prepared to contribute the whole of the postal order I'm expecting! Did I mention to you chaps that I was expecting a postal order?"

"Oh, crikey!"

"To-morrow's a half-holiday," went on Bunter. "The weather's good! I suggest a picnic—either up the river, or in the spinney, or at the old priory, or somewhere. Might ask the Cliff House girls—they'd be glad to see me! I'm practically certain that my postal order will be here in the morning. If not—"

"The if-fulness is terrific."

"If not, you fellows can lend me my whack and I'll settle when my postal order comes! That's all right, I suppose? Now, what about it?" asked Bunter.

He blinked with owlish seriousness at the chums of the Remove. There was a chortle in Study No. 1.

Billy Bunter had no doubts on the subject. But Study No. 1 had very considerable doubts. They really did not think that it was a food problem that was bothering their chum.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter peevishly. "I've told you what's the matter with the chap, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows would never have thought of it—"

"Right on the nail!" chuckled Nugent. "We shouldn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it's rather unfeeling to cackle when poor old Bob is fairly fading away under your eyes for want of something decent in the way of grub. A really good spread—a real blow-out—would set him up, make him smile again, and all that. Is it a go?"

Harry Wharton closed one eye at his comrades.

"It's a go—" he said.

"Oh, good!"

"We'll have a terrific spread—cold chicken and ham and beef, puddings and pies, cakes and tarts and buns and eclairs—"

"Fino!"

"Ginger-pop and cream puffs and chocolates and chocolate creams—"

"Splendid!" gasped Bunter.

"And we'll do it—when your postal order comes!"

"Eh?"

"When your postal order comes! Let us know immediately it comes, and it's a go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors, quite entertained by the expression on Billy Bunter's fat face.

Bunter had stated that his celebrated postal order was to arrive on the morrow. Judging by the expression on his face, however, he did not really expect it quite so soon. Indeed, judging by his look, he might not really have been expecting it at all!

"You—you silly asses!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you silly idiots—"

"Shut the door after you, old fat bean."

"Beasts!"

"And don't forget to let us know when that postal order comes—"

"Yah!"

The door of Study No. 1 slammed after Billy Bunter. A chuckle followed him as he went. But the chums of the Remove were soon serious again. Bob Cherry's mysterious trouble was a serious matter, though Bunter had succeeded in furnishing a little comic relief.

"My esteemed chums," remarked Hurreo Janset Ram Singh thoughtfully. "The absurd Bunter is an excellent and execrable ass; but sometimes the words of wisdom fall from the mouths of ridiculous babes and idiotic sucklings. The worthy and ludicrous Bob is in the blues, and the bluefulness is terrific. Perhapsfully a cheerful and absurd picnic, with the charming company of the beauteous and idiotic misses of Cliff House would buck up his absurd spirits and chase the frown of bluefulness from his ridiculous brow."

"Not a bad idea," assented Wharton. "Blessed if I know what's the matter with the chap; but he seems right down in the blues, and seems to like hanging about by himself, which isn't good for any chap. We'll get Marjorie and Clara to come, and make a jolly party of it."

"Hear, hear!"

"At the old priory—that's half-way between here and Cliff House. We'll make Bob come whether he wants to or not. And if Bunter isn't there, that alone will be enough to cheer any fellow up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Outside in the Remove passage Billy Bunter detached a fat ear from the keyhole of Study No. 1 and rolled away, grinning. These beasts had taken a tip from Bunter—and were apparently thinking of leaving Bunter out! Billy Bunter had his own idea about that—and his idea was, that if any fellow was missing from the picnic at the old priory in Friardale Wood the name of that fellow would not be W. G. Bunter!

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### After Lights-Out!

HERBERT VERNON - SMITH smiled—a smile that was half cynical, half compassionate. The Bounder was sitting on the side of his bed, taking off his boots. Wingate of the Sixth had marched the Remove to their dormitory, and left them to turn in while he chatted in the corridor with another great man of the Sixth who was seeing lights out for the Third.

Wingate was a keen and dutiful prefect; but he was not suspicious—and if he had suspected any Remove fellow of intending to break bounds after lights-out Bob Cherry certainly would not have been the suspected one. But it was at Bob that the Bounder was looking with that peculiar smile on his face, and what was never likely to occur to the Greyfriars captain was a certainty in Smithy's mind.

Redwing had sat down beside him to kick off his boots. He noticed the Bounder's expression, and followed his glance, and then looked at the Bounder again. Smithy closed one eye at him.

"What the dickens, Smithy—" began Tom.

"Don't shout, old bean!" murmured



the Bounder. "Don't give a man away! If Wingate spotted him—"

"You don't mean Cherry?"

"I jolly well do!" The Bounder grinned. "Look under his bed. Can you see a pair of rubber shoes there?"

"Yes, now you speak of it. But what—"

"You can't guess?"

It was a way of the Bounder's, when he was going to break bounds, to keep a pair of rubber shoes in readiness so that he could leave the dormitory without a sound. Smithy, certainly, never left them where a prefect's eye might chance to fall on them. He was too wary for that.

"You don't mean that Cherry is going out of bounds after lights-out, Smithy?" muttered Redwing. He was careful not to let his words be overheard by any other fellow in the dormitory.

"What else?" grinned the Bounder.

"Some jape, I suppose," said Redwing slowly. "Some lark on the Fourth or the Shell—"

"He looks like larking, doesn't he?"

Redwing did not answer that. Bob Cherry's glum and clouded face looked like anything but "larking." It was a good many days now since Bob Cherry, once the liveliest member of the Greyfriars Remove, had indulged in anything like a "lark."

"No bizney of ours, anyhow, Smithy," said Tom at last.

"Think not?" asked the Bounder.

"Certainly not!" said Tom, rather sharply. "I don't know what the chap's up to, and don't want to know. But I'm jolly certain that it's no harm. If he's breaking bounds to-night, it's not for any rotten reason, Smithy."

"You mean that he's not tarred with my brush?" chuckled Smithy.

"Well, yes—if you like to put it like that," said Tom bluntly.

"You wouldn't believe that he knew any shady sort of a rascal outside the school?"

"No fear."

"You wouldn't fancy that he had been playing the goat, and got into bad hands, or anything of that kind?"

"Never!"

"You don't think he's been looking like it for a week past?"

Redwing was silent again.

Bob Cherry turned into bed—the first in. He seemed to want to avoid joining in the buzz of talk that was going on in the dormitory.

"Chance for you, Reddy!" murmured the Bounder. "Give him one of your jolly old sermons, in your seventhy style!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" Redwing's voice was sharp. "Look here, Smithy, it's all rot—the fellow's as straight as a string. And if he was kicking over the traces, and making a fool of himself, it's not a laughing matter. I should feel pretty rotten about it, if I thought so."

"Same here, old bean! You know my sympathetic nature, what?" grinned the Bounder. "A chap like that ought to keep straight. First time he goes off the jolly old straight and narrow path he's bound to come a mucker. I should be sorry to see him sacked from the school."

"That's not likely."

"My dear man, can't you see he's askin' for it? You don't feel inclined to keep a fatherly eye on him?"

"Bosh!"

"Then it's up to me!" sighed the Bounder. "Can you fancy me in the role of a guardian angel, Reddy?"

Redwing laughed involuntarily.

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"Anything but that!" he said. "If you want a fellow to keep straight, Smithy, the best thing you can do is to leave him alone, and see that he doesn't pick up your ways and follow your example."

"A hit—a very palpable hit!" chuckled the Bounder. "Right on the jolly old wicket! You talk like a picture-book, Reddy."

Redwing went across to his own bed. Wingate was looking in at the doorway.

The Remove turned in.

Lights were extinguished, and Wingate bade the Remove good-night and departed. The usual chatter from bed to bed ran on for a time, and died away into silence at last.

Billy Bunter's deep snore woke the echoes of the dormitory. The fat Owl was dreaming happily of the picnic that was to come off on the morrow at the old priory in Friardale Wood. That important subject had been in Bunter's thoughts all the evening, and it haunted him in his slumbers.

But when the Remove had fallen asleep, there was at least one fellow who remained wide awake. And it was the Bounder's belief there were two.

Vernon-Smith did not close his eyes.

The Bounder's feelings were strangely mixed. He had no doubt—not the slightest doubt—that Bob Cherry had been "playing the goat," and landed himself in trouble. He derived from that thought a cynical amusement, and he was curious, too, to know how the matter really stood.

He had a feeling of contempt for a fellow who "played the goat," and hadn't sense enough to keep clear of trouble. But mingled with those feelings was genuine friendly concern for the fellow who, so far as Smithy could see, was heading for the "sack."

While his feud with Wharton had been on, Smithy had been up against Bob and all the members of the Co. But he had never really disliked him—it would have been rather hard for anyone to dislike the cheery Bob. And he knew that if Bob Cherry left Greyfriars in disgrace, he would miss his cheery face in the Remove. He realised, rather to his own surprise, that he would have taken a good deal of trouble to save Bob from the "chopper."

Smithy, too, was now captain of the Remove. He told himself that it was up to a Form captain to keep an eye on fellows in the Form who were heading for bad trouble. That, undoubtedly, was true; though such considerations did not trouble the Bounder very much. He was not, and did not want to be, such a Form captain as Harry Wharton had been last term. The Bounder's sense of duty was not highly developed.

He told himself also that it was up to the strong to help the weak; to the wise to help the foolish. That, too, was true; but Smithy was not given to thinking on those lines. Generally, he had only scorn and indifference for a "lame duck."

Nevertheless, Smithy had made up his mind to see Bob through if he could. He had no doubt that he could do it, if the matter was in his hands. Some rogue had Bob under his thumb, owing to some act of reckless folly—that was how Smithy looked at it. And Smithy was the man to deal with a rogue—and Bob certainly was not. What was an overwhelming trouble to poor Bob, would be "pie" to the Bounder if he handled the affair.

Half-past ten chimed out.

Then there was a sound of a creaking bed, as someone stirred and sat up. The Bounder grinned in the darkness.

He had been right—there was another

fellow awake! Who it was he could not see but he knew.

He had proof a moment or two later. A whispering voice came through the silence of the sleeping dormitory.

"You fellows asleep?"

There was no answer, save the sound of regular breathing and the resonant snore of Billy Bunter.

The Bounder subdued a chuckle. It was Bob Cherry's voice that had whispered.

A faint creaking sound followed; Bob was out of bed. Faint sounds in the silence told that he was dressing in the dark. There was no sound as he crept to the door; the rubber shoes were noiseless. But faintly came the sound of the closing door.

Bob was gone.

The next moment Herbert Vernon-Smith was out of bed. Swiftly he dressed himself. Swiftly he crossed to the door and left the dormitory. Many a time had the reckless Bounder left his dormitory secretly, surreptitiously, after lights out; it was no new experience to him. Silent as a cat, he tiptoed away, grinning as a faint footfall, less cautious than his own, came back to his ears.

A couple of minutes later he was looking from a box-room window on to a slanting roof beyond. From that roof the starlight showed a figure dropping from the leads.

It vanished.

A few moments, and the Bounder of Greyfriars was dropping in the same place. He chuckled softly as he followed the sound of soft footfalls. Harry Wharton & Co., and the rest of the Remove, were sleeping soundly, little dreaming that Bob Cherry was out of bounds, and that, following him in the darkness was the last fellow in the school whom they would have expected to play the part of a guardian angel!

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Shadowed I

**B**OB CHERRY tramped on in the dusky May night, his collar turned up, his cap pulled down over his eyes.

Friardale Lane was lonely enough at that hour; he was not likely to meet anyone. But his heart was beating unpleasantly. He was out of school bounds, after lights out; and discovery meant serious consequences. For a senior it would have meant expulsion; for a junior it meant at least a flogging. But it was not the thought of possible punishment that lay heaviest on Bob's mind.

Bob's conscience had always been clear of wrongdoing; and now he could not feel sure whether he was doing right or wrong. That was a trouble on his mind which the Bounder would hardly have understood.

Once or twice, as he tramped along the dark lane, it seemed to Bob that he caught a footfall behind him that was not the echo of his own. But when he glanced back, he saw nothing but the shadows of nodding trees.

After all, he was not likely to be spotted. And if a prefect or a master had spotted him, he would not have followed him from the school—he would have collared him at once and marched him in. Bob dismissed the thought from his mind.

Right or wrong, he felt that he had to do as he was doing. He found some comfort in clinging to what Paul Tyrrell had said, with an appearance of earnestness—that if he escaped this time he had learned his lesson, and would keep straight in the future.





Silent as a cat, Vernon-Smith tiptoed up to the box-room window and looked out on to the slanting roof beyond. As he did so, the starlight showed a figure just dropping from the leads!

It was probable enough. The fellow was scared to the marrow of his bones by the situation his rascality had landed him in; he would not want to go through it a second time. He was gathering the fruits of idleness and vice, and he found them bitter enough in his mouth.

It had come rather like a thunderclap to Bob when his friends had told him of the plans for the half-holiday the next day. In the innocence of their hearts they had considered that a jolly picnic party, with the Cliff House girls, would have the effect of bucking up poor Bob, in his strange new mood of settled "blues." No doubt it might have had that effect, at least for a time, had they chosen any spot but the old priory in Friardale Wood—the spot haunted by the wretched fugitive!

It was natural to pick that spot. It lay half-way between the two schools, and the juniors had picnicked there a good many times. It was a pleasant spot, embosomed in the woods that grew thick and shady round the old ruins. Likely enough the picnickers would explore the ruins—a pleasant enough occupation on a sunny half-holiday. The chums of the Remove had little dreamed of what was in Bob's mind, when they told him.

Tyrrell had said that he camped in the vault in the ruined priory at night, and kept away from it, skulking in the woods, most of the day-time. He might or might not be there when the picnickers came. But if he was there—if the juniors saw him, or spotted some trace of his camping there—

He had to be warned.

Helping him to escape was not in Bob's power. He could not help the wretch in the way he wanted. He could not make up his mind that he would have done so, even had it been in his

power. But warning him to keep out of sight—to give the old ruins a wide berth on the morrow—was a different matter. Whether he was doing right or wrong, Bob could hardly tell. He had thought it over and over till his brain seemed to spin. But he felt that he had to do it.

There was a glimmer of light in the darkness of the lane ahead. Bob Cherry stopped suddenly, and jumped into the hawthorn hedge at the roadside.

With a heavy tread of feet, P.-c. Tozer, of Friardale, passed him, slowly and ponderously, his lantern gleaming through the gloom.

Bob's heart thumped almost to suffocation.

But the plump constable did not glance in his direction. The ponderous footfalls died away into the night.

Bob gasped for breath and wiped a trickle of perspiration from his forehead. It had been a narrow escape.

Had Mr. Tozer spotted him, he certainly would have seen Paul Tyrrell that night. Mr. Tozer would have walked him back to the school with a hand on his shoulder.

But Mr. Tozer was gone. The glimmer of his lantern died away. Bob emerged from the hedge with thumping heart.

He tramped on doggedly, and stopped at the stile which gave on the footpath through Friardale Wood. Lightly he swung himself over the stile, and tramped on up the path, vanishing into black shadows.

A minute later another figure stood at the stile, staring across with puzzled eyes.

Vernon-Smith was perplexed.

Like Bob, he had narrowly escaped the Friardale constable. But that risky encounter had only made the Bounder chuckle.

Now he stood staring over the stile

into the black depths of the wood, wondering what it meant. When Bob had gone along the lane, Smithy had concluded that he was heading for the Cross Keys—a delectable resort that Smithy knew well. He was surprised when the junior disappeared into the wood.

What his game could be in the dark woods at eleven o'clock at night, was a mystery to Vernon-Smith. Evidently he was not "playing the goat," on this occasion, looking on the wine when it was red, and the billiards-table when it was green, as the Bounder expressed it. Standing by the stile, the Bounder thought it out. Obviously the fellow had some object—he had not taken the risk of breaking bounds for nothing. He was going to meet somebody. That rogue of Redclyffe Wood—the amateur footpad, the sportsman who had him under his thumb! That was it! Taking him money, perhaps, paying some gambling debt, or, more likely, asking to be given time to pay. Poor Bob was not well provided with money. It did not take the Bounder long to work out how the matter stood, in accordance with the belief already fixed in his mind.

He swung himself over the stile and followed.

Faint footfalls came from the darkness ahead; faint, but clear enough. Bob was less cautious now that he was a mile from the school, on a woodland footpath scarcely ever traversed at night. But the Bounder's footfalls were noiseless as he followed.

A little later and there was a sound of brushing twigs. Bob had left the path, and was pushing through the wood.

"My hat!" muttered the Bounder.

From the direction Bob was now

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taking, he could have had only one possible destination—the ruined priory. That, then, was the place of his appointment.

It was fixed in the Bounder's mind that Bob was going to keep an appointment. He could imagine no other reason for his going at all.

The Bounder, in his turn, left the footpath, and followed on through the tangled thickness of the wood.

But now that he was sure of Bob's destination he dropped farther behind. He could not move without crackling twigs and brushing bracken betraying him, and he did not want Bob to hear.

The sounds that came back from Bob Cherry, as he pushed on, died away ahead. Smithy needed no guide now. He knew where to find the junior he was shadowing. He knew that he would find him at the old priory in the heart of the wood.

Suddenly he gave a start.

He heard no sound from Bob now; the junior was too far ahead of him. But through the silence of the woods came crackling and rustling—from behind the Bounder.

"Good gad!" breathed Smithy.

He stopped, his heart throbbing, to listen. He listened with straining ears.

Was it some animal—a rabbit scuttling in the bracken?

He moved on again, as quietly and softly as he could; but in the thick wood it was impossible to move without sound. A twig would snap, a branch sway and crack. Dead wood crackled under his feet in the grass. And from behind him came the same sounds again. Someone else besides the Bounder was abroad in the dusky depths of Friardale Wood that May night.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Man in the Vault!

**D**IM in the glimmering starlight the dismantled old ruins of the priory lay round Bob Cherry as he passed in through the shattered gateway, of which only fragments of two stone pillars remained.

There was no building where once the Priory of the Grey Friars had stood; where in ancient days old men in grey robes and cowls had told their beads in their cells. Masses of masonry lay in disorder, overgrown with grasses and mosses and lichens. Fragments of ancient walls were half hidden by bracken and hawthorn and the branches of trees. Here and there cracked flags showed in the earth, where stone paving once had been. In the daytime, in the summer sunshine, it was a solitary but pleasant spot.

It needed little imagination to picture a ghostly figure in robe and cowl gliding among the shattered old walls, revisiting the glimpses of the moon. But Bob Cherry was not troubled by nerves, and he had more pressing matters to think of than gliding, ghostly monks.

He tramped into the ruins, and kept on towards a dark mass on the farther side. There was the opening to the ancient vaults—a dim archway of stone where once an oaken door had been, door and hinges having vanished long centuries ago. Fragments of fallen masonry were piled above, in an irregular heap overgrown with mosses. Like a black gap the opening of the stone arch looked, black and tomb-like, and Bob shivered at the thought of the wretched man passing long nights there, in silence and solitude. Truly, Paul Tyrrell was paying dear for his ill-deeds. Prison would have been a more welcome refuge, but for the wretched man's lingering hope of ultimate escape across the seas.

He was there. Bob had no doubt that he was there. He had said that he camped there at night, and it was now past eleven. Bob had no doubt that his footsteps reached the man crouching in the darkness, probably terrifying him with the fear that searchers were coming.

Indeed, now that he thought of it, Bob had little doubt that Inspector Grimes had looked into the place in the daytime. He knew that Tyrrell had come in that direction. He suspected that the man was seeking to open communication with a Greyfriars boy, and so he was not

likely to have left such a lurking-place unsearched. Probably only the fact that Tyrrell cleared off in the day-time and hid in the woods had saved him from discovery already.

Bob stopped under the dark stone arch and stared into the blackness of the interior. There was no sound. But suddenly from the darkness he caught a gleam of eyes, like the glinting eyes of a wild animal in its den. From the darkness within the man was watching.

"Paul!"

Bob Cherry whispered the name.

He heard a panting gasp.

"Bob! You!"

"Yes."

"Oh! Oh, I—I heard you. I—I feared—" The voice came stammering from the darkness. "I—I hoped it was you, but I feared—"

Bob felt a throb of pity. In Paul Tyrrell's place—if he could have imagined himself in his place—he could never have yielded to fear like this. Idleness, selfishness, vice had led the wretched man into crime; but he had not the courage of his misdeeds. It was rather a frightened, hunted animal than a man who was peering at Bob in the black shadows. No doubt what he had said was true—this fearful lesson would be enough for him. Even if he escaped, the terror of it was likely to linger for long years in his memory.

"It's all right, Paul!" muttered Bob.

He heard the man's spasmodic breathing, but could not see him. Only the glint of the eyes came from the dark.

"Get in, Bob! I've got a candle here—farther in. It's safe to strike a light. Come in—quick! You're sure you've not been followed?"

"Nobody knows anything, Paul. It's all right!"

"Get in!"

Bob groped into the low, vaulted room. Tyrrell's footsteps shuffled before him, and he followed. At a distance from the open archway, behind a stone pillar that supported the roof, a match scratched, and was put to a candle, and light flickered out.

Tyrrell stood before his schoolboy cousin, trembling. But he was pulling himself together now. He stuck the candle in a crevice of the stone pillar, where it dropped grease, and stared at Bob in the flickering light.

"You've brought it?" he asked eagerly.

"It—what?" Bob did not understand for a moment.

"The money!" muttered Tyrrell hoarsely.

"No."

"What? Why are you here then, you fool?"

Bob's lip curved bitterly.

"Because I'm a fool, I suppose," he answered. "Because you're in danger here, and I've come to give you the tip!"

"Oh!" muttered Tyrrell.

"You're not safe here," muttered Bob. "To-morrow afternoon—it's a half-holiday at the school—there will be a picnic party here—a lot of fellows. Some of them are pretty certain to explore the ruins while they're here. If you're here you'll be seen."

"Oh!" repeated Tyrrell.

"I've broken school bounds at night to come and tell you," said Bob. "I'm up for a flogging if I'm spotted—or worse. Goodness knows what the Head would do if he knew what I'd come out for. It may be against the law to give you this tip, for anything I know."

"And—that's all?"

"That's all."

"You can't help me?"

"How can I help you?" muttered Bob.

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"Even if I could I ought not, and you know it. I'm helping you to keep clear. You'd be spotted for a cert if you were here to-morrow afternoon. You told me that you usually get out in the daytime; but—"

"Usually—not always!" muttered Tyrrell. "I might have been here. It was decent of you to come and warn me. But—"

"You can hide in the woods to-morrow, and keep clear. But if you've any sense, you'll cut," said Bob. "Old Grimes at Courtfield knows you headed for Greyfriars, and this is just the place he would nose into. Ten to one he's given it the once-over already. If he came at night—"

"Someone has been here at night already," muttered Tyrrell. "Whether it was the police, or some wandering tramp, I don't know. It's the place where a tramp might camp out sometimes. I got away into the vaults underneath—I've found the way down. I dare say you know it—"

"I know it," said Bob. Again he felt a throb of pity. He could imagine the wretch skulking in fear in the black depths under the old priory—dismal, noisome depths, full of pitfalls for the unwary.

"You'd better cut," repeated Bob. "I suppose it's no use advising you to give yourself up and take your gruel—"

"Fool!"

"Well, the next best thing is to cut. You're known to be in this neighbourhood, and I suppose you have to show yourself sometimes to get food. It can't last long."

"Where am I to go?" muttered Tyrrell. "I came here because you were my last hope—my last chance. I have no other."

Bob was silent. He pitied the unfortunate wretch, but he could do no more than pity him. Could he, even had it been in his power, have helped a man who had broken the law, to escape justice? He hardly knew, but, at all events, it was not in his power.

Paul Tyrrell stood leaning on the stone pillar beside the spluttering candle. The flickering light showed up the gaunt, haggard lines in his face. He had hoped, when he saw Bob, that the schoolboy had somehow obtained the means to make his escape. The disappointment was crushing.

In the silence, from the ruins outside the arched vault, came the sound of a clinking stone.

Tyrrell started convulsively. "Listen!" He grasped Bob's arm. He was shaking from head to foot.

"Only a stone falling," said Bob. "For goodness' sake pull yourself together, man! It's nothing!"

Tyrrell did not answer. He stood with bent head, listening like a hunted beast. Long minutes passed, but there was no other sound. He lifted his head at last, relieved. Silence as of the tomb reigned in the old ruins—for the Bounder of Greyfriars made no other sound as he crept towards the opening of the vault.

ruins, and there was no other place where he could be.

Slowly, cautiously, noiselessly, the Bounder of Greyfriars crept on till he had passed the pillar behind which Bob and his cousin stood, keeping to the side of the vault, far out of the radius of the candlelight. And then he stopped, wrapped in darkness himself as by a cloak, but seeing from where he stood the two figures in the glimmer of the candle. And he recognised Bob's companion instantly as the man who had attempted to rob him in Redelyffe Woods, days ago. It was the amateur footpad—the "sportsman" under whose thumb he supposed Bob Cherry to be.

But wonder grew in the Bounder's face as he watched them. Bob Cherry's secret, he had had no doubt, was some dingy, blackguardly secret like his own. The fathead had made some false step while "playing the goat," and some rascal had got a hold on him. It was natural for the Bounder's suspicions to take such a form, and had it been as he believed he was the man to help a foolish schoolboy out of such a scrape.

But now he doubted. That shivering, cringing rascal might be a blackmailer, but he did not look the part. He looked like a man whose bedfellow was terror. Bob Cherry did not look as if he feared him. Smithy

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could read his face in the candlelight—he could read there pity, mingled with scorn.

Slowly, reluctantly, it forced itself into the Bounder's mind that he had made a mistake—that, with all his wary sagacity, all his cunning and keenness, he had jumped to a false conclusion. He had made the mistake of judging others by himself.

Yet, if he was mistaken, what did it all mean? Bob was in deep trouble—on that point there was no doubt whatever. He had crept out of bounds at night to meet a man who undoubtedly was a rascal, in a secret place. If that did not mean wrongdoing on his own part what did it and could it mean? The Bounder felt himself hopelessly beaten.

He was soon to be enlightened, however. Tyrrell's voice came muttering through the gloom.

"You're not going, Bob?"

"I've told you what I came to say, Paul. Keep clear of this place to-morrow, or your game's up. The sooner I get back to the school the better."

"Hold on!"

Bob Cherry shifted uncomfortably. He wanted to be gone, but he stayed. But every minute that he was absent from the Remove dormitory added to the danger of discovery.

"A few minutes—half an hour—won't hurt you!" snarled Tyrrell. "I don't get

any other visitors here, Bob! I never hear a human voice, except when once in a couple of days I risk showing up at a farmhouse to buy bread and cheese. That's my life now."

"You've asked for it," said Bob. "You know what the law was when you broke it, I suppose."

"I expected to get clear with something to give me a new start. I had to run with nothing. You're glad of that?" added Tyrrell bitterly.

"Of course I'm glad of it," snapped Bob savagely. "As glad as I am that I stopped you from robbing Vernon-Smith the other day. Do you think I want a relation of mine to be a thief?"

Every word came clearly to the Bounder, pressed against the side of the vault in the darkness.

He caught his breath. So that was it!

He could have laughed at the egregious mistake he had made! It was not a case of pub-haunting—of gambling at cards, or backing horses—nothing in his own peculiar line at all! This was not a reckless schoolboy's scrape, from which he could have helped Bob to get clear! Bob was in much deeper waters than that.

And the Bounder realised that led on by that false belief, assured that he could save a foolish fellow from the results of his own folly, he had butted into a matter that did not concern him—that he had surprised a dismal secret that he had no right to know—a secret of shame, that Bob would almost rather have died than have told him, or any fellow. That was a discomfiting reflection for the Bounder.

But it was rather too late to think of that. Paul Tyrrell's muttering voice was in his ears.

"Don't go yet, Bob! I tell you again, what I told you in the wood that day, you've got to help me! I've no other hope! You must!"

"I can't!"

"Fifty pounds—forty—thirty—would see me through! I've got everything fixed—cut and dried! Only money's needed! My passport's fixed in another name—that was easy! Only money—"

"Where am I to get thirty pounds, you ass—even if I would?" said Bob Cherry gruffly. "What do you think my father would say if I asked him for such a sum—or the half of it? Don't be an ass!"

"I tell you, I've a chance in the States—a friend there who will stand by me," went on Tyrrell, unheeding. "I swear I'm going straight—do you think I'd risk all this over again? Think of that, if your conscience is worrying you. Give me the help I want—"

"I can't!"

"You must—somehow!" Tyrrell's voice rose. "I'm your cousin—your own flesh and blood! My disgrace is your disgrace—if I go where they want to send me! Do you think they won't know it at the school? I'll take care that they do—I'll make Greyfriars ring with it. Will you be able to hold up your head at Greyfriars again, when they know that your cousin, Paul Tyrrell, had been sentenced for forgery? Think of that—"

From the darkness of the vault Vernon-Smith stood looking on.

"You cur!" muttered Bob. "I mean it—every word—hands off!" yelled Tyrrell, as Bob Cherry, in a blaze of anger, grasped him.

Crack!

"Ow! You—"

There was a savage howl from the outcast, as his head banged on the stone pillar.

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**THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.**

**A Narrow Escape!**

**H**ERBERT VERNON-SMITH moved like a cat in the dark. Feeling his way, silent, cautious, he crept into the vault. Faintly, from the black depths, once he was within, a flicker of light caught his eyes. He knew that Bob Cherry was there—he was not in the



"There!" panted Bob. "That's my answer! It's all the answer you'll get from me."

He released the panting rascal, and strode away, tramping out of the arched doorway of the vault without a look behind.

The Bounder grinned.

Tyrrell stood in the candlelight, rubbing his head, and muttering oaths and threats. Bob Cherry's answer had been rather emphatic.

Silently the Bounder crept out of the vault the way Bob Cherry had gone. In the dim starlight that fell into the ruins he saw Bob's sturdy form striding away towards the shattered gateway.

He turned in another direction himself, to leave the old priory by dropping over the wall. Now that he knew he had been mistaken—that the matter was far from what he had believed—he was only anxious to get clear without Bob learning that he had been there at all. Not a word would ever pass his lips; and Bob would never know that the Bounder of Greyfriars knew his miserable secret.

Lightly, silently, the Bounder clambered over the mossy old ruin of the priory wall. Then all of a sudden he stopped, catching his breath.

From the wall, he had a view outside the old priory; and in the starlight outside the old gateway he sighted a solid-looking, portly figure. He knew Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, at a glance.

Portly as he was, the police-inspector was moving very softly, as he merged from the wood and approached the gateway of the priory.

The Bounder's heart almost missed a beat.

He remembered the sounds that had followed him in the wood. He knew now from whom they had come.

The police-inspector was a dozen yards from him, and did not glance in his direction. He was stepping quietly towards the old gateway, with the obvious intention of entering the ruins. In a minute more, he would be entering the gateway from the outside—as Bob Cherry passed through it from within. The Bounder's thoughts raced.

Sixty seconds—and Bob would be walking fairly into the hands of the police-inspector—caught out of bounds, caught in communication with a breaker of the law—a man wanted by the police!

Smithy dropped back from the wall. There was not an instant to lose. He cut across after Bob at breathless speed.

The junior heard his footfalls, and turned his head. Probably he supposed that Tyrrell had followed him from the vault. He gave a violent start at the sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder reached him. He grasped him by the arm. Bob stared at him, almost stupefied.

"Quiet! Quick!"

The Bounder hissed the words in his ear. At the same moment, he dragged at his arm—dragging him into the cover of a mass of hawthorns that grew thickly among the old stones.

"W-what—" stuttered the amazed Bob.

"Quiet!" hissed the Bounder. "It's Grimes—not ten yards away—"

"Oh!"

"Quiet!"

Bob made no sound. Amazed, astounded, as he was, he was quick on the uptake. He knew what it meant for him if Mr. Grimes found him there—at that hour!

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Footfalls came faintly to his ears now. A portly figure loomed in the shattered old gateway.

With his heart beating almost to suffocation, Bob stood crouched beside the Bounder in the thick hawthorns. Through the tangled twigs he could see the Courtfield inspector—he caught the glint of Mr. Grimes' eyes in the starlight, as the inspector stared suspiciously round him. Mr. Grimes had caught some faint sound, and he was on the alert.

He passed on—treading softly and swiftly—towards the old vault. The portly figure disappeared among the scattered masses of fallen masonry.

"Now's our chance!" breathed the Bounder.

"But—but—" stammered Bob.

He was thinking of the man in the vault. Vernon-Smith gripped his arm.

"Don't be a mad ass! Let him take his chance! Come."

Bob jerked his arm free.

He stooped, groped for a loose stone, and tossed it into the air. It came down with a crash on a cracked flag—a crash that seemed almost like thunder in the stillness of the night. From somewhere came a startled exclamation, in the voice of Mr. Grimes. That sudden crash in the silence had startled him—as it had undoubtedly startled, and warned, the hidden man in the vault.

"Come, you mad duffer!" hissed the Bounder.

Bob had done all he could—more, he could not help thinking, than he ought to have done. The wretch was warned—he had time to dodge into the underground vaults and hide. He had to take his chance now! With the Bounder dragging at his arm, Bob ran by Smithy's side, and in a few moments more, they were out of the ruins, and racing through the shadows of the wood.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Serious News!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Cut it short!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, a jolly serious thing's happened!" said Billy Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles with owl-like gravity.

It was the following day in morning break. The Famous Five had come out of the Form-room together—four members of the Co. cheerfully surrounding Bob Cherry as he made a movement to clear off by himself.

What was "up" with Bob, was still a mystery to his chums; but whatever it was, it seemed to have taken a turn for the worse that morning—as Harree Jamsot Ram Singh put it, the upfulness was more terrific.

The excitement of the previous night and the loss of sleep and rest, had left their signs on Bob. And the fellow who had never known what it was to be "nervy" before, was now in a jumpy state.

What had happened at the old priory, after he had fled with the Bounder—or whether anything had happened—Bob could not know or guess. Already the handcuffs might be on the wrists of Paul Tyrrell; already he might be in a cell at Courtfield Police Station. Or he might have hidden in the underground recesses and escaped detection and capture, as he had done before. Bob would have given a great deal to know; but he could only wait dismally for news to reach him if the man had been caught.

In the bright May sunshine that morning, Bob's face was darkly clouded. He was thinking—not only of Tyrrell, but of the Bounder. The Bounder knew!

How Smithy had chanced to be in the old priory the previous night, he could not understand. He could hardly be sorry that the Bounder had been there, for unquestionably Smithy had saved him from walking into the arms of Inspector Grimes—who certainly would not have failed to guess why he was out of bounds at that hour. The Bounder had given no word of explanation. They had returned to the school in silence, and at the school wall they had parted. Smithy had not come in with Bob.

Bob Cherry had crept back to the Remove dormitory, and turned in. The Bounder had remained out.

There was nothing surprising in that. Bob concluded that the Bounder was engaged on one of his customary blackguardly excursions that night—though why and how he had been at the old priory was a mystery. Sleepless, in the sleeping dormitory, Bob had heard the Bounder come in—hours later. But no word had been said. And in the morning Smithy had not approached him—had rather seemed to avoid him. Apparently the Bounder intended to say nothing of what had happened that wild night, and that was a relief to Bob, in a way. But he was sorely puzzled and troubled.

Vernon-Smith—the last fellow at Greyfriars to whom he would willingly have confided his secret—knew! There could be no doubt about that, and it was bitter enough to Bob.

But he told himself that, if Paul Tyrrell had been taken, not only Smithy, but all the school, would know soon.

If only he could get news.

The voice of Billy Bunter, just then, fell on his ears like the drone of a troublesome wasp. He did not heed what the fat Owl was saying, but suddenly, as Bunter went on, he sat up and took notice, as it were.

"I can tell you fellows it's jolly serious! I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you! I tell you what's happened this morning is pretty serious."

"Bow-wow!" said Johnny Bull.

The Co. would have walked on—regardless of Billy Bunter's serious news. But Bob Cherry came to a halt, his eyes fixed on Bunter's fat face anxiously.

"What's happened, Bunter?" he asked, almost huskily. If this meant news that the man in the priory vault had been arrested—

"Only Bunter's rot!" granted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"For goodness' sake, give the fellow a chance to speak!" rapped out Bob, so sharply that his chums stared at him.

"What is it, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him. He was gratified, and at the same time surprised, by Bob Cherry's keen interest in what he had to tell.

"Well, it's pretty serious, you know, considering that we are going on a picnic at the priory this afternoon," said Bunter.

Bob's heart sank.

"Has—has—has something happened at—at the old priory?" he faltered.

"What—what have you heard about it?"

"Eh?"

"Tell me what's happened at the old priory, you fat fool!"

"What? Nothing that I know of!" said Bunter in surprise.

"Nothing?" repeated Bob, blankly.

"Not that I know of!"





"Will you be able to hold up your head at Greyfriars again, when they know that your cousin, Paul Tyrrell, has been sentenced for forgery?" Crack! "Ow! You——" There was a savage howl from the outcast as Bob Cherry banged his head on the stone pillar. In the darkness of the vault Vernon-Smith stood, looking on.

"You fat chump! You said something serious had happened——"

"So it has!" answered Bunter. "Jolly serious, as we are going to picnic at the old priory! I was going to stand my whack, of course, out of my postal order! I told you fellows that I was expecting a postal order—I'm sure I mentioned it! Well, it hasn't come!"

"What?" shrieked Bob Cherry. "It hasn't come!" said Bunter. "I was banking on it, you know, as it's from one of my titled relations. But there's been some delay in the post, or something, and it hasn't come! That rather lets me down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled four members of the Co.—while the fifth member glared at Billy Bunter as if he could have eaten him. Bunter's serious news, apparently, was the news that his celebrated postal order had not come as expected.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at, you fellows! As the matter stands, I'm stony! I shan't be able to stand my whack in the picnic. The only thing is, for you fellows to lend me, say, ten bob, till my postal order comes. What about it?" asked Bunter.

"You—you—you burbling idiot!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I don't think you ought to call a fellow names, when he's getting up a picnic entirely on your account!" said Bunter warmly. "You've been looking pretty rotten lately, and these fellows never even guessed what was the matter with you, till I told them——"

"You—you—what——"

"I put my finger on the trouble at once!" said Bunter complacently. "I told these fellows—didn't I, you chaps?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat scoundrel, what have you been prying into now?" gasped Bob.

"Eh! I knew what was the matter,

of course," said Bunter, blinking at him. "You're run down for want of nourishment—same as me——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"We don't get enough to eat here! You feel it the same as I do, old chap! I told these fellows, and we've got up a picnic——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "You—you—you benighted jabberwock! You burbling, blithering, blathering, babbling booby! You—you—you—— Oh, sit down!"

"Yaroooooooooh!" roared Bunter, as he sat.

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Clouds Roll By!

HARRY WHARTON glanced round when he came out of the House after dinner that day, sighted Herbert Vernon-Smith in the quadrangle, hesitated a moment or two, and then walked across towards the Bounder. Smithy grinned, that momentary hesitation not having escaped his eye. Both the new and the late captain of the Remove were trying sincerely enough these days to keep the peace and establish friendly relations, but neither of them had got quite used to it yet. Smithy gave Wharton a cheery nod, and a slightly sarcastic smile, as he came up and joined him.

"Anything on this afternoon, Smithy?" asked Harry.

"I've got to trot down to Friardale—nothing else! Quite at your service after that!" answered Smithy.

"Well, look here, we're getting up a picnic at the old priory—you know the place——"

"Yes! I gave it a look-in quite lately," assented the Bounder.

"Hazel's going over to Cliff House to fetch Marjorie and Clara, and we'd

like you and Redwing to come—if you'd care for it! I'm afraid Bunter's coming, but otherwise I hope it will be rather jolly!"

"Pleased!" said the Bounder. "Kind invitation gratefully accepted for self and Redwing. What time?"

"Leave here about three!" said Harry.

"Three?" repeated the Bounder reflectively. "I've got to see a man at Friardale about three. All right if I walk in a little later?"

"Quite!"

"It's a go, then! I suppose Cherry will be there?"

"Yes, rather!" answered Harry.

"Good! A jolly party may buck him a little!" drawled the Bounder. "Noticed that he's been lookin' rather down on his luck lately?"

"Well, yes!" said Harry, slowly. He did not want to discuss his chum with the Bounder. "He's rather had the blues, I believe!"

"Leaps to the eye, doesn't it?" said Smithy, "I rather fancied that I'd spotted his little trouble, do you know?"

"Did you?" ejaculated Wharton. It was news to him that Vernon-Smith had given the matter any thought at all.

"Yes! Judgin' by my own experience of the troubles of errin' youth, I figured it out that he had been backin' horses, or somethin' of that sort, and got landed!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, you must be an ass, old scout!" he said. "He seems to be up against something, but it's nothing of that sort! You're about as near the mark as Bunter. Bunter's idea is that he needs bigger meals!"

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

"If you're thinking anything of that sort, Smithy, for goodness' sake get it out of you head!" said Wharton. "Bob's



not that kind—as you really ought to know!”

“My dear man, I’ve got it out of my head already! I was judgin’ by myself—like jolly old Bunter!” The Bounder chuckled. “Look here, this is a jolly idea of a picnic, and I shouldn’t wonder if it bucks up Cherry no end, and you find him as merry an’ bright as a new pin afterwards!”

“I hope so,” said Wharton, smiling. “You’ll come, then?”

“Like a bird.” The Bounder paused. “Look here, take Reddy along with you when you start, will you? I’m goin’ to ask Cherry to walk down to Friardale with me, and if he consents, we’ll join you together later.”

“Oh, all right!” said Harry, though he could not help feeling surprised. “I’ll speak to Redwing now.”

Tom Redwing was glad enough to join up. It was a real pleasure to him to see his chum on friendly terms with Harry Wharton & Co., and he was more than willing to help on the good work.

The chums of the Remove put in an hour on the cricket ground before they prepared to start. Then there was an adjournment to the tuckshop, where the picnic-basket was packed by Mrs. Mible—under the eyes and spectacles of Billy Bunter. Billy Bunter took the deepest and most personal interest in that basket—and, indeed, displayed a desire to sample the good things as they were packed in. When all was ready, he offered to carry the basket—an offer which was declined without thanks. It was barely possible that, had Bunter carried the basket, it might not have reached the old priory in Friardale Wood. It was, in fact, probable that both Bunter and the basket would have been lost in transit.

Bob Cherry loafed rather dismally outside the tuckshop, while his friends were busy within. He did not want to join the party—he felt only too keenly that he was likely to be nothing but a wet blanket. But as the whole affair was got up for his special benefit, his comrades were not likely to let him off.

Billy Bunter was convinced that the one thing needful, to restore Bob’s sunny spirits, was a “regular blow-out.” And the Co. at least hoped that a jolly party, with the cheery company of the Cliff House girls, would have a cheering effect on him.

“Like a little trot, old bean?” It was the Bounder’s voice at Bob’s elbow, and he started and looked round.

He coloured under the half-mocking glance of Vernon-Smith.

“No!” he answered briefly.

“I’m goin’ down to Friardale—”

“I’m not stopping you.”

“I’m joinin’ the merry picnickers at the priory later. Won’t you trot along with me, and do the same?”

“No.”

“I did you a good turn last night, old bean.” The Bounder lowered his voice. “One good turn deserves another. I’ve told Wharton you’re comin’ along with me, so that’s all right.”

“Oh, rot!”

“You don’t like my company?” smiled the Bounder.

“No!” said Bob bluntly. “You did me a good turn last night, as you say—goodness knows what would have happened, if I’d been spotted down there by old Grimes. But I don’t see what you were doing there at all. You’ve found out something that I wanted nobody at Greyfriars to know—”

“You don’t think I’m going to tell the world, do you?”

“No; but—”

“I fancy if I hadn’t found it out, old  
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bean, all Greyfriars would have heard it before long. No danger of that now.”

Bob stared at him.

“What the thump do you mean?” he growled.

“I’m goin’ to explain if you’ll honour me with your fascinatin’ and cheerin’ society in a walk down to Friardale.”

“Oh, don’t be an ass!”

“One of us two is an ass,” agreed the Bounder. “But I don’t think it’s me. Come along, I tell you.”

Unwillingly, but at the same time anxious to hear what the Bounder had to tell him, Bob walked down to the gates with Vernon-Smith. The Bounder was smiling; a contrast to Bob’s clouded face.

“This way!” said Smithy, and crossing Friardale Lane, he led the way to the towpath by the Sark.

Bob tramped along moodily by the Bounder’s side. The gleaming river, rippling through the rushes in the bright May sunshine, the blue sky dotted with fleecy clouds, the deep green woods, and waving shining grass, might have cheered the gloomiest pessimist; but they did not seem to have a cheering effect on Bob. The thought of the wretched man hidden in the old priory was a torment on his mind. The Bounder, on the other hand, seemed to be in excellent spirits. He hummed a tune as he walked along by the river. Bob waited for him to speak; but the Bounder did not speak, and not a word was said till they came in sight of a little gate set among the trees at the back of the towpath. It was the back gate of the Cross Keys—a spot that the Bounder knew well.

Bob Cherry halted.

“Look here, Smithy—where are we going?” he snapped.

“Nowhere now—we’ve arrived,” answered the Bounder. “Hold on a minute—I’ll join you in two ticks.”

Vernon-Smith hurried on to the little gate. Bob Cherry stared after him, with wrath gathering in his brow. A man, who had evidently been waiting for the Bounder, appeared from the shrubberies on the other side of the gate, and handed an envelope across to Vernon-Smith. He disappeared the next moment, and Smithy came back towards Bob with the envelope in his hand. Bob could see that it was a telegram.

His eyes glinted at the Bounder.

“You—you worm!” he muttered. “I’ve heard fellows say that you get letters and telegrams addressed to that putrid show. You’ve brought me here to see you get one of your rotten racing tips—”

“Read it, old bean,” grinned the Bounder. He tore open the envelope, glanced at the slip within, and extended it to Bob.

Bob Cherry stepped back.

“I’m not going to read it, or look at it! Do you think I want to know anything about your putrid horse-racing?”

The Bounder chuckled.

“You said you had something to tell me,” growled Bob. “If you have, get it off your chest!”

“Look at that wire, you ass! Can’t you see that it’s from France—handed in at Boulogne-sur-Mer?”

“Nothing to do with me if it is.”

“Read it, fathead!”

The Bounder thrust the telegram fairly under Bob Cherry’s nose, and he could not help reading the message. It ran:

“Smith, Cross Keys, Friardale, Kent, Angleterre.

Winner. Fred Jones.”

Bob gave an angry snort.

Vernon-Smith, grinning, tore the telegram into small pieces, and scattered the fragments in the flowing waters of the Sark.

“That’s that!” he remarked. “Now let’s get back to the jolly old picnic. Aren’t you glad to hear that Fred Jones got safe across the Channel by the morning boat?”

“As I’ve never even heard of the man—”

“He had a different name when you saw him last—in the vault of the old priory in Friardale Wood.”

Bob Cherry jumped almost clear of the towpath. His eyes almost started from his head as he stared at the Bounder.

“What?” He gasped. “Vernon-Smith—what—”

“Catching on?” asked Smithy.

“You—you—you don’t mean—you can’t mean—” panted Bob.

“I can—and do! I suppose you know that that sportsman can’t travel, at present, under his own name—and Fred Jones is a nice, honest, harmless, unsuspecting sort of a name—”

“But—but—” stammered Bob.

“‘Winner’ is a jolly old code word—means that the sportsman got across all right!” drawled the Bounder. “Nothin’ about a horse, old bean—give your giddy conscience a rest—I’m not mixin’ you up in racin’ matters.” Smithy chuckled. “I fixed it up last night—after I left you at the school wall. Be-ginnin’ to understand?”

“But—but—” Bob fairly stuttered.

“Couldn’t get that wire at the school—and I didn’t care to confide in the gents at the Cross Keys, so I fixed it to read like a racin’ wire,” said Smithy. “I thought you’d be glad to know that that sportsman was safe out of the country. He will get to the States all right—from France. Got it yet?”

Bob could only stare blankly. His mind was in a whirl.

“You—you went back—after you’d left me—last night—”

“Exactly. Grimey was gone—he’d found nothing—the sportsman was lying very low. It was some time before I could get in touch with him. But I managed it all right. All he needed, to clear, was cash—and that’s my long suit, you know.” The Bounder laughed. “Comin’ along to the picnic? They’ll be expectin’ us.”

Bob stood very still.

It was hard for him to grasp it—hard to realise that the trouble, the torment, the danger, were over; that he no longer had a miserable secret to keep. Paul Tyrrell was out of the country; the man he had believed to be lurking, hunted and desperate, in the woods, or in the vaults under the old priory, was already in a foreign land. What he could not, and perhaps would not, have done for the fugitive, the Bounder had done—why?

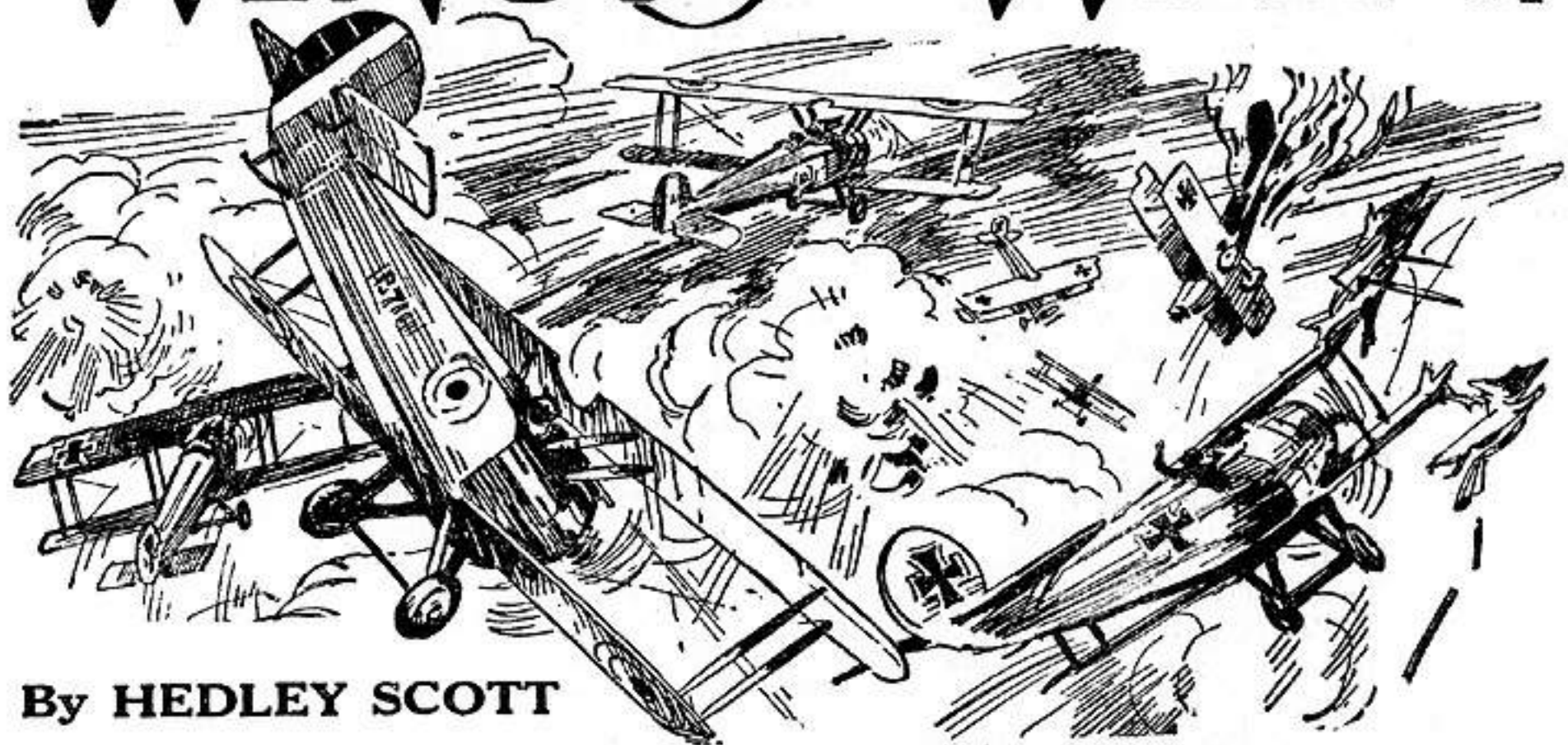
Vernon-Smith, the black sheep of the Remove, the hardest case at Greyfriars, had done this for him. And it was over—the miserable secret—the shadow of disgrace—they were gone, like the clouds rolling away before the sunshine. For long, long minutes, Bob Cherry stood staring at the Bounder, unable to speak; his heart too full for words.

“Smithy!” he said, at last.

“Wash it all out, old bean,” said the Bounder quietly. “That sportsman will get clear now—and he will go straight. He’s had the lesson of his life—scared to the marrow of his bones. He’s got a chance to make a fresh start, and he  
(Continued on page 28.)



# WINGS OF WAR!



By HEDLEY SCOTT

## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

MAJOR FERRERS LOCKE—A SECRET SERVICE AGENT—IS PUT IN CHARGE OF 256 SQUADRON, R.F.C., STATIONED "SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE." JIM DANIELS, RON GLYNN, AND BRUCE THORBURN, THREE STAUNCH CHUMS, ARE FLYING OFFICERS. LOCKE'S SUSPICIONS ARE SOON AROUSED BY THE STRANGE CONDUCT OF SERGEANT WILKINS, WHO IS, IN REALITY, "R. ONE," ONE OF THE SMARTEST SPIES IN THE SERVICE OF GERMANY. LOCKE LEARNS OF WILKINS' DASTARDLY PLOT TO BLOW UP THE SQUADRON, AND ONLY AVERTS DISASTER IN THE NICK OF TIME. IN THE ENSUING CHASE, HOWEVER, THE MAJOR IS KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS AND PLACED ABOARD AN ALBATROSS WHICH IS WAITING IN READINESS TO CONVEY "R. ONE" BACK TO GERMANY. JIM AND RON GIVE CHASE TO THE GERMAN PLANE IN A BRISTOL FIGHTER. MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE DROME, THORBURN IS SPENDING AN ANXIOUS TIME WONDERING HOW JIM, RON, AND MAJOR LOCKE ARE FARING.

### The Scare!

**W**HILE young Thorburn tossed from one side to the other on his camp-bed, two bruised and battered flying officers in British uniform were holding each other up unsteadily.

Not three yards distant from them, discernible even in the darkness, was the outline of a Bristol Fighter standing upon its nose.

"Any damage, Ron?" asked Jim, caressing his badly damaged face with one hand, and supporting his chum with the other.

"Few bruises, old scout," came the panting reply. "Nothing serious, far as I can tell."

"Good egg," breathed Jim. "I say, what ghastly luck, though."

"You're right!"

In the thrill of the chase after the fleeing Albatross such considerations as petrol and oil had been overlooked. It was only when the engine showed signs of giving up the ghost that Ron and Jim realised the seriousness of their plight. By following the stabbing light from the exhaust of the Albatross they had penetrated miles and miles into enemy territory. Where they were, exactly, neither of the two knew. And after the engine had spluttered its unwillingness to go on, the chums had been more concerned with finding a suitable place in which to land. The infernal darkness made this a highly dangerous task, and it was not surprising that the Bristol undercarriage had fouled the top of a lone tree and toppled the plane on to its nose.

The two chums had been shot out of their respective cockpits like bullets

from a gun. Unconsciousness had wrapped them as in a garment after that. How long they had lain there, neither of them knew, for both their watches had ceased to function after that crash.

Jim had come to first. He had been conscious of a throbbing ache in his head; in his arms; in his legs. Carefully he had set himself the task of discovering the extent of his injuries.

Luck in that direction, however, had befriended him. Beyond a generous number of bruises, and a few minor lacerations on his face, he was only badly shaken up. Ron Glynn had fared similarly. Now the two of them, supporting each other, drank in great gulps of air, and gazed ruefully at the wreckage of their machine.

"Ron, old son," said Jim sadly, "the sooner we get away from the poor old bus the better. It's too much like advertising our presence."

"You're right, old man. The blamed thing won't fly again, that's a certainty. Happen to know where we are?"

"Yes. Piccadilly Circus. That light over there is the Criterion, old bean. What about a spot of supper—or shall we say breakfast?"

Ron grinned faintly.

Anything less like Piccadilly Circus it would be hard to imagine. Jim's sally, however, cheered him up. The pair of them began to take stock of their position. To make absolutely certain that their Bristol was wrecked beyond all hope of making a quick repair they gave it a critical examination. The propeller was smashed so thoroughly that only the boss remained; the undercarriage was all awry, whilst one wing

was completely buckled. Not even if the chums had been able to find petrol—which was a chance they had been prepared to take—would that Bristol ever "get off the ground" again.

"N.G.," grinned Jim, with forced gaiety. "If we're in Jerryland, and I don't think there's much doubt about that, our best plan is to put as many miles between this broken-down relic of R.F.C. efficiency and our sweet selves as possible."

"And toot-sweet at that," added Ron. "Looks as if we've come down on somebody's farm. Sssssh!"

The sharp hissing intake of breath made Jim jump.

"What's the idea?"

Ron's pointing finger indicated a shadowy outline of a human form not more than ten yards away. As Jim looked hard in the direction he could have sworn that the figure moved.

In answer to the pressure Ron put upon his arm Jim flattened himself on the ground in one quick movement. Breathing hard, Ron lay beside him, straining his eyes in the darkness.

"Do the Ghurka stuff," whispered Jim. "Get busy."

Like grass snakes the pair separated, and writhed their way, yard by yard, to the vague figure that had surprised them.

Both Jim and Ron told themselves that the man was alone. It should not be a matter of great difficulty to silence him. Yard by yard they approached, certain in their own minds now that the lone watcher was making up his mind whether to come forward and investigate or stay where he was.

Biff! Thud!

Rising up out of the darkness Jim



got behind that waiting figure and dealt out two terrific blows. The first took the figure right behind where his ear should have been; the second missed its mark completely, for the simple reason that the figure collapsed upon receipt of that first blow like a pole-axed ox. Unable to check himself Jim crashed to earth, carried forward by his own impetus, and struck his chin a resounding wallop.

That did not worry him unduly, however. But what surprised him was the sound of a chuckling voice close at hand.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Ron was lying on his back, kicking up his heels. "Ho, ho! Jim, old scout, I've never seen anything so funny in my life."

It took Jim several seconds to see the funny side of that one-sided encounter, and by that time Ron, still chuckling, was dragging a ragged-looking scarecrow to an upright position. Apparently it was none the worse for the terrific knock-down blow Jim had handed it, except that a ragged felt hat had become detached in the process.

"Well——" words failed Jim Daniels as he gazed at that grimy figure.

"The best stunt of the war, old boy," chuckled Ron. "Won't the boys shriek when I tell 'em about it!"

"You cackling dummy!" exploded Jim. "I'll make you shriek like a punctured balloon if you don't stow it. How the thump did I know it was a scarecrow?"

His mood changed in a moment, and soon a large section of German territory was echoing to the unrestrained laughter of two British flying officers.

"My son, that giddy scarecrow is going to be mighty useful," said Jim, at length. "Off with that tunic—toot-sweet!"

Suiting the action to the word, he whipped off his own tunic, calmly disrobed the scarecrow of a tattered jacket, and donned it himself. True, the fit was hardly Bond Street, but the effect was to transform a good-looking British officer into a very passable German tramp.

Meantime, Ron was helping himself to the scarecrow's trousers and the battered trilby hat. Next he swapped shirts with the scarecrow, for his own silken khaki shirt was too conspicuously British.

With their own discarded garments gathered into a neat pile, Jim and Ron stood and eyed each other critically.

Again uncontrolled laughter rang out. "Not bad," said Ron. "But, say, old bean, your fancy riding-breeches will soon give you away. Your jacket is swell, though."

"While Weary Willie isn't in it where you are concerned," said Jim admiringly. "Still, you're right about these breeks. I shall have to do something to them."

Jim did not waste time. In a moment those offending breeches were off, and undergoing an impromptu surgical operation under the keen edge of Jim's jack-knife. By the time he had finished this task they resembled corduroy shorts. But Jim was thorough in the extreme. In 256 Squadron mess he had been wont to strut about with a feeling of pride, clad in those beige-coloured riding-breeches. But beige-coloured breeches surmounted by a scarecrow's ragged jacket would never do.

With a pang, Jim rubbed those delicately coloured breeches into a near-

by pool of rain water and mud until their sartorial splendour had completely and for ever disappeared. His next proceeding was to sever the tops of his "posh" riding-boots until they looked like a pair of clumsily made ordinary boots. A few judicious slashes with the knife reduced their general tone and fit. Liberal application of mud reduced their fine polish of brown.

"That's better," grinned Ron.

He felt much happier, for he had slipped his scarecrow's trousers on over his breeches and boots, and, as the said trousers were at least two sizes too large for him, not much remained to view of his own posh riding-boots. What little did was soon treated with Jim's knife and a liberal treatment of mud. Much of this mud, too, was transferred to the two youngsters' faces and hands, and by the time they pronounced themselves satisfied they had undergone a complete metamorphosis.

"Pick up our gear," said Jim, taking charge. "We must dump it in the old wreck, and set the thing alight."

"Load on, Macduff!" was Ron's form of assent.

In a few moments they stood again beside the wrecked Bristol. Into the front cockpit the discarded shirt, tunics, remnants of breeches, and tell-tale pieces of leather from the jack-boots were unceremoniously dumped.

Next Jim took the Very light pistol from its clips, filled his pockets with cartridges, and signalled to his companion to stand away.

Crack! Crack! Two dazzling red balls of fire darted viciously towards the petrol tank of the Bristol as Jim pulled the trigger of the Very pistol. In the next second the British plane was ablaze. Flames licked hungrily at its oil-soaked fabric, and shrivelled it into ashes.

And in the brilliant glare of the burning plane Ron and Jim were able to get some idea of their immediate surroundings.

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### The Working Party!

**I**T was a farm, undoubtedly, upon which the Bristol had crashed, and the nearest sign of any building was at least a hundred yards away. But to the right a few dim glimmers of twinkling, red light suggested the presence of a railway.

Leaving their blazing machine, the two chums faded away into the surrounding curtain of darkness, and headed for the twinkling lights. Some wild scheme of getting aboard a train which was making its way to the German lines was in their minds. Tucked away in Jim's ragged jacket pocket was the Very pistol, and a dozen cartridges. A Very pistol is not exactly the best of weapons for self-defence in times of war, but it has been known to keep more than one German at bay.

Stumbling along through the darkness the chums passed within a yard of a squad of armed men who were hurrying to the scene of the blaze. Flattening themselves against the cover of a friendly hedge, the two waited for the squad to pass. If there had been any doubts in the two Britishers' minds as to whether or not they had been forced down in German territory, those doubts were speedily set at rest. The voices that reached Ron and Jim as they

pressed into the hedge were unmistakably German.

The squad hurried on, and Ron and Jim lost no time in doing likewise.

Avoiding the road they pressed on in the direction of the railway station, with no clear-cut plan in mind at all. Both now were showing signs of fatigue, for the shock of their crash had drained them of their usual reserve of strength. It was not surprising, therefore, that they pulled up within fifty yards of the station for a rest, and a whispered discussion as to their future plans.

They chose a hollow in the ground, sheltered on three sides by a clump of bushes, but barely had they settled their weary limbs in that hollow, when a glaring torchlight settled on their grimy, startled faces, and a German oath rasped out at them. Simultaneously a German boot, or, to be more precise, two German boots began to belabour them as a tall, bull-necked corporal hauled the two youngsters to their feet.

"Donner und blitzen! Do I but take my eyes off you scum for two minutes, and you slink away like rats and shirk!"

He punctuated his remarks with vicious kicks, and how near the corporal was to receiving a Very light cartridge in his fleshy abdomen as Jim half-dragged the pistol out, he was never destined to know.

"Get back to the wagons, you snivelling pig-dogs! Conscientious objectors—eh? You won't fight, but Corporal Bluntz will see to it that you work!"

Ron's eyes gleamed in the darkness. He understood German fairly well, although his accent would have betrayed him in any lengthy conversation. It was evident to him that the corporal had missed two men from a working-party, and that he and Jim had been mistaken for those two men.

Giving Jim a warning pinch, Ron desperately replied in apologetic German, croaking his voice so effectually that the bullying corporal was completely deceived. Then at a trot with Jim panting beside him, and the corporal labouring a couple of feet in their rear, he headed for the railway precincts.

"Steady, Jim!" he whispered. "This sausage-eater thinks we belong to him. Don't talk—leave it to me! Do what I do!"

He made for a large wagon-shed, and by good luck it happened to be the one at which a number of civilian labourers were stacking up shells and munitions.

"Now, you lazy pigs," roared the corporal—"work!"

Jim and Ron joined the men by the wagon, and helped with the loading of the shells. No word passed between them, though by covert signs they reassured each other that everything was working well. The men about them were sullen, ill-kempt, and of various walks of life, and in varying conditions of health. Men too old to join the colours; too weak physically, or too weak morally to stand the racket of the trenches, they were pressganged into "peaceful" labour.

For three hours the gang worked, and by that time Ron and Jim were well-nigh on the verge of collapse. They stuck it out, however, marvelling inwardly at their good luck.

At the end of the three hours the dawn was well advanced, but not until the last shell had been stacked did the



corporal allow his gang to ease up. Then, with a fine flow of invective, he marshalled them into some sort of orderly formation and marched them into a wooden building.

At the doorway of the building was a camp kitchen, from the boiler of which rose the fragrant odour of coffee. As each man passed into the hut he was given a mug of this heartening beverage and a hunk of black bread.

Ron and Jim made the most of that frugal meal, and then tossed themselves on to a pile of shavings in one corner of the hut, and fell off to sleep. And in their sleep they dreamed of 256 Squadron—of Bruce Thorburn, of Major Locke—little knowing that the latter, at least, was not so many miles away from them.

### "Spies!"

**S**ERGEANT WILKINS, alias R. One, alias the Herr Hauptman von Wolfesen, looked the picture of contentment and smug self-satisfaction.

He also looked an entirely different picture from a sartorial standpoint. Gone were the rough khaki trousers and familiar jacket of the British Army non-commissioned officer. Gone was the Sergeant Wilkins hitherto presented in this narrative.

Now the bulky frame was clad in the well-fitting blue tunic, with the high collar of the German Imperial Intelligence Corps. Stars of rank equivalent to that of a captain in the British Army graced that tunic, whilst across the massive chest sprang to life the coveted strip of black-and-white ribbon which showed that the Herr Hauptman numbered an Iron Cross among his decorations.

"Ja! It was good to be back in the Fatherland," the Herr Hauptman von Wolfesen told himself for the tenth time that morning. "Good to be so appreciated."

Had not his Excellency the General pinned upon his chest an Iron Cross of the Second Order that very morning? Had not the Herr General promised him promotion to the rank of colonel? The Fatherland was a mighty country, and kultur would triumph over all obstacles, but any day now.

The wily spy had every reason to feel content with the world and the way Germany was winning the War. The good Schloss had brought him safely back, despite the handicap of the prisoner, Major Locke.

Major Locke—The Hauptman von Wolfesen's face lost some of its genial expression as he thought of the Britisher. The pig-dog had refused to talk when his Excellency the General had questioned him. Ach! But there were ways of making the most obstinate men talk.

The smile returned to Wolfesen's coarse features as he pondered over that. In Holzminden Prison Camp many obstinate men had been made to talk; many insolent Britishers had found their spirits broken.

"Ja! Major Ferrers Locke would be made to talk like the rest!"

Even now the commanding officer of 256 Squadron was on his way to that celebrated prison, and there was no possible fear that the armed escort responsible for his person would permit him any chance of escape.

The Hauptman von Wolfesen called a halt in his musings as an orderly stood at the doorway of his room and slammed a terrific salute.

"A thousand pardons for breaking in upon your rest, Herr Hauptman von Wolfesen," he said in guttural German, "but his Excellency the General desires audience with you."

"Zo! I will follow and at once!" grunted Wolfesen; and, with a clanking of spurs, he marched into the presence of a body of men, controllers of the Fatherland's destinies, and coloured with obvious pleasure.

Standing like a ramrod, the Hauptman von Wolfesen brought his massive hand up in a smart salute.

His piggy eyes noted the array of highly placed generals, dwelt for a second on their war-strained countenances, then they travelled to a spot a foot above their heads and remained fixed. It was not for a mere captain, in favour as he was, to presume to look upon these exalted personages.

Seated round a mahogany table in this sparsely furnished room in their headquarters at Liege the generals conferred for a few moments, what time Von Wolfesen remained like a statue.

"Colonel von Wolfesen!" R. One felt his ears burning as a tired-voiced general addressed him. "Colonel von Wolfesen, we of the Fatherland's War Council congratulate you on your splendid work against the enemy—"

R. One did not move a muscle. A colonel!

"We have deliberated upon your meritorious work as R. One, and in recognition of those services you will from this day be promoted."

"Ten thousand thanks! Ten million



thanks—" began the newly appointed colonel, still at the salute.

"And with your new rank you will proceed at once to Holzminden Prison Camp and take command. Stand easy, colonel!"

Colonel von Wolfesen merely allowed his hand to drop from the salute. The rest of his massive frame never quivered a muscle.

"At Holzminden there is much for you to do, you understand?" came the tired voice of the general again. "There are British prisoners of war who must be made to talk. We will leave it to your discretion, Colonel von Wolfesen, as to how you make these obstinate men talk. But talk they must. Why"—some animation began to show now in that tired voice—"there is one man there who is in possession of the identities of our entire espionage corps. Every faithful son of the Fatherland serving in the ranks of the French, the British, and the Colonial forces is known to this clever Britisher. But, fortunately for the Fatherland, this British agent was arrested before he could pass the intelligence that he had stolen from us back to our enemies."

"Ja! Herr Excellency!"

"It will be your duty to make this obstinate man talk," continued the general. "You will persuade him to reveal the whereabouts of the document he has stolen, so that we may recover it. You must keep him alive—you must, you understand, Herr Colonel. That is, until he chooses to speak."

"Ja! Herr Excellency! This humble but obedient son of the Fatherland understands implicitly."

"Perhaps, if you make use of your latest prisoner, the Major Ferrers Locke, the talking will not be so difficult to accomplish."

"Ja! Herr Excellency, in all humbleness I claim to be able to extract the information you require."

"That is well. Proceed with dispatch, Herr Colonel von Wolfesen, and blessings of the All Highest and we, his devoted servants, go with you."

The newly ranked colonel slammed another terrific salute and departed. Once outside the exalted company of the War Council he felt as though he were treading on air.

A colonel, decorated with the Iron Cross, congratulated by the highest powers in Germany. Verily the dangerous work of R. One had brought a magnificent reward.

Seated in a first-class compartment, the Colonel von Wolfesen started his journey from Liege to Holzminden, full of high confidence in his powers to extract the necessary information from the British prisoner of war, whose name was now entered in his "special" notebook. Pleasant thoughts were running through the colonel's mind as he settled down to extract the most comfort from the long, monotonous journey that lay before him.

He did not show his usual impatience when the train slowed down at a small wayside town to allow a number of empty wagons to be hitched on to the stream of coaches. Feeling very pleased with life, and Colonel von Wolfesen in particular, he gazed out of the carriage window, mildly eyeing a number of labourers gathered outside a large wooden building.

Then, of a sudden, the mildness of that fixed stare faded. The piggy eyes of the exalted colonel widened, and widened, as if he were on the point of throwing a dangerous fit. Amaze, incredulity, gleamed in them, quickly to give place to overpowering rage.

Flinging open the door of the compartment, the colonel stepped down on to the platform, and, attended by his usual three orderlies, armed with rifles and fixed bayonets, he stamped ponderously towards the group of labourers.

With listless expressions they met his approach—listless, with the exception of two mud-begrimed freaks, who nearly sank through the earth as they beheld a face painfully familiar to them.

"Wilkins!"

Ron and Jim gasped the name in unison and turned to bolt.

At the same moment Colonel von Wolfesen's harsh voice rang out in German.

"Arrest those men! Ach! They are Britishers! Spies!"

The chums made a desperate break for freedom, but two of the escort flew to do their colonel's bidding. Gleaming steel bayonets pressed within an inch of the Britishers' breasts. Escape was hopeless.

"So!" Colonel von Wolfesen relapsed into English. "This is indeed a surprise, and a pleasure! Never, in my wildest dreams, did I ever hope to have you in my power in my beloved Fatherland. Now you shall suffer!"

*(Jim and Ron are booked for a rough passage by the look of things! Look out, boys, for a further feast of thrills in next week's chapters of this powerful War story!)*



## THE SECRET OF THE PRIORY!

(Continued from page 24.)

will keep straight, you can put your shirt on that. You're done with him, for good—wash it all out of your mind."

"Smithy, old man—" muttered Bob.

"I'm forgettin' the whole thing. In fact, I've forgotten it already. Wash it out, I tell you. But to get down to somethin' really important—"

"What's that?"

"I'm gettin' hungry—and the picnic's waitin'!"

Bob Cherry laughed. He could laugh now. His face was bright as he walked back along the river with the Bounder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

The picnickers were in the old priory. Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived first, with Tom Redwing, and, of course, Billy Bunter. Then Hazel came along with Marjorie and Clara from Cliff House. All was ready, but the picnic awaited the arrival of Bob Cherry and Smithy. Billy Bunter, with great eloquence, urged that the picnic should begin at once. He explained that he was hungry—frightfully hungry, having had nothing since dinner but a packet of toffee, a few tarts, some oranges, and a cake. Billy Bunter was still going strong when there was a sound of footsteps on the old stones, and a voice that Stentor of old might have envied, hailed the picnic party.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Here's Bob!" said Marjorie, with a smile.

"Or somebody with a megaphone," said Miss Clara.

"I say, you fellows, here they are! Now—" gasped Billy Bunter.

Bob Cherry and the Bounder came into the old priory. Harry Wharton & Co. stared at Bob. The change in his looks struck them at once. Whatever had been the cause of his mysterious attack of the "blues," it seemed to be gone now. His voice, with all its

old cheery ring, awoke every echo of the ancient priory.

"Oh, here you are, you fellows!" said Harry.

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" chanted Bob. "Jolly to see you here, Marjorie—and you, Clara, old thing! Jolly old place, isn't it? And what a ripping day for a picnic! Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Bunter! Enjoying life, old fat bean?" A hearty smack on Bunter's fat shoulder rang like a pistol-shot.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a jolly picnic. The whole party were merry and bright, and the merriest and brightest was Bob Cherry. Hurree Janset Ram Singh told his friends, afterwards, that the idea had been terrifically good, and that the absurd society of the beautiful and idiotic misses had bucked up the worthy Bob, as he had so sagely foreseen.

Billy Bunter had no doubt that the "blow-out" had done the trick—as he had foreseen. Whatever the cause, it was clear that Bob Cherry was his old sunny self again—which was a great satisfaction to his friends. It was a happy end to Bob Cherry's secret.

THE END.

(Enjoyed the yarn, chum? Good! Now look forward to next week's MAGNET. It will contain another Frank Richards' "special," entitled: "TRUANTS OF THE REMOVE!" also another coupon for 50 points to add to your growing collection.)

### ANOTHER WALLET WON!

Miss Sheila P. Flynn, of 49, Torrington Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants, wins one of these useful prizes for sending in the following Greysfriars Limerick.

Messrs. Temple, Dabney, and Fry  
Did happen across Nugent mi.  
Hot words then ensued,  
And Dick was pursued  
By a kick, plus a punch in the eye!  
Now, you Boys, don't let the Girls  
beat you!

## COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

(Continued from page 2.)

I think I have just room for another prizewinner. This time it is Chas. L. Dean, of 13, Oakley Crescent, Stoke Poges Lane, Slough, Bucks, who sends along the following Greysfriars limerick, and gets a topping pocket wallet for it:

Said Bunter to Cherry one morn,  
As he sat up in bed with a yawn:  
"Tell Quelchy I'm ill—oh!"  
Bob's swipe with a pillow  
Made him realise his illness was gone.

LOOK out for next week's issue, chums! First of all, there will be **ANOTHER COUPON WORTH 50 POINTS**

which will help you to become one of the lucky ten thousand readers who are going to get splendid story volumes from me. Then there is

"TRUANTS OF THE REMOVE!"

By Frank Richards.

You know what to expect from the pen of Frank Richards, and you won't be disappointed. One of my readers took me to task for being too modest about our stories. Well, what can I say? You all know that Frank Richards writes the finest, funniest, and most thrilling of boy's yarns—and I can't say more than that, can I? So look out for this latest masterpiece from his pen—or, I should say, his typewriter!

Now for the titbit! Next week's centre pages will be devoted to a new story by our youthful author, Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form at Greysfriars. It features those screamingly funny characters—Dr. Birchmall, of St. Sam's, and Jack Jolly & Co. Gee, boys, you'll absolutely rock with laughter when you read it.

Of course, there will be another instalment of our gripping war story, and the usual shorter features.

Sounds an O.K. programme, doesn't it? And it is—and how!

Cherio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

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## THE LURE OF THE TERE . . . A Racy Yarn. BY DICKY NUGENT

"Backing gee-gees is a degrading pastime . . .," says Dr. Birchamall, of St. Sam's. Give him a "cert," though, and he'll put his shirt on it, you've always been down on horse-racing?"

"Yes, yes!"

"You recall how often you've said that if you found any boy at St. Sam's betting, you'd flog the miscreant black and blue?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"You recollect how you've always opposed to gambling, sir?"

"The Head laffed."

"So I am, Lickham. I consider it a degrading pastime that ought to be sternly suppressed. But I don't see why I should throw away the chance of making a prophet out of Dirty Dick. Come! We will away to the woods!"



"The Head!"

"Bounder, the black sheep of the Sixth, went gleefully white as Dr. Birchamall and Mr. Lickham suddenly appeared in the woods, just when he was handing over sixpence to Larry Lossilittle."

"Good-afternoon, Bounder!" said Dr. Birchamall calmly. "Mind introducing me to your friend?"

"Y-y-yes, sir!" stammered Bounder nervously.

"'A-atnoon, old covey,'" said the scowling-looking bookmaker, respectfully. "Like to have something on something this afternoon, sir?"

The Head grinned.

"As a matter of fact, my good man, you've hit the nail on the head. I want sixpence each way on Dirty Dick!"

"What!" yelled Bounder, hardly able to believe his ears.

"Here is my bob—shilling, as it is sometimes vulgarly eggpressed!" went on the Head, handing over a silver coin.

"Bounder, I trusted you will keep mum over this at St. Sam's."

"M-m-my hat! Rely on me, sir!" gasped Bounder.

"Good egg!" grinned Dr. Birchamall. "Now, Mr. Lossilittle, when do we know the result of the race?"

Larry Lossilittle grinned.

"I eggpect it'll be in the papers by the time I get to Muggleton, sir. P-r-r-raps you'd like to stroll along with me?"

"Eggcellent idea! You will then be able to pay me out my winnings on the spot!" said Dr. Birchamall cheerfully.

"Come, Lickham! A walk will do us both good!"

The four sportsmen strolled through the woods to Muggleton, where Dr. Birchamall purchased a paper from a passing paper-boy.

The Head's hands were fairly trembling with excitement as he looked for the result.

"Ah, sir! I've been scratching everywhere for you!"

Mr. Lickham made that remark as he bumped into Dr. Birchamall in the Fourth Passage two seconds later.

The master of the Fourth was puffing and blowing, and his face was even redder than usual, which seemed to indicate that he had been hurrying.

The Head of St. Sam's purred impatiently.

"Well, Lickham, what is it? I am in a hurry."

"Sorry and all that," said Mr. Lickham apologetically. "But this is frightfully important, sir. You know how

## BUNTERS' HIKING CLUB

Bunter has started a Hiking Club.

The first hike has not yet taken place, but Bunter is only waiting for a few more subscriptions to roll in. So far he is the only one to have subscribed. The amount of his subscription has not been revealed.

Bunter is full of enthusiasm for his new idea. As he points out, hiking gives a drop an opportunity of seeing the beauty spots of England at his leisure.

Already, he has a full programme arranged. Here are one or two of his proposed hikes:

1. Start from Study No. 7.
2. Cycle to Farnham. Post Office. Hike back to school. (Total distance, 400 yards.)
3. Take train to Courtfield. Hike from station to Chumley's Food in Chumley's Palm Lounge. Return hike back to station. (Total distance, 250 yards.)

By the way, we almost forgot to mention Bunter's only stipulation—that in consideration of his services to the Club the rest of the members should pay for his refreshments between them. But that's nothing, is it? Surely nobody will be mean enough to worry about a trifle like that?

**BACK TO THE CRADLE SMITTHY'S PESSIMISTIC PROPHECY**

*(NOTE: Smitthy wrote this article. Don't take him too seriously, clogs. Like the rest of us, he's peeved over the refusal of the Powers that Be to abolish that inflexible institution, the Form Walk (toppers and clean gloves and quenching complete.) We're allowing him to let off a little steam. What's all!—Ed.)*

The authorities have decreed that the Form Walk remains.

Quite right, too! The undisciplined Removees who suggested that it ought to be abolished should be bunked without the option. The idea of seeking to abolish the Form Walk!

## BIG FIGHT FIASCO

**Fearsome Threats Not Fulfilled**

Immediately on receipt of the amazing news that Fisher T. Fish and Sidney Snoop had arranged to meet in a 6-round scarp in the gym, a Special Reporter from the "Gazette-Herald" was sent round to interview them.

It was almost inconceivable that the world's two worst finks should agree to fight. Obviously they must both have been suffering from very great emotion when the fight was agreed on.

"They had been!" It turned out that the quarrel was over sixpence which Fisher declared Snoop owed him, but which Snoop denied having borrowed.

Fish was found tramping up and down his study with an almost dreadful look on his hatchet face.

"I'll make potato-strappings of him! I guess I'll smash that double-crossing, gray!" he doctored ferociously. "You tell him I'll wipe up the floor of the gym with him!"

The message was duly conveyed to Snoop, who almost tore his hair with rage.

"Try to diddle me out of a tanner, would he?" Snoop raved. "I'll batter him black and blue before I've finished with him! Tell him to put that in his pipe and smoke it!"

Ridiculous almost danced when he got the message.

"You best wait!" he howled. "I'll beat up that galoot so's his own mother won't know him!"

Snoop turned a little pale when told of this. But he was still full of fire and slaughter.

"Minceat!" he said scornfully. "Why, minceament won't

be in it when I've finished with that swindling rotter Fisher!"

Fish seemed to shudder a bit when he got this message. But he managed to send back a most ferocious response.

This went on right up to the time fixed for the fight. The threats uttered kept a high level of ferocity. It was noticeable, however, that both Fish and Snoop seemed to go whiter about the girls each time they received a fresh message.

A huge crowd assembled in the gym for the scarp.

It was timed for 2.30.

Prompt at 2.55 Fish and Snoop were carried in by their seconds, struggling and moaning feebly. Snoop was heard to say that he felt as if he had caught a chill, and Fish was understood to remark that he had just remembered an important engagement.

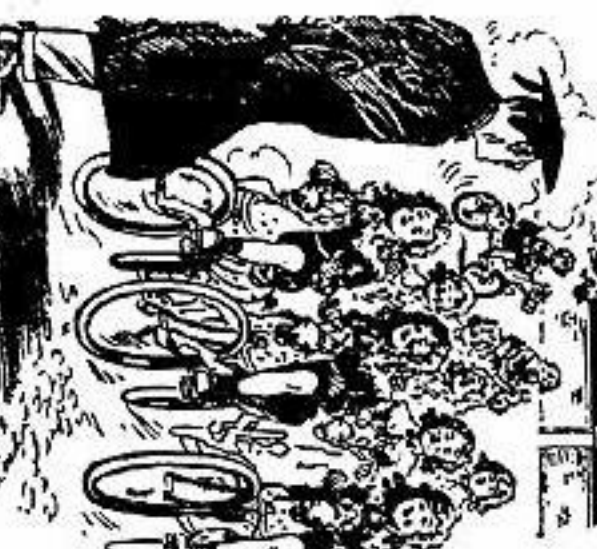
On the call of "Time!" they were pushed into the ring.

Snoop promptly fell on his knees crying "Meey!" and Fish ran round the ring covering his face with his gloved hands, being apparently under the impression that Snoop was chasing him.

This went on for three rounds without a blow being struck. In the fourth session, however, Fish accidentally flogged his opponent on the ear.

Snoop collapsed, howling pitifully. Fish, yelling with fear, leaped out of the ring and ran for his life!

We understand that the dispute has now been settled out of court. Snoop has agreed to pay three-



"What I meant was that I'm no better. I don't go in for betting! Consequently, I'm afraid I can't assist you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" roared the Head, blushing to the roots of his bald pate. "If you don't know, you should say so, instead of attempting to pull my shaggy leg. Take fifty lines each. And bust you!"

And the Head slammed out of the study, leaving Jack Jolly & Co. feeling rather foolish at having been funny at the expense of their revered and majestic Head.

hoop-bowling in pairs is bound to come in the near future.

Skipping will follow as a matter of course. The spectacle of the Removee should be very exhilarating.

Why not bicycle-horses, toy motor-cars, and scooters? A Form parade on these vehicles with the fellows all dressed in little velvet suits would be grateful and comforting, wouldn't it? And if we were all compelled to grow Lord Ransall-roy curls, the effect would be enhanced considerably.

Ring-a-ring-o'-roses on the village green wouldn't be a bad wheeze, either, when you come to think about it. All sorts of suggestions leap to the mind.

But what I really am looking forward to is the day when we're all wheeled down to Farnham in perambulators, holding feeding-bottles and rattles.

That'll be the time, won't it?

(Continued in next column.)