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Page 11.

The **MAGNET** 2^D



READ "THE HUNTED SCHOOLBOY" INSIDE

THE HUNTED SCHOOLBOY!

By Frank Richards.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Hunts Cover!

THERE was a sudden scamper of feet in the Remove passage at Greyfriars. The door of Study No. 1 burst open, as if a battering-ram had struck it. Billy Bunter hurtled into the study like a stone from a catapult.

Bunter seemed to be in a hurry! He came in with a terrific rush, and his momentum carried him right across to the study table, and would probably have carried him farther, had not the table stopped him in his wild career.

The study table stopped him—but only just! It rocked as Billy Bunter's weight smote it, and the fat junior clutched at it.

The three juniors jumped up, yelling. It was rather unfortunate that Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Jim Valentine were at tea when Bunter landed in the study like a cannon-ball.

Tea and tea-things scattered and clattered as the table rocked.

The teapot landed on Harry Wharton's waistcoat, and the captain of the Remove yelled as its steaming contents were distributed over him. Frank Nugent received a lapful of crockery. Jim Valentine got the butter and the jam. And the three yelled in chorus.

"Bunter, you fat Owl!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,307.

"You potty porpoise—"
"Oh crumbs!"
"I say, you fellows—"
gasped Bunter.

"You howling ass!" roared Wharton. "Wow! I'm scalded! I'm wet! Ow! I'll burst you all over the passage! I'll—"

"I say, you fellows, that beast's after me!" spluttered Bunter. "Hide me, old chap! I say, where can a fellow hide?"

Billy Bunter blinked wildly round the study through his big spectacles.

Evidently he was in a state of alarm. The disaster he had caused in Study No. 1 was not worrying Bunter. His fat thoughts, as usual, were concentrated on his fat and important self.

He spun round to the door and slammed it. Then he turned to Harry Wharton & Co. again. They were eyeing him almost wolfishly. Wharton napped the hot sea from his waistcoat with his handkerchief. Jim Valentine scraped butter and jam from his trousers. Frank Nugent snatched a fives bat from the bookshelf, with the evident intention of using it on Billy Bunter.

"Hide me!" gasped Bunter. "He'll be along in a minute! I say, you fellows, hide a chap!"

"I'll hide you!" yelled Nugent, brandishing the fives bat.

"Buck up, then—yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as Nugent proceeded to "hide" him with the fives bat. "Wow! Stop it! Oh, you rotter! Wharrer you up to?"

"Hiding you!" answered Nugent. "Ow! I didn't mean that—" roared Bunter.

"I did!" answered Frank.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter dodged round the table. The hiding he wanted was not of the variety he was getting from Nugent.

"I say, you fellows! Stand by a chap!" gasped Bunter. "That beast is after me. I only just got away from him—"

"Loder of the Sixth?" asked Wharton.

If the fat Owl had fled from the bully of the Sixth, the chums of the Remove were prepared to do their best for him, disastrous as his arrival in the study had been.

"Ow! No! That beast, Smithy!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I can hear him! Don't tell him I'm here."

There was a rather tattered screen standing in the corner of the study. Billy Bunter whizzed into the corner behind it and vanished from sight as footsteps passed the doorway.

But the footsteps passed on. If it was Herbert Vernon-Smith of the Remove, apparently he did not suspect that the fat Owl had taken refuge in Harry Wharton's study. Billy Bunter

quaked behind the screen till the sound died way up the Remove passage.

Then his fat face and big spectacles appeared round the edge of the screen.

"I say, you fellows! He's gone! If he comes back, don't let on that I'm here! Tell him I'm gone to see Quelch, will you?"

"Fathead!?"

"Or—or say the Head's asked me to tea, and I—I've gone there! Perhaps that will be better. Or—or—"

The sound of returning footsteps in the passage interrupted Bunter. He gave a gasp, and his head disappeared behind the screen again, like that of a tortoise into its shell.

This time the door of Study No. 1 opened, and Herbert Vernon-Smith looked in. The Bouncer of Greyfriars stared at the three juniors, who were engaged in repairing the wreckage of the tea-table. His eyes lingered for a moment on Jim Valentine, with bitter dislike, Valentine taking no heed of him whatever.

"Seen Bunter, you men?" snapped Smithy.

His unavailing hunt for Bunter seemed to have irritated the Bouncer's temper, never very reliable.

"Yes," said Frank Nugent, with a grin. "He left a message for you."

"For me?" Smithy stared. "Did he know I was looking for him then?"

"He seems to have guessed it," chuckled Nugent.

"What was the fat idiot's message then?"

"He's gone to see Quelch," answered Nugent, "and he's gone to tea with the Head."

"He can't have done both at once, I suppose," snapped Vernon-Smith.

"I'm simply giving you his jolly old message. You pays your money and you takes your choice," explained Nugent; and there was a chortle from Wharton and Valentine.

The Bouncer scowled and stepped back from the doorway, slamming the door after him. He did not seem in a mood for little jokes.

That slam of the door was loud and sharp, but it was a pleasing sound to the fat ears of Billy Bunter, at least. Vernon-Smith was gone, and the Owl of the Remove put his head out again from behind the screen.

"I say, you fellows—" he gasped.

"What have you been up to, you fat villain?" asked Harry Wharton.

He had mopped off most of the tea and his good-humour was restored.

"Nothing," answered Bunter promptly. "You fellows know whether I'm the sort of chap to bag a fellow's cake."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated the three together.

"Of course, I never went into Smithy's study at all," explained Bunter. "I

never saw him bringing the cake from the tuckshop, never saw him take it into his study, and never waited behind the door in Study No. 7 till he went out again. The fact is that I was talking to Toddy, in the gym, at the time."

"Oh crumbs!"
"Being in the library at the time—I mean the gym!—naturally, I never knew anything about Smithy's cake," explained Bunter. "Knowing nothing whatever about it, how could I have snaffed it? I ask you!"

"That chap ought to be in a home for idiots!" said Jim Valentine, with a shake of the head. "A super-home for super-idiots!"

"Oh, really, Valentine! Besides, how did Smithy know, even if I had been to his study?" demanded Bunter hotly. "Just beastly suspiciousness! When I came down from the study—"

"The study you hadn't been in?" asked Wharton.

"Eh? Oh! I mean when I came down Smithy was in the lower passage. He called me, and I hooked it. He came after me, and, not wanting a row with the fellow, I rather ran for it—"

"You seemed a bit hurried when you came in here," said Valentine.

"So far as I know, Smithy couldn't even have known that the cake was gone," argued Bunter. "He hadn't been up to the study since he put it there. He may have seen a few crumbs on me. It's pretty rotten that a fellow's to be suspected of snaffing a cake because he's got a few crumbs on his waistcoat. The truth is, you fellows, that Smithy's low—distinctly low! He smokes in his study and breaks bounds after lights-out, and all that—a regular bad hat! He loathes you like poison, Valentine!"

"Rot!" said Valentine.
"And he thinks you're a silly sort of milkop, Nugent."

"Does he?" grinned Nugent.
"Yes; and the things he says about Wharton are fearfully insulting. He thinks you're a stuck-up pig, Harry, old chap. Of course, I'm not saying you're not—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I'm not going to tell you what I think of you, old chap. You'd be offended. Look here, Smithy says the awfulest things about all you fellows," said Bunter. "He's fearfully up against this study. Well, look here, I'll stay and have tea with you chaps, and if Smithy looks in again you fellows collar him, and give him a thorough good ragging. See? He's fairly asked for it, calling you fellows such names. You a spoony nincompoop, Franky, old chap, and you a stuck-up noodle, Wharton, and you a burglar, or something of the kind, Valentine. I think you fellows ought to rag a fellow for saying such things."

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.
"I quite agree," he said. "You men, shall we rag a fellow for saying such things?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Nugent.

"Hear, hear!" said Valentine.

"Good!" said Bunter. "Now—I say—whoop—wharrer you at—wow! Leggo, you silly asses! Wharrer you up to?" yelled Bunter, as the three Removites grasped him and bumped him on the study carpet.

"Ragging a fellow for saying such things, of course!" answered Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass—wow! I meant Smithy—ow! Not me—yaroooh! Oh lor! Oh crickey! Leggo! Yarooooooop!"
Bump, bump!

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Fire! Yaroooh!"
"Open the door, Franky."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank opened the door. Wharton and Valentine rolled the fat junior out like a barrel. They chuckled and closed the door on him.

Bunter sat up, gasping.

Between Study No. 1 on the one hand and the Bouncer on the other, Billy Bunter was rather in the position of the ancient mariners steering a dangerous course between Scylla and Charybdis.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked round. There was a footstep on the Remove staircase. Herbert Vernon-Smith's head rose to view. Bunter was on his feet like lightning, and in a fraction of a second he was going up the Remove passage at about 60 m.p.h.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

"BOB, old chap!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

There were four juniors in Study No. 13 in the Remove.

Bob Cherry and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh had the gloves on, and Bob was demonstrating an upper-cut to the Nabob of Bhanipur. Little Wun Lung, the Chinese, was curled up in the armchair in the corner, watching them through his slanting eyes. Mark Linley,

Time and again Jim Valentine, the Greyfriars new boy—alias "Dick, the Penman"—has escaped the clutches of the police. But slowly and surely the net is closing round him!

with his books on his knees at the window, was trying to do Greek—under difficulties, in the circumstances.

The door opened, and Billy Bunter stepped in hastily and shut it after him.

"Bob! I say, old chap, stand by a fellow!" gasped Bunter. "I say, Bob, you can lick Smithy with one hand!"

"Fathead!"

"You're the pluckiest fellow in the Remove, and chance it!" said Bunter.

"I've always admired your pluck, Bob."

"Chump!"

"I have, really, old fellow! I don't think you a clumsy great ass, as obstreperous as a wild elephant, like most of the fellows," said Bunter.

"I've never told Toddy that I'm thankful not to have a clumsy ass like you barging about in our study."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That beast Smithy is coming here!" panted Bunter. "He spotted me in the passage, and he's after me. He makes out that I bagged a cake from his study. As if I would, you know. I say, old chap, wallop him when he butts in, won't you? You can do it easily. You could whop him and Redwing together. Hit him in the eye as soon as he opens the door!"

Bob Cherry stared at the fat Owl.

"Yes, I can see myself doing it!" he ejaculated. "If you've been pinching tuck in Smithy's study—"

"I haven't!" roared Bunter. "I never knew he had a cake, and he doesn't know I had it, either. It's just beastly suspiciousness! I say, you fellows— Oh crickey! Here he is, the beast!"

The door of Study No. 13 opened again. Billy Bunter dodged round Bob Cherry's athletic form, as the Bouncer appeared in the doorway.

"Is that fat idiot Bunter here?" asked Vernon-Smith. "Oh, here he is! Bunter, you frabjous ass—"

"Keep him off!" yelled Bunter. "I say, Bob, old chap, pitch into him! Boot him out of the study!"

"You silly ass!" hooted Vernon-Smith. "I've been looking for you everywhere—"

"I know you have, you beast! Keep off! I say, Inky you kid! him out of the study!" yelled Bunter. "You're not a funk like Bob!"

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh grinned a dusky grin.

"The kickfulness of the esteemed Smithy is not the proper caper, my absurd and idiotic Bunter!" he answered.

"I say, Marky, old fellow—"

Mark Linley chuckled.

"What's the matter with the fat frump?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, in wonder. "I've been looking for you, Bunter—"

"Beast!" retorted Bunter, safe behind Bob Cherry. "Keep him off, Bob."

"I've got a cake in my study—"

"Eh?"

"And I want you to come and whack it out with me," said the Bouncer.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled all the study.

Bunter blinked at the Bouncer in amazement.

Apparently Smithy had not, after all, been seeking him with hostile intentions. He had been going to invite the fat Owl to share his cake.

Certainly, Bunter could not have guessed that!

Vernon-Smith's study was like a land flowing with milk and honey, so many were the good things in which the Bouncer lavishly indulged himself. But it was seldom, very seldom indeed, that Billy Bunter had a chance of sharing in those good things. Bunter was not a man whom Smithy delighted to honour, as a rule. Why Smithy was extending that hospitable invitation to Bunter on this occasion was rather mysterious.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "You—you—you were going to—to—to— Oh lor! I—I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, come on, you ass, if you want some of the cake!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh!" said Bunter again.

Unexpected as the invitation was, Billy Bunter would have jumped at it on any other occasion. But on this occasion he did not jump! There was a little difficulty in the way! Bunter had already scoffed that cake!

Evidently the Bouncer did not yet know that his cake had gone the way of all cakes! But he was certain to find it out as soon as he arrived in his study!

Bunter did not want to be with him when he made the discovery.

Smithy was offering him a "whack" in the cake; but what he would say, and what he would do, when he found that Bunter had had the whole cake, was quite another matter.

"Are you coming?" snapped Smithy.

Bunter, to the amazement of every fellow in the study, shook his head.

"No!" he answered firmly.

The Bouncer stared at him angrily.

"You fat chump! It's a jolly good

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,501.

cake—one of Mrs. Mimble's best cakes! What do you mean? Come on, while you've got the chance!"

"Thanks, but I don't care about visiting your study!" answered Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "You're not the kind of fellow I care to be pally with Vernon-Smith!"

"What!" yelled the Bounder. "You've been saying, and hinting, a lot of rotten things, about Valentine, who's a friend of mine," said Bunter. "I don't care to come, Smithy! Keep your cake, and be blown to you!"

"Well, my only hat!" said Bob Cherry blankly. "Jolly old wonders will never cease! Who ever heard Bunter refuse to whack out a cake before?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"I shan't ask you again, you frowzy fat oyster!" snarled the Bounder, with a black scowl at the Owl of the Remove.

"You needn't ask me at all!" said Bunter. "Keep your distance, Vernon-Smith! Blow your cake, and you, too!"

Vernon-Smith gave him a savage look, and made a step towards him. Bunter gave a yell.

"Keep him off, Bob!"

Bob Cherry grinned, and pushed the Bounder back with his gloved hand.

"Hands off, old bean!" he said amicably.

The Bounder, scowling, tramped out of the study. There was a chuckle from Mark Linley at the window.

"I fancy I know why Bunter isn't going to whack out that cake," he remarked. "He's had it already!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Linley! Of course, I haven't touched the cake," said Bunter. "But I don't want to be there when Smithy misses it. He's got a rotten temper. I—I think I'll go now. He may come back here when he misses the cake. If—he does, tell him I've gone home to—to a funeral."

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter departed from the study to seek safer cover. Evidently it was a judicious move on his part, for, a few minutes later, Vernon-Smith looked in again, scowling. Four grins greeted his scowl. He stared round the study, and demanded:

"Where's Bunter?"

"Gone home to a funeral!" chuckled Bob. "At least, that's what he said!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder, scowling more blackly than ever, slammed the door and departed. And Billy Bunter, in deep cover under Lord Maulverer's table in Study No. 12, listened to his passing footsteps, and quaked.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Man from the Sky!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Look!"

"Great Scott!"

Harry Wharton & Co. came to a halt, with suddenly blanched faces. It was the following morning, and the Famous Five of the Remove, with Jim Valentine in their company, were taking a stroll after third school across the meadows between Greyfriars and the village of Friardale.

For some minutes they had noticed an aeroplane humming far above them, against the steely sky, without giving it any special attention. Aeroplanes from Wapshot Camp were common enough in the neighbourhood of the school, and the drone of a plane often mingled with

the drone of Quelch's voice in the Form-room.

But all of a sudden Bob Cherry gave a shout, and pointed upward, and the six juniors fixed their eyes upon the plane in startled horror.

What the trouble was they did not know, but that the airman was in difficulties they could not fail to see. Something had gone wrong, and from the plunging plane something dropped that looked like a doll in the high distance, but which they knew must be the pilot dropping with a parachute.

It shot downward like a stone, so swiftly that their eyes could not follow it. The plane plunged on, and dived far clear of it; but the juniors did not watch the plane now—they watched the tiny object that shot down like a bullet, and their hearts almost ceased to beat. For the parachute had not opened, and for a breathless second or two it seemed that the falling flyer must strike the earth like a stone—which meant instant and terrible death under their very eyes.

It was only a second or two, but it seemed age-long to the horrified school-boys. Then they saw the parachute open out and float. They panted with relief.

"My only hat!" said Johnny Bull. "I thought——"

"Same here!" breathed Nugent. "I thought——"

"The thoughtfulness was terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed and absurd flying-man is as right as rainfulness!"

"Thank goodness!" said Bob Cherry, whose ruddy cheeks had paled for the moment. "Come on, you men—he may need help when he lands!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Jim Valentine, and he started, the Famous Five cutting swiftly after him in the direction of the falling parachute, which was floating down over the next meadow.

It was still falling swiftly; and there were high trees in the field, on which it was in danger of fouling. It was quite possible that the man who had escaped from the plunging plane might need help when he landed—which the chums of the Greyfriars Remove were only too eager to give.

At a distance, they heard the sound of a terrific crash as the nose-diving plane met the earth. A red sheet of flame shot skyward where the plane crashed; it had burst almost instantly into flames. But the juniors did not heed it. They raced for the meadow where the man on the parachute was falling.

He was down before they could get near across the wide meadows, quick as they were. They saw the parachute drop behind a clump of tall oaks and beeches, so close to them that they had little doubt that it had come to grief on the spreading branches.

They ran breathlessly round the clump of trees, fearing to find the fallen man dead or injured.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo——"

"Here he is!"

The parachute was sprawling in the grass. Beside it lay a man in airman's outfit, motionless.

"Quick!" panted Wharton.

The captain of the Remove was the first to reach him.

He dropped on his knees beside the fallen man, and at the same moment the airman stirred and tried to rise, and Harry Wharton grasped him and gave him aid. The other fellows were round him in another moment, all lend-

ing helping hands, and the man from the sky sat up in the grass, panting.

"Hurt?" exclaimed Nugent.

The flying-man panted.

"Only a bump or two—the parachute fouled on those trees! I dropped a dozen feet sheer, I think! But it's all right! Corpo de Deos! I've had a close shave—what!"

He staggered to his feet.

He was bruised and shaken, but evidently not injured as the juniors had feared. They looked at him rather curiously. They had taken it for granted that he was one of the flying-men from the Air Camp at Wapshot; but they saw now that he was not a R.A.F. man. Though he spoke in English, his exclamation, "Corpo de Deos!" struck them at once. He was English, but evidently from foreign parts.

He stared across the fields and hedges towards the flaming plane in the distance.

"Hard luck!" he grunted. "Wrecked in sight of port—what! I've flown that plane from Paris this morning, and I suppose I'm not far from Wapshot."

"Only a few miles," said Harry Wharton.

The airman glanced round. His eyes rested on the grey old tower of Greyfriars School, rising over the trees.

"That's Greyfriars—our school!" said Harry. "Wapshot's the other direction. If we can help you in any way——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's the jolly old bell!" exclaimed Bob.

"Never mind dinner, if we can give any help!" said Harry. "Quelch won't mind!"

"It will be a terrific pleasure to extend any absurd helpfulness that may be in our ridiculous power, esteemed sahib!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

The flying-man stared at the nabob for a moment, and grinned.

"Oh! Exactly!" he gasped. "Quite! But it's all right. Thank you, boys, for helping me! I'll cut off and look after my bus, though I reckon there won't be much left of it."

"The burnfulness is preposterous," agreed the nabob.

The flying-man grinned, apparently a little entertained by Hurree Singh's variety of the English language. He had a pleasant, good-tempered face, burned almost brown by tropical suns, from which twinkled a pair of very keen eyes. His age it would have been rather difficult to guess, but evidently he was well over thirty.

The dinner-bell was ringing at the school, and the sound was wafted on the wind across the meadows.

"Thanks again!" said the flying-man, and he made a movement to go.

Then, as his eyes fell on Jim Valentine's handsome face, he gave a little start, and stared at him.

"Corpo de Deos!" he exclaimed, making a step towards the boy. "I've seen you before somewhere, my lad!"

Valentine started a little. The new fellow at Greyfriars had reasons for not wishing to be known by anyone who had seen him before he had become a Greyfriars fellow.

"I don't remember having seen you, sir!" he answered, rather curtly. "Come on, you fellows—we shall be late! And if we can't help this gentleman——"

"That's all right, but——"

Valentine moved away, without waiting for the flying-man to finish. The airman broke off, staring after him with a puzzled look, and Harry Wharton & Co. hesitated a moment or two.

Then, as the flying-man turned away and strode off in the direction of the burning plane, they followed Valentine.

Jim was walking quickly, with a flush on his face. They had to trot to overtake him.

"What the dickens, Valentine!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, rather warmly. "You might have been civil to the man!"

Valentine's colour deepened. "I didn't mean to be uncivil!" he stammered. "But—" "He thought he knew you," said Nugent.

"I don't see how he could have; but if he did I'd rather not see any more of him," answered Valentine.

"Why?" demanded Bob.

In his mind was the perpetual thought that Dick the Penman was wanted by the police.

"Well, you'll never see that sportsman again, old bean," said Bob, when they came in at the gates and walked up to the House. "He doesn't belong to these parts—he's come from some Spanish country."

"Portuguese!" said Valentine, with a smile.

"How the thump do you know that, if you don't know him?" asked Bob.

"From what he said—'Corpo de Deos,'" answered Valentine.

"Isn't that Spanish?"

"It's very like Spanish—but in Spanish it would be 'Dios.'"

"You don't mean to say you know

his real character. He's supposed to be a wealthy City man; nobody outside the gang suspects what he really is—and he doesn't usually use the name of Clark, either. But—after I found out what he was—I used to think of my Uncle Valentine in Brazil, and wonder whether he lived—and—when I ran away from the gang, I hoped some day to get out to South America, and look for my uncle. I should have tried it on sooner or later, if Mr. Quelch had not so kindly taken me up and placed me at Greyfriars."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, blow away, Bunter!"

"You'll be late for dinner," said Bunter, "I say, you fellows, there's a plane down near here somewhere—"



"I say, you fellows, keep him off!" yelled Bunter, as Vernon-Smith entered the study. "Boot him out!" "You silly ass!" hooted the Bounder. "I've been looking for you everywhere. I've got a cake in my study, and I want you to come and whack it out with me!" "Oh!" gasped Bunter, blinking in amazement.

"Can't you guess why?" muttered Valentine.

"Oh!" said Bob, and he said no more, and the juniors hurried on to the school in silence.

The "boy with a past" had his secrets to keep. Harry Wharton & Co. did not always remember that Valentine of the Remove had not always been what he was now. But, naturally, Jim himself could not forget that not so very long ago he had been "Dick the Penman" in the gang of which Nosey Clark the master-crook was the chief.

Certainly, it was unlikely enough that the bronzed airman, who evidently came from a tropical country, could ever have had any connection with Nosey Clark & Co. But it gave the boy a pang of uneasiness to be recognised. The shadow of the past was always over him; and

the Portuguese lingo?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in great astonishment.

"I know a little," Valentine smiled. "I hoped once that I might go to Brazil; you know, they speak Portuguese in Brazil, as it was originally a colony of Portugal. I began to learn the language for that reason—I put in a good deal of study, while I was with Nosey Clark—I had anything I wanted, so long as I was of use to them."

"Oh!" said Harry, "I understand! You've got an uncle in Brazil."

Valentine nodded.

"Yes—if he is still living! He has not been heard of for years, though. I lived with my other uncle when I was a kid, and left an orphan; before I had anything to do with Nosey Clark. I was left penniless; and Clark was left my guardian; my uncle knew nothing of

"Go hon!" said Bob.

"You fellows never see anything," said Bunter, scornfully, "I jolly well saw it! It came down in flames—fearful flames—and the poor chap in it was killed—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Awful, ain't it?" said Bunter, "I wonder what they've got for dinner to-day—I hope it's steak-and-kidney pie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, it's rather heartless to laugh, when I tell you that that man in the plane was smashed into small pieces," said Bunter, reprovingly, "He came an awful crash—I heard it! Every bone broken, poor chap! Do you think it will be steak and kidney to-day, you fellows? We had steak and kidney on Monday—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the six. Bunter's concern, equally divided between the crashed airman and the problem of dinner, struck them as funny.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Smashed like—like—like anything!" said Bunter. "Awful, you know! You fellows must have been quite near—but you go about with your eyes shut—you never see anything—"

"But we've seen him!" chuckled Bob. "Seen the body?" asked Bunter.

"Yes—and talked to the jolly old body, and the jolly old body's walked away quite merry and bright!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove went in to dinner, Billy Bunter grunting as he rolled in after them. Bunter liked to be first with the news; but on the present occasion he was evidently a bad second. But his fat face brightened as he arrived in Hall. It was, after all, steak-and-kidney pie—and Billy Bunter's fat face beamed with satisfaction. The whole of the R.A.F. might have crashed, unregarded by Bunter, when his little round eyes and his big round spectacles were fixed on steak-and-kidney pie.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tea with Smithy!

TOM REDWING eyed the Bounder curiously, at tea-time in Study No. 4. Vernon-Smith had told him that Billy Bunter was coming to tea; and though Redwing certainly did not yearn for the fat company of William George Bunter, he had no objection to make. But he was puzzled.

Smithy had stacked a big cake on the table, flanked by a bag of tarts, and

another of doughnuts—a sight to delight the eyes of the fat Owl when he came in. But why he was taking all this trouble for Bunter, a fellow about whom he did not care a pin, was rather a mystery.

Billy Bunter, as a matter of fact, was as puzzled as Redwing. The previous day, he had "scoffed" the Bounder's cake, never dreaming that it had been intended for him all the while. Afterwards, he had expected trouble—but there had been no trouble—Smithy had apparently forgotten the raid on his study. Now he had asked the fat junior to tea—why, Bunter could not guess. It was true that Bunter, in his own estimation at least, was a fascinating and entertaining fellow—a fellow that any chap might have been pleased to see at any time. But if that was the explanation, Smithy had been a long time finding out what a charming chap Bunter was.

"That's all right," said Vernon-Smith, "More than enough to feed the brute, Reddy—what?"

"The 'brute' being the fellow you've asked to tea?" said Redwing.

"Exactly."

"If that's what you think of him, what the thump have you asked him for?"

"To make him talk."

Redwing stared.

"No need to stand him a spread to make him talk! The difficulty generally is to keep him from talking."

"I want him to talk on a particular subject. He knows about Valentine before the fellow came to Greyfriars."

Redwing's expression changed. The Bounder grinned sardonically as he noted it.

"From what I can make out, Wharton and his friends came across the fellow

last hols," went on Smithy. "Bunter was with them. Wharton and the rest are close as oysters about it—but Bunter knows something. I've asked the fat ass to tea to hear him spout it out, see?"

Tom Redwing's face set.

"Why can't you leave the chap alone, Smithy? He's inoffensive enough. I know he was in the wrong, in your row with him at Lantham, But—"

"He laid hands on me," said the Bounder, with a glitter in his eyes. "A measly pickpocket robbed me, and I had him—and Valentine butted in, and let the man escape. He handled me—to get a thief away! I've scrapped with him since—though it never came to a finish. He had the best of it—but never mind that! If he were decent, I'd forget what he's done, and let him alone! But—"

"He's decent enough."

"He's a crook!" said the Bounder, coolly. "He's mixed up in some gang of crooks. That pickpocket at Lantham was one of them, and he dared not let the man be taken to the police station. He handled me! By gad! I'll make the cud sorry he laid his hands on me!"

Redwing was silent. He realised that Smithy had persuaded himself that his motives were good; that he was seeking only to show up in his true colours a rascal who was living a lie, deceiving all who knew. But he realised, too, that it was the Bounder's arrogant temper that was at the bottom of it. He could not forgive a fellow who had defied and defeated him. And though he affected, and doubtless believed, that he attached no importance to the fact that Valentine had had the best of the scrap in the changing-room a few weeks ago, Redwing knew that it rankled. Smithy was not the first fellow who mistook a malicious desire for vengeance, for a sense of duty.

"He's a crook," repeated the Bounder. "Last week, there was a burglary at Popper Court—old Popper's diamond was bagged. Well, that night I was out of bounds—so I can't say for certain what the fellow did—but I'm fairly sure he was out of bounds too, and one of the gang that robbed old Popper. The diamond was sent back later—but not till Inspector Grimes had come over from Courtfield and seen Valentine. What does it look like?"

"You were out of bounds that night?" repeated Redwing, staring at him. "But Quelch came up to the dorm with Mr. Grimes. If you'd been out, he would have missed you. What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean! Quelch would have missed me from the dormitory, if a dummy hadn't been rigged in my bed after I left. You did it."

"I!" exclaimed Redwing, in astonishment.

It was the Bounder's turn to stare. On that night last week, he had had the narrowest escape of all his reckless career at Greyfriars. Had not a friendly hand placed a dummy in his bed, it was certain that the Remove master would have discovered his absence after lights-out, when he visited the dormitory with Inspector Grimes. Smithy had taken it for granted that Redwing's had been the friendly hand.

"Wasn't it you?" he demanded.

"Nothing of the kind! I never knew you were out of bounds."

"My hat! I thought you had woken up, and seeing that I was missing, had fixed up my bed in case Quelch came up and spotted it—"

"I never dreamed that Quelch might come up. I never woke up till he came. And then I never knew that you were out of bounds."

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Vernon-Smith whistled. "Then it was some other fellow! Who on earth did me that good turn and saved my bacon? I'd like to know." The Bounder looked puzzled. "I haven't a pal in the Form, excepting you, Reddy. I supposed it was you that did it, as a matter of course. Who else would have taken the trouble?"

"Well, lots of fellows would; but I don't see how any fellow could have foreseen that Quelch might come up that particular night," said Redwing. "I certainly never thought of it. I remember looking at your bed and feeling glad that you were there. Whoever rigged up the dummy under the bedclothes, did it well. Quelch never noticed anything."

"Lucky for me he didn't!" grinned the Bounder. "It would have been the sack for me, short and sharp! It's odd that the fellow hasn't mentioned it to me, whoever he was. But never mind that. As I was saying, I believe that that fellow Valentine was hand-in-glove with the thieves at Popper Court—"

"What rot!"

"Think so?" sneered the Bounder. "Well, one of the thieves was seen, and described to Inspector Grimes as a man with a beaky nose."

"Lots of men with beaky noses."

"I asked Wharton if he knew whether Valentine had ever been in touch with a man with a beaky nose, and he refused to answer. But he knew."

"Rot!"

"He wouldn't say; but Bunter will say, if he knows! That's why I've asked the fat rotter to tea!"

Redwing compressed his lips. "If that's your game you can have it all to yourself," he said curtly, and he walked out of the study without another word.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. As a matter of fact, he was not quite satisfied with his own methods; but he told himself that his motives were good, forgetting the ancient text that one must not do evil that good may come of it.

He lounged to the window, and stood staring out into the quad while he waited for his distinguished guest to arrive.

At a distance a number of Remove fellows were punting a ball about; the Famous Five, Jim Valentine, Squiff and Peter Todd, Russell and Ogilvy and Wibley. Vernon-Smith's eyes lingered with bitter animosity on the agile figure and handsome face of Jim Valentine. He disliked the fellow—disliked him intensely; and he did not realise that it was chiefly because he had crumpled up in the boy's strong hands, and that his defeat had wounded his pride. The fellow had been in the wrong; he was a rogue and a rascal, in the Bounder's belief. He was keeping up appearances among decent fellows, when his proper place was behind prison bars, so Smithy told himself. And he added bitterly that he would never rest till he had sent the fellow where he belonged.

Looking at the other fellows he wondered which of them it was who had saved him on that night out of bounds when the Remove master had paid his unexpected visit to the dormitory.

He had no friend that could be called a friend at Greyfriars, excepting Tom Redwing. But some good-natured fellow might have done him that good turn. But, as he had said, it was odd that the fellow had never mentioned it afterwards. Nobody in the Remove, in fact, seemed to know that he had been out of bounds at all that eventful night. It was rather a puzzle, and the Bounder thought it over perplexedly. But in all

his surmises on the subject it never crossed his mind that it was Jim Valentine who had saved him that night. The Bounder was not a fellow to help an enemy, and from an enemy he would never have dreamed of expecting help.

"I say, old chap—"

Billy Bunter rolled into the study. The Bounder turned from the window with a scowl that was not exactly hospitable. But the Owl of the Remove did not see it. His eyes were fixed on the good things on the table, and an expansive grin wreathed his podgy face. Smithy might have scowled like a demon in a pantomime, without Billy Bunter observing it that ecstatic moment.

"Hope I'm not late, old fellow," said Bunter, his eyes glued on the cake. "I say, that looks a jolly good cake! Not like the cakes I get from Bunter Court, but jolly good, what?"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Smithy?—"

"Sit down, fathead!"

Bunter blinked at him. He had no idea why Smithy had asked him to tea, and provided these excellent things for his gratification. But that Smithy had

One of This Week's USEFUL LEATHER POCKET WALLETS

goes to: Fred A. Bigg, of 37,
Quaker's Hall Lane, Sevenoaks,
Kent, who submitted the following
Greyfriars limerick:

**Billy Bunter was out on the spree,
So he ate forty tarts for his tea.
Then exclaimed, with loud sighs:
"I should like some mince-pies,
But I don't know if they would
like me!"**

Have a shot at writing a limerick,
boys! It's a fascinating pastime,
and the prizes offered for winning
efforts are **WELL WORTH
HAVING!**

realised at long last what a charming fellow he was, could hardly be the explanation, judging by the Bounder's looks. Smithy certainly did not look like a host who was glad to see his guest; neither did he speak as if he was charmed by Bunter's company.

Still, these things were trifles. The spread on the study table was the important thing. That spread was good and ample, and Bunter could do without polite smiles and courteous greetings.

He sat down. "Get going!" said the Bounder.

Bunter did not need telling. He got going on the spot. Vernon-Smith sat on the corner of the table, watching him with a sardonic sneer on his hard face. Really his manners were not those of a hospitable host in the best circles. But Billy Bunter did not mind. His face beamed over the spread. Not till he had eaten enough for three fellows, and so taken the keen edge off his appetite, did Bunter speak again.

"Good!" he said. "A jolly good spread, Smithy! I must ask you to tea in my study some time."

"Fathead!"

"Hem! Come to-morrow," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "No, not to-morrow; I'm tea-ing out with a friend. The day after. No, not the day after; I have an engagement that

day. Perhaps we'd better leave it open for the present—"

"Don't be a silly ass!"

"Hem!"

Bunter gave up polite conversation and tucked in again. The ham and poached eggs were gone, and the doughnuts had followed. Bunter was travelling through the tarts with an eye on the cake.

In many things, in fact in most things, Bunter was slow. But in dealing with a spread Bunter had a wonderful turn of speed. Smithy realised that it was time to get to business before the spread had completely vanished.

"You knew that fellow Valentine before he came here, Bunter," he said abruptly.

"Oh, yes! These tarts are good, Smithy."

"You met him at Wharton's place in the hols, I hear."

"Yes! Any more tarts?"

"No! How did Valentine happen to be at Wharton's place?"

Bunter blinked at Vernon-Smith. Smithy's feud with the new fellow was common knowledge in the Remove, and it began to dawn on Billy Bunter why he had been asked to tea in Study No. 4.

He shook his bullet head. "The fact is, Smithy, I'd rather not talk about the chap," he said. "He's been rather decent to me. Let it drop."

"I've asked you a question, Bunter," said Smithy, with a glitter in his eyes. "If you want to be kicked out of the study—"

"Oh, really, Smithy, if that's the way you talk to a guest, I think I'd better go!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Get out, then, you fat fool!"

Bunter, with a jam tart in his fat hand, eyed the cake. Dignity was all very well, but the cake was untouched as yet. To get out of the study, leaving the cake untouched, was asking too much of flesh and blood—Billy Bunter's, at all events. Bunter sat tight.

"Of course, I can tell a pal," said Bunter affably. "So far as I remember, Valentine was running away from somebody, and the fellows stood by him and helped him out."

"Was he mixed up with crooks?"

"Well," said Bunter thoughtfully, "I don't know about being mixed up with them. They were after him."

"Who were they?"

"Well, that man with a beaky nose—"

Vernon-Smith's eyes flashed. He was getting on to it; that spread in Study No. 4 was not being wasted!

"A man with a beaky nose?" he repeated. "What was he called?"

Bunter jammed another tart into his capacious mouth. It was the last, and he was already carving the cake.

"Blessed if I remember," he said. "Parker, I think—or Parks, No. Clark! That was it—Nosey Clark."

"And he was a pal of Valentine's?"

"No fear! Valentine was trying to keep clear of him; he was an awful villain," said Bunter. "So far as I could make out, they had hold of Valentine somehow, and he was trying to dodge them. How he came to get to Greyfriars I don't know, and never could make out. He's got no money. He, he, he! No people or anything. Poor beast! I say, I like this cake!"

"No people?" asked the Bounder.

"He had an uncle, or something, who pegged out, or something," said Bunter. "So I heard! Then he was a ward of that man Clark's, or something or other. The man made out that he

was his guardian, anyhow. He's got another uncle, on the other side of the family, who went to South America years ago, or something, and snuffed out there, or something or other! This cake—"

"How did he live before he came here?"

"Never asked him," said Bunter. "I suppose he lived somehow."

"Somehow—yes," said the Bouncer, with a bitter sneer. "And I fancy I can guess how. And he made out that he was dodging the crooks. And the fellows never knew that it was gammon, and that he was hand in glove with them."

"Eh—was he?" asked Bunter, in a rather muffled voice, his mouth being full of cake.

"Of course he was, you fat idiot, and is now."

"Better not say that outside this study," grinned Bunter. "Quelch would have you up before the Head in a jiffy. I suppose that's the sort of thing you would think, Smithy," added Bunter reflectively.

"What?"

"I mean, you're a suspicious sort of blighter, always thinking rotten things about somebody or other, ain't you?" said Bunter affably. "That's your style. I dare say I might think the same, if Valentine had thumped me all over the changing-room like he did you. Ha, he, he!"

The Bouncer's eyes glittered.

"This is a jolly good cake," went on Bunter. "Do you mind if I finish it? I rather think— I say, Smithy, wharrer you up to? Why, you beast! Yaroo!"

That feast of the gods was suddenly interrupted. Smithy was aware that he had now exhausted the whole stock of Bunter's information. He was, therefore, done with Bunter. He proceeded to make that fact clear in the most unmistakable manner by grasping the fat Owl by the collar, and hooking him out of his chair.

"Urrrrg!" gurgled Bunter.

His mouth was full of cake, and some of it, naturally, went down the wrong way as he squirmed in the Bouncer's powerful grasp.

"Urrrrgh! Grooogh! Wooh! I'm chook-chook-choking!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo! Wharrer you at? Have you gone mad? Yaroooh! Groogh!"

Without answering, Vernon-Smith swung the fat Owl to the doorway, and jerked open the door.

Crash!

Smithy's foot landed on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars, with what a novelist would have described as a sickening thud.

Bunter flew!

Slam!

"Oh erikey!" gasped Bunter, as he sat up in the passage. "Oh crumbs! Grooogh! Gug-gug-gug-gug! Ooooh! Had as a matter—I mean, mad as a hatter! Woocogh! Oh lor', I'll jolly well never go to tea with Smithy again—breaking out on a chap like this in the middle of a friendly talk! Wow! Ooogh! Wow!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away, still gasping and gurgling. Tea with Smithy was over—quite suddenly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

MR. COMPTON CLARK, more familiarly known among his associates as "Nosey," chewed the end of an unlighted cigar, and scowled over it blackly. Mr. Clark seemed to be in a very bad temper.

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He moved restlessly about the handsomely appointed room in the mansion where "Mr. Compton" lived as a wealthy City gentleman, and which was the headquarters of the dangerous gang of crooks of which Nosey was the chief. Barney Hayes, the "thug," and Kicky Judd, the pickpocket, sat and smoked, and stared at him as he paced the room. Mr. Clark came to a sudden halt, facing them, with a black scowl on his bushy brows, and a glow of anger in his prominent nose that was so like a vulture's beak.

"It's got to finish!" he snarled.

"It will finish soon enough, guv'nor, if the boy talks too much at his new school," said Kicky, with a grin. "Scotland Yard would make just one hop to this show, and then—"

"Don't be a fool!" snarled Nosey. "The boy dare not talk. If he landed one of us in the stone jug that one would tell the police, first thing, that Jim Valentine of Greyfriars was Dick the Penman, whom they've wanted for more than a year. He will keep his mouth shut for his own sake. But we've got to get him back."

"I'd get him fast enough, if you gave the word!" growled Barney. "A grip on the back of his neck, some day when he's found out of the school—"

"Fool! Hasn't he warned us that he's written out a full description of all of us, with details of our whole game for the police, to be found and handed over to them if he's missing at any time. But for that we'd have had him before this!" growled Nosey Clark. "But with that paper in existence, the game is up for us if we nail him."

"Gammon!" said Barney. "He was pulling your leg, guv'nor."

Clark shook his head.

"He told us so, and meant it—every word," he answered. "That keeps him safe. But we've got to get him back. Dick the Penman is too valuable for us to lose. If we could get hold of that paper without the boy knowing—"

"Plenty of room to look for it in a big place like Greyfriars," said Kicky, with a shrug of his shoulders. "And you can lay to it that if it really exists, he's got it well hidden."

"It must be among his things at the school—either in his study, or in his box in his dormitory," muttered Clark. "To serve his purpose, he would have to leave it where it could be found if he was missed."

"That's so," agreed Kicky. "That fool Nutty"—he shrugged his narrow shoulders again—"he's bungled half a dozen times. He will bungle again—you can lay to that!"

Nosey Clark grunted, and stalked to the window, and stared out on the avenue that led up to the house.

Plot after plot, scheme after scheme, had the cunning master-crook designed to drive Dick the Penman from his last refuge—to drive the boy who had fled from him back into crime. Every scheme had failed, and Nosey Clark felt himself at the end of his resources.

If Nutty Nixon this time came back successful—

Once that telltale paper was in the hands of the master-crook, all would be plain sailing. No more need for plotting, no more need for scheming. Once it was safe to lay hands on the boy, the rest was easy. Kidnapped, and in the power of the crooks, Nosey told himself savagely that he would soon be brought to reason. His methods would not be gentle. But so long as that paper, written out to the last detail by Jim Valentine, remained within the walls of Greyfriars School, Nosey dared not lay hands on him.

He stood scowling savagely from the window. He had failed and failed and

failed again, and had begun to believe that he was doomed to failure. But he was bitterly determined not to let the boy go. With his strange gift of penmanship, the boy was more useful to him than any other member of the gang. But, apart from that, the crook was resolved not to be beaten by the boy whom he had planned to train to crime.

A figure came up the avenue and Nosey's black eyes glinted as he recognised Nutty Nixon, the crackman. Nutty spotted him at the window, and waved his hand and grinned.

Nosey felt his heart beat faster. He turned from the window.

"Nutty's coming," he said. "He looks as if he's had luck."

A few minutes later the door opened, and Nutty came in. There was a cheery grin on his rascally face. Nosey Clark strode towards him.

"What luck?" he breathed.

Nutty chuckled.

"The best!" he answered.

He groped under his coat, drew out a paper, and laid it on a table. The man with the vulture's beak fairly pounced on it. His black eyes shone over it. Barney Hayes and Kicky looked at it over his shoulders.

The paper was written in Jim Valentine's hand. It was a lengthy statement of all that the boy knew of Nosey Clark and his gang—a full description of the nest of rogues, of their headquarters, of their various aliases, and other information. Enough, more than enough, to have enabled the police to round up the whole gang at one swoop, had an official eye fallen on that paper.

Nosey breathed hard and deep.

"Where did you find it, Nutty?" he asked, at last.

Nutty Nixon chuckled again.

"In Jim's desk in his study at the school, at one in the morning," he answered. "It was in an envelope addressed to a master named Quelch. I guessed what was in that envelope when I saw it."

"And"—breathed Nosey.

"They've got a kettle in the study, what I s'pose they use to make their tea," said Nutty. "It came in handy to open the envelope with steam. I got this paper out, and put in a folded sheet of foolscap, and stuck the envelope again," he chuckled. "If that envelope is handed over to Quelch when Jim is missing, he won't get much news from it."

"Shades of Hades!" said Nosey Clark. "You've done it this time, Nutty. You've made up for your bungling. Jim will never know that the paper's missing."

"Not unless he opens the envelope in his desk, which he ain't likely to do," grinned Nutty.

"Then we've got him!"

"Got him fair and square as soon as you like to lay hands on him, guv'nor."

Clark's eyes danced.

"That won't be long. He fancies he's safe, with that paper ready to fall into the hands of the police if we noble him. He will find out soon enough that he is mistaken. We've got him—and the sooner the better! We're taking no chances this time. The four of us will be on the spot, and a car handy! By thunder, Dick the Penman is coming back at last!"

And the man with the vulture's beak grinned with the anticipation of triumph. He had failed many times, but this time he was not going to fail. All was cut and dried now—and Nosey Clark forgot, as he had forgotten before, that there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip!



Having exhausted the whole stock of Bunter's information, Vernon-Smith grasped the fat Owl by the collar and hooked him out of the chair. "Urrrrgh! Crooogh! Woooooh! I'm chook-chook-choking!" gasped Bunter. "Wharrer you at? Grooogh!" Without answering, the Bouncer swung the fat junior to the doorway and assisted him out of the study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Stands Out!

"STANDING out?"
 "Yes," answered the Bouncer coolly.
 "And why?" demanded Wharton.

"I'm not feeling quite fit."
 "This is the first I've heard of it."
 "Well, you've heard of it now I've told you."

The captain of the Remove looked grimly at Herbert Vernon-Smith. There was a mocking glimmer in the Bouncer's eyes.

It was a Wednesday, and the Remove were booked to play football at St. Jude's that afternoon. It was after dinner that the Bouncer coolly told his skipper that he was standing out of the game.

That he was not fit Wharton did not believe for a moment. The Bouncer was fit as a fiddle. He had some other reason for cutting the match at St. Jude's, though what it was Wharton did not know, and could not guess.

But he was deeply irritated. It was a hard game at St. Jude's, and the Greyfriars team needed their best men. Vernon-Smith was one of the very best.

Wharton had been very careful in the selection of his team. Several times Jim Valentine had played half in the Remove Eleven; but though the captain of the Remove was keen to play him when he could, he was leaving him out this time. But he was extremely unwilling to leave Smithy out.

"Look here, Smithy," said Wharton at

last, "this won't do! You're fit enough—that's all rot! Are you letting the team down, to go off on some of your rotten, blackguardly stunts this afternoon?"

"Not at all."
 "Then what do you mean?" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "You know we want you at St. Jude's, and can't spare you from the game."

"You're frightfully flattering!" drawled the Bouncer. "I'm fearfully sorry, and all that; but I don't feel up to a hard game this afternoon—and you wouldn't like it if I let you down in the match."

"I don't believe a word of it!" answered Wharton deliberately. "You've got some other reason. Have you got your silly back up over Valentine? He's not in the team, if that's the reason. He's not even coming over to see the game; he's got extra toot with Quelch. If it's your silly feud with Valentine that's worrying you, you can wash it out!"

The Bouncer laughed.
 "Not in the least," he answered. "But it's rather queer that the fellow isn't going over with the crowd to see the game, as he's so jolly keen on football. Don't you think so?"

"He's got Latin with Quelch!" snapped Wharton.

"Might have something else on, too, on a half-holiday!" drawled Vernon-Smith. "Might be glad to get out of sight for a time if he's still in touch with that old beaky friend of his!"

"You silly ass! Can't you get that out of your head?" growled Wharton.

"What bizney is it of yours, anyhow?"

"Isn't it every fellow's bizney to help the police lay their hands on a crook?" jeered the Bouncer.

"He's nothing of the sort!"
 "And never has been!" grinned the Bouncer.

Wharton made no reply to that. He was not likely to tell Herbert Vernon-Smith what he knew of the earlier shadowed days of Dick the Penman.

Smithy gave a sneering laugh. He had no doubt of Wharton's reason for refusing to answer.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry came up. "Feeling up to a big game, Smithy? We shall have to pull up our socks to-day to beat St. Jude's. I hear they're in great form."

"Smithy says he's standing out!" growled the captain of the Remove.

"What on earth for?"
 "Some rotten reason!" snapped Harry.

"Well, if you mean it, Smithy, you can stand out, and go and eat coko! I'll put in Redwing. He's not your form at the game, but I can trust him, at least!"

And Harry Wharton swung away, with a frowning brow.

When the footballers started for the railway station, Herbert Vernon-Smith stood at the gates and watched them go.

There was rather a cloud on his face. Perhaps he half-repentted his resolve to stand out of the game that afternoon. The Bouncer was a keen footballer, and he was not the man to let his skipper down if he could help it. But on this occasion he told himself that it could not

be helped. He had reasons that seemed good to himself, though it was certain that they would not have seemed good to any other fellow in the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. arrived at the station, the captain of the Remove with a frown on his brow. A suspicion was in his mind that Vernon-Smith was standing out with some idea in his head of keeping an eye on the junior he doubted and suspected—and that suspicion was more than enough to make Wharton angry.

Had Jim Valentine still been in touch with the gang from which he had fled, no doubt he might have taken the opportunity on a half-holiday to keep some appointment with Nosey Clark & Co. But Wharton was well aware that that was not the case, and the Bouncer's malicious suspicions irritated him deeply.

There were ten minutes to wait for the train, and the Greyfriars party crowded the platform at Courtfield, most of them discussing the coming match. A man leaning against the wall of the waiting-room eyed them curiously and listened to the talk of the school-boys. He was a small, slim man, with a thick, dark moustache and a beard, and looked nothing like Kicky Judd, whom some of the fellows would have recognised had they seen him undisguised.

The man with the beard seemed keenly interested in the talk of the Greyfriars fellows, though they did not notice him. A good many fellows were going over with the team, and the crowd of cheery schoolboys was rather numerous; and Kicky's eyes wandered from face to face, as if in search of one that he wanted to see. But if he was looking for Jim Valentine, he did not see him there. Valentine in those moments was seated at the table in Mr. Quelch's study at Greyfriars School, deep in deponent verbs.

But Kicky started a little as he heard the name mentioned. It was Bob Cherry's cheery voice that mentioned it. "Wish old Valentine could have come along!" said Bob.

"Well, he could have if he'd liked," said Squiff, the Remove goalkeeper. "But as Quelch is giving him extra toot, I suppose he felt that it was up to him to stay in and stick it. He would have come like a shot, though, if Wharton wanted him in the team."

"He's a jolly good half!" said Bob. "Might have done worse."

"Might have left you out for him, old bean—what?" asked Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"Bow-wow!" answered Bob.

Bob Cherry, Tom Brown, and Dick Penfold were the half-backs, and Valentine, good as he was, was not so good.

"Well, I wish he'd come!" said Bob. "He can't be enjoying Latin in Quelch's study—at least, I shouldn't."

"Well, it's decent of Quelch to give him the time," said Harry. "He doesn't have a lot of leisure. It's kind of him."

"Oh, quite! But I hope he'll never be kind to me in the same way!" chuckled Bob. "I can do without quite a lot of kindness when it takes the form of Latin on a half-holiday!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall have to pull up our socks this afternoon," remarked Peter Todd. "It will be a bit of a tussle without Smitty to help, and they're in great form at St. Jude's."

"Oh, we'll beat them," said Harry, "and it will do Smitty good to find out that we can win matches without his help. Hallo! Here comes the train!"

The Greyfriars crowd swarmed on the

train, the man leaning on the wall of the waiting-room watching them with curious eyes. The train steamed out of Courtfield Station with the cheery crowd on board, and then Kicky Judd walked quickly away. In the street outside, he called a taxi and hummed away at a great speed. The taxi-man probably wondered why his fare chose to alight on a lonely country road bordered by shadowy woods; but it was no business of his, and he drove back to the town, leaving Kicky Judd there.

Kicky loafed about idly till the taxi was out of sight. Then all his idleness left him, and he plunged into the wood and tramped along swiftly till he reached a secluded lane shadowed by trees. In that solitary spot a car was waiting. A man with a nose like a vulture's beak peered eagerly from the window as Kicky came up.

"Well?" rapped Nosey Clark. "No luck!" answered Kicky. "There's a crowd of them gone over to St. Jude's, wherever that may be, to play football, but Jim's not with them. I've picked up that he's staying in the school this afternoon—extra lessons, or something, with his Form master Quelch."

And Kicky related all that he had learned from the talk of the Greyfriars fellows on Courtfield Station platform.

Nosey listened attentively, in silence. There was a gleam in his black eyes that told that his cunning brain was at work. "We've got him!" he muttered.

Kicky Judd stared.

"Not a chance, guv'nor," he answered, shaking his head. "We can't get him in the school, in his Form master's study—"

"Doesn't look a healthy chance," said Barney Hayes, at the wheel.

Nosey's lip curled.

"I tell you we've got him! It's out and dried! No need to talk. Leave it to me. Get going, Barney."

"Where?" grunted Barney.

"Redclyffe. That's the nearest place I can get to a telephone."

"But what—" ejaculated Kicky.

"Get in, and don't talk! Leave it to me!" snapped Nosey Clark. "Haven't I told you it's all out and dried? I tell you we've got him! This is the last throw of the dice, and, by gosh, it's going to be a winner! Get going, Barney, you fool!"

And the car hummed away to Redclyffe.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Valentine is Wanted!

DEONENT verbs—those irritating verbs which are passive in form but active in meaning—did not wholly fill Jim Valentine's thoughts as he sat in his Form master's study that cold, keen spring afternoon.

There was a bright, though cold, sunshine out of doors, and shafts of it fell into the window of the dusky old panelled study, and every now and then Jim's eyes wandered to the sunny window, and his thoughts to the footballers who had gone over to St. Jude's.

He would have been glad to follow the team that afternoon, as a crowd of other fellows had done, and watch them scoring goals for Greyfriars; and certainly he would have enjoyed that more than he enjoyed deponent verbs.

But he gave Mr. Quelch very great attention, all the same. It was kind of Quelch to give him extra "toot" in his scanty spare time, and Jim had leeway to make up. His year with Nosey Clark's gang had been lost time, so far as his education was concerned—worse than lost time in all other respects.

He was keen to get on in his Form,

to please the kind-hearted man who had taken him on trust and given him a new chance in life. He worked hard at the Form master's table, under Mr. Quelch's kind, supervising eye, though he could not help wishing that Wharton had picked him out to play. In that case, of course, extra toot would have been washed out and he would have gone with the team.

Mr. Quelch's expression was very benevolent.

He liked the boy whom he had taken under his protection, and he rejected with contempt Inspector Grimes' deep suspicions of him. Yet as the term wore on Mr. Quelch realised very clearly that he had taken a heavy responsibility on his hands in placing Valentine at Greyfriars. Suspected by the police on one side, haunted by his old, crooked associates on the other, what was likely to be the outcome? But the Remove master did not falter in his resolution. He believed in the boy, trusted him, and was determined to stand by him through thick and thin.

Buzzzzzz!

If the sudden buzz of the telephone-bell annoyed Henry Samuel Quelch, it did not have the same effect on Jim Valentine. He was not unwilling to slow down a little on deponent verbs.

Mr. Quelch crossed to the instrument and took down the receiver. He spoke—or, rather, barked—into the mouth-piece.

"Is that Courtfield One-O-One?" came a voice from afar.

Courtfield 101 was the latest number that an efficient Telephone Department had assigned to Mr. Quelch. So he barked an affirmative.

"If that is Mr. Quelch—"

"Mr. Quelch speaking."

"Very good, sir." The voice that came over the wires was low and smooth and deferential in tone. "I am speaking from St. Jude's School, sir—a message from Master Wharton."

"Indeed!" Mr. Quelch was aware that the Remove footballers had gone over to St. Jude's, but he could not guess why Master Wharton desired to send him a message by telephone from that scholastic establishment. "Please give the message. I am listening."

"One of the Greyfriars boys had a slight accident on leaving the train—he slipped and hurt his ankle—a boy named Cherry. He is unable to play in the match, and Master Wharton desires Valentine—or Ballantyne—I think he said Valentine—"

"Valentine. Yes, yes!"

"He desires Valentine to come over at once to play half-back in Cherry's place. The match will wait till he reaches here, so if he is coming he must lose no time."

"Oh!" grunted Mr. Quelch.

"There will be no time to come by train, as the service on this line is so infrequent, and Master Wharton says that Valentine can come across on his bicycle much more quickly by the short cut through Redclyffe Wood. That is all, sir. Perhaps you will be so kind as to give the message to Valentine, if he is in the school. Master Wharton desires to apologise for troubling you in this way, but in the circumstances he hopes you will excuse him."

Grunt from Mr. Quelch.

He turned to Valentine.

"Some mishap appears to have occurred to one of the Remove boys on the way to St. Jude's, Valentine," he said. "Wharton desires you to go over and play in Cherry's place."

Jim's eyes danced.

"You would like to go?" asked Mr. Quelch.

(Continued on page 12.)

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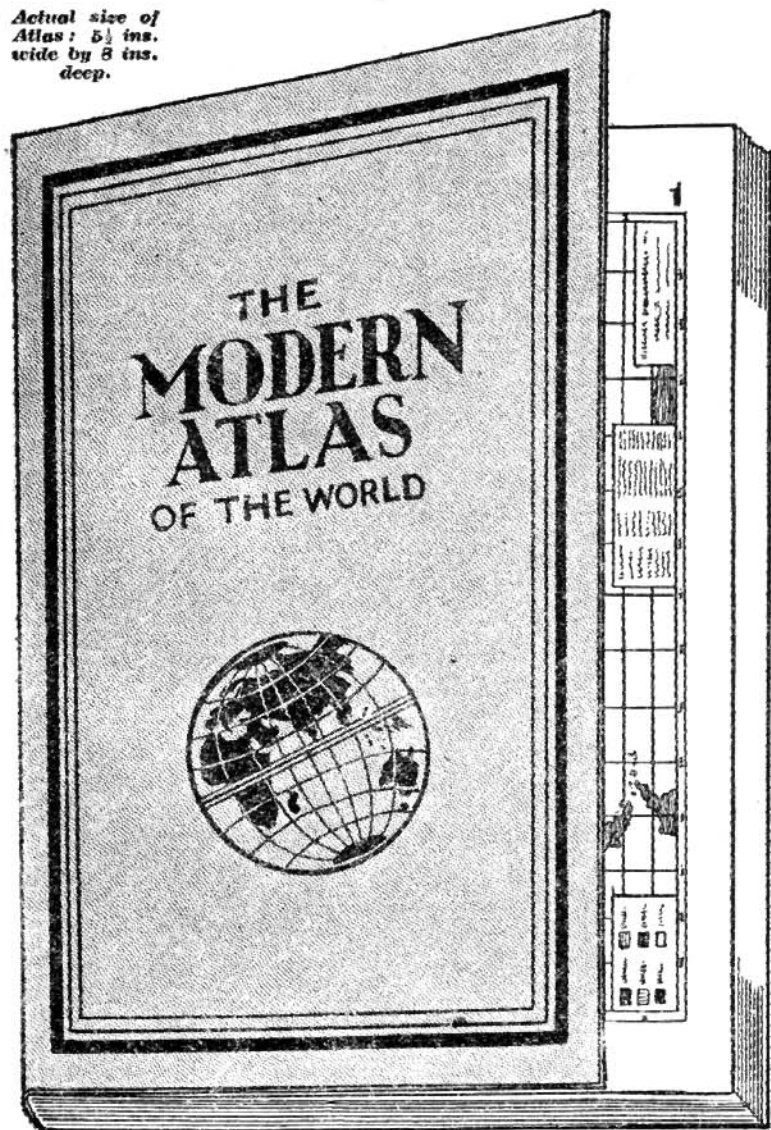
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THE EDITOR.

THE FIRST COUPON—VALUE 5 POINTS—IS ON PAGE 28. CUT IT OUT AND KEEP IT BY YOU!

THE HUNTED SCHOOLBOY!

(Continued from page 10.)

"Oh, sir!" murmured Jim.

The Remove master smiled. It was a long time since Henry Samuel Quelch had been a boy, but he had not quite forgotten boyhood. He quite realised that the average human boy would rather play football than sit in a study at Latin grammar.

"Very well, my boy, lose no time," he said. "It is a long way to St. Jude's, and it appears that the match will not begin till you arrive."

"But, sir—"

Jim glanced rather remorsefully at the papers on the table. Certainly he wanted to play football that afternoon if Wharton needed him in the St. Jude's match, but he did not want to appear ungrateful to his kind benefactor.

"My dear boy, go at once!" said Mr. Quelch. "I hope you will have an enjoyable game. Wharton suggests that you should go on your bicycle by the short cut through Redclyffe Woods. You should be able to reach the school in little more than half an hour if you make good speed. Lose no time."

"Thank you, sir!"

Jim was not likely to lose time. Once outside the Form master's study he fairly raced away.

Mr. Quelch barked into the phone again.

"You may tell Master Wharton that Valentine is coming over at once."

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Quelch put up the receiver and stood at his study window, looking out into the wintry sunshine.

In a very few minutes he saw Jim Valentine cutting away from the House with a bag in his hand, heading for the bikeshed.

He smiled—a kind though frosty smile.

A fat junior, loafing under the elms, cut across to intercept Valentine. Billy Bunter was on his lonely own that afternoon, and he was in his usual state of having been disappointed about a postal order.

"I say, Valentine—" squeaked Bunter.

Jim ran on, unheeding. He had no time to waste on the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter grabbed at his arm.

"I say, old chap, could you lend me—Whoooooop!"

Bunter sat down suddenly.

Valentine ran on and left him sitting. Mr. Quelch, watching from the study window, gave a little laugh. He seemed to find that little incident amusing. Bunter did not! Bunter roared with wrath.

Headless of Bunter's roars, Jim Valentine ran on to the bikeshed, wheeled out his machine, and ran it down to the gate.

"Boys will be boys!" mused the Remove master, and he turned from the window and went back to his table. Deponent verbs were "off," and Mr. Quelch opened a drawer in which reposed manuscripts in black letter, and smiled serenely as he drew forth a bundle of parchments which would have made any Remove fellow's head ache to look at them. He was glad that Jim Valentine was going to enjoy his afternoon. And Mr. Quelch also was going to enjoy his afternoon, in a way very different from Valentine's.

And certainly neither Mr. Quelch nor Jim Valentine suspected for a single moment that that telephone call had not come from St. Jude's School, but from a man with a vulture's beak in the telephone-box at Redclyffe Post

Office. Nosey Clark was grinning as he rejoined Barney and Nutty and Kicky Judd in the waiting car. This time Nosey was backing a winner—at least, Nosey had no doubt about it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Smithy on the Track!

"SMITHY, old chap—" "Scat!" growled the Bounder. "Oh, really, Smithy—" "Cut!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, lounging with his hands in his pockets and a scowl on his face, did not seem in a good temper.

He was, in point of fact, in the very worst of tempers. Billy Bunter, blinking at him through his big spectacles, discerned that fact at once. Indeed, he could have discerned it even without the aid of his spectacles. It leaped to the eye, as it were.

The Bounder had set himself the task of "catching out" the fellow he suspected—showing up the confederate of crooks in his true colours. It was in his suspicious mind that on a half-holiday, with most of the fellows at a distance, the "boy with a past" was more than likely to take the opportunity of keeping some appointment with the gang with whom he was, as Smithy was convinced, in touch. Acting on that suspicion, Smithy had stood out of the football match to remain within gates and keep an eye on Valentine—and now he repented it.

"THE 'SWOT' OF ST. JIMS!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

is the title of this week's tip-top tale of TOM MERRY & CO. at ST. JIMS. Herbert Skimpole, the freak of the Shell, is in desperate straits, for his school fees are long overdue. Despite his cranky little ways and ideas, Skimpole is not a bad sort, and Tom Merry & Co. set to work to help him through. Be sure and read this corking yarn, chums, which appears in the

GEM

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To Smithy's distrustful mind, it looked as if the "extra toot" with Quelch was merely camouflage—a pretence to account for Valentine not going over to St. Jude's with the team. But his own distrustful eyes saw Jim go to the Remove master's study; and later, strolling in the quad, he glanced in at Mr. Quelch's window with those distrustful eyes and saw the boy working there with the Form master. And it was borne in upon Smithy's mind that, even if Valentine was keeping in touch with Nosey Clark & Co., he was not planning any excursion out of gates for that particular afternoon. Smithy had let down his skipper and barred himself from a football match for nothing.

So the Bounder had no patience for Billy Bunter—indeed, he was feeling inclined to kick himself, and still more inclined to kick somebody else. Billy Bunter came along opportunely to serve as the kickee, so to speak.

"Look here, old chap—" said Bunter, eyeing him warily.

"Cut!" repeated Smithy. A motion of his right foot hinted of what was going to happen when Bunter turned his back. The fat Owl glared at him.

"Beast!" he snorted. "You're a worse beast than that beast Valentine!

I say, Smithy, old chap, I wish you'd jolly well lick him!"

"Won't he cash your postal order?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

"Barging a fellow over!" said Bunter indignantly. "I was only going to speak to the beast—just to mention that Mrs. Mumble had a fresh lot of tarts in—and the beast barged me over—"

"What do you mean, idiot? Valentine's in Quelch's study!" But the Bounder gave heed now. "Has he come out?"

"He's just gone down to the bikeshed—"

"The bikeshed!" repeated Smithy, his eyes snapping.

"Yes, and I was going to speak to him, and he barged me over!" gasped Bunter. "After all I've done for him, you know! I say, Smithy—"

But the Bounder heeded him not, and rushed away towards the bikeshed as fast as a deer.

What a fool he had been!—he was telling himself. That "extra toot" with Quelch was, after all, camouflage. Likely enough the fellow knew that Smithy was keeping an eye on him, and had only waited till he was out of sight before getting out. Of the telephone-call received in Mr. Quelch's study the Bounder, of course, knew nothing. If Valentine was really going out on his bike, after telling his friends that extra toot with Quelch prevented him from following the team to St. Jude's, what did it look like? It looked like a confirmation of the Bounder's dark suspicions.

He ran breathlessly into the bikeshed. A glance told him that Jim Valentine's machine was missing from its stand.

That was enough for Vernon-Smith. He dragged out his own machine and rushed it down to the gate.

Was he in time? Standing in the road, he stared up and down with keen, searching eyes. He was in time. On the Courtfield road a cyclist was riding away, and, far off as he already was, Vernon-Smith knew that it was Valentine. He threw a leg over his machine and pedalled after the suspected junior. Valentine did not look back.

Naturally, it never crossed his mind for a moment that he was followed—and he would have cared little if he had known.

He rode on hard and fast.

After him whizzed Vernon-Smith, grinding at his pedals. There was a savage grin on the Bounder's face.

He had been right. He was convinced of it now. The rotter had deceived everyone else, but he had not deceived the wary Bounder. Certainly he had very nearly thrown dust in Smithy's eyes by that pretence of work in Quelch's study: Smithy had lost sight of him, and would not have known that he had gone out but for Bunter. But now he knew. Now he knew, and he was on the rascal's track. And Smithy had little or no doubt that that track would lead him to the gang of crooks—or some of them. For what else could be Valentine's motive? Not for an instant did the Bounder dream that Jim was heading for St. Jude's, in the belief that Wharton wanted him in the match.

He rode on with savage speed and gained on Valentine, fast as Jim was riding. But at a short distance behind he slowed down to keep equal pace. He did not want Valentine to spot the pursuit if it could be avoided. The fellow was not likely to keep on to the place of appointment if he knew that he was shadowed.

Smithy had expected him, if he went at all, to go on foot, in which case



As Vernon-Smith pedalled rapidly between two clumps of willows, four figures suddenly sprang into view—two from either side. Before the Bounder knew what was happening, he was grasped and dragged from his machine!

shadowing would have been easier. But as he had gone on his bicycle Smithy had no choice but to follow him on a machine or lose him. And a single backward glance from Valentine would have been enough to apprise the suspected boy that he was followed. The Bounder had to take that chance—it could not be helped. He was rather surprised that Valentine did not look back. He did not seem wary—as certainly he should have been had Smithy's suspicions been well-founded. Still, the Bounder was glad of it.

Valentine shot out into the Redclyffe road, with the Bounder humming on fifty yards in the rear.

At a point where a bridle-path left the road, winding away through the lonely spaces of Redclyffe Wood, Valentine turned his machine. It was as he turned into the bridle-path that he saw the Bounder coming on behind.

He stared back at him for a moment and then disappeared into the shadowy path through the wood.

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth. He wondered whether the fellow had noticed him as he turned into the wood. If so, was he likely to keep on to the place of appointment?

Smithy wondered savagely whether the fellow knew he was shadowed. Anyhow, he was keeping on. He turned into the bridle-path hardly a minute after Jim Valentine.

There was a cheery grin on Jim's face as he rode on by the leafy path under shadowy branches.

He had spotted the Bounder, and he knew what his game was. More than once of late when he had been out of

gates he had spotted the Bounder in the offing. Smithy was welcome to watch him as much as he liked, if it came to that. Still, it was irritating; and when the thick woodland had swallowed him from the Bounder's sight he grinned at the idea of giving the spy a long and futile hunt by the woodland paths. It did not matter a straw to him whether Herbert Vernon-Smith followed him to St. Jude's or not. But it was rather entertaining to give him the slip and leave him to hunt. And when the Bounder, deeper in suspicion than ever, came back to Greyfriars, it would be to learn that Valentine had been at St. Jude's all the time, playing football with Harry Wharton & Co. Jim chuckled at that thought.

The bridle-path through Redclyffe Wood ran direct to a road that led past the gates of St. Jude's. But there were other paths, which Jim knew well enough, having cycled many times round the country with his friends in the Remove. The other paths were footpaths, where cyclists were not supposed to ride, but where they sometimes did, all the same. A quarter of a mile deep in the wood Jim suddenly braked, jumped down, and pushed his machine on the bridle-path into the thickets. A minute's rest was welcome on a hard ride, and he did not want to reach St. Jude's pumped out of breath.

He rested a minute in the thicket out of sight, and through the interstices of the bush saw a cyclist whizz past.

It was the Bounder—going strong.

Valentine grinned as he glimpsed him for a second; in a second more the Bounder was past.

The whirr of the bicycle died away up the bridle-path.

With a chuckle, Jim Valentine wheeled his machine through the wood for a short distance, struck a footpath, and there remounted it. He rode on again by a path that drew him farther and farther away from the main path. It meant the addition of half a mile to the distance he had to cover, and he was in a hurry, but a minute or two more or less did not make a great deal of difference. And it was entertaining to think of the Bounder riding on and on till he realised that he had missed his quarry, and turned back to root in the woodlands for him.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had no suspicion, so far, that Valentine had left the main path. The winding of the path hid anyone ahead from his sight, and he had no doubt that Valentine was still pedalling on ahead of him.

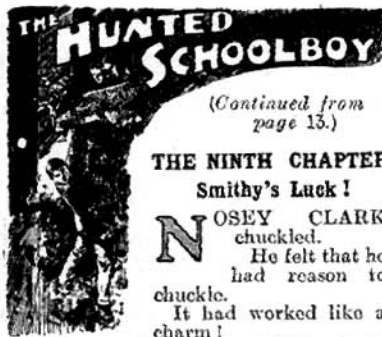
He rode on grimly. Deeper in the woodland the path was narrower, and branches hung thickly over it, here and there brushing the cyclist as he rode.

It was in the very heart of the wood, as solitary a spot as could have been found in that part of Kent, that the unexpected suddenly happened.

As the Bounder pedalled rapidly between two clumps of willows that grew on either side of the bridle-path, four figures suddenly sprang into view—two from either side. And before Herbert Vernon-Smith knew what was happening, he was grasped and dragged from his machine, and sprawled, bumping and gasping, on the ground.

(Continued on page 15.)

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THE HUNTED SCHOOLBOY

(Continued from page 13.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER Smithy's Luck!

NOSEY CLARK chuckled.

He felt that he had reason to chuckle.

It had worked like a charm!

From the information Kicky Judd had picked up at Courtfield Station, Nosey had been able to form his plan. The telephone call to Mr. Quelch at Greyfriars had followed, and Nosey knew that Jim Valentine would be riding on his bicycle, and alone, by the bridle-path through Redclyffe Wood. The rest was simple—an ambush in the wood to seize the boy as he passed.

Since he had warned the crooks of the precaution he had taken, Jim had no fear of kidnapping when he came out of gates. That the paper he had written out, and which was his safeguard, had been abstracted from his desk by the thievish fingers of Nutty, the cracksmen, he did not know.

He had started to ride to St. Jude's without a single thought of Nosey and the gang in his mind. And, but for the Bounder's shadowing, and the trick Jim had played on him, it was certain that he would have ridden fairly into the hands of his old enemies—as Nosey, for the moment, believed that he had done, as he dragged the Bounder down.

The man with the vulture's beak chuckled gleefully.

Nosey and Nutty, Barney and Kicky, had been waiting and watching—for a solitary cyclist to come whizzing along the lonely path. A solitary cyclist had come—half-seen in the dim shadows of the woods. Now he lay, sprawling and panting, under the grasp of the gang.

Vernon-Smith struggled savagely. He was taken utterly by surprise; but he supposed that he had fallen into the hands of a gang of footpads, and he was not the fellow to be robbed without a struggle.

"You rotters! Let me go!" he roared.

Nosey Clark ceased to chuckle, and stared blankly at the struggling schoolboy.

"Who's that? That's not him!"

He glared at Vernon-Smith.

"By gum! The wrong bird!" grunted Nutty, and he released the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith scrambled to his feet. He was breathless, and he was hurt by his crash on the ground. His eyes glittered savagely at the gang.

They fixed on Nosey Clark.

The man with the beaky nose!

He knew at once!

This was the man with the beaky nose who had been seen at Popper Court on the night of the robbery there. This was the man with the beaky nose that Jim Valentine had once been associated with. This was the "Nosey Clark" of whom Billy Bunter had told him! The Bounder knew!

His heart throbbed.

He had been right! He still believed that he had been right! Valentine had been on his way to meet his old associates—for here they were, on the bridle-path in Redclyffe Wood. Valentine had missed them—that was clear. He must have passed before they came along—or taken another path—perhaps dodging

his pursuer in the wood! The Bounder's brain worked quickly. It was Nosey Clark who was under his eyes—the man who was wanted by the police—the crook whose confederate Jim Valentine was!

The four crooks were exchanging surly looks. They had jumped to it that it was Valentine, when the cyclist came hurtling along the dusky path—but they had been mistaken. Barney was giving the Bounder threatening looks. But the man with the vulture's beak pushed him back.

"Sorry, young gentleman!" said Nosey smoothly. "No harm intended. We took you for a friend of ours."

"I took you for a gang of footpads!" grunted the Bounder.

"Not at all, sir!" said Nosey civilly. "Pick up the young gentleman's machine for him, Barney."

Barney grunted, and obeyed.

"You will excuse the mistake, sir?" said Nosey, still very civilly. "We were expecting a friend of ours, and we took you for him. It was rather a rough joke on a stranger—but no offence intended."

"No harm done," grunted Vernon-Smith. "But you'd better be a bit more careful another time." He rubbed a bruise on his arm.

He quite understood.

Having bagged the wrong bird, Nosey Clark was only anxious to get rid of him without trouble, and see him clear off. Wary as he was, the crook never dreamed for a moment that this schoolboy knew him, or anything about him. He had never seen Vernon-Smith before, or heard of his existence, and, naturally, had no suspicion of him. All he wanted

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was to see him go before Jim Valentine came along. Every moment he expected to hear Valentine's bicycle on the bridle-path.

"The jigger's all right!" grunted Barney.

The Bounder took it from him. He was as anxious to get away, as the crooks could be to get rid of him. Certainly they would not have been likely to let him get away had they known what was in his mind.

"Perhaps you have seen another cyclist—a lad about your own age, sir?" said the civil Nosey. "Might have passed him coming this way?"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed for a moment.

If he could delay these rascals, keep them where they were till he could get word to the police—

That was the thought at the back of his mind.

Where was Valentine? It was easy now for Smithy to guess that he had turned from the bridle-path to dodge his pursuer. He might be some time in getting to his associates—as Smithy still firmly believed was his intention. There was a chance, with luck, of "nobbling" the whole gang. The Bounder's heart beat at the thought. Little did Nosey Clark guess that he was dealing with a fellow who, young as he was, was as cool, wary, and resolute as himself!

"If you mean a Greyfriars fellow," said Smithy coolly.

"Yes, my young friend belongs to that school," said Nosey. "You have seen him then?"

"Do you mean Valentine?"

Nosey's black eyes snapped.

"Yes; that is his name."

"I passed him nearly a mile back!" said the Bounder, lying with a coolness that was worthy of Nosey Clark himself. "He had a puncture, and stopped to mend it. He will be along later, I suppose."

"Thank you, sir!" said Nosey. "You'll excuse our rather rough joke, which was not intended for you?"

"That's all right," said the Bounder.

He remounted his machine, and rode on. The four crooks watched him out of sight up the path, and then exchanged glances.

"All serene!" said Nosey Clark quietly. "That boy is some Greyfriars schoolboy, going over to see the football match most likely. What he's told us settles the matter—we've only got to wait for Jim!"

And the four rascals plunged back into their ambush in the willows to wait for Jim Valentine to pass. They were booked for a long wait—if they had known it.

Vernon-Smith, once out of sight of the gang, drove at his pedals like a madman. He rode as he had never ridden before. With set teeth and panting breath, bent double over his handlebars, he fairly flew. He covered the ground almost like lightning, and shot out of the wood, into the road beyond, like an arrow. St. Jude's lay to the left—but it was to the right that Vernon-Smith turned, to the little town of Redclyffe.

He hurtled into Redclyffe, jumped off his machine at the post office, and almost staggered into a telephone-box. In a minute or two more he was through to Courtfield Police Station.

"Inspector Grimes—call Inspector Grimes—quick!" His voice was a hoarse gasp.

"Inspector Grimes speaking!" came back a deep voice. "Who—"

"Vernon-Smith—of Greyfriars School—you know me!" panted the Bounder.

"Yes—what—"

"I told you I might have information—about Valentine! I've got it! He's in Redclyffe Wood—and the gang of them are there—Nosey Clark and three others—"

Smithy heard a gasp along the wires.

"What—"

"There's not a second to lose. I tell you I've seen them—talked to them. I'll explain later. Nosey Clark—three others—and Valentine may join them any minute—by the clump of willows on the bridle-path through Redclyffe Wood!" panted the Bounder.

"By gad!"

"Quick—"

"That's enough!"

The inspector at Courtfield had rung off. Herbert Vernon-Smith, breathless, panting, streaming with perspiration, his heart beating in great throbs, staggered out of the post office to his machine. He had done his bit—it was for Mr. Grimes to do the rest!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Jim Valentine's Uncle!

MR. QUELCH looked at the sturdy, thickset, yet supple figure that was crossing from the gates, and wondered who the stranger was.

The man was a stranger at Greyfriars School; Mr. Quelch had never seen that rather hard-lined, deeply bronzed, yet good-tempered visage before. And yet, as he saw it in the sunlight in the quad, it seemed to him that there was a glimpse of something familiar in the

features—an elusive resemblance to a face he had seen before, though certainly not the same face.

Standing in the big doorway of the House, pleasantly tired after an hour or two with black-letter manuscripts, Mr. Quelch was breathing the keen, fresh air from the sea, and waiting till it was time to "tea."

Thus it was that he came to observe the man whose face had been tanned by tropical suns.

He saw the bronzed man pause and speak to a junior in the quad—Billy Bunter, of the Remove. Bunter blinked at him inquisitively through his big spectacles, and jerked a thumb towards the House, apparently in answer to a question from the stranger.

And the man came on with a swinging gait, directly towards Mr. Quelch, who prepared a polite smile for him, being

a civil gentleman, and always ready to oblige a stranger within the gates.

The man came up the broad steps of the House, and his hard, keen eyes, lighting on the Form master in the doorway, he raised the soft, wide-brimmed hat he wore a salute to which Mr. Quelch responded with a slight bow.

"No doubt you are a master here, senator?" said the stranger.

"Precisely so," assented Mr. Quelch, smiling faintly at the "senator," which seemed to indicate that the man had come from foreign parts where the language of Portugal or Spain was spoken.

"This is Greyfriars School—"
"Quite so. Can I assist you in any way—"

"It was my intention to ask to see the headmaster," answered the bronzed man. "But I have only a brief question to ask, and no doubt you can answer it and save time and trouble."

"With pleasure," assented the Remove master, in wonder.

"Can you tell me whether there is a boy named Valentine in this school?"

Mr. Quelch gave a start. His face hardened.

The stranger looked a decent man enough, but any man inquiring after a boy named Valentine was open to suspicion. Of Valentine's old connections, before he had come into the hands of the crooks, none could possibly know that he was at Greyfriars School, or come there in quest of him. And it flashed into Mr. Quelch's mind at once that this was some member of the "gang"—some confederate of the rascally Clark!

And yet—he did not look it! His face was hard, as that of a man who had lived a hard and perhaps perilous life, under burning suns and in fierce

(Continued on next page.)

THE ONE KICK THAT MATTERS!

THERE are many names which, from time to time, are given to the football Cup competition.

It is called the "big gamble," the "never can tell competition," and the "life and death" affair. When I think back, or when I talk to the players who have appeared in the big Cup games, I always like giving it yet another name—the "if and but" competition.

"If only I had done this, or if somebody else had done that, how different it might all have been." Phrases like these are constantly heard when players are discussing how and why the team managed to get knocked out of the Cup. The result of a Cup game might depend on one kick.

Just an example, the passing of Sheffield Wednesday—beaten by Chesterfield—may be cited. At the first meeting between these clubs the score was two goals each, when, near the end, the Wednesday were awarded a penalty kick. This was entrusted to Ball, the centre-forward, but he failed to score; the match was drawn, and the Wednesday lost the replay.

If Ball had scored with that twelve yards kick the whole course of this season's competition might have been different.

Ball had a very high reputation as a successful penalty-kick taker, and I think I am right in saying that before the miss in the Cup tie he had scored eight times in succession with penalty kicks in League games. Just one little interesting story connected with Ball's effort in this connection. His wife always goes to see him play, but she has never yet seen him score with a penalty kick. There is a good reason why. When Mrs. Ball notes that her husband is being entrusted with a penalty kick she puts her hands over her eyes, and "waits for the worst."

Incidentally, that little story shows how one football spectator regards penalty kicks—as occasions when the tension is so great that she dare not even look. If the tension is like that for a spectator—and I know others who adopt a similar attitude—what must be the feelings of the player who knows that the result of an important match may depend on the one kick which he is called upon to take in "cold blood," as we might put it?

SCORING FROM THE "SPOT"!

I N talking thus about penalty kicks I may have given part of the answer to a question put to me by a MAGNET reader: Why do so many penalty kicks in first-class football fail to produce

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goals? The excitement which is associated with these kicks on which the result of the match may depend does affect some players. It is a fact that about one penalty kick in three, in first-class football, fails to produce a goal. It ought not to be so, of course, because the scoring of goals from the penalty spot is comparatively easy—in principle.

There are other reasons for penalty kick failures, however, and I may answer my correspondent further by telling him the way to go about the business of scoring from the "spot." In the first place, and in the case of shots from merely twelve yards out, placing is much more important than strength. It isn't necessary to make the attempt to break the net; and, of course, the harder the kick the greater the risk of a miss.

A comparatively gentle low shot, nicely placed, will go into the net against any goalkeeper. Personally, I like to see the penalty-kick taker keeping the ball low, for it has to be remembered that it is ever so much easier for the goalkeeper to throw out his arms, and thus save a high ball, than it is for him to throw out his foot to stop a low ball.

Keep the ball low; place it. Those are the two big principles in successful penalty-kick taking. One other point. Look at the ball, not at the place where you propose to put it.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP!

THERE has been a lot of talk, during the past few weeks, on the question of sportsmanship, or otherwise, in connection with the big cricket matches played in Australia. I am not going to discuss the question of body-line bowling, but I just mention it because one of my readers has set me a problem concerning the sporting thing to do in a

particular circumstances in a football match.

This reader is a goalkeeper. In a recent match a high shot was sent in which was going very near the corner of the goal. This goalkeeper went for the ball, just managed to get the tips of his fingers to it, and turned the ball round the post. The referee's decision should have been a corner-kick, but, apparently, he did not see the goalkeeper touch the ball, and gave a goal-kick. "Should I have gone to the referee and told him I had touched the ball?" That is the question put to me by my goalkeeper friend.

Obviously, this young goalkeeper's conscience is worrying him a bit, and I certainly should not have been annoyed with him if he had told me that he did go to the referee and tell him it should have been a corner. In some respects such an action could be regarded as the essence of good sportsmanship. On the whole, however, I don't think our reader friend has anything with which to reproach himself because he did not tell.

In regard to decisions by officials appointed to control football matches, I think the safest attitude, and one quite consistent with good sportsmanship, is to accept every decision without question, whether in favour or against a side.

If, in this particular instance, a referee had trusted the player and asked him whether he touched the ball, then the player himself would have been justified in telling the truth. There would have been no other sporting course open to him. The referee, however, is the judge, and the safe course—the one which avoids trouble—is to accept decisions as given.

"LINESMAN."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,367.

winds. But it was open and frank, and even handsome—a face that many would have liked at the first glance.

"A boy named James—or Jim—Valentine," added the bronzed man—for Mr. Quelch's further information.

"Before answering any question on that subject, sir, I must know your reason for inquiring," said Mr. Quelch grimly.

The bronzed man smiled.

"That is told in a few words, sir. My name is Valentine—Peter Valentine—and I have a nephew of the same surname. If Jim Valentine is in this school, no doubt he will be pleased to see his uncle."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

He gazed at the bronzed face. He knew now what that resemblance was—it was Jim Valentine that the man was like! It was only a glimpse of resemblance, but it was sufficient to indicate relationship, now that the man had explained who he was.

"Please step into my study, Mr. Valentine," said the Remove master. "The boy is in my Form, and I can answer any question concerning him."

"Is he in the school now, sir?"

"No; he has gone with other boys to play football at a neighbouring school. But they will be returning before long. Please come this way."

"Sim, senhor!"

In Mr. Quelch's study the stocky man sat down, and Mr. Quelch's glance lingered curiously on his tanned face. It was the face of a man between thirty and forty, with pleasant, hazel eyes, very like Valentine's, and a frank, almost boyish expression on it—the healthy face of an open-air man.

"And you are Valentine's uncle?" said Mr. Quelch.

He did not doubt now; but it was his business to be on his guard in dealing with any man who claimed a connection with the "boy with a past."

"Sim, senhor." The tanned face broke into a smile. "Excuse me—I am so accustomed to speaking Portuguese that I forget occasionally to speak in English. I have lived many years in Brazil."

"Valentine has told me of an uncle who went to South America some years ago, and of whom he has never since heard."

"I am he, senhor. I had little to write home about." The bronzed man smiled. "I had no relatives but Jim, and he was under the charge of his uncle on the other side of the family. He was a small kid when I saw him last—he must be about fifteen now, I suppose."

"That is so. But I am quite surprised to hear that you knew that he was at Greyfriars. It is inexplicable."

"Not at all, when I explain," smiled Mr. Valentine. "I did not know for certain that he was here—I came to inquire, senhor! A few days ago I flew a plane from Paris, and had bad luck—the machine came down in flames in a field near this school, and a number of boys ran up to offer help. I dropped in a parachute, and was rather bruised and shaken."

"One of the boys struck my attention very forcibly—by his resemblance to Jim. Another of the boys mentioned that they belonged to Greyfriars. I have been very busy since, but I have thought the matter over and it seemed possible that the boy was indeed my nephew. Hence my visit to-day to ask

whether there was a boy named Valentine in the school."

Mr. Quelch nodded. "I heard of the accident to the plane," he said. "You appear to have had a narrow escape. Mr. Valentine."

"We are used to that, in our line of life, sir," answered the flying-man carelessly. "I am the superintendent of an aerodrome under the Brazilian Government, in the country of my adoption, and I am over here to negotiate the purchase of a number of biplanes for Brazil. I have completed my business in Europe, and am now about to return to South America; but—"

He paused.

"I have already looked for Jim in his former home," he explained. "But it seems that his other uncle died more than a year ago after which the boy was taken away from school by some man who had been appointed his guardian—a Mr. Compton—but of this man I could find no trace."

"I was prepared, if necessary, to take the boy in my charge, and to take him out to Brazil with me; but as I heard that he was under the guardianship of a wealthy man, I concluded that he had no need of my assistance."

"Nevertheless, I should be glad to see him and ascertain whether I can do anything for him. Finding him at a school like Greyfriars, however, I must suppose that he is well provided for."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"You know nothing of Valentine's experiences since he was left alone in the world?" he asked.

"Naturally, nothing. But I suppose that it is his guardian, Mr. Compton, who has sent him to this school."

"Not at all. The Mr. Compton you speak of is, I believe, properly named Compton Clark—and is—is far from being the wealthy gentleman you suppose—being, in fact, a law-breaking rascal!" said Mr. Quelch warmly. "It was most unfortunate that the boy fell into his hands, but I am glad to say that Valentine fled from him at the first opportunity."

"Corpo de Deus!" murmured the flying-man. "But in that case, how does it happen that the boy is here?"

"It chanced, sir, that he rendered me a great service, guiding me to safety when I was lost in a desolate wood on a winter's night, said Mr. Quelch. "I took him under my protection, and, with the headmaster's consent, placed him in this school."

"That was a kind and generous action, senhor!"

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"I have never had cause to regret my action, Mr. Valentine. The boy has passed through some painful experiences—but I can now answer for it that he is as good and honourable a lad as any in this school."

"I am glad to hear it. But"—the flying-man paused and bit his lip—"do you mean to imply that the boy took to bad courses—that he was—in any way outside the law when he was in the hands of this man Compton or Clark?"

The Remove master coughed again. "I have feared so," he confessed.

"Valentine is extremely reticent about his past, and I have forbore to question him too closely, but I fear that he may have been driven into actions of which I do not care to think, while he was in the hands of a scoundrel. If so, he has more than atoned for it. His former associates have made attempts to induce him to rejoin them; but he

has refused to have anything to do with them—and there is no doubt that when he was with them he had plenty of money, while here he is as poor as the poorest boy in the school. His character, sir, is a sterling one."

The uring-man nodded slowly. "And you are willing for him to remain?"

"More than willing, sir. I should be sorry to lose him, though, of course, I should not think of standing in his way if he preferred to accept the protection of a blood-relative."

"Probably he would prefer to remain. I can offer him a good opening, under my own care in Brazil. But it is not an easy life, and he may very likely choose to remain here," said Mr. Valentine. "In that case, it must be at my charges, sir. I am now a wealthy man, and there is no need for my nephew to be dependent upon a stranger, however kind and generous. I should like to see the boy and discuss the matter with him."

"You may certainly see him, Mr. Valentine, as soon as he comes back, which cannot be long now. The juniors will be back before dark," said Mr. Quelch. "Certainly, you should not leave without having seen him, especially if you are leaving England soon."

"I am leaving England to-night, from Wapshot," answered Mr. Valentine, with a smile.

"From Wapshot?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"By plane, sir," explained the flying-man. "I am making a hop to Paris, where I have to conclude some business in the morning, before leaving Europe again for South America."

"Then you must certainly see him while you are here," said Mr. Quelch. "If you will stay to tea with me, the boy will be back, and then—"

"Muito obrigado, senhor!" said Peter Valentine.

While Mr. Quelch was giving instructions for tea to be brought to the study the flying-man stood at the window, looking out into the quad—at the old elms, the grey old buildings, the playing-fields in the distance, where a game was going on between two teams of the Fifth and Sixth. His bronzed face was very thoughtful.

After many years in a foreign country he had a yearning to see one of his own kindred, and Jim Valentine was the only blood-relation he had in the world. He would have been glad—more than glad—to take the boy back with him to the country where he had made his fortune and made his home. He wondered whether the boy would have preferred the sun-baked cities, the vast forests, the rolling Amazon, to his present surroundings, and he shook his head at the thought. He had found his nephew—but it was only to leave him where he had found him! Little did the man from Brazil dream what was destined to happen before he stepped into his plane and took off from Wapshot Aerodrome.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

At St. Jude's!

"GOAL!"

"Good man, Wharton!"

"Well kicked, sir!"

Remove fellows, round the football field at St. Jude's School, were shouting. The pill was in the net, and Harry Wharton's foot had landed it there. The roar of "Goal" greeted



Inspector Grimes was not three yards from Nosey when the crook heard a sudden sound from behind. He twisted round, to see an electric torch gleaming and policemen's helmets topping the brambles!

Jim Valentino's ears as he came at a run towards the football ground.

Valentine had lost no time, after shaking off the Bounder in Redclyffe Wood. He left his machine at the porter's lodge and hurried in—to find the football match going strong, and getting on towards half-time. He stared blankly as he came breathlessly up.

Bob Cherry, in the field, spotted him as the sides lined up again after the goal, and waved a hand to him. Valentine could only stare.

According to the telephone message, the match was to wait till he got to St. Jude's. Evidently it had not waited. And Bob Cherry, who was supposed to have had some accident and dropped out of the team, was playing, as large as life! Jim could only wonder, in amazement, what it all meant.

Obviously, at all events, he was not wanted to play. He joined the knot of Greyfriars fellows looking on at the game. Ogilvy of the Remove gave him a friendly grin.

"You've come over after all!" said the Scottish junior. "Fed-up with Quelch and the extra toot—what?"

"N-no," stammered Valentine, "I thought Wharton wanted me here. Didn't he ask somebody here to phone for me to come?"

"Not that I know of," answered Ogilvy, with a stare. "Why should he?"

"Well, somebody did phone, and used Wharton's name," said Jim blankly.

"Somebody pulling your leg then.

Hallo, there they go again! Play up, Greyfriars!" yelled Ogilvy.

Jim Valentino stood looking on. He could not make it out, in the least. Had he been aware that the tell-tale paper had been surreptitiously purloined from his desk in Study No. 1 in the Remove, he might easily have guessed that it was a trick of Nosey Clark—a trick to get him out of the school into a lonely place, where he could be seized by force. But he was quite unaware of Nutty Nixon's activities at Greyfriars the previous night. The cunning cracksman had come and gone without leaving a sign, and it never crossed Jim's mind for a moment that his safeguard was gone, and that the gang of crooks were once more seeking to kidnap him. The whole thing was a puzzle to him.

The whistle went for half-time, and Harry Wharton came along to speak to Valentine.

"You're here after all!" he said. "Glad to see you, old bean, though I never expected to."

"Well, you ought to have expected to, if you asked that man, whoever he was, to phone for me," answered Valentine, a trifle tartly.

Wharton stared at him.

"Somebody phoned for you?" he asked. "Who the dickens—"

"Some man at this school phoned to Quelch, while I was doing Latin with him, and said that Bob had been damaged slipping from the train—"

"My only hat!" ejaculated the captain of the Remove in astonishment. "I never knew anything about it. Bob wasn't damaged! Does he look like it?"

"Well, no; but the man here said on the phone that you wanted me to play half-back in his place, and I was to come over at once, and you'd wait—"

"Great pip!"

"And it was all gammon then?" asked Jim.

"Somebody's been spoofing, that's a cert," said the astonished captain of the Remove. "Sure the phone call came from here?"

"Well, the man said so, and Quelch supposed so, and I—"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"It's a rotten trick!" he said. "Can't make out who did it. I suppose Smithy wouldn't be such a fool, and I can't think of anybody else. You've been spoofed, old man!"

"I'd like to know who it was!" growled Valentine. "If it was Smithy playing tricks I'll jolly well call him to account when I get back to Greyfriars. The silly ass followed me when I came over, and I dodged him in Redclyffe Wood and left him to root for me."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I hardly think it would be Smithy, though he's rather got his teeth into you. Can't make it out!"

The captain of the Remove went back to the footballers, leaving Jim Valentine wondering. Jim was not sorry, if it came to that, to be standing in the fresh, open air, watching the game, instead of grinding deponent verbs in Mr. Quelch's study. It was, in fact, a change for the better. But it was distinctly irritating to have had his leg pulled; and it was possible that Mr. Quelch might fancy that he had had a

part in the trick if he learned that Valentine had not, after all, played in the match. The mere thought of appearing careless and ungrateful towards his benefactor was disagreeable enough. Who had played that trick, unless it was Smitty, his only enemy in the school? Yet, if it was Smitty, why had the Bouncer followed him when he left the school to ride over to St. Jude's? Anyhow, he resolved to see the Bouncer when he got back to Greyfriars, and find out the facts.

Meanwhile, he dismissed the matter from his mind and gave his thoughts to the football match he was watching. The Greyfriars fellows were getting the upper hand, and Valentine joined in the cheering of another and another goal. Little did it occur to his mind, as he shouted with the other fellows, that this was the last Greyfriars game he would ever watch. Little did he dream that before another sun rose the climax of his life would have come and a strange new life would be opening before him. The future was veiled from his eyes as he stood and cheered among the other Greyfriars fellows.

"Three—one!" said Bob Cherry, when the players came off the field. "Good news for Smitty. He will be glad to hear that the Remove can win matches without his royal nibs!"

"The gladfulness will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Jim Valentine joined the crowd of Greyfriars fellows going to the station. He packed into the same carriage with the Famous Five, and two or three more fellows. That mysterious telephone call was discussed on the way home, but nobody could throw light on it, though several fellows suspected that the Bouncer had had a hand in it, in the absence of anyone else to suspect.

The train passed through Redclyffe Station on its way to Courtfield. Bob Cherry, looking from the window, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Something's up yonder!" he remarked.

The juniors crammed the windows,

and stared at the shadowy mass of Redclyffe Wood, spread out at a little distance. On the road by the wood mounted police were patrolling; and a car passed in view with several constables in it. Here and there, in open places in the woodland, policemen's helmets could be seen.

The juniors watched curiously, until the train had swept on, and Redclyffe Wood disappeared from sight.

"They're combing the wood for somebody!" said Bob.

"Looks like it!" said Valentine.

He did not guess for whom Inspector Grimes and his men were combing Redclyffe Wood! There was no thought of Nosey Clark in his mind when he arrived at Greyfriars with the cheery crowd of Remove fellows.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Surprise!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, greeting the Owl of the Remove with a hearty smack on the shoulder—a smack so hearty that Billy Bunter yelled.

"Wow! Beast! Wharrer you hitting me for?" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear old fat fruit, that was a friendly smack!" said Bob. "Now I'll give you an unfriendly one, and you'll see the difference!"

Billy Bunter jumped back like a fat kangaroo.

"Beast! Keep off!" he howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, have you—"

gasped Bunter.

"Yes, we've won!" said Harry Wharton, interrupting the fat Owl's inquiry.

"Three goals to one, old fat man!"

"Eh! What? Oh, yes! But I was going to ask you—"

Harry Wharton laughed. He had supposed that Bunter was going to ask the result of the Soccer match at St. Jude's. Evidently he had supposed too much.

"Well, what, fathead?" he asked.

"Have you had your tea?" Bunter got it out. "You see, I've been waiting for you fellows to come in—waiting tea for you! I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've only had tea in Hall, so far," said Bunter pathetically, "and a couple of doughnuts I found in Ogilvy's study—"

"What's that?" ejaculated Ogilvy.

"Eh! I didn't see you, old chap! I mean, I never found any doughnuts in your study—I meant, Brown's—"

"Mine?" ejaculated Tom Brown.

"Eh! No! Bolsover's!" said Bunter hastily. "But, to come to the point, what about tea, you fellows? That beast Smitty hasn't come in. I was going to tea with him—"

"Did he know?" grinned Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I say, Valentine, did he whom you?" grinned Bunter. "He was after you to whom you! He, he, he!"

"He was after me, certainly," said Valentine dryly. "I left him in Redclyffe Wood—still looking for me, perhaps!"

"Well, he hasn't come in! I say, Valentine, you'd better hike off to Quelch's study! You're for it!"

Valentine stared at the fat Owl.

"What do you mean, ass? Has Quelch said I'm to go to his study?"

"Yes, rather! He's been out twice to see if you were back!" chuckled Bunter.

"He's in a fearful rage! He, he, he! It's a whopping, old chap! I could see that in his eyes! You know his look! I'm not saying this to make you get the wind up, you know, because you barged me over in the quad this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! You won't cackle when you see Quelch, I can jolly well tell you!" said Bunter darkly. "He's in an awful bate—grinding his teeth! He told me to send you to his study at once when you came in. 'Send that young scoundrel to my study as soon as you see him, Bunter!' was what he said. His very words!"

"Yes, I can hear Quelch saying that—I don't think!" chuckled Bob.

"He's got it in for Valentine!" said Bunter. "He's fairly foaming! Foaming at the mouth with rage!"

"Go it!"

"It's a flogging at least for Valentine," said Bunter, cheerfully. "Can't say I'm sorry! Barging a man over for nothing—"

"You fat frump!" exclaimed Valentine. "Has Quelch really said that I'm to go to his study?"

"Certainly he has! I tell you he's been out twice! The first time he was merely scowling, but the second time he was grinding his teeth, like a man filing a saw! Seeing that I was waiting for you fellows to come in, he said to me, 'Bunter, see that that young blighter comes to my study the minute he puts his ugly face into the House.' His very words!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. The idea of Mr. Quelch, their stateley Form master, expressing himself in such words, seemed to entertain them.

"Cackle!" sneered Bunter. "But I can jolly well tell you that Valentine is for it! Quelch is waiting for him—and simply furious! The other man keeps on staring out of the study window—"

"The who?"

"Quelch has got another man in his study—had tea with him—a man with a face like a copper pot," said Bunter.



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"I saw Quelch take him to see the Head; but they're back in Quelch's study now. Blessed if I know who he is—never saw him before. Some blinking foreigner, I fancy!"

"Well, it won't be a whopping, Valentine," said the captain of the Remove. "Quelch wouldn't whop with a visitor in the study."

"Wouldn't he?" grinned Bunter. "I can tell you he was foaming with fury! Pale with rage, you know! Grinding his teeth to such an extent that I thought they would come out! He said to me, 'Keep your peepers open for that young rotter Valentine, Bunter, and buzz him into my study as soon as he hikes in! I'm going to take the skin off him!' His very words!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you fat dummy, has Quelch really sent for me, or not?" demanded Valentine, taking Billy Bunter by the collar and shaking him.

"Yaroo!"

"Answer me, you fat chump!"

"Woo-hoo! Leggo! If you make my specs fall off—wow!—make him leggo, you fellows! Yoop!"

"Valentine!" Wingate of the Sixth came along. "You're wanted in your Form master's study."

"Yes, Wingate!"

Jim released the gasping fat Owl. He left his friends and made his way to Masters' Passage.

His face was a little clouded. Billy Bunter's fatuous remarks had little effect on him; but he wondered what Mr. Quelch wanted, and whether it was trouble. That "spoo!" telephone call had taken him away from "extra toot," which might have annoyed Mr. Quelch had he discovered that the call was a "spoo."

He tapped at his Form master's door. "Come in!"

Mr. Quelch's voice did not sound as if he was angry.

Valentine entered the study. His uneasiness was relieved the next moment. Mr. Quelch rose from his chair, with a very kind and benevolent expression on his face. So far from foaming with rage, as the fat Owl had declared, the Remove master was obviously in one of his very best tempers.

Jim glanced at the other man in the study, who also rose to his feet and started a little. It was the bronzed-faced airman who had dropped in the parachute, in the meadow near Greyfriars, a few days since—the man who had seemed to recognise him.

Jim's heart beat fast. Who the man was, and why he was at Greyfriars, he could not guess; but the "boy with a past" could not feel easy in the presence of a man who appeared to know something of him.

The bronzed man's eyes were fixed on him with a penetrating look. But it was Mr. Quelch who spoke.

"I am glad you have returned, Valentine! This gentleman has been waiting to see you."

"Yes, sir!" said Jim quietly.

"You do not recognise him, Valentine?" asked the Remove master, with a smile.

"No, sir!"

"Yet you have seen him before."

"Not for four or five years, though!" said the flying-man, his bronzed face breaking into a pleasant smile. "And I dare say I have changed a good deal—the sun of Brazil makes a difference."

Valentine gave a violent start.

"Brazil!" he exclaimed. "You are from Brazil, sir?"

"Yes, my boy! Look at me again!" smiled the flying-man.

Jim Valentine scanned his face. Five years under a tropical sun had changed Peter Valentine; but as he scrutinised the bronzed visage recollection came to the boy, and he understood.

POCKET-MONEY WON!

Result of "Magnet" Painting Contest!

THE FIRST PRIZE OF 1s. A WEEK FOR A YEAR for the best coloured picture sent in has been captured by:

WILLIAM WAREING,
3, Lonsdale Avenue, Swinton,
Manchester.

THE SECOND PRIZE OF 6d. A WEEK FOR A YEAR has been won by:

TREVOR BACON,
60, King Street, Gt. Yarmouth.

THE 50 OTHER PRIZES have been awarded to the following:

James Ashton, 68, Holland St., Pendleton, Salford; Michael F. Avery, 8, Clarence Rd., Teddington, Middx.; William Ayre, 14, Church Ter., Wooley Ter., Crook; K. G. Barratt, 109, Evington Drive, Leicester; Dennis W. Berry, 69, Melbourne Grove, East Dulwich, S.E.22; N. Bittleston, 13a, Constitution Hill, Ipswich; Roy E. Bolton, 47, Vyner Rd., East Acton Lane, Acton, W.3; Donald Boulton, 12, Thanet Rd., Edinminster, Bristol; M. Brown, 11, Lady Somerset Rd., Tufnell Park, N.W.5; William Brown, 56, Three Tuns Road, Eastwood, Notts; James Clarke, 6, The Crescent, Taunton, Somerset; Arthur Craven, 53, Drummond Av., Layton, Blackpool; Leonard Davies, 5, Carlton St., Causing Town, E.16; Stanley Delo, 9, Dorset Road, Coventry; John L. Dix, 60, Chilton West View, North Shields; C. Fergusson, Bridge End, The Avenue, Wilton, nr. Salisbury; Brian Foster, 10, Anne Street, Cheetham Hill, Manchester; J. Godwin, 3, Donnington Mansions, Willesden, N.W.10; H. Green, 63, St. Alban's Rd., Blackpool; Frank Howard, 8, Bedford St., Wisbech, Cambs; John Howard, 37, St. Warburghas Rd., Layton, Blackpool; Frank L. Hewing, 83, Rossington Rd., off Sneinton Dale, Nottingham; Ronald Humpage, 76, Harbury Rd., Cannon Hill, Birmingham; Herbert W. Hunt, 278, Rolls Rd., Bermuda, S.E.1; A. Joshing, 1a, Station Rd., Beccles, Suffolk; Clifford Kilderby, 82, Bookwood Rd., Osmandthorpe, Leeds; Donald Lake, 24, Pickhurst Rise, West Wickham, Kent; Colin R. Lear, 44, Woodville Rd., Golders Green, N.W.11; C. G. Long, 15, Strada St. Anna, Floriana, Malta; E. Males, 30, Cobham Rd., Wood Green, N.22; John R. Marshall, 33, Sunnyside Gdns., Bury St., Edmonton, N.9; Trevor Moss, 63, Empire Rd., Torquay; Patrick Newark, 230, Lordship Lane, London, N.17; Bernard North, 22, Blagdon Rd., New Malden, Surrey; Miss I. Randall, The Post Office Ho., Sandwich, Kent; J. S. Redmore, 68, St. Brannocks Park, Ilfracombe; Harry E. Richards, 18, Partridge Av., Darlington, S. Staffs; John H. Richardson, White Lodge, Church Rd., Whitechurch, Glam; Kenneth Robinson, 144, Jelfcock Rd., Wolverhampton; Harold C. Speed, Walkdene, South Rd., Beccles, Suffolk; Raydn J. Smith, 42, St. James St., Northampton; B. Stewart, 72, Roods, Kilmuir, Angus; J. Thorpe, 14, Hudum St., Rnscombe, Manchester; Robert Todd, 5, Bolckow St., North Skelton-in-Cleveland; Peter Tuddenham, Shaaklin, Rosbery Rd., Felixstowe; Barrie H. Turner, Claremont, Station Rd., Corbridge; Jack Turner, 144, Barclowie St., Possilpark, Glasgow; Harold West, 17, Egan Cres., Mayhill, Swansea; Eric Wray, 10, Meade Road, West Derby, Liverpool; Bernard Wright, 79 Belle Vue Rd., Leeds.

"Is—is—is it possible?" he exclaimed.

"You are not—not—"

"You've guessed it!"

"Yes, Valentine, this gentleman is your uncle, Mr. Peter Valentine!" said the Remove master.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Jim.

Peter Valentine extended a sinewy, brown hand and took the schoolboy's in it, with a grip that made him wince a little.

"Glad to see your uncle, Jim?" he asked.

"Oh! Yes, yes!" exclaimed Valentine eagerly. "I can't tell you how glad I My Uncle Valentine—after all these years!"

Mr. Quelch rustled to the door. "You will desire to talk with your uncle, Valentine," he said. "I have some business with the headmaster at the moment, and I will leave you for the present."

The Remove master left the study; and Jim Valentine, feeling a good deal like a fellow in a dream, was left with his uncle from Brazil.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bagged at Last!

NOSEY CLARK panted like a hunted animal.

The man with the nose like a vulture's beak was crouching in the cover of a damp thicket in the heart of Redclyffe Wood listening—his ears straining, like those of a fox with the hounds at hand.

A fox he was—a human fox, and now he was hunted hard; and the hounds were very close!

Fear and rage mingled in the hard, beaky face as the crook crouched and slivered and listened.

For many years, Nosey Clark had defied and eluded the law; but the law's strong arm was stretched out for him now, and it was borne in upon his mind that the end had come to a career of crime.

He had been ruthlessly determined to drive Dick the Penman back into a crooked life; and that ruthlessness had been his undoing!

He crouched and hid; but he knew in his bones that it was the finish!

The blow had fallen suddenly, unexpectedly; it had landed like a thunderbolt. Danger had not been even in his thoughts.

In the willows by the bridge-path the four rascals had watched and waited—watching and waiting for the boy who was never coming. A long hour had passed—and Jim Valentine had not come! Nosey Clark had realised, at last, that something must have gone wrong; there had been some hitch in the scheme that had seemed absolutely certain to succeed; he had failed, as he had failed before.

Not for a moment did he guess that his failure was due to Vernon-Smith. He had forgotten Smithy—forgotten the schoolboy who had been collared by mistake, and allowed to go on his way. Perhaps Jim had missed the paper from his desk—or taken the alarm in some other way—or perhaps by mere chance he had gone to St. Jude's by a different route, whatever the cause, it was clear at last that he was not going to fall into that cunning ambush. And Nosey Clark had decided, at last, to give it up and try again another day! But that "other day" was destined never to come.

For the lonely wood, lonely and silent when the crooks had crept into it from their car hidden in a shadowy lane, was

no longer lonely. Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, had acted promptly on the information Herbert Vernon-Smith had telephoned from Redclyffe. Already there was a cordon of police round the wood; and when, at last, the crooks, in savage disappointment, quitted their ambush, the sight of a policeman's helmet on the bridle-path drove them panting back to cover.

What followed seemed like an evil dream to Nosey.

There were police in the wood—the natural enemies of Nosey Clark & Co. With beating hearts the rascals had crept away by a different path—only to find it blocked and guarded, and to find back in terror. It was then that Nosey Clark & Co. realised that the officers of the law were not there by chance, looking for other game. They knew that they were hunted and tracked—and the same thought was in all their minds—that the boy at Greyfriars had given them away. How else could the police have come upon them in that solitary spot?

Dick the Penman had spotted them and betrayed them—that was the only conclusion to which they could come. They had counted upon his silence, even while they strove and schemed and plotted to injure him; for his safety depended on theirs; if he gave them away, they could give Dick the Penman away in their turn. But now they could only believe that the boy, driven to desperation by their persecution, had thrown prudence to the winds and betrayed them to the police. For the police were round them—guarding every path—seeking them through the thickets—and the game was up!

Deep in the wood, the desperate rascals separated, to seek safety singly. Taking different directions, they crept and crawled; but through an opening of the underwoods Nosey had seen Nutty Nixon collared and handcuffed; and later, a stream of profanity from the lips of Kicky Judd told that he also was in official hands. And though Nosey did not know it, Barney Hayes had also fallen into the grasp of the police, after a savage struggle. And Nosey, crouching like a hunted beast in cover, could hear footsteps and rustling, and calling voices, and knew that he was surrounded and that the circle was closing in.

His black eyes glinted with rage; his vulture's nose glowed purple. Jim Valentine—Dick the Penman—had done this—and the game was up for the gang of crooks! Nosey Clark, at long last, was going where he belonged—the fate he had long cluded, was upon him at last; the fate which he might have known was certain to be the ultimate result of a crooked life!

He crouched and shivered. What did they know—what could they prove against him? If Dick the Penman had spoken, they knew enough to "send him up" for ten years! But even without the help of the boy with a past, there was enough against him—he had been seen at Popper Court on the night of the robbery—he was known to have kidnapped the boy Wharton—and there were other things! They had plenty of evidence on which to arrest and hold him—and once in the hands of the police the rest was inevitable.

In his country house in Sussex "Mr. Compton" was safe enough, so long as Jim Valentine kept silence—but in a place where he could be identified as Nosey Clark it was a different matter. And once in the toils, all would come out—the police would not be long in discovering that Nosey Clark was Mr. Compton, of Compton House, Sussex—and a search of that mansion would

reveal all his crooked activities. The game was up—the game was up—those words hammered in the crook's throbbing brain as he crouched and listened to the footsteps that drew closer and closer.

Deep dusk was over the wood—there was a faint hope in Nosey Clark's heart that when darkness fell he might yet have a chance of getting clear. But the hope was very faint.

Lights flashed on the paths and in the thickets. They were hunting him close and hard.

Through the twigs and brambles he had a glimpse of a portly form—that of Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield. The inspector's plump face was keen and alert in the light of the lantern held by a constable. Nosey's glinting eyes burned at him from his cover. His hand, for a moment, strayed to his hip-pocket. But it was useless, worse than useless, to draw the deadly automatic. A shot would bring them on him in a swarm—and Nosey was very much concerned about his worthless neck. He gave up that desperate thought as soon as it entered his mind. He crouched like a hunted beast, his heart pounding.

The portly inspector from Courtfield was not three yards from him. And suddenly, behind him, Nosey heard a sound.

He twisted round to see an electric torch gleaming, and a policeman's helmet topping the brambles.

He panted with despair.

He was seen the next moment, and there was a shout. He bounded from the thicket and ran. A moment more, and hands were upon him, and he was dragged back, struggling, panting, spitting like a cat. And then there was a click of metal, and the handcuffs were on his wrists; and Mr. Grimes was grinning at him genially in the lantern-light.

"That's the last of them!" said Mr. Grimes. "We've got the whole bag!"

"That's four, sir!" said one of the constables.

"Four's the lot!" said Mr. Grimes. "Four of them, according to the information received."

Nosey Clark gritted his teeth. He stood handcuffed, with a constable holding either arm. He strove to pull himself together.

"What's the charge?" he asked quietly.

"The charge?" repeated Mr. Grimes reflectively. "Well, we've got a few! Burglary and kidnapping to begin with! More to follow, I fancy—but enough to hold you on, my friend, while we look into your record. What?"

Nosey breathed hard.

"Will you answer me one question?"

"That depends!" answered Mr. Grimes, genial but guarded. "You can ask it if you like."

"Was it a Greyfriars boy who put you on to us?"

The inspector stared, and then smiled.

"You've guessed that? No reason why you shouldn't know—yes, it was!"

"And the boy—" Nosey almost choked with fury. "Have you got him?"

"Got him?" repeated the inspector blankly. Certainly he had no idea or intention of "getting" Herbert Vernon-Smith. But it was not of Vernon-Smith that the captured crook was thinking.

Nosey ground out an imprecation.

"You've got me, you've got the rest, but you've not got Dick the Penman. Are you letting him slip through your fingers?"

Mr. Grimes was attentive at once.

Dick the Penman! Glad as he was

to get the handcuffs on Nosey Clark & Co., Mr. Grimes would gladly have given up his whole bag, in order to get them on the elusive Penman, whose real name and identity were clouded in mystery. That the Penman was one of Nosey Clark's gang he was sure, and he had hoped to get him with the others. Indeed, he was not sure that Nosey was not the mysterious Penman himself. The mere mention of the name was enough to make Mr. Grimes very alert.

"You're letting him escape!" Nosey's voice rose almost to a shriek in his rage. "You're letting him slip—Dick the Penman!"

"Not if I can help it!" said the inspector, with a very curious look at the crook's enraged face. "We'll get him all right, my friend."

"He's in the wood—or was. He can't have gone back to the school. He dare not, now he's given us away!"

"To the school?" repeated Mr. Grimes.

"If you let him slip—" Nosey panted. "Dick the penman, Jim Valentine—"

"Jim Valentine!"

"You never knew!" snarled Nosey. "No; you'd never have known, either! You've let yourself be beaten by a boy—a schoolboy! Bah! I tell you that Jim Valentine of Greyfriars School is Dick the Penman. And every man you've got in your hands will tell you the same."

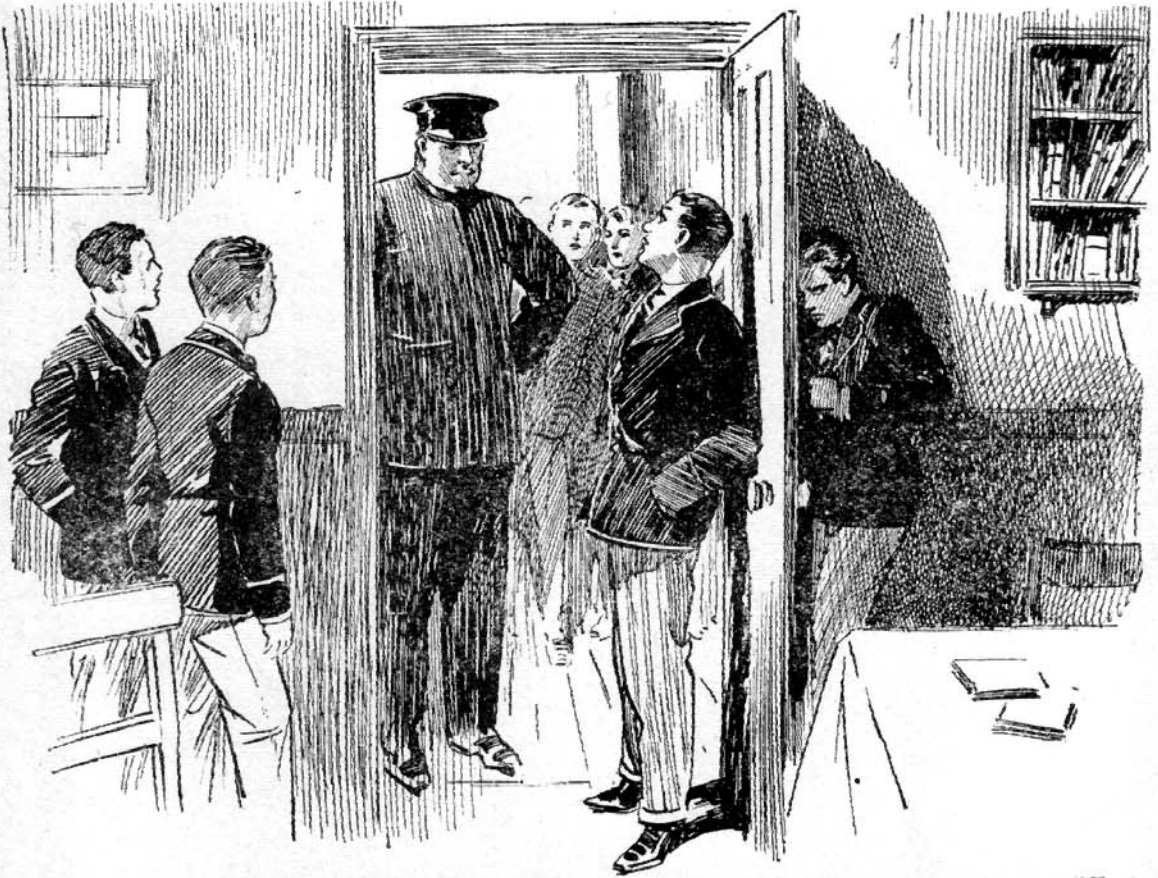
Inspector Grimes drew a long, deep breath.

Jim Valentine, Dick the Penman! He understood at last. His suspicions of the "boy with a past" had been deep and keen, but he had never suspected that. The mysterious, elusive Penman, a boy—a mere boy! That was the secret that the boy with a past had been hiding—the secret that Mr. Grimes, keen as he was, had never been able to penetrate. He breathed hard and deep, and his eyes danced. Dick the Penman, who had baffled Scotland Yard, was to fall into the hands of Henry Grimes, inspector, of Courtfield. Mr. Grimes felt at that moment like the ancient classic gentleman who touched the stars with his sublime head. His plump fingers tingled with the desire to grip the shoulder of Jim Valentine of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Bring him along!" he said abruptly.

He tramped away through the dark wood, followed by the constables, with Nosey Clark between them. For some reason unknown to the inspector, Clark believed that it was Valentine who had given him away. Had it been so, Dick the Penman would have fled promptly enough. But it was not so. Valentine, so far as Mr. Grimes knew, was unaware of the capture of the crooks. Even had he, as Vernon-Smith suspected, intended to meet them in the wood that afternoon, it was clear that he had not met them. He knew nothing, and was not on his guard. He was at Greyfriars, unsuspecting—ready to fall into the inspector's hands like a ripe apple. All that Mr. Grimes had to do was to call at Greyfriars, and "collect" Jim Valentine, and then he would have a full "bag." It was going to be the triumph of Mr. Grimes' official career.

Mr. Grimes stayed only to give brief directions for the safe bestowal of his prisoners, and jumped into the car that had brought him from Courtfield. And official gentleman as he was, and a stern upholder of the law, Mr. Grimes recklessly disregarded speed limits as he raced away in the car, heading for Greyfriars School and Jim Valentine.



Vernon-Smith dragged Valentine behind the study door and then faced the portly inspector as he came tramping up. "You've got him, sir?" asked the Bounder. "I'm here for him, Master Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Grimes. "I understand he's in this study!" "He was, three minutes ago," said the Bounder, "but a fellow tipped him that you were coming!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Blow Falls!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life?" bawled Bob Cherry. The Famous Five were standing themselves a study supper in Study No. 1 in the Remova when Jim Valentine came in.

Valentine looked as if he was enjoying life.

His face was flushed, and looked more handsome than ever; his eyes shining, his step light. Indeed, he seemed to be walking on air.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him curiously.

"Come into a fortune?" asked Harry. Valentine laughed.

"Better than that," he answered.

"The betterfulness must be terrific, to judge by the esteemed and ridiculous light of your absurd countenance," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You've been a jolly long time with Quelch," said Frank Nugent. "You cut call-over, I noticed."

"Not with Quelch—with my uncle," said Valentine, smiling.

Five fellows jumped at the same time. Five voices repeated:

"Your uncle!"

"My jolly old uncle! My Uncle Valentine! My uncle from Brazil. I can tell you fellows that I'm feeling good," chuckled Valentine. "You remember that flying-man who came down the other day?"

"What about him?"

"He seemed to recognise me—"

"And you gave him the marble eye," said Johnny Bull.

"I never guessed. He's changed a lot, and it's five years since I've seen him," said Jim. "But he knew me, and came here to-day to ask—"

"You don't mean to say—" gasped Wharton.

"I jolly well do! He's my Uncle Valentine, home from Brazil. He's been trying to find me, but, of course, had no luck. But when he saw me the day the plane came down—"

"Well, my only hat!"

"He's a splendid chap!" said Valentine. "I—I've had a long jaw with him. I've told him everything. About—about Nosey Clark and the gang, and—and Dick the Penman, and—and all that." He coloured. "All that you fellows knew, and a good deal more. I had to tell him. I—I wanted him to stick to me; but—but I wasn't going to have any false pretences. I've told him the whole lot."

"That was right," said Harry Wharton gravely. "But what does he say?"

"He can make allowances for a kid who fell into the hands of a villain like Nosey Clark. And—and he knows I cut it all. And Quelch has told him what he thinks of me, and—and— Well, so far as uncle is concerned, it's all washed out. He's standing by me."

"Good man!" said Bob.

"He's in the air service in Brazil," went on Valentine. "He's offered to take me out there, if I like. He'll be glad if I'll go. I'd have jumped at it once, but now—now I can't make up my mind that I can leave Greyfriars. I—I want to talk to you fellows about it. My uncle's leaving England to-night in

his aeroplane for Paris, so I've not much time to make up my mind."

"Quick work," grinned Bob.

"He may not be back again for years. I've got to tell him my decision to-night," said Valentine. "I've got to think it out."

"Mop up some supper while you think it out," said Nugent.

Valentine laughed, and sat down at the table. But his face became grave again. It was a serious decision that he had to make, and it required some thinking out.

If he accepted his uncle's offer in a far country, he would be safe from Nosey Clark & Co.—safe from the past of Dick the Penman. The shadow of the underworld would be lifted from him, and lifted for ever. He was happy at Greyfriars, and he had made staunch friends there, whom he was loath to leave. Yet all the time there was the lurking danger that Dick the Penman might be discovered and tracked out, though Valentine little dreamed how terribly near that danger was, even in these happy moments.

Leaving Greyfriars would be a wrench, but it would be a wrench, too, to part with his only relative now that he had found him. And prudence urged him to go, while the going was good. And the wonderful land of South America, the vast forests, the rolling Amazon, the blaze of tropic suns appealed to his boyish imagination.

And he had some day his way to make in the world—and this was his chance. And yet— Greyfriars was his home now; his friends were round

aim. And he had a strong attachment to the kindhearted man who had befriended and protected him. Like Desdemona in the play, he perceived here a divided duty. And it was difficult to make up his mind, though fate, in those moments, was deciding the question for him.

There was eager talk round the table in Study No. 1. Billy Bunter, looking in on the suspicion that a supper was going on, was promptly kicked out, and departed yelling. It was not easy for Harry Wharton & Co. to advise their chum. They did not want to lose him, yet they realised that he would do well not to lose such a chance.

Jim Valentine's uncle had gone back to Wapshot Camp, to make his final preparations for the flight. If Valentine was going he had to join him there before he left. If he did not come, Peter Valentine would know that his nephew had decided to remain at Greyfriars School. And there was not much time now for thinking it out.

He finished a hasty supper, and threw himself into the armchair. The Famous Five sat on the study table, and all faces were thoughtful. They were discussing the pros and cons. And it was still undecided whether Jim Valentine would go to the Remove dormitory that night with the Form, or whether he would ring up a taxi to carry him to Wapshot. The talk ceased as the study door swung open, and the Bounder came in.

He gave the Famous Five a sardonic look. He did not, for the moment, see Valentine, who was hidden from his sight by the high back of the armchair.

Smithy did not, as a matter of fact, know that Valentine was in the school at all. He had come in late himself for call-over, having remained in Redclyffe Wood to see what happened after Mr. Grimes got there. He had seen Nutty Nixon, Barney Hayes, and Kicky Judd handcuffed and packed into the police car under guard before he left. Mr. Grimes and his men were still hunting Nosey Clark in the dark woods when Vernon-Smith started for Greyfriars; even the reckless Bounder not venturing to remain longer out of gates. But though he was late for call-over himself, he had learned that Valentine had not been present when the roll was called in Hall; and he thought he knew why. Quite unaware that Valentine was in Mr. Quelch's study at that time, talking to his uncle from Brazil, Vernon-Smith had no doubt that he was in Redclyffe Woods, hunted with the rest of the gang. And Smithy was grinning with anticipated triumph.

Harry Wharton waved a hand at him. "Cut, Smithy; we're rather busy now," he said.

"You look it!" said Smithy. "Do you always loiter on a study table when you're busy? Like to hear the news?"

"Take it along the passage."

"No other study's interested in Valentine!" sneered the Bounder. "I thought you'd like to hear."

Wharton stared at him. "Have you heard the news about Valentine?" he asked. "If so, we've heard it before you!"

"You've heard it?" exclaimed Smithy.

"Of course we have."

"Have they got him then?"

"They—who—what—"

"The police."

"Are you potty?" asked Wharton blankly. "The news I'm referring to is that Valentine's uncle has turned up from Brazil."

"Oh, has he?" The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "Then he's turned up in time to see his precious

nephew take his trial along with the other crooks."

Jim Valentine sat very still. The Bounder's words fell on his ears, bodiful as the knell of doom. Could fate have played him so cruel a trick? How did Smithy know if it was so? He sat as if stunned.

The Famous Five slipped from the study table and stood facing the Bounder with grim looks.

"What do you mean by that, Vernon-Smith?" asked Wharton very quietly.

"Just what I say; no more and no less!" sneered the Bounder. "Grimey's getting his bird at last, and I've helped! I said that I'd show the fellow up in his true colours, and I've done it! You'll never see him again."

"Never see him again!" repeated Wharton.

As Jim Valentine was sitting in the study, only screened from the Bounder's view by the high back of the chair, that statement was rather surprising.

"Sure of that, Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Quite!" said the Bounder coolly. "They'll get him in Redclyffe Wood, if they haven't got him already, with the other crooks. I stayed in this afternoon to keep an eye on him, and I'm glad I did! I knew that his extra foot was a spoof. He cleared off on his bike after you fellows had gone—"

"You benighted ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Somebody pulled his leg on the telephone, and made him believe that he was wanted at St. Jude's. That's where he cleared off to."

The Bounder started. "He came over to St. Jude's?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, you suspicious idiot, and watched the game, and came back with us to Greyfriars and found his uncle from Brazil here!" snapped Wharton.

The Bounder's face was a study for a moment or two. His expression made the chums of the Remove grin. Never had the wind been so completely taken out of a fellow's sails. He was taken utterly by surprise.

"Then he never went out to meet the crooks!" he ejaculated at last.

"We're the crooks he went out to meet!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder bit his lip savagely.

"I don't get on to it then! They were in the wood. They expected him; watching and waiting for him. They grabbed me by mistake—"

"Oh, my hat!" yelled Bob. "That accounts for the milk in the jolly old coconut! It was dear old Nosey who put through that spoof call!"

"I don't catch on to it all!" snarled the Bounder. "But I know this. Grimey is after him, and he will get him, and I've helped! If they haven't got him, they've got his pals, and he will follow! If he's back in the school now they'll come here for him, and it's my doing—all my doing, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it! And if he were here I'd be glad to tell him to his face that it's my hand that's put the handcuffs on him!"

The Bounder spat out the words venomously.

He gave a start the next moment as Jim Valentine rose from the armchair. Across the back of the chair Valentine looked at his enemy—his face pale, his eyes gleaming scorn.

"I'm here!" he said. "Here, Vernon-Smith! If you're telling the truth, you've done for me. But it's not your doing, you see; it's my own doing! You'd have been sacked and gone if I hadn't been fool enough to save you—fool that I was! They'd have kicked you out of Greyfriars a week ago. You

couldn't have done me any harm then. And now—"

The anger and scorn died out of his voice, out of his ashen face. He gave a groan. It was the finish, when everything had looked so bright! He had saved his enemy, and his enemy had ruined him. At any moment now he might hear the footsteps of those who came to take him away, with the gyves upon his wrists. There was a dead silence in the study. It was the Bounder's voice that broke it.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quits!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH

stood staring at Valentine. He did not heed the grim and angry faces of Harry Wharton & Co. His eyes were fixed on the pale, tormented face of the boy he had brought to his fate. His voice was less strident than usual as he spoke again. "You saved me?" he repeated. "What do you mean? You've never done anything for me that I know of!"

Valentine's pale lip curled.

"What does it matter now?" he said wearily. "Get out of this study! Leave me alone. You've done me all the harm you can, now leave me alone!"

But the Bounder did not go. A strange look was coming over his face. He was beginning to understand.

"The night of the Popper Court robbery!" he said slowly. "I thought you were out of bounds like myself. I thought you might have been one of the two thieves I saw sneaking away from Popper Court—"

"You would!" said Valentine contemptuously.

"Quelch came up to the dorm while I was out," went on the Bounder, unheeding. "He would have spotted that I was gone, but some fellow rigged a dummy in my bed, and he never noticed. I thought it was Redwing, but Redwing's told me that it was not he—"

"Oh!" murmured Wharton.

The Bounder's own hard face paled a little.

"I wondered who had done it? Who could have guessed that Quelch might come up that night?" he muttered. "You—you fool! Was it you?"

"Who else?" snapped Valentine.

The Bounder breathed hard.

"I might have guessed it! Nobody else could have foreseen that the dorm would be visited that night. And you—why did you do it?"

"You'd never understand!"

The contempt in Valentine's voice passed the Bounder unheeded. It was true that he would never understand.

He was not the fellow to help an enemy out of a scrape, or to understand why any other fellow would. But bitter as he was, malicious as he was, the Bounder of Greyfriars was not a bad fellow at heart. This fellow had saved him from the sack; saved him for his own destruction! More than a week ago the gates of Greyfriars would have closed behind Herbert Vernon-Smith for ever had not Valentine saved him. It was, as the unhappy boy said, his own doing that he was now caught in the toils. A generous action had placed him in the power of his enemy to ruin him.

"If I'd known—" muttered Smithy. He bit his lips.

It was borne in upon his mind that he had misjudged the fellow he had hounded down. He realised it now. The fellow who had taken the trouble to save his enemy from disaster was not

the crook and rascal that Smithy had believed him to be. Sacked from the school, but for Jim Valentine, and this was how he had repaid him!

"If I'd known—" he repeated. He broke off and turned to the door. But he turned back again. "I'm sorry, Valentine. If I'd known I'd never have taken a hand against you! But, thinking as I did, I believe I did right, all the same. But—but you can count me out now!" Something of the old sardonic sneer came back to the Bounder's hard face. "I was never a fellow to stay under an obligation if I could help it. I'll be glad to make it up and cry quits. If I could help—now—"

"You can't help! I don't want your help, if you could! Thank goodness my uncle will be gone—and he may never hear—that's something! I've got to stand it now—but he'll be clear of it!" breathed Valentine. He was speaking to himself now, not to the Bounder, who watched his tortured face strangely.

"But—is it all up?" Harry Wharton broke in. "Look here, Smithy, you say you saw those rascals in Redclyffe wood—"

"Four of them—one, a man with a beaky nose—"

"That's Nosey Clark! And—"

"I put the police on them! I stayed to see how it worked out! They'd got three of them by the time I left—but the beaky man was still dodging—but the wood was surrounded, they've got him by this time, or before! And if Valentine was in with him—" The Bounder broke off.

"Fool!" said Valentine bitterly. "He was my enemy, a worse enemy than you have been—and if they've got him, he's told them all they want to know! If Nosey Clark has the handcuffs on—"

"He has them on before this—"

"Then it's the finish! Where he goes, I go—and that's the end! What I've done he made me do, a child in his hands—but that counts for nothing—he's only got to tell them—"

"I say, you fellows!" The door jerked open, and an excited fat face looked in. "I say, you fellows know what's on—old Grimey—"

"Grimes!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, with a sinking heart.

"Already!" breathed Valentine.

He clenched his hands desperately. A wild thought had been in his mind of getting out somehow—of making a run for it, now that it was certain that Nosey Clark would betray him—at least of being arrested outside the walls of Greyfriars, and saving the old school from disgrace—his school, his friends, his benefactor! But it was too late!

"He came in a car!" gasped Bunter, his eyes shining with excitement behind his big spectacles. "He's got three bobbies with him—Redwing says he's left one watching the gates, and another outside the door, and one's standing in the hall! Skinner says they're after somebody here—goodness knows whom! Do you fellows know?"

The Famous Five stood dumb.

"You know, Valentine?" asked Bunter, blinking at him.

Valentine suppressed a groan. Too late—too late—he was done for, and that choice between the old life, and the new life, was never to be made—neither life was for him now! Neither Greyfriars with his friends, nor Brazil with his uncle—but stone walls and prison bars! That was the end of his dream!

"You know, Smithy?" asked Bunter, as Valentine did not speak.

Vernon-Smith, without answering, thrust the fat Owl roughly out of the

study. He looked out into the passage, and Billy Banter scudded away to spread his startling news in other quarters. Smithy's eyes were on the Remove staircase. From that direction a deep voice was heard.

"Mr. Quelch, I have my duty to do!" It was the voice of Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield. "I warn you, sir, that you will impede me at your peril!"

That voice was heard in Study No. 1, and Valentine shuddered. Harry Wharton grasped him by the arm.

"Valentine—isn't there a chance yet?" He breathed the words. "Your uncle—at Wapshot—he takes off in his plane to-night—if you could reach him—"

Hope, for a second, flickered in Jim Valentine's white face. But it was only for a second. He shook his head.

"Too late!"

And Wharton knew that it was too late! The heavy tread of Mr. Grimes was already heard on the Remove landing. He knew where Valentine was, and he was coming for him. There was no escape—no chance—no hope! And Herbert Vernon-Smith felt a spasm of remorse. He had done his work—and but for the boy he had ruined, he would not have been there to do it—he would have been an expelled outcast! He set his lips.

Swiftly, he made a stride towards Valentine.

"Quick! There's a chance!" he whispered. "Here—quick—and keep your mouth shut—and you fellows play up!"

He dragged Valentine behind the study door, as it stood open. Jim went, unresisting, not understanding. The Famous Five could only stare. Herbert Vernon-Smith stood lolling in the open doorway—cool as ice, though his heart beat hard.

There was a chance—a slim chance; for he was on Valentine's side now, and Mr. Grimes did not know it. A chance—and the cool-headed, iron-nerved Bounder was the fellow to make the most of the slimmest chance!

Inspector Grimes was already tramping up the passage; a constable behind him remained on the landing. On the stairs, a crowd of scared and excited faces watched.

"You've got him, sir?" asked Smithy, as the portly inspector came tramping up.

"I'm here for him, Master Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Grimes. "I understand that he is in his study—this study!"

"He was, three minutes ago," said the Bounder, coolly, "but a fellow tipped him that you were coming! But he can't have got out of the box-room window yet—"

Mr. Grimes set his teeth.

"The box-room window—where—show me—quick!"

"This way!"

Had it been any other fellow but Vernon-Smith who spoke, Mr. Grimes would have brushed him aside and searched the study. But it was the Bounder's bitter enmity towards Valentine, that had put him on the track, and brought him there—and he did not doubt! Keen as he was, he had no knowledge or suspicion of the Bounder's change of heart. He took it for granted that Smithy was as keen as ever to see Jim Valentine "lagged"—and he followed the Bounder at a rapid stride, as Smithy led him up the passage to the box-room stairs.

In No. 1 Study, Harry Wharton & Co. stood in dumb silence. They understood now—and Jim Valentine understood! Up the passage after the inspector went a crowd of fellows, and among them was Mr. Quelch, his face white and set.

At the box-room stairs, Inspector Grimes ran up lightly, leaving the Bounder behind, and Smithy, with a cynical grin on his face, hurried back to No. 1 Study. He cut in and shut the door.

Valentine looked at him.

"Grimey's on a false scent!" drawled the Bounder. "You heard me draw him! We're quits now, Valentine!"

Jim did not speak.

"Quits, I think!" said Smithy, with a faint sneer.

Valentine nodded.

"Take your chance!" said Vernon-Smith. "You can't get out through the House—but a fellow has climbed down from this study window before now—Wharton's done it, and I've done it—the ivy's thick and strong—and if you've got the nerve—"

"The nerve!" Valentine almost laughed. "I've the nerve—for that or anything else—for anything except—"

"Take your chance then! It's black as a hat in the quad. You can slip out by the Cloisters; they're watching the gates. Take your chance, and cut!"

"Cut to Wapshot!" whispered Harry.

"Your uncle—in an hour from now he will be taking off in his plane. They'll never guess—"

Nugent turned out the light in the study. Johnny Bull silently opened the window. Below was thick darkness and rustling ivy. In the dim study Jim Valentine shook hands with his friends for the last time. He stood at the window. He felt a nudge, and looked round at the Bounder. Herbert Vernon-Smith was holding out his hand.

Valentine smiled faintly, and pressed the Bounder's hand.

"Sorry!" whispered Smithy. "And good luck!"

He crossed the study to the door and slipped out. The Famous Five remained, helping Valentine from the window. He swung on the strong old ivy and disappeared from their sight in the darkness. They watched, with anxious hearts, till a faint whistle, floating up from below, told them that their comrade was safe.

Harry Wharton shut the window. The light was turned on. The chums of the Remove looked at one another, with pale faces. Their thoughts and their hearts were with the fugitive boy scudding in the darkness, seeking freedom and a new life—their chum, Jim Valentine—Dick the Penman—who had been more sinned against than sinning!

The House was in a buzz of wild excitement. Footsteps and voices echoed on all sides. The study door opened, and Mr. Quelch came in. His face was pale and worn.

"He's gone, sir!" said Harry, without waiting to be questioned.

"Valentine?"

"Yes, sir!"

"He is not in the school now?"

"I—I think not, sir."

Mr. Quelch asked no more questions. Perhaps he realised that he had better not. He stood silent for some moments. "The boy was a good and noble lad, whatever his past may have been!" he said at last. "We may never see him again; but I trust that, whatever may be said of him, you—his friends—will always remember him with kindness."

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Bob. "Ho was our pal!"

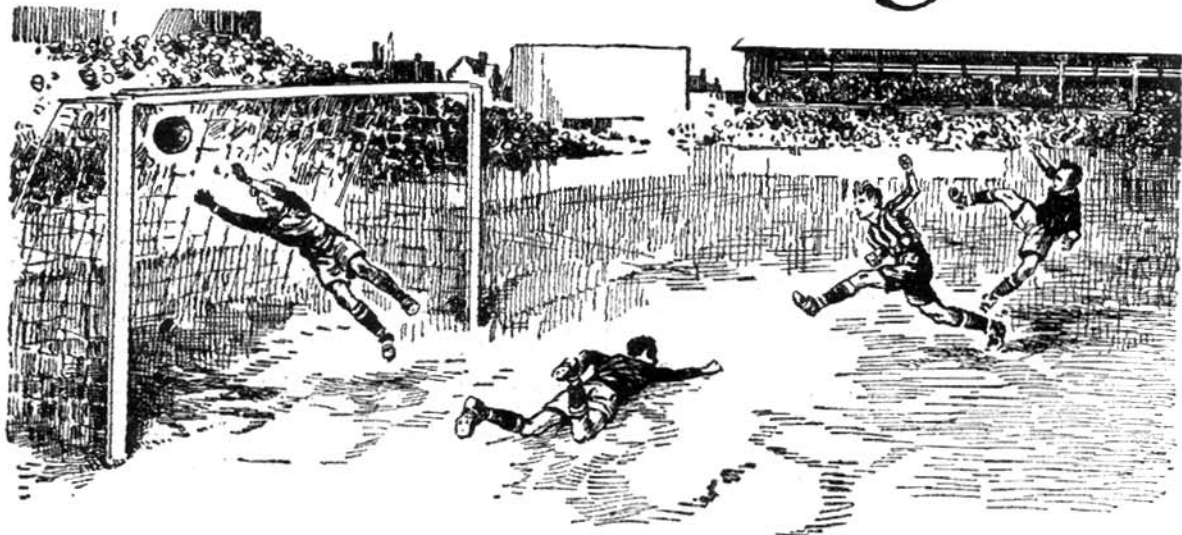
Mr. Quelch nodded and left the study. A minute or two later the portly, flushed face of Inspector Grimes looked in with glinting, angry eyes.

"Want anything, sir?" asked Bob Cherry politely.

(Continued on page 23.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,307,

NOBBY, the 'Shooting Star'!



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

Having run away, from Don Carlos' circus, Nobby, a sixteen-year-old waif, meets Ferrers Locke, the detective, who introduces him to Lord Douglas Weatherstone, chairman of the Perriton Rovers F.C. From ground-boy, Nobby very soon becomes professional. Later, he falls foul of Lord Douglas' rascally nephew, Daniel Willoughby Thundersley, who, in league with the Don, determines to bring about his downfall. Failing in an attempt to kidnap Nobby, Thundersley sets out to humiliate the youngster during an important game with Blampton Wednesday, only to receive "marching orders" from his captain, Dixie Toddin.

(Now read on)

The Winning Goal!

WITH frowning brow the amateur turned on his heel and sauntered to the touchline.

Here he was met by a dead, uncanny silence from the amazed crowd. Here he was met, too, by an enraged Sandy Macfarland.

"Ye devil!" snorted the old trainer. "If I had been Toddin I'd have sent ye off twenty minutes ago! I'm ashamed of ye!"

Feeling somewhat sick with himself now, for he realised he had overdone things in his hatred of the nameless waif, Thundersley tramped into the dressing-room, cursing and reviling his luck.

The crowd booed him as he disappeared from sight. They realised now that he had been sent off—ordered off by his own captain. No captain does that sort of thing unless the offence or offences warrant such extreme action. And Dixie Toddin, the captain, was something of an idol with the crowd. He was respected for his clean play, his fairness, unselfishness, and his sound judgment. Something which the keenest eyes in the crowd had failed to see, save perhaps a few "experts" in the stand, and a number of sporting writers, had occurred—something pro-

judicial to the Rovers' chances of success.

Daniel Willoughby Thundersley, one-time idol of the crowds who packed the Rovers' ground, was a fallen idol.

In the dressing-room the amateur inside-left was like a raging maniac. Up and down the floor he stamped, shaking his fist and pouring out a string of invective on the innocent head of young Nobby. For five minutes that uncontrolled outburst lasted, then Thundersley's natural cunning usurped the impassioned outburst, and he fell to scheming afresh.

At all costs the nameless waif had to be put in his place. Meantime, there was the Don to be consulted. How was it that his ingenious kidnaping had failed? How much, too, did that interfering busybody, Ferrers Locke, know of the circumstances? Thundersley told himself repeatedly that nothing could be framed on him. Throughout the entire business he had kept in the background.

Yet the failure of the Don's plan was disturbing. Long before the match with Blampton Wednesday was finished Thundersley was back in his chambers, where with the aid of sundry glasses of potent liquor, he evolved scheme after scheme for bringing about the disgrace and downfall of the youngster who had never done him an ill turn in his life.

Meanwhile, the subject of his bitter thoughts was adding fresh laurels to the crown he had won on his first appearance with the Rovers. It wanted only ten minutes to full time, and the Wednesday men, attacking fiercely, had levelled the one goal deficit so that the score now stood at two—two. Against ten men they began to show a superiority which might turn the tide of success in their direction. But the Rovers were fighting strenuously, and no one worked harder than young Nobby. For old Sandy's sake he hoped the team would register a win, not for any personal glory.

"Up, the Rovers!"
"Let's hear from you, Nobby!"

A roar went up from the anxious crowd as time rapidly approached.

Suddenly the Rovers' right-back got possession of the ball in a sliding tackle, elithered the ball along the turf to his half-back, who turned like an eel and raced up-field. Over to the right wing went the ball in a perfect pass. Campbell, the outside-right, steadied the whirling sphere with his bullet head and kept going like a racehorse. He back-heeled cleverly when a giant Wednesday man flew at him, quickly sighted the position of his forwards, and swung the ball right across the field to the outside-left.

The manoeuvre was carried out at such pace that the Blampton Wednesday defence wavered for a split second, undecided which man to mark when the vital pass should come. The Rovers' outside-left, "Skinny" Skelton, they called him, for he was lean and wiry, made rings round the Wednesday defender who hustled into him, saw that Nobby was too well marked to attempt a pass to him, and quickly shot the ball diagonally across the field to his centre-half, who was keeping well up with the forwards.

O'Malley, the Rovers' centre-half, just saw about a yard of daylight between a group of perspiring players—and at the end of that aperture loomed a portion of the Wednesday's goal.

The crowd in the grandstand were on their feet now, one eye, so to speak, upon the play, the other upon the referee. The latter raced up with the play, watch in hand, and whistle to his mouth. Only ten seconds remained before he should signal full time.

Back towards the Blampton Wednesday goal raced the visiting team, forwards, half-backs, and full-backs crowding their penalty area in that one last effort to repel the invaders.

In like fashion the Perriton Rovers side, with the one exception of the goalkeeper, surged forward, determined to hustle a goal through on the stroke of time.

Knowing the importance of the occasion, great credit must go to

O'Malley, the centre-half, for taking instantaneous advantage of that one single yard of "daylight." His right foot swept backward and forwards—
Boomp!

Like a meteor the muddy sphere twinkled through that single aperture, missing the players' legs by inches only, and shot hard and true for the Wednesday's goal. The custodian saw it coming, slithered despairingly to his knees, blindly pushed both gloved hands straight out before him, and, more by luck than good judgment, made contact with the leather. It rebounded off his clumsy fingers a full two yards in front of the net.

Immediately players of both sides swept towards it like bees about a hive. But one youthful, slim figure, surmounted by a crop of flaming red hair, got to the ball a fraction of a second quicker than anyone else.

It was Nobby—quick as a panther to take this last second chance. His left foot travelled barely six inches in a short stabbing movement. The ball flickered away from his boot, while he himself was sent sprawling in six feet of mud, and over him toppled three more over-anxious players. But through it all he caught sight of the kneeling goalkeeper fling himself sideways in a desperate effort to reach the ball.

That was all Nobby had time to see, for a studded boot accidentally clouted him hard upon the temple and momentarily knocked him out.

When he opened his eyes he saw the players helping each other up from the mud in front of the Wednesday goal, heard as in a dream, the mighty roars of the crowd, saw a disgusted goalkeeper snap up the ball and sling it out of the net—then the final whistle, long ear-splitting, triumphant!

The game was over. The ten men, and a novice among the ten at that, had battled victoriously. And the hero of the battle was Nobby—Nobby, whom the pressmen quickly dubbed "The 'Short' ing Star."

Pay—or Be Paid!

"TELL the blackguard that I'm not at home, you fool!"

Daniel Willoughby Thundersley did not mind his words.

His personal manservant, accustomed to the varying moods of his master, merely bowed and made to depart, but he found himself roughly pushed aside by a thickset, middle-aged man whose most noticeable feature was his corpulency and the massive gold watchchain which spanned his soiled waistcoat.

"So you're not at home, eh? And I'm a blackguard, am I, Mr. Clever Thundersley?"

The newcomer assumed an aggressive air, jerked a finger threateningly at Jenkins as an order to make himself scarce, and lowered his heavy bulk into an armchair.

Mr. Entwistle was an exceedingly unpleasant individual, both to look at and with whom to have any dealings. Never more than at that moment did Thundersley regret having made the man's acquaintance.

With drawn, pale face Thundersley watched his unwelcome visitor extract a much-thumbed pocket-book from his waistcoat.

"I'll pay you, Sam," he said hurriedly. "Good lord, man, you are not going to dun me for a paltry fifty pounds, are you?"

The bookmaker, for that was his means of livelihood, balanced his pocket-book carefully in one hand and leered under contracted brows at his host.

"I am that!" he said unpleasantly. "Furthermore, young man I'm 'Sam' to my friends and 'Mr. Entwistle' to scum like you! Moreover," he added, "you've made a mistake about the amount. It's a hundred you owe me, Mr. Thundersley!"

"But—" began Thundersley excitedly.

"There ain't no buts, young feller!" interrupted Sam. "It was fifty a few moments ago. But I don't allow no one to call me a blackguard under a fifty-pun' note. That's 'ow I make it a hundred, see?"

Thundersley shook his head helplessly. Really, it did not make much difference to him at that moment if this unpleasant person made it a thousand, for Thundersley was "dead broke." He tried conciliatory measures.

"Look here, Sam, I didn't mean that—I was worried," he explained.

"Things have gone pretty badly with me lately; but I'll pay you, old man. Every penny."

"Every penny is right!" sneered

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

Of course you've seen the great announcement on page 11 of this issue, chums—

A FREE 32-PAGE ATLAS IN FULL COLOURS

—our latest stupendous offer to readers! Isn't it just wonderful? This handy-size "MODERN ATLAS OF THE WORLD," printed on art paper, deals with every country under the sun, and is just what every schoolboy has long been wanting! All you've got to do to obtain this useful gift is to collect eight coupons—value five points each—making a total of forty points in all. Couldn't be simpler, could it? On page 28 you will find the first coupon for five points, while in the next five issues a similar coupon will appear which will bring your total up to thirty points. All you want then will be two more coupons of five points each which you can obtain by purchasing just one copy of our companion papers—"Gem" and "Modern Boy," both of which are participating in this wonderful offer. This opportunity is too good to miss, boys, so give your newsagent a regular order for your MAGNET and start collecting those eight coupons RIGHT AWAY!

Now for—

NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME!

There's another bumper issue in store for you, chums! Frank Richards has written a splendid, first-rate yarn, entitled:

"WIBLEY'S WONDERFUL WHEEZE!"

And I can tell you it's a winner! Once you start it you won't want to put down the old paper until you've read every line of it.

Hedley Scott, too, is at his very best in our powerful footer and 'tee story, while a rib-tickling "Greyfriars Herald," together with our usual short features, will round off a programme it'll be hard to beat!

But don't forget our stupendous "Atlas" offer—start collecting your coupons this week.

YOUR EDITOR.

Sam. "I've waited a month for this little account to be settled, and, because I call on you decently, instead of adopting other ways and means to get what is rightly mine, I'm called a blackguard, eh? Remember this, I ain't leaving this flat until I've got your cheque, see?"

"Can't you wait until the end of the week, Sam?" asked Thundersley. "I tell you I haven't a bean! On Friday it will be all right."

The bookmaker sniffed.

"On Friday? Yes, I've heard that before. Things are hard with me, I'll let you know, and I want my money now—now, you understand! If not"—Samuel Entwistle became threatening—"I'm going straight to your bloomin' uncle!"

Thundersley got up from his chair and crossed to his visitor.

"Look here, Sam, you can't do that!" he exclaimed. "You mustn't do it, you hear? Why, the old chap would disinherit me if he knew that I gambled on horses. He's dead against it."

The bookmaker smiled evilly.

"And don't I know it?" he said coarsely. "D'you think I would stand fifty pounds of your credit if I didn't feel I had someone a bit more solid than yourself to fall back on? No, sir, Samuel Entwistle wasn't born yesterday. Just you put yourself in my place. How long would you wait for money that was legally due to you, eh?"

Thundersley pleaded and entreated, but to no avail. The bookmaker was solid in his refusal to shift until he had got Thundersley's cheque.

"But the cheque will only be returned," Thundersley exclaimed in despair. "What's the sense in giving you a dud cheque, Sam? Honestly, there's no money at the bank to meet it."

"Well, I'm relying on some money being put in there to meet it," said Sam stubbornly. "Otherwise, you can look out for trouble!"

With hands that trembled, Thundersley took out his cheque book and fountain-pen.

Mr. Entwistle watched him scornfully as he wrote.

"And don't forget to make it for a hundred, young fellow," he advised grimly.

Thundersley paused.

"Look here, you can't mean that!" he remonstrated. "The bet was for fifty—"

The bookmaker closed one eye and winked evilly.

"According to my accounts, it's a hundred," he returned, "and if you don't look sharp it'll rise to a hundred-and-fifty. I told you the price of callin' me a blackguard!"

"This is blackmail, you scoundrel!" snarled Thundersley. "Blackmail!"

"I'm not going to pay! I'll ring for the police!"

"You ring for the police!" laughed Sam, in derision. "You wouldn't ring for the police if I know you rightly! Think what a sensation it would make! 'Nephew of a famous peer tries to do an honest bookmaker out of his just due by faking a charge of blackmail!' Then your precious secrets would come out, what? But ring for the police, if you like! Samuel Entwistle has nothing to fear from them, you white-livered rat!"

For the space of a full minute Thundersley stared at his tormentor like a wild animal. But Sam merely smiled. He was an old hand, and knew when he'd got an easy "pigeon to pluck."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,307.

"I'll give you two minutes," he said at length. "If I ain't got my cheque by then I'm going straight round to his lordship!"

The final threat did it. Wearing a hunted expression, Thundersley began to write—and the sum he made payable to Samuel Entwistle was for one hundred pounds!

"There you—you—"
He could trust himself to speak no further as he handed over the cheque.

The bookmaker took it, scanned it carefully, and, with irritating slowness, folded the cheque carefully into three before he stowed it away in his pocket. Then he eased his heavy figure out of the armchair.

"I'll be going now; but if this cheque ain't met to-morrow look out for squalls!"

In dumb horror Thundersley watched the bookmaker walk to the door and let himself out. No further words passed between them.

Jenkins found his master in deep despair half an hour later when he called to ask if there was anything needed.

No reply greeted the servant's words. Thundersley's thoughts were far away. With an aching head, he stared out moodily into the blazing fire, cursing his luck, Samuel Entwistle—anyone but himself he blamed for his present predicament, which is the nature of the weak character.

At last he reached a decision. That money had to be raised. He knew Samuel Entwistle; knew that the man would carry out his threat of going to Lord Weatherstone and denouncing him. Better to visit his lordship himself and "touch" him.

"The old fool will pay out!" Thundersley told himself as he now walked up and down the carpeted floor. "He's never refused me yet. I'll see him now."

Comforting himself with that decision, Thundersley donned his hat and coat and let himself out of his chambers. A passing taxicab drew into the kerb in answer to his hail, and was soon bearing him towards Lord Douglas Weatherstone's town house.

(There's a big surprise in store for Daniel Thundersley when he reaches his uncle's house—and a big surprise for you! Don't miss next week's chapters, boys!)

THE HUNTED SCHOOLBOY!

(Continued from page 25.)

Mr. Grimes gave him a look, but no answer. He proceeded to root through the study, as if suspecting that the quarry he sought might be concealed there. He was soon satisfied that only the Famous Five were in the room, and he grunted and departed. Up and down and round about Greyfriars School went Mr. Grimes and his men, seeking Dick the Penman, but they found him not!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Glimpse!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Bow-wow!"
"That's a plane!" said Billy Bunter.

Mr. Grimes and his men were gone. They had drawn Greyfriars blank, and were seeking farther for the boy who had fled. A crowd of fellows in the Rag were breathlessly discussing the exciting events of the evening when the hum of an aeroplane was heard over the school.

Harry Wharton ran to a window and threw it open. The moon had come out now, and silvery light streamed down on the quadrangle, which had been hidden in black darkness when Jim Valentine went. High over Greyfriars floated the round, white moon in a steely sky dotted with fleecy clouds. Now that the window was open, the hum of the purring engine came louder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There it is!" Bob Cherry pointed at a distant graceful shape in the moonlit heavens. It was a biplane, speeding away towards the Channel and France from the direction of Wapshot Camp. They watched it tensely as it hummed and purred on in the light of the moon.

Was it the aeroplane of the man from Brazil? They had no doubt of it. Was Jim Valentine safe on board the graceful craft that cut through the clouds? He had had ample time to reach Wapshot. Surely he had found safety? Surely he was on his way to a new land and a new life, safe from the shadows of the past? They hoped it and believed it. With tense gaze they watched the aeroplane vanishing in the glimmering of the moon.

"I say, you fellows, a fellow would think you'd never seen an aeroplane before!" said Billy Bunter. "What about supper? You see I've been disappointed about a postal order, and if someone will lend me—Yooop!"

Bob Cherry turned on the fat Owl, grasped him by the collar, and sat him down on the floor with a bump. Bunter roared, and rolled away—disappointed about a supper as well as about a postal order! And Harry Wharton & Co. watched the plane till it was gone, hoping from the bottom of their hearts that it was bearing Jim Valentine far away from the troubles of his troubled past.

And it was!

Mr. Grimes hunted for Dick the Penman, but he never found him. Certainly it never crossed his mind that the "boy with a past" was leading a new and happy life by the banks of the rolling Amazon. Nosey Clark & Co. went where they belonged, but the boy they had persecuted they never saw again. They did not know, and Mr. Grimes did not know, what had become of him. But Mr. Grimes, when he had learned more of Nosey Clark, and of the history of the boy who had once been his victim, was rather glad, after all, that the boy had been given another chance.

Mr. Quelch and Harry Wharton & Co. knew, and were glad to know that in another land their chum was leading a happy and honourable life. And the Famous Five made up their minds that, some day or other, they would have a holiday in the far land of Brazil and see Jim Valentine again.

THE END.

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