

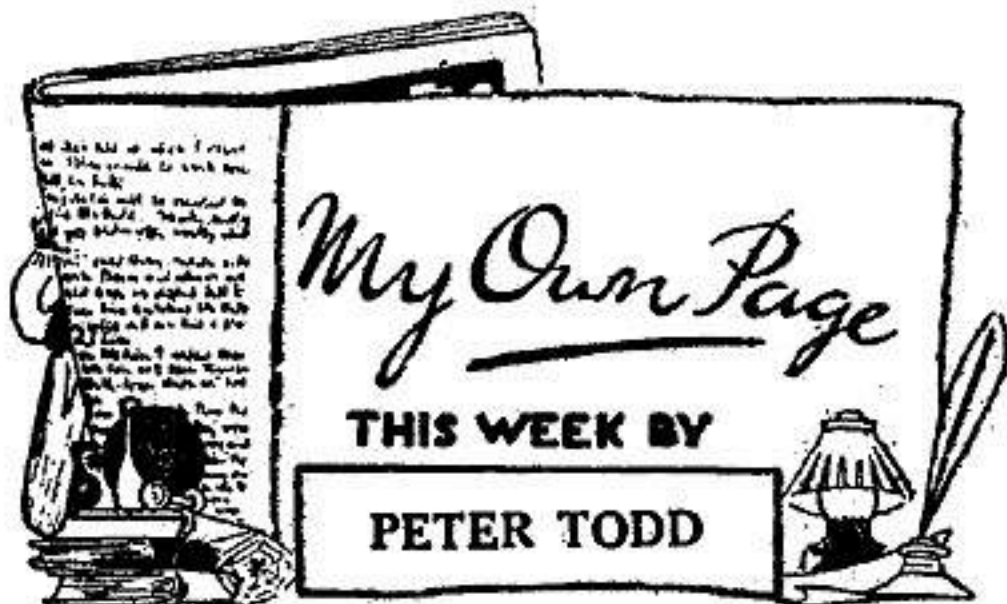
Greyfriars School Yarn with a Real Live Punch—Inside!

The Magnet ^{2^D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*

R. CROCKER
FORMERLY OF
GREYFRIARS
SCHOOL
**BOOTS AND
SHOES**
SOLED & HEELED
WITH
PROMPTNESS
AND
DESPATCH
TERMS: CASH!

**SPEEDING THE
PARTING GUEST!**



THE little sketch on this page, which I drew myself, shows a fat, gloating, spider-like object which shares my study, and, sometimes, shares my boot. My life's work is to make a man of this creature, and I'm going bald already. Still, whatever cricket-stump and boot can accomplish, shall be well and faithfully done, and you can put this for my epitaph:

Here lies
ONE WHO

THOUGHT HE COULD REFORM BUNTER.
"There's one born every minute!"

Skinner's cartoon I have not yet seen, as he sends it direct to the Editor, but I have already kicked him in anticipation. I dare say it will be mostly nose. I can't help having a prominent nose, though even so, it's quite handsome. It's not pointed, like Skinner's, or hatchet-edged, like Fishy's, or sprawling like Bolsover's, or like Hunter's bit of squashed putty.

And, anyway, famous men usually have big noses. Look at Cyrano de Bergerac. He had the biggest nose in Gascony, and fought dozens of duels with people who happened to mention the fact. Not that my nose is really big. It's ornamental and striking, that's all.

TODD, TODD & TODD

Most of you know What I Want To Be When I Grow Up! I'm going to study law, and join the family firm of Todd, Todd, & Todd, Solicitors. The aforementioned three Todds, who started the business, were my great-grandfather, Anthony Todd and his two sons, Peter and Charles. That was way back in the time of George III, when Bloomsbury was a bit different from the flat-and-office district it is to-day.

In those days Todds wore periwigs and knee-breeches, and took a sedan-chair instead of a taxi. Bloomsbury then was what Mayfair is now—the aristocratic part. My jolly old ancestors would sit in their office writing law-papers with quill pens in the light of flickering candles, and then step down to the coffee-house to share the scandal of the day over a bottle of port wine with other choice nibs, smoking their churchwarden pipes or taking snuff.

To-day, my pater slides up to the office—the same office—in a Wolseley 14, and uses the telephone instead of the ticket-porters for sending messages. Otherwise there's not much difference. Law papers are still written by hand in old-style script, and we even use quill pens, though electricity has displaced candles. AND we still use the same old arguments in the Law Courts.

I suppose I must be suffering from hereditary Law Fever, for it's always been my ambition in Whereases and Heretofores, and, in fact, I've drafted out some Laws for Greyfriars, as hereinafter shown.

GREYFRIARS LAW

(Extracts from the great book by Eminent Authority Todd.)

FAGGING—Grounds for Divorce.—A fag may apply for a Divorce from any senior on grounds of Cruelty or Aggravated Rascality. Under the law (Cap. VI. Clause 11. Todd, 1938) Cruelty consists of not less than 12 swipes with a cricket stump or 16 goal-kicks upon any part of the plaintiff's anatomy. Rascality is shown by sending a fag for cigarettes or making him buy tuck for senior consumption.

fag the Remove, or he will be guilty of Illegal Restraint. All such offences are punishable by death—or ought to be!

FELONY—Foodstuffs Appropriation Act.—Any person stealing, pinching, or otherwise appropriating to his own use and enjoyment any food, grub, tuck or other delicacy, shall be guilty of Felony, notwithstanding any plea that may be preferred under the Expected Postal-Order Clause. Recompense for the missing foodstuffs shall be granted, under a warrant of Summary Jurisdiction, upon the offender's fat hide, boots, stumps, oars or other instruments of torture being permitted.

Under the Remote Contingencies Act (Expected Postal-Order Clause), all persons having a claim against the estate of William George Bunter, Bankrupt, shall present their accounts to the Official Receiver, to be settled out of the Postal-Order when it arrives beard or side-whiskers notwithstanding. Claims at present amount to £86.

ASSAULT AND BATTERY—It is an offence to lay a hand on any free citizen of Greyfriars, save in extreme provocation. (In Bolsover major's case, it shall be deemed an offence to slaughter anyone less than half his size. It shall be no provocation to pass remarks upon Bolsover major's face, for in that case Bolsover could bring an action for Slander, providing he could prove all such remarks were untrue, which they are not.) Provocation consists in felony aforementioned, in sneaking, swindling and playing the corner. Under the last-mentioned clause it is therefore legal to slaughter Johnny Bull without previous notice.

RACKETEERING—It shall be an offence to run any racket at a profit of more than 750%, moneylending, insurance swindles, and food frauds included. Persons convicted under this act may be Deported as Undesirable Aliens and returned with thanks to Noo Yark. F.T.F.—beware!

EXCEPTION—Notwithstanding anything herein mentioned to the contrary, it shall always be legal to flog, flay, slaughter, or otherwise wreak havoc upon the person of Coker of the Fifth, as often as may be found necessary.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned causes, fags shall not be admitted to Court unless they have previously been disinfected by the Court Sanitary Officer, and their necks cleansed of superfluous ink.

It is **HEREBY AFFIRMED** that allegations of Cruelty or Rascality against Loder of the Sixth shall be taken for granted, and no proof required.

FAGGING—Illegal Restraint.—No senior shall, under any circumstances whatever,

COUSIN 'LONZY

He will probably read this, so I mustn't say too much. (How are you, 'Lonzy? Thanks for your 63-page letter. I'm having it translated, and will read it in due course.)

Alonzo Theophilus Todd used to be in my study until he went to stay with Uncle Benjamin for his health. Personally, if there was anything wrong with my health, I'd rather go to a West African swamp; but 'Lonzy is fond of Uncle Ben, and quotes him so often that fellows have asked me whether he's a real man or just a talking parrot.

Well, Uncle Ben is quite real, and more than that, is actually quite clever. He's a complete bookworm, and lives in an old house near Folkestone with 120,000 moth-eaten books. It's a long time since he was a boy, and as he is a bachelor, he's a bit out of touch with modern youth. He thinks boys still behave like "Eric, or Little by Little," which suits 'Lonzy down to the ground.

'Lonzy has spent a great deal of his time with Uncle Ben, and that's why he's so simple and confiding, and desperately boring. (You are, 'Lonzy—at times, you know!) He speaks Uncle Ben's own crackjaw language. Greyfriars would have cured him in time, but as he's a bit too weak for the rough and tumble Remove, he had to go back to Nunky to get convalescent, and all the good work is undone.


Still, he's full of virtues, and his worst fault is being too good. I expect he'll get over that! (That's all, 'Lonzy. Maybe the Editor will write and ask YOU to do this page some time. Then you can have a dig at me—what?)



This is a picture of my birthday cake. X marks the spot where the cake may be found. And X-Rays are needed to find it!

PETER TODD

REMOVE FORM
STUDY NO 7



In appearance, Peter Todd is much like his cousin Alonzo; both are tall, thin, and have prominent noses. There is no likeness apart from looks. Peter is a shrewd, clever fellow, with a dry sense of humour. He has a good head for figures, and studies English Law during his leisure hours, as he hopes some day to be a lawyer, and join his father's firm. He lives in Bloomsbury, in an old house inhabited by his family for a long time; for Todd is a well-known name in the legal world. Peter is not a swot, however. He is a good athlete, and plays in the Remove Soccer eleven. He is the chief of Study No. 7, at one time known as "The Four Freaks"—Peter, Alonzo, Dutton, and Bunter. With Bunter, Peter deals very freely, in the vain hope of one day making that youth a credit to the study. We can but wish him luck!

(Cartoon by HAROLD SKINNER.)

SENSATION AT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL! Someone has struck Gerald Loder, of the Sixth, a violent, savage, brutal blow—and vanished in the darkness, without leaving a clue! The rascally prefect has many enemies—but which of them is the culprit?

LODER LOOKS *for* TROUBLE!

By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**



A fist lashed out in the darkness—a crashing blow landed between Loder's eyes. The Sixth Former gave one faint groaning gasp, and then crumpled up!

Thump, thump! came on the door. "Look here, Smithy, don't play the goat!" urged Harry Wharton.

"Rats to you!" answered Smithy, jamming his foot harder as the door-handle rattled. "Carry on, Brownie, you ass!"

The radio ran on. Politics had happily come to an end. But the news Smithy wanted was not yet on. The announcer's voice droned:

"Rupert Crook, the cracksman convict, who escaped from Highmoor, is still at large—"

Thump, thump! "Oh, bother that rot!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "Who the dickens wants to know that tosh?"

"He was last seen in London—"

Thump! "A week ago—"

Thump! Bang! Then a terrific shove!

"Bear a hand here!" yelled Smithy, his voice drowning the announcer's. "Back up, you men!"

But it was too late, even if the juniors had wanted to join the Bounder in a reckless and hot-headed defiance of authority. That shove did it. Loder was exerting his strength on the door, and, in spite of the Bounder's resistance within, it opened. Smithy's foot, tight as he jammed it, was forced away, and the door, swinging open, sent him staggering backwards.

Loder of the Sixth strode in, his face red with wrath.

Tom Brown shut off the radio without waiting to be told. Smithy was not, after all, going to get those football results, and had to remain in doubt—such doubt as there was—whether a small fortune was coming his way or not.

Loder had his official ashplant under his arm. He slipped it down into his hand, and his angry eyes glinted round.

"Somebody was holding that door shut!" he roared. "Who was it?"

"I say, Loder, it wasn't me?" squeaked Billy Bunter, in haste.

"Who was it?" roared Loder. "You, Cherry?"

"Not guilty, my lord!" answered Bob meekly.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Six For Smithy!

"L ODER—" "Keep him out!" "Hold on, Smithy!" "Rats!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, did not hold on. He jammed the door of the Rag shut, and jammed his boot against it to keep it shut.

Loder of the Sixth pushed it from outside the next moment. But he pushed in vain. Smithy's boot held it fast.

Nobody, of course, wanted Gerald Loder in the Rag. That apartment was the happy hunting-ground of the juniors, and prefects were never welcome there—especially Loder.

Nevertheless, as a Sixth Form prefect, Loder had the right of entry, if he chose to butt in, and evidently he did. He banged angrily on the outside of the door, as it remained immovable.

"Chuck it, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton.

"Rot!" retorted Smithy.

"We can't keep a prefect out," said Bob Cherry.

"We jolly well can!" snapped the Bounder. "Loder only wants to throw his weight about. He can throw it about in the passage. Carry on, Brownie!"

Tom Brown of the Remove had his portable wireless going in the Rag. The Remove fellows were getting the early news. Atmospherics were rather busy, and the news was accompanied by squeaks and squeals.

Perhaps Loder considered there was too much row going on in the Rag. Or perhaps that was only a pretext for the bully of the Sixth to throw his weight about. Anyhow, there he was demanding admittance.

"Better shut off, perhaps," said Tom.

"Carry on, I tell you!" snapped the Bounder. "Loder's not going to stop it!"

The news, so far, was not fearfully exciting. It was political news which, to youthful ears, was weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. Hardly a fel-

School, Mystery, and Adventure Yarn of HARRY WHARTON & CO., the cheery chums of GREYFRIARS.

low in the Remove wanted to know what the Honourable Member for this had said to the Honourable Member for that. They did not care a boiled bean whether an eminent statesman had been on his legs, or off his legs.

But some football results were expected, it being Saturday, and Smithy was keen to hear them. Smithy, on the strict g.t., dabbled in football pools, which, of course, no Greyfriars fellow was supposed to do. Smithy was very keen to learn whether his coupons were going to bring him in a small fortune. They never had, so far.

"You, Vernon-Smith?" Loder's eyes fixed on the Bounder, who was gasping for breath, and who was nearest the door.

"Find out!" snapped Smithy, which was not a respectful way of answering so great a man as a prefect of the Sixth Form.

But Smithy was not a very respectful fellow at the best of times, and at the present moment he was in the worst temper ever.

Loder gave him a grim look.

"Is that how you answer a prefect, Vernon-Smith?" he rapped.

"Yes, exactly; and if you don't like it, lump it!" snarled the Bounder.

"What are you barging in here for?" "I fancy I know who was holding that door," said Loder grimly. He swished the ash, and then pointed with it to a chair. "Bend over that chair, Vernon-Smith!"

There was a pause, and the crowd of juniors in the Rag watched the Bounder almost breathlessly.

Smithy was a reckless fellow, and a mutineer by nature. His career at Greyfriars was a series of kicks against authority, often with painful consequences. More than once he had been very near the sack. When Smithy's temper was roused he was liable to let it lead him whither it would. And it was savagely roused now.

It was easy to read, in his angry face and gleaming eyes, that he was thinking of disobeying that order.

Which, of course, was impossible. Loder, as a prefect, was entrusted with whopping privs, which sometimes he used not wisely but too well. On this occasion, however, it had to be admitted that Smithy had asked for it. Even old Wingate, the best-tempered fellow at Greyfriars School, would have whopped a junior for holding a door shut against him.

Such things, really, couldn't be done; but Smithy did not always reflect whether a thing could be done or not before he did it.

"I'm waiting, Vernon-Smith," said Loder ominously.

Vernon-Smith drew a deep, deep breath.

He was strongly tempted to snarl defiance at Loder. But that meant going up to the Head, and Smithy had gone up to the Head oftener than any other fellow in the Remove. And a fellow who went up to the Head too often was liable to find his stay at Greyfriars cut short. Some saving remnant of common sense kept the Bounder's recklessness in control, and in savage silence he bent over the chair.

The ash in Loder's hand swished. He laid on six scientifically. Loder was quite an expert in this line. He had had a lot of practice. Six successive whops echoed through the Rag like six pistol-shots.

Hardly a fellow could have taken that whopping in silence. But the Bounder did not utter a sound.

Loder tucked the ash under his arm again. He glanced round at a sea of hostile faces.

"Now, less noise here!" he said. "You can be heard all over the House. Any more row here, and you'll see me again."

With which Loder of the Sixth walked out of the Rag. He left a grim silence behind him. There were few of the juniors who would not have liked to boot Loder through the doorway. But Sixth Form prefects were not to be booted.

Billy Bunter's fat squeak broke the silence.

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"I say, Smithy, did it hurt?"

Vernon-Smith did not answer that question. He gave the fat Owl of the Remove a look, and turned to Tom Brown.

"Shove it on again!" he said.

"The news is over now, Smithy," said Tom mildly.

"Shove it on, all the same."

Tom shook his head.

"What's the good of asking for trouble?" he said. "We don't want that swab butting in again."

"Funk!" sneered the Bounder.

"Fathead!" answered Tom Brown, unmoved. "Isn't six enough for you?"

"Oh, go and eat coko!" snarled the Bounder.

And, with a set and savage face, he framped out of the Rag, and slammed the door behind him, with a bang that rang far and wide.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Done In The Dark!

MR. QUELCH frowned.

Frowning, he set his lips, and stared.

After lock-up, the Remove master was walking in the quad, with Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

The evening was dark, but fine, with a glimmer of bright stars in a steely sky. Dark as it was, a good deal of light fell from innumerable lighted windows in the wintry dusk.

Quelch and Prout were talking, as they walked—or, at any rate, Prout was talking, Quelch chiefly listening. Probably it was because Quelch was not fearfully interested in Prout's weighty conversation that his attention wandered and he noted a dark figure that appeared between him and a lighted window.

Wherefore did Quelch frown.

After lock-up, every Greyfriars fellow was supposed to be in the House. Here was a fellow evidently out of the House!

That it was a junior, Quelch could see by its height. But he could discern little else in the gloom, especially as the figure had its back to him.

That figure was stepping softly along, obviously unaware of the two masters in the offing, and approaching a lighted study window.

It was the window of a Sixth Form study. The blind was not drawn, and a senior could be seen within—Loder of the Sixth. Loder was, in fact, coming towards the window to draw the blind. He stood silhouetted against the light.

And the junior, out in the quad, had his eyes on Loder at the window. And Mr. Quelch, farther off, had his eyes on the junior.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "Do you see that boy, Prout?" "Eh? What? What boy?" asked Prout peevishly. The question interrupted a stream of conversation.

"Some boy is out of House bounds!" said Mr. Quelch, pointing. "Look!"

Mr. Prout looked.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "It is long past lock-up, Quelch! No boy should be out of the House! No doubt a Remove boy—"

"I see no reason to suppose that he is a Remove boy!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "No doubt a Fourth Form boy, or one of the Shell."

"But what is he doing?" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "What can his object be, Quelch? Does he appear to you to have something in his hand?"

"He does!" said Mr. Quelch. "I imagine that it is a snowball."

"Extraordinary!" said Prout.

He stared, and Quelch stared. There was a good deal of snow, piled among the old elms, and any fellow who wanted a snowball had no lack of material. But why that junior was stepping along, in the gloom, with a snowball gripped in his right hand, was rather a mystery. There was nobody in the quad to be snowballed—except the two masters, whom the most reckless fellow was not likely to snowball. Besides, he clearly did not know that they were there.

Tap!

It was a slight sound, but clearly audible. It was caused by a pebble tossed against Loder's window. The shadowy figure had tossed it with his left hand.

Loder, at the window, was seen to start. Instead of drawing the blind, he threw up the sash, evidently to inquire into the cause of that strange and unexpected tap at his window.

Then, suddenly, the two masters knew what the lurking junior was up to! As Loder of the Sixth leaned out, to look into the dusky quad, the junior's right arm went up, and the snowball whizzed.

Smash!

Well-aimed and accurate, that snowball squashed in the middle of Gerald Loder's features, smothering his face with snow, and sending him staggering back into the study.

Through the open window floated the sound of a heavy bump!

Loder, it seemed, had sat down!

"Ooooooogh!" came a wild splutter from the study.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "The young rascal—"

"An assault upon a prefect!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Do not let that young rascal escape undetected, Quelch!"

Quelch was already swooping. After him lumbered the portly Fifth Form master.

The junior who had hurled the snowball dodged away instantly. Then, for the first time, he became aware of Quelch.

He did not see Prout lumbering on behind, but he spotted Quelch, swooping like a hawk.

Only a swift leap saved him from a clutching hand.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

But the junior did not stop! He leaped clear, dodged round Quelch, and darted off in the darkness. Evidently his chief object was to get away from lighted windows as quickly as he could, to avoid recognition.

Quelch swung round in rapid pursuit. "Prout! Stop him!" he shouted.

The fleeing junior—not seeing Prout's portly form in the gloom—was running direct towards the Fifth Form master.

He saw that portly form a moment later, dim and immense. But it was too late to dodge. Quelch was cutting after him—Prout planted firmly in his way, with outstretched hand.

That junior, whoever he was, was plainly a fellow of quick decisions, and swift on the uptake. He had no chance of dodging! He had one chance—and he took it—taking it in his stride, as it were. Without swerving an inch to right or left, he rushed straight on, lowering his head—and butted!

Prout was not expecting that.

No beak would or could have expected it! Any fellow could be, and would be, sacked, for butting over a beak! Such a wildly reckless act was not to be expected. It really was unheard of! But it happened!



Gerald Loder exerted all his strength on the door. Vernon-Smith's foot, tight as he jammed it, was forced away, and the door, swinging open, sent him staggering backwards!

Prout's stout arms were outstretched to clutch. The junior ran between them, and butted before the clutch could close in.

A head, that seemed to Prout like a lump of iron, smote the Fifth Form master over the third waistcoat button. It drove every ounce of wind out of Prout. He never had very much—and what he had, was driven right out.

One horrible gurgle came from Prout, and he went over backwards. The junior, active as a cat, jumped over the collapsed portly form, and bounded on.

Queleh, almost at his heels, rushing on, stumbled over Prout, and fell on him.

Had Prout had any wind left in him, that would have deprived him of it. Queleh came down like a sack of coke.

"Ooooooooh!" came a feeble, agonised murmur from Prout.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Queleh.

He staggered up dizzily.

From the dark distance came an echo of running feet.

It died into silence.

That junior was gone—beyond hope of capture! That desperate deed had saved him—for the present, at least.

"Ooooooh!" moaned Mr. Prout.

Queleh, gasping, stared round him in the gloom. From Loder's study window a head was projected and a furious face stared round.

"Who——" bawled Loder. "Who threw that snowball? Who——" Loder, red, breathless, and infuriated, jumped down from the window—rather too late to have any chance of capturing the snowballer.

Queleh bent over Prout. The young rascal, whoever he was, was gone—and Prout was in need of help! He was, indeed, badly in need of help. Winded to the wide, Prout moaned and gurgled.

"My dear Prout——" exclaimed the Remove master.

"Woooooooh!"

"Let me assist you——"

"Moooooooh!" came faintly from Prout. It sounded strangely like the moaning of a sad and pessimistic cow. "Moooooooh!"

"Oh! There you are, you young rotter!" roared Loder. He glimpsed a figure in the gloom, and rushed up. "You young scoundrel—you cheeky rotter—I've got you——"

"Loder!" roared Mr. Queleh, spinning round as he was clutched.

"Oh!" gasped Loder. He let go Mr. Queleh as suddenly as if that gentleman had been red-hot. "Is—is that Mr. Queleh? I—I thought——"

"Goooooooh!" came moaning from Prout.

"Did you see him, sir?" gasped Loder. "Somebody pitched a snowball in at my study window—some junior out of the House——"

"I saw him, Loder, but unfortunately did not recognise him. Kindly give me a hand with Mr. Prout—he is in need of assistance——"

"Perhaps I had better get after that young rascal, sir! He may not yet have got back into the House——"

"Perhaps you had better do as I request you, Loder," snapped Mr. Queleh, "and you will kindly do it immediately."

"Oh! Very well, sir!"

Loder, unwillingly, took one portly arm, and Mr. Queleh took the other.

Between them they heaved Prout to his feet. Supporting him on either side, they assisted him to the House—Prout still moaning feebly.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Who Was The Bad Lad?

"SEEN Smithy?"

Tom Redwing asked that question, with a rather worried and anxious face.

He came out of Study No. 4 in the

Remove passage, which he shared with his chum, and came along to a group standing at the door of Study No. 1.

The Famous Five were discussing football matters, but they gave Soccer-jaw a rest, as the Bounder's worried chum came along.

"Not since that row in the Rag, Reddy," answered Harry Wharton. "Isn't he in the study?"

"I thought he was, but I've just looked for him——"

"In Hall, perhaps," suggested Bob Cherry.

"I looked before I came up."

"Stalking Loder, perhaps," said Johnny Bull, with a grin. "Smithy will give him something back for that six, if he gets half a chance."

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Redwing. "Smithy's such a reckless ass when his temper's up."

"And the upfulness was terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Smithy was preposterously infuriated."

"Must be in the House somewhere," said Frank Nugent.

"Ask Bunter," suggested Bob. "Bunter knows everything. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter, old fat man, you're wanted!"

Billy Bunter was coming up the Remove staircase. There was a fat grin on his plump face.

"I say, you fellows, something's up!" he squeaked. "I say, there's something going on in the Sixth——"

"Blow the Sixth!" said Bob. "Where's Smithy?"

"Eh?" Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. "How the blump should I know where Smithy is?"

"What's the good of being a Peeping Tom, a Paul Pry, and an Inquisitive Jack, if you don't?" demanded Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

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"Well, if Bunter doesn't know where he is, he isn't on the other side of a keyhole," said Bob. "Bunter always knows what's going on, on the other side of a keyhole."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" hooted Bunter. "I say, though, isn't Smithy about? I shouldn't wonder if he's been up to something—I know there's a row on in the Sixth. I heard Wingate say something to Gwynno about Loder and a snowball."

"Loder!" breathed Tom Redwing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's Smithy!" He pointed up the passage.

At the other end of the Remove passage was the stair to the box-room. From that stair Herbert Vernon-Smith emerged, and came sauntering down the passage, his hands in his pockets.

All the juniors looked at him curiously. The Bounder gave them a cool nod. He seemed to have recovered from the effect of that six in the Rag by this time.

"Anythin' up, you chaps?" he drawled. "You seem to be lookin' like a lot of moultin' owls."

"I say, you fellows, it can't have been Smithy if he was in the box-room," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the Bounder.

"What can't have been?" asked Vernon-Smith. "Has anythin' happened?"

"Bunter says there's a row in the Sixth, and he's heard talk about Loder and a snowball!" said Harry Wharton dryly.

"Which Smithy, of course, knows absolutely nothing about!" remarked Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"Nothin'!" agreed the Bounder. "Innocent as a babe in the wood, or

more so, if possible. Hallo, Toddy, what's the news?"

Peter Todd came up the stairs. He was grinning.

"Frightfully exciting!" he answered. "Any of you men been out of the House?"

"Out of the House," repeated Redwing. "Has anybody been out after lock-up?"

"Sort of!" chuckled Peter. "I hear that somebody got Loder of the Sixth in his study with a snowball from the quad. Quelch and Prout were out, and they started in to collar the bad lad—"

"Did they get him?" asked the Bounder calmly.

"Near thing," answered Peter. "From what I hear, he butted Prout in the tummy and left him for dead. Quelch and Loder are carrying in the remains."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob.

"Quite a spot of excitement downstairs," said Peter cheerily. "Prout's just been rolled in. He seems annoyed and a bit short of breath. I think there's going to be rather a row. None of you men been out, I hope?"

"Is it likely—after lock-up?" said the Bounder.

Tom Redwing gave him a deeply troubled look. Smithy answered it with a cheerful wink.

"Oh!" Peter eyed the Bounder. "You haven't?"

"Hardly."

"Haven't been out of the House since that row in the Rag. I dare say?" said Peter Todd.

"Right in one!"

"Good man!" said Peter, approvingly. "If you haven't been out, Smithy, you're all right. But if you'll

take a tip from a pal you'll go and change your shoes, before they start-inquiring—"

"What?"

"You know how suspicious beaks and prefects are," said Peter blandly. "If they noticed that mud on your shoes they mightn't believe that you picked it up indoors."

"Oh!" gasped Smithy.

He gave a quick stare down at his shoes. Then, without another word, he cut up the passage and disappeared into Study No. 4.

The juniors on the landing were left staring—Redwing with a clouded brow. There was a fat chuckle from Billy Bunter.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, it was Smithy all the time—"

"Shut up!" said Bob Cherry, with an anxious glance over the banisters.

Toddy's news that a beak had been butted over by some fellow out of House bounds meant that an inquiry was coming.

"That's why he was in the box-room," grinned Bunter. "He got in at the window, of course! He, he, he!"

"Quiet, ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Is Quelch coming up, Toddy?"

"I fancy so, when he's landed Prout's remains somewhere," answered Peter cheerfully. "There's teco for somebody—if he's copped! Loder seemed rather shirty, I thought. He had a lot of snow sticking in his neck. Some unknown person seems to have got him fair and square with a snowball."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't jaw, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"For goodness' sake, not a word!" said Tom Redwing anxiously. "It might be the sack if he really butted Prout over. The mad ass!"

"Not a giddy syllable!" said Bob Cherry. "Nobody knows nuffin, you men."

"The nuffinfulness is terrific!" grinned the Nabob-of-Bhanipur.

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say—"

"Will you turn off the chin-wag, you ass?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, glancing down the stairs in expectation of seeing a mortar-board rising into view.

"But I say—" persisted Bunter.

"Shut up!" hissed Johnny Bull. "Quelch may be coming up any minute!"

"I was only going to say—"

"If you say a word I'll burst you all over the Remove!" said Bob Cherry, in concentrated tones.

"Oh, really, Cherry! If you mean that there ain't any of the chestnuts left—"

"The what?"

"Chestnuts," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I heard that you were having baked chestnuts in your study. If there ain't any left—"

Bob stared at the fat Owl, and then grinned.

Baked chestnuts, it appeared, were uppermost in Bunter's fat mind. He was not bothering about Smithy!

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Yes, ass; cut along to my study and scoff them, and shut up!"

Billy Bunter rolled up the Remove passage to Study No. 13. The other fellows remained on the landing in an anxious and uneasy frame of mind.

Herbert Vernon-Smith rejoined them there as a mortar-board was seen below. There was no sign of mud about the Bounder now.

When Mr. Quelch arrived in the Remove passage to make inquiries the Bounder was as spick and span as any

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fellow in the Remove, with nothing about him to hint that he had been out of doors. And Mr. Quelch, who hoped that the bad lad in the quad was not a member of his Form, departed again in the happy belief that that hope was well founded.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

TOM REDWING moved restlessly about Study No. 4, every now and then glancing at a junior who sat at the table, with his brows wrinkled over a printed sheet of paper marked off in columns.

Redwing's face was clouded and anxious—the Bounder's absorbed.

There was something like anger, too, as well as anxiety, in Redwing's clouded face. He was concerned about his chum, but he was deeply irritated with him as well.

"Look here, Smithy—" he said, breaking the long silence.

Vernon-Smith did not look up. He was deep in his coupons—the copy of the sheet that had been sent earlier in the week to Snooter's Pools.

"You fool!" said Redwing at last, angrily.

The Bounder glanced up at that.

"Fool or not, I fancy I've scored this time," he said. "I should know for certain if that bully hadn't interrupted the radio news."

"It would have been Loder's duty to interrupt it if he had known what it was you wanted!" snapped Redwing.

"Loder's a whale on duty, isn't he?" sneered the Bounder. "He was just bullying, as he always is. Well, I've given him something back for it."

"And got pretty near the sack!" snapped Redwing.

"A miss is as good as a mile!" retorted the Bounder coolly. "I never knew those two old goats were out of the House! Prout would have had me if I hadn't butted him. Lucky Quelch never saw my face in the light, what?"

"Your luck won't always hold good!" said Redwing. "Quelch seems to be satisfied that it wasn't a Remove man; but Loder will guess."

"Let him guess—so long as he can't prove anythin'!" drawled the Bounder. "I'm not afraid of Loder."

"You'd have reason to be if he spotted that silly rot!" said Redwing, with a gesture towards the sheet of coupons on the table.

The gambling instinct, which was so strongly developed in the Bounder, was rather a puzzle to a clear-headed, sensible fellow like Redwing, and he had little patience with it. So far from feeling a thrill at getting "something for nothing," he did not want to get something for nothing; and, indeed, thought it rather unscrupulous to want to get something for nothing.

"I'm not going to show this to Loder!" said Smithy sarcastically. "And he doesn't know what I wanted to hear on Browney's radio. I'm going to hear it all the same—later; Loder or no Loder!" The Bounder broke into a laugh. "You solemn old sobersides, you'll sing a different tune if you see me walk off with a thousand quids!"

"If!" grunted Redwing.

"Somebody snaffles it." The Bounder's eyes gleamed as he got on to a favourite topic. "Last week the Snooter Penny Pool handed out over £1,000 to the winner."

"Did they?" grunted Redwing.

"Don't you believe it's on the square?"

"I don't know anything about that!

But, taking it that it's on the square, where's the sense in it?" said Redwing. "Do you know as much arithmetic as Bunter?"

"I hope so!" The Bounder stared. "What do you mean?"

"Well, put in a little simple arithmetic on your precious penny pool!" snapped Redwing. "The attempts are a penny a time. One man wins £1,000—if he does! How many lose?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"You can calculate, if you know as much arithmetic as a fag in the Second Form! Get Dicky Nugent to do it for you!" grunted Redwing.

"What do you mean?" snapped the Bounder irritably.

"The pool prize is made up of the cash sent in. The losers pay!" answered Redwing. "If one man wins £1,000 in the penny pool, there must be as many losers as there are pennies in £1,000."

"Oh!" said Smithy. It had never struck him in that light before. "Oh!"

"How many?" said Redwing. "A hundred pence are eight-and-fourpence. So there must be a hundred losers for one man to win as much as eight-and-fourpence."

"Um!"

"So there must be twenty-four thousand losers for one man to win a hundred pounds—"

"Oh gad!" said Smithy.

"And two hundred and forty thousand losers for one man to win a thousand pounds—"

"Great pip!"

"So, with your precious penny pool coupon, you have exactly one chance in two hundred and forty thousand, if the prize comes out at £1,000. What fellow in his senses would put money on a single chance in a quarter of a million?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith made no reply to that.

His common sense admitted Redwing's argument. One chance in a quarter of a million was practically no chance at all. But common sense had little to do with gambling.

"Oh rats!" he said at last. "A fellow might ring the bell! You never know your luck!"

"That," said Redwing, "is about as intelligent as a hee-haw from a donkey."

The Bounder burst into a laugh.

"Just about!" he agreed. "I'm going on, all the same."

"Well, you're a fool," said Redwing, "and worse than that! They have a rule that nobody under age may enter, and you're breaking it; so you're not entitled to a prize, even if you win—which you won't do."

"Well, if I don't, the question will not arise, as the lawyers say!" grinned the Bounder. "But I'm working this under another name, from another address, of course; they won't accept coupons from schools."

"That's breaking another of their rules, and breaking any rule washes out the claim to a prize."

"Redwing, old bean, you're as full of wisdom as an egg is of meat! But what did jolly old Shakespeare say about that? 'Wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it!' See?"

"Oh rats!" grunted Redwing. "The best thing I could do for you, Smithy, would be to jam that silly coupon in the fire."

"You'd better not!" growled the Bounder. Then he gave a jump. "Why, you cheeky ass—you fool—you rotter—you dare—"

Vernon-Smith fairly yelled with rage as Redwing snatched the coupon from

the table and flung it right into the study fire.

It blazed up and disappeared as the study door was flung wide open.

Loder of the Sixth strode in.

Vernon-Smith had his back to the door as he stood at the table.

Redwing had seen the door opening, and Loder's face in the aperture, just in time. A second later, Loder's eyes would have fallen on the coupon full in view on the table.

Vernon-Smith, in his rage, was making a stride towards Redwing. But he stopped as Loder tramped in. He understood his chum's action as he saw the bully of the Sixth.

"What's that?" Loder's eyes flashed with suspicion. "I saw you throw something into the fire, Redwing!"

"Did you?" said Redwing coolly, though his heart was beating. "I suppose a fellow can throw a paper into his study fire, Loder, without asking a prefect's permission first."

"I know quite well that is was something you did not dare to let a prefect see!" snapped Loder.

Redwing did not answer that. The Bounder stood biting his lip. He was intensely angry at the loss of his coupon copy; but, at the same time, he knew that if Loder had seen it, Loder would have taken him direct to his headmaster. Gambling on football pools—with the addition, in Smithy's case, of the miserable subterfuge of a false name and address—would have meant very serious trouble for the sportsman of the Remove; a flogging, at the least. Vernon-Smith's look at Gerald Loder expressed sheer evil.

"What do you want here?" he snarled. "Do they butt into rooms without knocking in the slum you were brought up in, Loder?"

"Are you asking for another six, Vernon-Smith?" said Loder grimly. "You won't have to ask twice." He fixed his eyes on the Bounder's savage face. "I believe it was you who were out of House bounds, and got me with a snowball at my window."

"You're welcome to believe what you like!" sneered the Bounder. "And if you come spying in my study again, I'll complain to Quelch!"

Loder's eyes glittered at him. It was more than probable that Loder suspected something of the Bounder's manners and customs; and he had butted into Study No. 4 so suddenly, it was quite plain, with some idea of catching him. The Bounder might have been smoking; or he might have had a racing paper in his hand; in which case, punishment hard and heavy would have fallen on the fellow whom Loder was certain had got him with that snowball.

Something had been going on—Loder knew that. Redwing was above suspicion—what he had tossed into the fire belonged to his study-mate, if it was something forbidden. Loder would have given a good deal to know what it was.

But he was rather at a loss now. Loder was satisfied with his own methods; but Mr. Quelch would have had something very emphatic to say about such methods as coming along quietly and opening a study door suddenly in the hope of catching a fellow out. Loder did not want trouble with a beak.

"It was you," he said between his teeth, "and I've a jolly good mind to give you another six!"

"You won't!" said Vernon-Smith. "You'll get out of my study, you spy, or I'll cut along to the landing and yell for Quelch."

"What was that paper that was thrown on the fire?"

"Find out!"

Loder breathed hard and deep. This time the Bounder had to be allowed to "get by" with that answer. Loder did not want the Remove master called up.

"Look out!" he said; and with that warning, he walked out of the study, angry and disappointed.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Voice In The Night.

HARRY WHARTON opened his eyes in the dark of the Remove dormitory, and rubbed them, and wondered whether he was dreaming.

Really, it seemed like it.

The voice that came to his ears was strange to him; and it was uttering words that were quite amazing at such a time and in such a place.

Bed-time for the Remove was half-past nine. By a quarter to ten all the Form, as a rule, were fast asleep. At ten o'clock it was very unlikely that there would be a wakeful fellow in a junior dormitory. It was now a few minutes after ten. Wharton did not know the hour; but he knew that he must have been asleep some time, when he was awakened by that strange voice.

It came from the darkness to his amazed ears, droning:

"Strong easterly winds will be——"

It shut off suddenly.

In amazement, the captain of the Remove sat up in bed and stared round him in the dark.

Only the darkness was to be seen. Had he been dreaming that he was listening to a wireless announcer on Browne's radio? That was what it had sounded like—the weather forecast that preceded the news.

But there was deep silence now, broken only by the steady breathing of many sleepers, and the rumbling snore of Billy Bunter.

Concluding that he must have been dreaming, Wharton laid his head on the pillow again.

But he had not closed his eyes, when the strange voice was heard again. This time it droned:

"Squalls and light showers may be expected in south-eastern England——"

Wharton sat up again.

Again the voice was shut off; but he knew this time that it was no dream. It was a wireless announcer's voice in the Remove dormitory.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sleepy voice. Bob Cherry had awakened, too. "What the dickens is that?"

"Did you hear it, Bob?" gasped Wharton.

Bob sat up, peering in the gloom.

"Yes, unless I was dreaming! Brownie can't have left the radio on in his study, I suppose."

"We shouldn't hear it from here if he had——"

"No; I suppose we shouldn't! But that was wireless!" said Bob.

"Blessed if I make it out. Hark!"

The droning voice resumed:

"Warning to shipping! On the west coast of Ireland——"

Sudden silence again.

"Well, that beats the band!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Are we being haunted by a giddy wireless announcer?"

"Shut up, you gabbling idiots!" came another voice—not that of the radio announcer! It was the Bounder's voice in low, angry tones.

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"Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton and Bob Cherry together.

"Quiet, you fools!"

The two juniors peered; but they could not see the Bounder in the gloom. Evidently, however, he was out of bed—and, amazing as it was, he was putting on and shutting off the radio.

"My esteemed chums, what is the up-fulness?" came another voice. Hurreo Jamsset Ram Singh had awakened.

"That was Smithy——"

"What's Smithy up to?" It was Skinner's voice now; wakefulness was spreading along the Remove. "Going out on the tiles, Smithy?"

"Quiet, you fool!" came the Bounder's hiss.

"Better watch out, old man!" chuckled Skinner. "Loder knows who got him with that snowball; and he will jump at a chance at you."

"Will you shut up?"

Several more voices became audible. But they died down in surprise as the radio announcer's voice resumed—Smithy having turned it on again.

"Herr Hitler addressed a crowd of ten thousand persons this afternoon at——"

Sudden silence again.

Smithy, it seemed, was not interested in the chin-wag of the Fuhrer.

"What on earth's this game?" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Is that Smithy playing the goat with a radio?"

"Is that my radio?" came from Tom Brown's bed in rather excited tones. Brownie was too careful of that portable to lend it up and down the Remove.

"Yes; shut up!" snarled Vernon-Smith.

"You've got Brownie's radio up here in the dormitory?" exclaimed Harry Wharton in amazement.

"Guessed it!" snarled the Bounder. "Will you shut up, or do you want to bring half the House here?"

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Harry. "That radio's loud enough to bring anybody here."

"No need to add a lot of gabble, then!"

"You've had the cheek to cart my radio up here!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Why, Quelch might confiscate it, if he found it here! You had the neck——"

"I hid it under my bed after prep!" answered the Bounder coolly. "I want the football results! If you don't want it confiscated, you'd better keep quiet and not bring a beak here. I think they give the results over again to-night."

"Why, you—you—you cheeky swab!" gasped Brownie.

"I'm getting the ten o'clock news!" said Vernon-Smith. "The football results will be given over again—when the gabbling ass has finished talking about Hitler and Mussolini. At least, I think they will—we shall see."

There was a buzz up and down the beds.

The Bounder's nerve was well known; but for a fellow to set a portable wireless going in a junior dormitory half an hour after bed-time was the limit—or over it!

"Well, that takes the bun!" said Skinner. "You're a card, Smithy!"

"Thanks; shut up!"

"I'll punch your head to-morrow, Vernon-Smith!" said Tom Brown.

"I'll be there when you do it! Keep your silly head shut now!"

Smithy turned on the wireless again. He wanted to keep it silent while unimportant news was being handed out and catch the football results when they came. But the announcer had not yet got to the desired subject. Herr

Hitler was done with, but Mussolini was getting his turn.

"In a speech at Turin this afternoon, Signor Mussolini stated that the just aspirations of the Italian people——"

Sudden silence again as Smithy shut off! He did not want to hear about the aspirations of the Italian people; just or unjust! All this dreary stuff was simply irritating to Smithy.

"Bother the blithering asses!" the Bounder was heard to growl. "Do they really think that people are interested in such stuff?"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter was the last to wake. "I say, is that the wireless? I say, what a nerve——"

"Shut up!"

"Oh, really, Smithy!"

"Quiet, for goodness' sake!"

"My hat! There'll be a tremendous row if Quelch spots this!" said Peter Todd. "You're begging for it, Smithy."

"The begfulness is terrific."

"Oh, shut up! I wonder if they've got on to something sensible yet?" growled Vernon-Smith, and he switched on again. The announcer's voice came:

"The honourable member for Muddycombe stated that he repudiated with scorn any such suggestion! The ship was not a foreign ship. It was a purely British ship. It was true that the captain was a Greek, the mate a Swede, and the crew wholly composed of Lascars, but——" Smithy shut off.

Silence again.

"Politics!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Give us a rest, Smithy!"

"Will they ever get to the football results?" hissed Smithy.

But they never did. Vernon-Smith turned on again, but the announcer was still dealing with the speech of the honourable member for Muddycombe.

And at the same moment the dormitory door opened and the light was switched on—and Vernon-Smith made one rapid nose-dive back into bed.

He had no time even to switch off—much less to shove the radio out of sight—barely time to plunge into bed and escape being seen. And the speech of the honourable member for Muddycombe ran on merrily as Loder of the Sixth stepped into the Remove dormitory.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Rough Luck For Smithy I

LODER stared round. At the opening of the door and the switching on of the light, every fellow in the Remove beds dropped his head to his pillow. A long row of—apparent—sleepers greeted Loder's gaze. And so swiftly had the Bounder plunged in that he was reposing peacefully, his head on his pillow, as Loder's glance swept round.

But if the Remove looked like a Form plunged in balmy slumber, Loder was not to be taken in by appearances.

He was hardly likely to believe that the juniors were all fast asleep when he had heard voices—plenty of voices—from the dormitory, and when the portable radio was still chattering away on the floor near Smithy's bed.

"All asleep, what?" asked Loder sarcastically.

The only reply came from the radio. "Mr. Chinwag challenged that statement," droned the announcer. "Peace, he admitted, was the universal desire; but he could not help thinking that peace would be most easily obtained by declaring war upon practically every body."



Vernon-Smith sent Redwing staggering over and then sprang to the window, snatching up a catapult as he did so. "Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton, grabbing the Bounder by the shoulder and dragging him back forcibly.

Loder jumped. That was not what he had expected to hear in a junior dormitory at a quarter-past ten.

"What——" he stuttered, staring round in amazement. "Who——"

The drone went on:

"The member for Popping hoped that the Government would remember that their first and greatest duty was to concern themselves with the inhabitants of any country but their own——"

"Who's doing that?" howled the amazed Loder.

From where he stood he could not see the radio on the floor by Smithy's bed. Evidently he had no idea that a portable wireless had been smuggled up to the Remove dormitory and set going after lights out.

Loder could only suppose that one of the juniors was doing this by way of a jest. He glared round for the offender.

But he failed to detect the speaker, who went on:

"He hoped, and he trusted, that no British statesman would ever so far forget what was due to foreign peoples as to waste a single thought upon the inhabitants of these islands——"

"Which of you is playing that silly trick?" roared Loder.

There was a faint chuckle. But through it the droning voice went on:

"That is the end of the speech by the honourable member for Popping. We have now to announce that Sir Noodle Balmcrumpet has been appointed minister at Hankey-Pankey——"

"Is that you, Vernon-Smith?" hooted Loder.

He was tracing the voice home, as it were! He strode towards the Bounder's bed.

Smithy's head was peacefully on his pillow, his eyes closed. He looked as if he was fast asleep. Appearances were deceptive.

"A report has been received that Rupert Crook, the convict for whom the police have been searching for over a month, has been seen again in London——" The radio was going on, and Loder jumped as he nearly stepped on it.

"Oh!" he gasped.

He stared blankly at Tom Brown's wireless. He knew now whence that mysterious voice proceeded.

He grabbed at it and shut it off.

"Who brought this here?" he demanded.

Silence.

"Is this your radio, Brown?"

Silence! Tom Brown was as fast asleep as the rest of the Remove!

"You'd better answer if you don't want me to kick it across the dormitory!"

Tom Brown woke up quite suddenly! He woke up and sat up!

"It's mine, Loder!" he answered promptly.

"What do you mean by bringing it here?" exclaimed Loder. "I fancied there was something going on here, but I never thought any junior would have cheek enough for this! Wireless after lights out, by Jove! I shall report this to your Form-master."

Loder picked up the portable.

"I shall take this to Mr. Quelch!" he said. "Most likely it will be confiscated till the end of the term."

"I—I say——" stammered Brownie, in dismay.

"You needn't say anything!" said Loder grimly. "Wireless entertainments in the dormitory after lights out are rather new. This is going to be the last time as well as the first, you cheeky young sweep!"

Vernon-Smith sat up.

"Brown had nothing to do with it, Loder!" he said quietly. "He never even knew the radio was here till he

heard it turned on! I brought it up here without asking him."

"Oh!" said Loder. His eyes gleamed at the Bounder. "I might have guessed that, Vernon-Smith! Well, I shall take it to Quelch, all the same, and you will see him about it."

And Loder, with the portable under his arm, walked out, shut off the light, and closed the door.

"That's that!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"The thatfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Some fellows ask for it, and no mistake!" remarked Bolsover major.

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"Loder would never have heard anything, if he hadn't been sneaking about listening," he snarled. "He's been hanging about spying."

"Might have fancied that some chap was going out of bounds!" murmured Skinner. "Might have hoped that it was the chap who got him with a snowball! You beg for these things, Smithy."

"If I don't get my radio back——" said Tom Brown.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped the Bounder. "You'll get it back when Quelch knows it was I did it. What do you think I owned up for, you fat-head—because I want six on the bags?"

"Well, six on the bags will do you good! Of all the cheek——"

"Oh, rats! By gum, I'll make that cur sorry for spying after me!" said the Bounder between his teeth. "I'll give him something more than a snowball next time."

"Better not have a next time, old bean!" said Bob Cherry.

"You wait and see!" snarled Vernon-Smith.

A few minutes later the dormitory door opened again, and the light switched on.

This time it was Mr. Quelch who entered, and he had a cane under his arm. And his expression was deadly.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Loder reports to me that he heard a noise in this dormitory and found a radio going on here—a radio that you had conveyed to the dormitory without the owner's knowledge!"

"Yes, sir!" said the Bounder. "There's a special bit of classical music coming on and I was very anxious to hear it, sir."

That statement made some of the Removites gasp!

"Your taste for classical music—if genuine—is much to be commended," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "but such an act of reckless audacity will be very severely punished, Vernon-Smith! Get up at once!"

The Bounder turned out.

"Now bend over the bed!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe!

Pyjamas were a poor protection against a cane well laid on. The Bounder yelled—he could not help it.

"Let that be a warning to you, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch, tucking the cane under his arm again. "On any repetition of such an action you will be sent to your headmaster."

Mr. Quelch departed, and the Removites were left to darkness again.

The Bounder breathed hard as he wriggled; and his eyes gleamed in the dark like a cat's.

"Let Loder wait a bit!" he said in a choking voice. "Let the cur wait a bit! I'll get back on him for this!"

Smithy was the last to sleep when the Removites settled down again. He was thinking, as he lay wriggling from those hefty swipes; but he was not thinking of football pools or results. He was thinking of "getting back" on Loder of the sixth; and still thinking of it when he fell asleep at last.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Cool Card!

"I SAY, you fellows! Who's that?" "Which?" asked Bob Cherry. The Famous Five were in the quad after third school on Monday when Billy Bunter asked the question.

They glanced round.

Bunter was blinking through his big spectacles at a figure that stood in the gateway.

Harry Wharton & Co., having had their attention drawn to him, looked at him.

He was a young man, in a bowler hat and a well-cut overcoat. He stood with a cigarette between finger and thumb as he looked in at the gates. He seemed interested in what he saw within.

"Who is it?" asked Bunter.

"Blessed if I know!" said Bob. "Only somebody looking in to see the manners and customs of the jolly old natives."

"He's been standing there some time," said Bunter. "There's Gosling."

Gosling, the ancient porter, was visible at the door of his lodge, his eyes fixed on the young man in the gateway. Judging by Gosling's expression, he recognised that young man, and was not pleased to see him. Grim disapproval was registered in Gosling's rugged countenance.

"Old Gosling looks shirty!" said Bunter. "Can't be a relation of one of the chaps, or old Gossy wouldn't glare at him like that! You can jolly well see that he knows him."

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Bunter was curious—his perpetual state. The Famous Five, however, were not deeply interested in the stranger, or in the fact that the old Greyfriars porter evidently knew him, and disapproved of him. They had never seen the man before, and did not share the fat Owl's inquisitiveness.

"I say, he's coming in!" said Bunter.

The young man stepped in at last. He came strolling in like a fellow who was quite satisfied with himself, and felt himself at home.

Gosling emerged from his lodge and stepped in his way.

Apparently Gosling carried his disapproval so far as to object to that young man entering the precincts of Greyfriars School.

"I say, you fellows, something's up!" exclaimed Bunter eagerly; and he rolled off towards the gates, keenly interested.

The Famous Five strolled in the same direction. That young man, so far as they could see, looked respectable enough. But if he was pushing in without permission, they were ready to lend Gosling a cheery hand in pushing him out again.

As they drew nearer they could see that that young man was not so young as he appeared at the first glance from a distance. Also they could observe that the face was a hard one; the eyes extremely keen and observant, the mouth hard under the drooping little moustache.

"You!" Gosling was saying, as they came within hearing.

"Know me again, old bean?" asked the newcomer, in an easy drawl.

"I ain't forgot you, Mr. Crocker!" said Gosling grimly. "You was growing that there moustache when you was in the Sixth Form 'ere, you was."

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he's an old boy! What's Gosling checking him for, if he's an old boy?"

The Famous Five could not help wondering

The young man with the moustache was, from Gosling's words, an old boy of Greyfriars; once upon a time Crocker of the Sixth Form! Old boys of Greyfriars could walk in if they liked. The Head was generally glad to see them. So was Gosling, as it often meant tips.

Clearly, however, Gosling was not glad to see this particular old boy. He was displeased and disgruntled.

"I know you!" continued Gosling. "It's years since you looked in last, Mr. Crocker, but I ain't forgot you. And I wonder at your nerve in coming agin. I am surprised at you."

"It's a surprising world isn't it?" drawled Mr. Crocker.

"You go hout!" said Gosling.

"My dear old relic of ancient times, I've called to see my dear headmaster," remonstrated Crocker.

"Last time you called, the 'Ead requested you not to call agin," said Gosling, "and you was cheeky, and he told me to show you hout. Show that man hout, Gosling!" was his words.

"But that's years ago, old relic!" said Crocker cheerfully. "You can't have been much over ninety then."

Gosling's crusty face reddened with wrath. Gosling's years were riper—riper than he liked to admit. But he was nowhere near ninety.

"Cheeky as hever!" grunted Gosling.

"Quite!" assented Crocker.

"You always 'ad a neck!" said Gosling. "Cheeky you was, the day you was expelled, and jest as cheeky now!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob.

The Famous Five were interested in the young man with the moustache now, as well as Billy Bunter! From this it seemed that he was not only an old boy of Greyfriars, but an old boy who had been turned out of the school in disgrace.

Old boys often blew in; but a fellow who had been expelled was uncommonly provided with nerve to turn up again at his old school.

"You go hout!" went on Gosling. "Dr Locke don't want to see no more of you, and well you knows it!"

"You pain me, Gosling," said Mr. Crocker, with a cheery coolness that made the juniors grin. "You almost make me feel that you're not glad to see me. And I'm so pleased to see you a hundred up, and still going strong!"

"I ain't a hundred, and never was, and well you knows it, you young limb!" hooted Gosling. "I got a good mind to put you out of 'ere on the back of your cheeky neck, Mr. Randolph Crocker!"

"Shake hands instead, and call me dear old Randy!" suggested Mr. Crocker.

"He, he, he!" from Billy Bunter, and the Famous Five grinned.

From what they heard, it seemed that Randolph Crocker was, or had been, rather a bad hat; but they found him rather entertaining.

Gosling, clearly, was not disposed to shake hands with that old boy, or to call him dear old Randy! He glared.

"I dunno whether the 'Ead would like me to lay 'ands on you!" he said.

"Whether the Head would or not, you wouldn't!" smiled the cheerful Mr. Crocker. "I should up-end you so suddenly it would make your venerable nut swim. Don't you try it on! I've been in the boxing line, among other things, since I was at Greyfriars! If I punched you, Gosling, you'd never see your hundred-and-tenth birthday!"

"Boxing!" snorted Gosling. "Yes, I remember you boxed 'ere. And I remember what else you did, too!"

"Don't sing it out, with these dear lads listening!" remonstrated Mr. Crocker, with an airy gesture towards the juniors. "If I stay, the Head would rather you didn't, Gossy."

"I say, Gosling, what was he sacked for?" squeaked Billy Bunter, breathless with inquisitiveness.

"Shut up, you fat frump!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Shut up!"

"Stay!" Gosling was snorting. "Yes, you're likely to stay, I don't think! They'll 'ave to keep an eye on the umbrellas if you stay, Mr. Sportsman Crocker!"

"You haven't forgotten my old nickname!" grinned Mr. Crocker. "Nobody here, I suppose, who remembers Sportsman Crocker—only such ancient birds as yourself, what? Gosling, my dusty old relic, I take it kindly that you remember me so well!"

"Oh, you 'ook it!" snapped Gosling, in disgust. "You've got a face to show yourself 'ere, arter what you was sacked for! Where you been the last five years?"

"In America, old thing!"

"With a lock and key on it, I expect!" said Gosling derisively.

"Gosling, you're getting sarcastic in your old age!" said Sportsman Crocker, still smiling and good-tempered, in spite of Gosling's plain hint that he had seen the inside of a prison. "I could listen to you for hours, Gosling—your voice reminds me of a saw-mill I worked on in the States—but I've got to see the Head before

he trickles away to lunch. Take your face away and pack it up with the other curiosities, Gosling."

Mr. Crocker made a movement to pass on.

Gosling stretched out an arm in the way.

"You 'old on!" he grunted. "You wait till I got word from the 'Ead whether you can come in or not! Your sort ain't wanted 'ere, Mr. Randolph Crocker, and what I says is this 'ere— Yarooooop!"

Gosling gave a sudden splutter as Randolph Crocker suddenly put his hands on his shoulders and sat him down on the earth.

Gosling sat with a bump!

"Wooogh!" he gasped.

"Remember I sat you down like that when I was in the Sixth here!" grinned Crocker. "Remind you of old times, Gosling—the happy old times before you made your century! What?"

"Oooogh!"

Gosling spluttered, and Mr. Crocker, smiling, sauntered on.

He gave the Famous Five a cheery nod in passing.

"Head in the study?" he asked.

"I—I think so," said Harry Wharton. "He usually goes to his study after getting through with the Sixth!"

"Same old game!" said Crocker. "So he did when I was in the Sixth, and he used to cram Thucydides into my nut—the dear old bean! Everything changes in this world, my young friends, except schools and school-masters—they go doddering on in the same old way!"

And the cool Mr. Crocker sauntered on, leaving the Famous Five gazing after him, and Bunter's eyes almost popping through his spectacles.

"Well, that chap's a cool card!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"The coolfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton & Co.—and a good many other fellows—eyed Mr. Crocker as he sauntered to the House.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Trouble In Study No. 4!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Sounds like a scrap!" said Johnny Bull.

"Smithy—"

"And Redwing—"

"The scrapfulness is terrific!"

After seeing Mr. Crocker lounge into the House—as coolly as if he belonged there, or, rather, as if the House belonged to him—the Famous Five had dismissed that self-possessed young man from their minds.

It was still some time to dinner, and there were chestnuts in Bob Cherry's study—and they came up to the Remove passage with the intention of baking and disposing of the same.

But as they came up the passage in a cheery bunch, they forgot about chestnuts in Study No. 13, at startling sounds that reached their ears from Study No. 4.

From that study, which belonged to Smithy and Redwing, came a scuffling, a trampling, and a panting of breath.

Obviously, a struggle was going on in that study—and the combatants could only be the Bounder and his chum.

The Famous Five came to a stop! As they stopped, the Bounder's panting voice came to their ears.

"Will you leave go, you rotter!"

"No!" came Redwing's snapped reply.

"You cheeky cad!"

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged looks.

Clearly, there was bad trouble in Study No. 4. It was not, perhaps, surprising, for Smithy's temper was uncertain and arrogant; what was surprising, in fact, was that there was not more frequent trouble.

Still, it was very unusual for the two to come to blows—that, at least, was surprising. Any fellow who chummed with the Bounder had to have a very patient temper, but Tom Redwing's temper was phenomenally patient.

"By gum, they're going it!" muttered Bob. "Look here, let's chip in and stop them."

"No bizney of ours," said Johnny Bull.

"Perhaps not; but let's, all the same."

Bob settled the matter by throwing open the study door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he bawled into the study. "You men enjoying life?"

The Famous Five stared in.

Vernon-Smith and Redwing were locked in a fierce grasp, struggling.

The study window was wide open. Smithy appeared to be struggling to reach it; Redwing to prevent him.

Redwing's face was grim and set; the Bounder's blazing with passionate anger. Smithy was going all out in that savage tussle, but, though he was strong, he was not so strong as Redwing, and Tom held him.

"What on earth's up, you fellows?" asked Harry Wharton. "For goodness' sake, chuck it!"

"Leave go!" yelled the Bounder.

"I won't!"

"I'll make you, you cad!"

"It's all right, you fellows!" panted Redwing. "Get out and shut the door! It's all right!"

It did not look "all right" to the Remove fellows, and they stood uncertain.

Suddenly the Bounder hooked Redwing's leg and threw his weight on him. Redwing staggered over and went down on the floor.

As his hold was released Vernon-Smith, panting, sprang to the window.

He stooped and snatched up a small object that lay under the window, and as they saw it, the juniors began to understand. What the Bounder had snatched up was a catapult.

"Smithy—" exclaimed Wharton, startled.

Smithy did not heed. Catapult in hand, he leaned panting from the window.

But he had no time to use the instrument. Harry Wharton crossed the study with a bound, grabbed him by the shoulder, and dragged him back so forcibly that he sprawled over with a heavy crash. Catapulting was not the sort of thing that Remove fellows stood for.

Smithy crashed, the catapult flying from his hand.

Harry Wharton glanced down from the open window. Obviously, Smithy had been about to use that catapult on something or somebody in the quadrangle below, and Redwing had been preventing him. Wharton did not suppose for a moment that Smithy was stupid enough or brutal enough to think of catapulting birds or animals; the Bounder had plenty of faults, but they were not of that miserable kind. But clearly he had had some intended victim—and Wharton as he looked out, saw who it was.

Loder of the Sixth was walking in the quad with Carne of that Form.

(Continued on next page.)

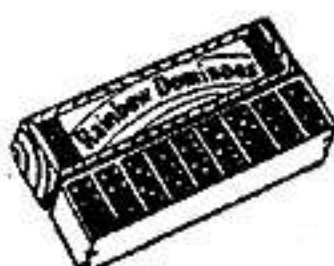
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within easy range of the window. At the sight of Loder, Wharton knew.

He turned round from the window with a dark brow.

Smithy had cause enough to feel enmity for Loder, but this kind of revenge was altogether too mean and rotten.

"You rotter, Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton.

Smithy scrambled up and grasped at the fallen catapult.

Redwing was on his feet, and he grasped him again and dragged him back from it.

Harry Wharton picked up the catapult.

"What—" exclaimed Nugent.

"Loder's down there," said Harry quietly.

"Oh! Smithy, you cad—"

"You worm, Smithy! Were you going to catapult Loder?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The Bounder did not answer; he was struggling savagely again in Redwing's tenacious grasp.

"I'll soon settle that," said Harry Wharton, and he placed the catapult under his heel and ground it to fragments.

Redwing released the Bounder then.

Vernon-Smith staggered away from him, leaning on the study table and breathing in great gulps.

"So that was the trouble, was it?" said Johnny Bull contemptuously. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, Smithy!"

Smithy panted and panted.

"Dirty trick!" said Bob. "And the sack for it if you got spotted!"

"The esteemed Smithy is terrifically infuriated," remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "He will be preposterously glad that Redwing stopped him when he is coolful again."

"I had to stop him," said Redwing in a low voice. His face was crimson. It was painful to him to see his chum regarded with contempt and disgust. "I—I wish you fellows hadn't butted in."

"I think it was all the better that we did," said the captain of the Remove dryly. "This won't do, Vernon-Smith. I'm speaking to you as captain of the Form. I've smashed that catapult—"

"You cheeky fool!" panted the Bounder.

"And I'm going to tell you this," said Harry quietly, "Loder's a bully and a cad, but if you don't toe the line at school you'll have the prefects down on you, good or bad! And, whatever Loder may be, or whatever he may have done, it was a dirty, cowardly trick to think of getting him with a catapult."

"Mind your own business!"

"I'm minding it," said Wharton. "This is my business, as captain of the Remove. I've smashed that catapult, and you're not going to get another. If you ever get a catapult in this study again I'll have you up in the Rag and give you six with a cricket stump. If you want to get back on Loder, do it in a decent way, not like some cowardly hooligan."

With that Harry Wharton walked out of the study, and the chums of the Remove went on their way to Study No. 13 and the chestnuts.

Herbert Vernon-Smith glared after them as they went, and then fixed his eyes with a look of deadly bitterness on his chum.

"Get out!" he snarled.

Redwing left the study without a word.

Smithy was left alone with his savage

temper—which he probably did not find very good company.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

An Extraordinary Interview!

DR. LOCKE, the headmaster of Greyfriars School, gave a start.

There was a tap on his study door, and it opened, and Mr. Randolph Crocker—otherwise, "Sportsman Crocker"—lounced in.

The Head looked at him.

Mr. Crocker had taken off his bowler hat, and he bowed over it to the surprised headmaster and laid it on the table.

The Head continued to look at him; surprise in his face deepened to annoyance, and then anger.

Crocker shut the door; then he smiled at the Head.

"You're asking me to sit down, sir?" he queried.

"No!" rapped the Head.

"I'll sit down unasked, in that case."

Crocker drew out a chair facing the headmaster's writing-table and sat down, still smiling at his former headmaster. Wrath gathered in Dr. Locke's usually kind and benignant face.

Seldom did the Head fail to give a cordial greeting to any Greyfriars old boy that blew in, but clearly he had no cordiality to expend upon the cool and self-possessed Mr. Crocker.

"Not glad to see me?" smiled Crocker.

"Can you ask?" rapped the Head.

"I've just asked!"

"Then I will answer," said Dr. Locke in a deep voice. "I am not glad to see you, Randolph Crocker. I am very displeased to see you. I wonder at your audacity in coming here."

"Your very words when I called some five or six years ago," drawled Crocker.

"You repeat yourself, my dear sir."

"How did you obtain admittance here?" exclaimed the Head. "Had your name been brought in to me, I should have refused to see you."

"Exactly! I guessed that one, dear old revered headmaster; so I walked in. I've not forgotten my way about my old school."

"Such impudence—"

"Again you repeat yourself," remarked Mr. Crocker. "May I respectfully suggest putting on a new record?"

Dr. Locke gazed at him, breathing hard. Crocker smiled genially. His coolness was remarkably like impudence. It was clear that Randolph Crocker possessed a thick skin, not easily pierced by scorn or contempt.

"I am unwilling," said the Head at last, "to have an old boy of this school thrust from the gates. I request you to go."

"Without saying what I came to say?"

"I have no desire to hear it."

"In this world," said Mr. Crocker, "both fellows are seldom suited. I enjoy a chat with my revered old headmaster; you don't."

"I am waiting for you to leave my study."

"I recommend waiting patiently, as I am not going just yet," smiled Randolph Crocker. "The last time I called, revered old chief, was to beg you to give me something in the nature of a recommendation to obtain a post I then had an eye on—a position of confidence, which I think you feared that I might abuse."

"I refused, and I should refuse

again!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "How dared you ask such a thing—you, who were expelled from this school for bad conduct, for reckless and riotous disregard of all restraints, culminating in crime! In crime, sir; it was for theft that you were expelled! Had you been older at the time you might have gone to prison! You were expelled; and a rag of decency, sir, if you possessed it, would keep you at a distance from the school you disgraced!"

"Quite!" agreed Mr. Crocker. "But, alas, I possess nothing of the kind!"

"If you have come to repeat such an impudent request, my answer remains the same!" said Dr. Locke.

"I have come to ask quite another thing."

"It is refused before it is asked."

"Hear me, all the same!" said Mr. Crocker cheerfully. "I have had my ups and downs, sir—recent years I have spent in the United States, where I have somehow failed to make good. Now, sir, I am one of the unemployed—genuinely seeking work!" Crocker grinned. "Will you give me a chance—here?"

"Here!" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"In my old school!" said Crocker. "I am not ambitious! I do not ask for an appointment on the staff."

"Bless my soul!"

"Possibly you may have use for a secretary!" suggested Crocker. "I have done a secretary's work in my time."

"Can you produce a testimonial of good conduct from your employer?" asked Dr. Locke, with grim sarcasm.

"Alas—no!"

"I thought not!"

"And you were right!" agreed Mr. Crocker. "I have had my ups and downs—more downs than ups—and misunderstandings have occurred. I have been a rolling stone, and gathered very little moss. Happy possessors of moss seem unwilling to part with it to rolling stones! But it is never too late to mend. What?"

"Is that all?"

"Far from it! Secretary—amanuensis a humbler post, if you like! Librarian, or librarian's assistant! School porter, even."

"What?"

"Gosling is getting old."

"Even if I believed that you were in earnest, I have nothing to say to you," said Dr. Locke. "I have reason to believe that you went from bad to worse after leaving Greyfriars. I shrink from learning what you may have done during the past twenty years. As a boy, you were bad-tempered and unscrupulous—a disgrace to your school! Since then, you have had many chances that you have thrown away. What is your object in coming here?"

"I have stated it!"

"I will speak plainly," said Dr. Locke. "I do not believe you. You—who deceived and deluded me when you were a schoolboy here! You who, suspected again and again, deluded me with falsehoods until the end came. You who mixed in disgraceful company at late hours—breaking bounds night after night, owing to some secret mode of ingress and egress that you discovered—some unsuspected means of getting in and out of the school—one of the secrets of this ancient place that you found out, and of which you made a base use. You who stole, and was expelled for stealing."

"You have lost none of your old eloquence, my respected chief!" remarked Mr. Crocker, as the Head paused for breath.

"I do not believe," said Dr. Locke, "that you had the slightest expectation that I might give you a post here. You



In the grasp of four prefects, Randolph Crocker was carried down the dining-room, with his arms and legs flying wildly in the air. "Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Jevver see anything like this before?" "Never!" gasped Harry Wharton.

had some other object in coming. What was it?"

The Sportsman's keen, watchful eyes narrowed. The one-time bad hat of the Greyfriars Sixth did not seem to have expected his old headmaster to be quite so penetrating.

But if Randolph Crocker had any secret motive for this call at his old school, he was keeping it a secret.

He gave the headmaster that one quick, wary look. Then he smiled.

"Will nothing make you trust me?" he asked.

"Yes!" said the Head grimly. "Proof that you have supported yourself by honest labour."

"Alas!" sighed Crocker.

"What was your object in coming here?" demanded the Head.

"The pleasure of seeing my revered old headmaster—and the dear old familiar surroundings of happy boyhood!" grinned Crocker.

"That will do!" said Dr. Locke. "Will you go?"

"Then there is nothing doing?"

"I desire only to see the last of you."

"You do not even ask me to walk round the dear old school and gaze with dimmed eyes on the dear old familiar spots?"

"Will you leave my study?" exclaimed the Head.

"You are not even asking me to lunch?"

Dr. Locke rose to his feet. His face was pale with anger.

"Will you go, or shall I ring for you to be shown out?" he asked.

Crocker rose also.

"I will not give you that trouble, dear old chief!" he answered. "It seems that the pleasure of this meeting has been all on my side! I take my leave, sir!"

He lounged to the door and opened it. Standing with his hand on the door, he glanced back at the frowning head-

master, smiling. Then, to Dr. Locke's intensified anger, he winked!

Then, at last, Mr. Crocker left the study, shutting the door after him.

Dr. Locke sank into his seat again, breathing very hard. That extraordinary interview had deeply disturbed him. Seldom had he been so deeply annoyed and angered.

His only consolation was that that remarkable old boy was gone!

But the Head consoled himself too soon! That remarkable old boy was not gone yet—and was not yet going!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Chucked Out!

"I SAY, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "He's here!"

Bunter blinked, with popping eyes.

Other fellows stared.

The Greyfriars fellows had come in to dinner. But even Bunter forgot dinner, for the moment at least, in surprise.

Standing by the high table, at which the prefects sat, was the rather slim figure of Randolph Crocker, old boy of Greyfriars.

He was minus hat and overcoat now. He stood in an easy attitude, speaking to some of the Sixth Form men—who rather stared than answered. And all other fellows stared, also, as they came trooping in.

Two or three dozen fellows had seen Crocker before he entered the House. Several fellows, as well as the Famous Five and Bunter, had heard what Gosling had said to him. Others, since, had heard more from Gosling.

So, by this time, it was known over nearly all the school that that cool young man was named Randolph Crocker: that he had been nicknamed "Sportsman Crocker" as a Greyfriars man; and that

he had been sacked from the school: and that, when he had called once, years ago, he had been ordered out by the Head.

Aware of all that, the fellows were naturally astonished to see him in Hall. They wondered at his nerve, and at his neck.

Some of the masters, no doubt, remembered him, as well as the Head! To the boys he came as a stranger. But, with cool assurance, he was ready to introduce himself to anybody.

Wingate of the Sixth eyed him rather grimly. Gwynne was grinning—Loder and Walker and Carne seemed rather amused. Other Sixth Form men looked at him with curiosity. Fifth and Shell, Fourth and Remove, Third and Second, all looked at him.

That sea of eyes did not disconcert him in the least. Little as he had to boast of at his old school, the Sportsman seemed to like the limelight he was getting.

"Some johnnies have a nerve!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Blessed if I should like to show up here, after getting bunked."

"I say, you fellows, Gosling says he was bunked for pinching!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Gosling's told a dozen fellows."

Harry Wharton's lip curled. "He must have a pretty thick skin to let himself be seen here," he said. "I wonder it's allowed."

"Perhaps it isn't!" grinned Peter Todd. "That sportsman looks as if he might give himself leave."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "I've heard that he went in to see the Big Beak. Think he's here without being asked?"

"By gad, what a nerve!" said Vernon-Smith. The Bouncer eyed the figure at the prefects' table very curiously.

"Rather too much nerve, if it's true

(Continued on page 16.)

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LODER LOOKS FOR TROUBLE!



(Continued
from
page 13.)

that he was sacked for stealing," said Redwing. "But perhaps it isn't."

"Gosling says so!" squeaked Bunter. "Oh, I believe that's right enough!" said Hazeldene. "Gosling must know, as he was here in Crocker's time! But what a neck!"

"The neckfulness is terrific." Mr. Quelch came in, and the juniors noted that his gimlet eyes shot round to Crocker at once. The Remove master seemed hardly able to believe those gimlet eyes.

There was a buzz of breathless excitement as Quelch rustled swiftly up the Hall to the spot where Randolph Crocker stood.

Crocker gave him a nod. "Quelch, by Jove!" he said cheerfully. "What a pleasure to see you again, my dear fellow!"

Quelch did not return that cheery greeting.

His face was hard and grim, and his look expressed only contempt.

"What are you doing here?" he rapped sharply.

"What a question!" drawled Mr. Crocker. "Are you not glad to see an old boy again, Quelch—once a member of your Form in the happy old innocent days?"

"Have you the headmaster's permission to be here?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Randolph Crocker.

"Will you answer my question?"

"Presently, old bean—presently! At the moment I am going to lunch with the present members of my old Form."

And Crocker calmly sat down in a chair at the high table.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, angry and very taken aback.

"It is quite clear that you are here without permission. I beg you to retire at once!"

"Without my lunch?" asked Crocker reproachfully.

"Will you leave this Hall?"

"Quelch, old man, I'm enjoying your company too much! You can't guess what a pleasure it is to see you again! I've seen nothing like your face since I left Greyfriars—except a gargoyle or two!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came echoing in the Hall.

Mr. Quelch glared round.

"Silence!" he hooted.

"Look here, Mr. Crocker," said Wingate of the Sixth, "You can't stick here, in the circumstances! Hadn't you better go?"

"You must allow me to be the best judge of that, my dear fellow!" answered Crocker. "J'y suis, j'y reste, as we used to say in the French class. I am here, and here I stop!"

Wingate eyed him, and glanced at Mr. Quelch. The captain of Greyfriars was prepared to exclude that intruder forcibly, if required.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, rolled up to the spot. Mr. Hacker, the

master of the Shell, followed, and Capper, master of the Fourth.

Prout, it seemed, knew Crocker, and remembered him—not favourably.

"Do my eyes deceive me," exclaimed Prout, "or is that Randolph Crocker, who was expelled from this school twenty years ago for dishonesty?"

"Your eyes don't deceive you this time, old fat friend!" said Crocker affably. "I remember they often used to; but this time you've got it right! Remember me in the Form, Prout? Do they still call you Old Pompons?"

"Wha-at?" gasped Prout.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Upon my word!" boomed Prout. "Unprecedented! Unparalleled! Extraordinary! Most unprecedented!"

"Polysyllabic as ever, old thing!" said Crocker. "Same old long-winded ass—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch's jaw shut like a vice. There was laughter up and down Hall; most of the fellows seemed to find "Sportsman Crocker" rather entertaining. But Quelch clearly did not regard this as a laughing matter. He was disgusted, shocked, and scandalised.

"This scene must end!" he said. "I can only conclude, Crocker, that you have visited this school with the deliberate intention of creating a scene here! Why, I cannot imagine. The merest sense of shame should have restrained you! But you will not be allowed to proceed! Go!"

"Guess again!" suggested Crocker.

"Will you leave this Hall instantly?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"The answer is in the jolly old negative!" drawled Randolph Crocker.

"Wingate! Loder! Gwynne! Sykes! May I request you to conduct this—this man out of the House?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir!" said Wingate.

"Come on, Mr. Crocker!"

The four prefects named gathered round the chair on which that amazing old boy had sat down.

Nobody else in Hall was sitting down. A breathless crowd watched the scene. It was a very unusual spot of excitement in Hall at Greyfriars.

What the man's object was, was difficult to guess—unless it was sheer malice towards the school from which he had been kicked out and the headmaster who had sentenced him. Apparently, Sportsman Crocker had dropped in with the cheery intention of making a scene and kicking up a shindy. It really was, as Prout declared, unprecedented.

Old boys varied, of course; there were all sorts and conditions of old boys. But an old boy of this kind was a novelty.

Possibly some old boys had gone to the bad since leaving school. If so, they naturally shrank from making the fact known there. But Randolph Crocker seemed to desire to parade it.

"Come, Mr. Crocker!" said Wingate, as civilly as the circumstances allowed.

"Let me see you out of the House!"

"Forget it!" said Mr. Crocker.

"Remove him!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker.

"Remove him at once!" boomed Prout.

"Nobody wants to use force," urged Wingate. "Come quietly."

"I have had that remark made to me before," said Crocker. "On that occasion it was made by a man in a blue tunic and a helmet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" barked Mr. Quelch. "Wingate, take that man away!"

"We shall have to shift you if you don't walk out, Mr. Crocker!" said the Greyfriars captain.

"Before you get going," said Randolph Crocker, "let me mention that I was the best boxer in the Sixth here, and that I have done some work in the ring since I left! I still have a fairly hefty punch! I have put a man to sleep with a single jolt before now!"

"Better keep that punch packed, Mr. Crocker!" said Wingate, rather grimly.

"Bear a hand, you men!"

Four pairs of hands hooked Mr. Crocker out of his chair.

Mr. Crocker's right came out and jolted on Wingate's chest.

There was a crash as the captain of Greyfriars went over.

"I warned you!" said Mr. Crocker, still genial.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Man down!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Silence! Vernon-Smith, take a hundred lines! Silence!"

Wingate was up with a bound. With gleaming eyes, he closed in on Crocker again. Three other prefects grasped the man at the same time.

Randolph Crocker was swept off his feet. Up he went, in the grasp of the four prefects, and they carried him down the Hall, with his arms and legs flying wildly in the air.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Jevver see anything like this before?"

"Never!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Well, hardly ever!" grinned Squiff.

"I guess it's the bee's knee!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "I'll tell a man, it's the opossum's eyelids!"

"I say, you fellows—He, he, he!"

There was a buzz of voices—or, rather, a roar—as Crocker was carried out. A bump was heard outside the House.

Four prefects, breathing rather hard, and with flushed faces, walked back to their places at the high table. Dinner at last proceeded in Hall. It proceeded amid a buzz of excitement that the masters could not suppress.

Some of the fellows wondered whether that extraordinary old boy would butt in again, and have to be chucked out again. But he did not butt in. Fellows were eager for dinner to be over, to see whether he was still hanging about the school. But when they came out they saw no more of Sportsman Crocker.

Apparently, the Sportsman had had enough, and had cleared. And then the surmise was whether they would see him again at Greyfriars. For the present, at least, Randolph Crocker had taken himself off.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Just In Time!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH leaned on the mantelpiece in Study No. 4, an unlighted cigarette between his lips, and a scowl on his face.

That scowl grew thicker as the study door opened and Tom Redwing came in.

Redwing glanced at him, met the black scowl, and turned away his eyes again. He sat down quietly at the study table.

It was nearly time for prep in the Remove.

Smithy, however, did not seem to be thinking of prep.

Since the row in the study that morning he had not spoken a word to his chum, and he did not speak now. But his look was expressive.

Smithy was, in fact, in one of his very worst tempers. Nothing at the moment seemed to be going Smithy's way.

That chance in a quarter of a million

had not, of course, materialised. The Bounder had seen the results in the newspapers, and, as usual, there was something amiss with all the coupons.

The previous week Smithy had put in a lot of time and a lot of trouble filling in coupons for Snooter's Penny Pool. He had filled in dozens and dozens of coupons, each of which cost the small sum of a penny—quite a sum in the aggregate. But to name all the winners in twelve football matches was a task that might have taxed the powers of the prophets of old. Smithy had not "rung the bell," and he knew perfectly well that he never was likely to do so—which added to his irritation.

Between that irritation and his row with Loder, and his resentment of the caning in the dormitory, Smithy had been more than usually inattentive and disrespectful in class that day; and Mr. Quelch was about the last master on the staff to tolerate the same.

Smithy was the richer by three hundred lines, and had narrowly escaped another whopping.

He was irritated, too, with the Famous Five; especially with Wharton, for what he had said on the subject of the catapult. He was deeply exasperated with Redwing for having intervened—though by this time he was secretly rather glad that he had not got Loder with that catapult, having realised, on reflection, that such a rotten thing was outside the limit. He was ashamed of having been seen with the catapult in his hand at all; but a feeling of shame only added acid to his temper.

Altogether, the Bounder was about the most unpleasant fellow at Greyfriars just then. And he looked it!

"You've just come up?" he asked, breaking the silence suddenly and unexpectedly.

Redwing glanced round, rather relieved to hear him speak. He was accustomed to sulky moods from Smithy, which made life far from enjoyable in Study No. 4. At such times, Redwing reminded himself of Smithy's many good qualities, and what a generous and loyal pal he had often been, and bore with him patiently.

"Yes," he answered.

"Hear anything from the Sixth?"

"From the Sixth!" repeated Redwing, puzzled. "No!"

"Loder's not gone to his study yet, then!" said the Bounder sardonically. "Half Greyfriars will hear him when he does!"

Redwing compressed his lips. Often and often, the Bounder had a feud on with somebody or other; he was not a fellow to forget offences. The latest was with Loder of the Sixth.

A feud with a Sixth Form prefect was a dangerous game, and Redwing was equally troubled and alarmed.

"What have you been doing in Loder's study, Smithy?" he asked, very quietly.

"Something that you can't meddle in, you meddling fool!" answered the Bounder coolly.

"If I hadn't meddled to-day, as you call it, you might be sacked from the school by this time, Smithy!" said Redwing. "Do you think Loder would not have guessed at once who had handled the catapult? He guessed who had snowballed him fast enough!"

"Let him guess, if he can't prove!" sneered the Bounder. "He may guess this time—much good may it do him!"

Redwing rose from the study table, his face deeply clouded.

"What have you done?" he asked.

"Find out!"

"You're mad to run such risks!" said Redwing. "Do you want to follow in the footsteps of that man Crocker, who was here to-day?"

The Bounder gave him a bitter look.

"Crocker was sacked for pinching!" he said. "Do you think I'm likely to come to that? Is that your opinion of me, Tom Redwing?"

"You know it isn't!" answered Tom quietly. "But from what I've heard to-day, Crocker started by pub-crawling, breaking bounds, sneaking out of the school at night, gambling, and such other rotten things. That led him to the finish. Your row with Loder is entirely due to your gambling—he's rather a brute, but that's what caused the row. And that row with Loder looks like going the way Crocker went. Do you want to be sacked?"

"I'll chance it, to get even with that bully!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth. "But don't you worry—a booby-trap isn't a matter for sacking—even if they get the man! And they won't!"

"Loder will know——"

"Let him!"

"Smithy, you're mad to run the risk!" said Redwing, in great distress. "You're in the black books of the beaks—you know how jolly near you've been to the sack already! The Head wouldn't go so easy with you as he might with another fellow!"

"So you think I might get turfed out for catching Loder with an inkpot on his napper?" sneered Vernon-Smith.

"I think it's quite likely—added to all you've done already!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm going to get even with that cur!" he said. "I'll chance it! Go and listen on the stairs, if you want to know when Loder goes to his study! I fancy he will be heard at a good distance!"

Redwing stood looking at him for some moments. Then, without speaking again, he left the study.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders again and lighted his cigarette. In his present mood his chum's worry and anxiety were nothing to the Bounder.

Tom Redwing went quickly down the passage to the landing.

The Famous Five were there, chatting till it was time to go to the studies for prep. Sportsman Crocker and his peculiar proceedings at the school that day was the subject under discussion.

As Redwing passed them, going to the staircase, Harry Wharton called to him.

"Going down, Reddy? Prep, you know!"

"Yes, I know!" answered Redwing over his shoulder. And he hurried down the Remove staircase.

"Anything up with Reddy?" asked Bob, glancing over the banisters as the Bounder's chum cut down the stairs. "He looks——"

"Oh, that row with Smithy to-day!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Reddy's always worried when that fathead gets his back up. Smithy wants booting!"

"Let's go along and boot him!" suggested Bob. "There's time before prep!"

"Fathead!" said Nugent.

The juniors resumed their discussion of the Sportsman and his proceedings. Redwing, meanwhile, hurried to the Sixth Form passage.

If Gerald Loder had not yet walked into the booby-trap that Smithy had fixed up in his study, there was still time to undo the Bounder's work and

save the reckless and headstrong fellow from certain trouble.

That was Redwing's intention; and the fact that there had been as yet no row from the Sixth gave him hope that there was still time. Loder, obviously, must have been well off the scene when the Bounder was at work; and Redwing hoped that he was still off the scene.

But as he hurried on, several Sixth Form men came out of the Prefects' Room and walked along by the scholar studies. Loder was one of them—Carne and Walker the others.

Redwing, stopping at the corner of the passage, watched them anxiously.

Carne went into his study; Loder and Walker stopped near Loder's door to exchange some remarks. It was too late to reach Loder's study unseen, but Redwing still hoped that Loder might go in with Walker, in which case he had still a chance.

But, a minute later, James Walker nodded to his pal and went on.

Loder turned to his study door.

That door was ajar! Loder lifted his hand to push it open and step in. And Redwing, without stopping to think, cut into the passage, grasped him by his arm, and dragged him back just in time.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Rough On Redwing!

LODER of the Sixth spun round, surprised and startled.

So swift and sudden was that drag on his arm that it almost spun Gerald Loder over. He staggered, and as Redwing, panting, released his arm, he glared furiously at the junior.

"You cheeky young cub!" he gasped. "What do you fancy you're up to? Have you come here to ask for a licking? By gum!"

"I—I——" stammered Redwing.

He hardly knew what to say. He had to stop Loder from walking into the trap, if he was to save his reckless chum from bad trouble.

Redwing could see—what Loder had not thought of noticing—the booby-trap on the study door. It made his heart sink to see it.

Booby-traps were not uncommon among exuberant juniors—a book, or a cushion, might drop on an unsuspecting head. But the trap laid in Loder's study was not so harmless as that.

On top of the door, lodged against the lintel, was a large and heavy volume—a Greek dictionary. That alone was enough to give a fellow a very unpleasant knock. But on the dictionary was a large inkpot, and a crashing inkpot on the head was fairly certain to do some damage. The Bounder must have been utterly reckless and savagely malicious to lay such a trap. But only too well Redwing knew of what his wayward chum was capable when the evil in his nature had the upper hand.

Whatever happened, he was glad that he had saved Loder from that crash. Bully as he was, Loder did not quite deserve that; though it was wholly of the Bounder that Redwing was thinking.

But Loder, unconscious of the danger he had so narrowly escaped, was only astonished and enraged by the extraordinary cheek of a Lower Fourth junior in grabbing him and dragging him backwards.

"By gum!" he repeated. "I'll let you learn whether you can handle a
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Sixth Form prefect like that, Redwing! You seem to be learning manners from your pal in the Remove! I'll teach you better! Come into my study!"

Loder turned to the door again.

"Stop!" panted Redwing. He jumped between Loder and the door, pushing him back, to his further amazement and rage.

"By gad!" spluttered Loder. "I—I—I'll—"

"What on earth's the row?" asked Walker of the Sixth, coming back along the passage and staring at both of them.

"I think this young cub's gone out of his senses!" gasped Loder. "I'll give him such a hiding!"

"Stop, I tell you!" rapped Redwing. "Look on your door, Loder!"

"On my door!" repeated Loder. "What—?" He broke off with the question unfinished as he looked.

Walker looked also, and whistled.

"By gum!" he said. "I'd rather not have that lot on my nut, Gerald! Looks as if the kid came to tip you."

Loder, in silence, reached up to the top of the door. He was tall enough, on tiptoe, to reach the articles Smithy had stacked there for him. With a black brow he lifted down the inkpot and the Greek lexicon.

Then he kicked the door open, and strode into the study. He laid the lexicon and the inkpot on the table, and turned to Redwing. The savage rage in his face was not pleasant to see.

"Come in here, Redwing," he said, in a choking voice.

Tom Redwing stepped silently in. How the matter was going to end, he did not know. But he had saved his hot-headed chum from a Head's flogging, if not from the sack—and he did not care much for anything else.

"You young villain!" hissed Loder. "You fixed that up for me. By gad, I'll take the skin off you!"

"Hold on, old man!" remonstrated Walker. "The kid can't have done it, when he came along to stop you."

"Don't be a fool, Jimmy Walker. He lost his nerve, and came back to stop it; but he did it right enough."

"Oh!" said Walker. "Is that it, Redwing?"

Redwing did not answer.

"If he hadn't changed his mind," said Loder, "I should have got that lot on my head! By gad, that inkpot might have cracked my nut—and the ink in it, too! By gad! Do you understand, you young scoundrel, that you would have been sacked for that, if it had come off? I suppose you thought of that in time, and that's why you came back."

"Speak up, kid!" said Walker. Walker was much more good-natured than his pal Loder. "If you did it, you know what to expect, whether you changed your mind or not, but if you didn't!"

"He did!" snarled Loder. "You know that!"

"I don't know it, and you don't, Gerald. More likely he heard that some other mad young ass had done it, as he came to stop you."

"Oh!"

Loder, who had gripped his ashplant, paused. He realised that Walker had probably guessed it. A trick of that kind was hardly in keeping with Redwing's well-known quiet and orderly character; but his best friend in the Remove—the fellow who shared his study—was capable of it. A glimmering of the truth dawned on Loder.

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"Answer me, Redwing!" he rapped. "Did you fix that up on my door?"

Redwing drew a deep breath.

"I've nothing to say," he answered.

"That's a confession, then," said Loder.

Redwing was silent.

"I'll give you a chance," said Loder, his eyes gleaming at him. "Was it Vernon-Smith who fixed up that trap for me? And did you hear of it, and come here to stop it for that reason?"

"I've said that I've nothing to say." Loder's grip closed almost convulsively on the ash.

"How did you know it was there, if you did not put it there?" he demanded.

No answer.

"Will you answer me, Redwing?"

"I've nothing to say."

Loder gritted his teeth. Gladly he would have dismissed Redwing, if he could have fixed this on Vernon-Smith instead. But if it was Redwing who had done it, Redwing was going to answer for it to the full.

"Will you say plainly whether you did it or not?" he asked, between his teeth.

"No!"

"That means that you did?"

No reply.

"Well, if it had come off, you'd be up before the Head!" said Loder. "If I'd got a bad knock as you intended, you young scoundrel, you'd be hoofed out of the school. As it is, I'll deal with you—and, by gum, I'll make you sorry for playing tricks like this in a prefect's study! Bend over that table."

Redwing, in silence, bent over the table. He shut his teeth, to bear what was coming. Six, or sixty, for that matter, would not have made him mention the name of his chum.

As he refused to speak, Loder had no choice but to judge him the guilty party; and Loder was not the man to spare the rod, when he had had a narrow escape of a cracked nut.

Up went the ash, and it came down with a terrific swipe.

Redwing gave a gasp; then he was silent, and he uttered no further sound as the ash rose and fell, and rose and fell again till the full six had been administered.

Six was the limit; but the enraged and exasperated bully of the Sixth seemed inclined to go on, all the same. But Walker interposed again:

"Chuck it, Gerald! The kid's had enough—more than enough, if you ask me!"

"I haven't asked you!" snarled Loder.

"Chuck it, all the same!"

Loder decided to chuck it. He threw down the cane.

"Cut, you young sweep!" he snapped.

Tom Redwing left the study in silence. His face was set and a little pale as he made his way back to the Remove.

The Bouncer stared at him as he came into Study No. 4.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Nothing."

And Redwing did not speak again.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

"I SAY, on fellows!" gurgled Billy Bunter.

Bunter had the news.

He was bursting with it.

The fat Owl was so tremendously excited that he could hardly gurgle it out.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and Bunter had been out of gates. Other fellows were thinking of football. There was a spot of fine weather that afternoon, and Harry Wharton & Co. were considering a pick-up game on Little Side. Bunter had not been bothering about Soccer. Bunter had certain reasons for believing that his sister Bessie, at Cliff House School, had had a cake from home. For which excellent reason, Bunter had decided to roll over to Cliff House and visit Bessie, like the affectionate brother he was.

But the fat Owl did not get very far on his way to Cliff House. Here he was again, rolling back, in such a state of excitement, that his little round eyes almost popped through his big, round spectacles.

"I—I—I say, you fellows!" Bunter almost shrieked. "I say! Oh crikey! He, he, he! I say—"

Fellows in the quad gave him their attention. Something evidently was up—something of a remarkable nature.

"What on earth—" asked Bob Cherry.

"I—I—I say—" Bunter gurgled and gasped. "I say, he hasn't gone, after all! He, he, he! I say—"

"Who hasn't gone?" asked Harry Wharton.

"He hasn't!" gasped Bunter.

"Who's he, fathead?"

"He! Him!" gasped Bunter. "I've seen him! Oh crumbs!"

"Who's him?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Him ancient or modern?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Him! Crocker!" Bunter got it out.

"Crocker!"

A dozen voices repeated the name.

That old boy's visit on Monday had caused tremendous excitement at Greyfriars. But it had rather died away, as a topic, on Tuesday, and by Wednesday Crocker was hardly remembered. Fellows had other matters to think of.

But the mention of his name revived interest at once. Nobody had supposed that the Sportsman was still hanging about. Apparently, however, he was, from Bunter's statement.

"You've seen Crocker?" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Oh crikey! Yes! He ain't going!" gasped Bunter. "Boots and shoes—He, he, he!"

"Boots and shoes!" repeated Bob Cherry blankly.

"Soled and heeled!" squeaked Bunter. "Fancy that!"

"Mad?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Really, this sounded a little like insanity. Crocker, once of the Sixth, might or might not be still hanging about the school from which he had been expelled twenty years ago. But what boots and shoes had to do with it was rather mysterious.

"There's a board up!" gasped Bunter.

"A board?"

"Yes. Boots and shoes, soled and heeled. He, he, he! Crocker—He, he, he! I say, he's got his knife into the Head for sacking him all that time ago. He, he, he! I say, what will the Big Beak say when he knows?"

"When he knows what, you burbling ass?" howled Bob Cherry. "What has Crocker been doing?"

"Boots and shoes!" gasped Bunter.

"What about boots and shoes, you blitherer?"

"Soled and heeled! He, he, he! I say, you fellows, he's there all right! I saw the board at Abbot's Spiney! He, he, he! He must have hired the place. He's set up a shop—"

"A shop!" yelled the juniors.



"I am quite at your service, sir," said Crocker. "One of your shoes, if I may be allowed to mention it, is a little down at the heel. May I—" "Will you cease this impertinence?" hissed Mr. Quelch. "I warn you that this will not be permitted. You must go!"

"Almost in sight of the gates!" yelled Bunter. "Boots and shoes soled and heeled! He, he, he!"

"Rot!"
 "Gammon!"
 "Rubbish!"
 "I've seen him!" yelled Bunter. "Sitting there with a leather apron on, and boots and shoes and things. He, he, he!"

"Come on, you men!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

And there was a rush to the gates. The keenest footballer forgot the pick-up, at that amazing and startling news, which they could hardly believe.

The Famous Five cut out at the gates with Vernon-Smith and Toddy and five or six more Remove fellows. And, as the excited Owl spread the news, more fellows followed—a crowd of the Remove, the Fourth, and the Shell. Fifth Form men, when they got the news, followed on.

Randolph Crocker had caused excitement on Monday, by kicking up a shindy at his old school. But this, if true, was still more exciting.

The Famous Five fairly sprinted into Friardale Lane. They had not far to go—Abbot's Spinney was quite close to Greyfriars. It was, indeed, in sight from many of the windows.

In ancient days, when Greyfriars had been a monastic establishment, much of the surrounding land had belonged to it. The spinney had then been within the precincts, as well as a good part of Friardale Wood.

But that was long ago; during some centuries, the spinney had had a variety of owners. Among the old trees there was a stone cell, called the Abbot's Cell, from a legend that the ancient abbots of Greyfriars had used it as a penitential cell.

It had been in ruins for ages; but in

more modern times an enterprising estate agent had had it roofed over, and one or two improvements added; and let it in the summer to hikers and campers.

In the winter, naturally, it never had a tenant, and was locked up; key with Mr. Pilkins, estate agent at Courtfield.

Now, it seemed, it had a tenant in the winter, and the tenant, according to Bunter, was Mr. Randolph Crocker, once a Greyfriars man.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob Cherry, as the advance guard of the Greyfriars crowd arrived on the spot. "Look!"

"Great pip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A wooden paling fenced off the spinney from the road. Most of the old trees had been cut down at one time or another, and the little modern timber building that covered the old abbot's cell was visible from the lane.

A gate in the fence stood wide open. On the fence was a large board with a notice painted on it—at which the Greyfriars fellows stared with grinning faces. It read:

R. CROCKER,
 Formerly of Greyfriars School.
BOOTS AND SHOES
SOLED AND HEELED
 With promptness and dispatch.
TERMS: CASH!

That board was large; the letters were capital letters, white on a black ground, evidently intended to catch the eye—visible, from the position of the board, from many Greyfriars windows.

"Well!" said Johnny Bull. "This takes the cake!"

"The cakefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"There he is!" chuckled the Bounder. Randolph Crocker was visible to the eye.

In the open doorway of the hiker's hut that covered the remnant of the ancient monastic cell, he sat at a bench.

He was dressed differently now. He wore a shabby old blue overall, and a leathern apron.

He had a boot in his left hand, and in his right, what cobblers call a wax-end. He seemed very seriously at work on that boot.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him. More and more Greyfriars fellows, arriving at the fence, looked at him. The crowd thickened every minute. Juniors and seniors swarmed up and down the fence and round the little gate. Most of them were grinning. Some were frowning. All were excited and keenly interested in this surprising stunt of the old boy of Greyfriars.

That Randolph Crocker, once of the Sixth, was seriously settling down to the honest, if humble, calling of a wax-side cobbler, no fellow was likely to believe.

He was doing this to annoy and irritate the headmaster who had expelled him twenty long years ago; nobody doubted that for a moment. If he had any other motive, nobody could begin to guess what it was.

Indeed, it was quite probable that, though he had hired that place from Mr. Pilkins, at Courtfield, and supplied himself with a cobbler's outfit, he did not know how to use the tools with which he was surrounded. Certainly he did not seem to be making much progress with that wax-end. Quite obviously he did not even know what to do with it.

Still, there he was—ostensibly at work!

And as he sat, sedately, though with a lurking grin on his face turning over the boot in his left hand, fiddling with the wax-end in his right, the crowd at the fence thickened and thickened, till it looked as if nearly all Greyfriars School had turned out to gaze at that extraordinary old boy.

a man earn an honest living if he likes?"

"That's rot, Smithy," said Harry Wharton. "I shouldn't like to wear boots or shoes cobbled by that sportsman, and you wouldn't, either. He won't earn sixpence, and he doesn't mean to."

"It's a dig at the Head, of course!" said Bob. "That's why he's stuck Greyfriars up on his jolly old board."

"Disgraceful!" said Skinner. "The school is coming to something when old boys set up as cobblers."

"Oh, we're not all so fearfully aristocratic as you, Skinner!" grinned the Bounder. "Why shouldn't a man cobbler?"

"No reason why he shouldn't, if he was a cobbler!" said Bob. "But Crocker's no cobbler—I'll bet that he couldn't sole a shoe to save his life."

"Rot! Some of us ought to give him orders—to encourage an old Greyfriars man setting up to earn an honest living!" chuckled Smithy.

There was a hush, as Mr. Quelch arrived on the scene.

The Remove master stood gazing for a long minute at the board over the gate. The expression on Quelch's speaking countenance was really extraordinary.

"Bless my soul!" he was heard to exclaim.

Then he glanced round, severely, at the breathless crowd. Obviously, he was thinking of ordering them off. But that he could scarcely do; Friardale Lane was not, and could not be, out of bounds. The fact that Mr. Crocker had set up a cobbler's shop in the old spinney could not invalidate the right of any fellow to walk up and down Friardale Lane.

Breathing hard, Mr. Quelch fixed his

eyes on the figure in the wide-open doorway of the hiker's hut.

After a pause, he walked through the gateway and up the rather muddy path to Mr. Crocker's new establishment.

Every eye followed him.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Dunter was on the scene again by this time. "I say, think Quelch is going to turn him out?"

"He can't!" grinned the Bounder.

"The fellow can't have any right there!" said Temple of the Fourth.

"Rot, old bean! I'll bet he's made himself safe before he stuck up that board!"

"Listen!" murmured Tom Brown.

Quelch stopped at the open doorway, and his gimlet eyes glinted in at the amateur cobbler.

Crocker did not look up; he seemed intensely set on his work, and not to notice the newcomer.

"Crocker!" said Mr. Quelch in a deep voice.

The Sportsman glanced up at that. Immediately he rose from the bench and touched the brim of an old hat in the most respectful manner.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" he said. "My first customer! Thank you, sir! What can I do for you, sir?"

There was a suppressed giggle from the crowded fence. Every word was heard by the fellows in the lane.

They did not need telling that Randolph Crocker knew perfectly well that the Remove master had not called as a customer.

"I want no impertinence, Crocker!" said Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir! Certainly not, sir! I trust that I shall always be found civil and obliging to my customers, sir," said Crocker. "If it is new shoes that you require, sir, I regret that I cannot supply them. I have no new stock. My work is wholly in the repairing line. Later, perhaps—"

"What does this mean, Crocker?"

"You have seen my board at the gate, sir?"

"I have seen that piece of rascally impertinence, Crocker."

"I fail to understand you, sir. Do you object to anything on my board?" asked Crocker, with a puzzled look. "Naturally, I have to make it known that I am in business here, or I should get no trade. I hope shortly to insert some advertisements in the local papers."

"Am I to understand, Crocker, that it is your intention to remain here and carry on this campaign of annoyance against the school that you have already sufficiently disgraced?"

"I hope, sir, that I shall receive your sympathy, and, indeed, your support, in this effort to earn an honest living by following a humble, but useful calling," said Crocker blandly. "Boots and shoes, if entrusted to me, will be repaired with the greatest care, at reasonable charges—"

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

"You will not be allowed to carry on this insolence, Crocker!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice. "I warn you to leave this place, and to leave it immediately. I shall telephone to Mr. Pilkins at Courtfield, and draw his attention to this."

"Mr. Pilkins is already aware, naturally, that he has let this place to me," said Crocker. "He does not need informing on the subject. He has let me this place for three months."

"In that case," said Mr. Quelch, a little taken aback, "Mr. Pilkins cannot have been aware of your intention to set up a pretended business here."

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Ordered Off!

"HERE comes Quelch!"

"Now the thunder's going to roll!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The news, evidently, was spreading in the school. It had reached the masters. There was an excited buzz in the crowd in Friardale Lane, as Mr. Quelch was seen approaching from the school gates.

"By gum, this will get the beaks' backs up!" chuckled the Bounder. "They can't do anything! But will they like it?"

Smithy, who was always up against the beaks on principle, was greatly amused.

There was, as Redwing had told him, a spot of similarity between him and the man who had been expelled long years ago—though the Bounder, with all his faults, was never likely to go the length that Randolph Crocker had gone. But reckless audacity and cool effrontery had an appeal for the Bounder. His view was rather that he wished Crocker back in this amazing campaign against the headmaster who had turfed him out.

"Well, the brute ought to be stopped," said Skinner. "This is pretty disgraceful for the school."

"How's that?" jeered Smithy. "Can't

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"That is as it may be," smiled Crocker, "but it does not alter the fact that Mr. Pilkins has let me the place, and that I have a three months' agreement, signed and witnessed, which would be upheld in any court of law."

"Didn't I say he'd made himself safe?" breathed the Bounder. "He's got them right on toast!"

"But what on earth's his game?" said Bob. "He jolly well won't stick there for three months, pretending to cobble, simply to worry the Head!"

"I trust," Crocker was going on, "that my old headmaster, who has reproached me with a youthful act of indiscretion, will have no objection to my taking up honest labour. I trust that he will approve. Surely, sir, he would make no effort to turn me out of my little shop!"

Quelch gazed at him.

"But if he did," continued Crocker, "and if Mr. Pilkins was induced to attempt to break my agreement, I should certainly contest the matter in the County Court. No doubt the case would make interesting reading in the locality."

Mr. Quelch seemed on the point of choking.

"You are an insolent rascal!" he gasped.

"Come, no personalities!" urged Crocker. "I have not told you what I think of you, Quelch. I am far too polite."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I regret," continued Crocker, "that as a hard-working man I have no time to waste in idle conversation, even with a gentleman who was my Form-master in my junior days. If your shoes require soling—"

"I repeat—"

"Or heeling—"

"I tell you—" roared Mr. Quelch.

"I am quite at your service. One of your shoes, sir, if I may be allowed to mention it, is a little down at the heel. May I hope that you will entrust it to my hands?"

"You impertinent knave—"

"The work will be done with promptness and dispatch, as stated on my sign," continued Crocker, imperturbably. "My terms are cash—net cash. I cannot at present afford to give credit."

"Will you cease this impertinence?" hissed Mr. Quelch. "I warn you that this will not be permitted. I warn you to go."

"You have not come here as a customer?" asked Crocker.

"You are perfectly well aware that I have not!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Then as I cannot afford to waste my time, please retire!" said Crocker. "To put it briefly—cut!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"In other words, get out!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Do you dare—"

"Unless you have come in as a customer you are trespassing here, Quelch. Get off my premises at once!"

"Upon my word!" gasped the Remove master.

"Hook it!" said Crocker, grinning cheerily at his exasperated face. "Beat it, Quelch! Hop it, old boy! Or are you waiting for me to help you out?"

"You—you—you—" gurgled Mr. Quelch.

"I give you ten seconds!" said Crocker, lifting the old boot in the air. "If you're not gone by then, Quelch, you get this right on the beezers."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a shriek from the lane.

Mr. Quelch gave the old boy of Greyfriars a look that really ought to have crumpled him up.

But looks had absolutely no effect on the cool and cheerful sportsman. He took aim with the boot.

The Remove master, choking, turned to go. He had no choice in the matter. The tenant of the hiker's hut had a right to order him off his premises.

With dignified calm Mr. Quelch walked back to the gate. Dignified calm used up more than the ten seconds Crocker had given him.

"Look out, sir!" yelled Bob Cherry, as Crocker's arm swung, and the old boot flew.

But Quelch had no time to look out. He was half-way back to the gate when the boot whizzed from the doorway of the hiker's hut.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch, staggering.

His mortar-board flew off, carried from his head by the whizzing boot. Mortar-board and boot dropped together on the muddy path.

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh scissors!"

Bob Cherry rushed in. With one hand he picked up Quelch's mortar-board and handed it back to his Form-master. With the other he clutched up the boot.

Whiz!

Bob sent it back the way it had come, whizzing!

Crocker's grinning, impudent face was looking out of his doorway. The returning boot caught him under the chin.

He gave a startled howl and went over backwards.

There was a loud bump, and a louder yell, in the hiker's hut. The floor of the hut was formed of the ancient flagstones of the Abbot's Cell—rather hard to bump on!

Mr. Crocker did not appear to like that bump. He roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl from the Greyfriars crowd.

"Man down!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thank you, Cherry!" gasped Mr. Quelch; though whether he was thanking Bob for picking up his mortar-board, or for bowling over Randolph Crocker, was not clear.

He jammed the mortar-board hastily on his majestic head and hurried away.

The old boy of Greyfriars had won the first round, at least, in his remarkable campaign against his old school.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

Out Of Bounds!

"OUT of bounds!" remarked Harry Wharton.

"What rot!" said Vernon-Smith.

After tea a good many fellows had gathered to look at a new notice on the notice-board. It was a Head's notice, signed by H. H. Locke, headmaster, and it referred, in brief, but very clear language, to the new inhabitant of the hiker's hut on Abbot's Spinney.

It did not refer to Randolph Crocker by name. It stated that the Abbot's Spinney was out of school bounds, and that loitering in Friardale Lane was forbidden.

Obviously Friardale Lane itself could not be put out of bounds, as it was a public road, and the only way to the village, except by devious by paths. But no more crowds were to be allowed to collect there and stare over the fence at Mr. Crocker's new and remarkable establishment for the repair of boots and shoes.

The Spinney itself was severely out of bounds, and, in consequence, the hiker's

hut that stood on the site of the old stone cell, and the inhabitant thereof.

If any Greyfriars man, in a spirit of mischief, had any idea of taking boots or shoes along to that old boy for repair, the Head's notice put paid to it.

Greyfriars fellows could pass the place, but they had to pass it—they could not enter or hang about.

That, apparently, was all that Dr. Locke could do in the way of dealing with the intruder.

"Rot!" repeated Smithy. "Why shouldn't a fellow go there if he likes? That sportsman is no end of a card."

"Hardly good company, Smithy, considering what he was sacked for!" remarked Lord Mauleverer.

"That was donkeys' years ago, and we don't know the rights of it, either," retorted Smithy. "I've got some old shoes that would do with soling."

"You mean, you'd take the trouble to sort out some old shoes, just to worry the beaks?" grinned Hazeldone.

"Better not, old man!" said Peter Todd. "The Head means this! Bet you it will mean a flogging if a fellow goes there."

"The truth is, the man is a bad hat!" said Harry Wharton. "If he had a rag of shame in him he would never show up here—and what he's doing now is outside the limit. The Head can't have had any choice about sacking him—and it's simply rotten to nurse a grudge for it, after all these years, too!"

"He does, though!" said Peter.

"Yes, he does and he ought to be booted for it."

"That's not all!" said the Bounder. "He's full of malice against the Big Beak—you can see that; but that isn't all. If that was all, he wouldn't have waited till now before getting back on Locke. He's got some other reason for what he's doing."

"What, then?" asked Bob.

Smithy shrugged his shoulders. "Ask me another!" he said. "I haven't the foggiest idea what he's planted himself close by Greyfriars for. But I jolly well know that it's not merely to pay out the Big Beak for sacking him twenty years ago."

"Blessed if I can see what else he can be there for!" said Bob.

"Neither can I; but he's up to some game. Perhaps it suits him to lie low for a time—he looks that sort."

"But he isn't lying low!" said Bob. "He's drawing attention to himself all over the shop! In a few days he'll have all Friardale and Courtfield and Wood-end staring in, and next week, all Redclyffe and Lantham."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"If he's trying to keep himself dark, he's going a queer way to work about it, Smithy!" he said.

The Bounder nodded.

"Yes, that's so!" he admitted. "All the same, he's got some game on, and I'll bank on that. I've had a good look at him, and with all his cheek and coolness, and cheery ways, anybody can read in his face that he's a hard case. He was a bad hat here—and he's grown worse."

"Not a reason for calling to see him!" said Mauleverer, rather dryly.

"Oh, I'm not so fearfully particular as all that," drawled the Bounder, "and I'm rather curious about him—I'd like to spot what he's really up to."

"No good, if he's up to anythin'," said Mauly. "He's got a face as hard as iron under that cheery grin he turns on."

"Well, any fellow who trickles along to Abbot's Spinney will get it where the chicken got the chopper!" remarked Skinner.

"Might drop in of an evening, when no beaks are about!" said the Bounder. "What about that?"

"Shut up, Smithy, you awful ass!" whispered Redwing. "Can't you see a prefect almost at your elbow?"

Loder of the Sixth, who was standing a little distance from the notice-board, speaking to Walker, glanced round. Obviously he had heard the Bounder's reckless words.

Smithy, who had his back to the prefects, did not heed Redwing. He went on, without subduing his voice in the least.

"Of course, it's not the sort of thing I would do myself! I hope I'm a good little schoolboy, and love my kind teachers! But if I were one of those naughty bad hats who break bounds after lights out—which, of course, I'm not—I know a jolly easy way of getting in and out of the House."

"Hadn't you better shut up, old man?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Nobody here is likely to do it, I suppose," said Vernon-Smith. "I certainly wouldn't mention it if I thought so. But if a fellow snaffled the key of a downstairs study—"

"Dry up, idiot!" hissed Bob. "Loder's taking all that in! He can hear every word you say!"

The Bounder looked round at last. He gave a little jump as he saw Loder, and walked away quickly, without uttering another word.

Loder cast a curious glance after him, and walked away with James Walker. Whether he had taken any heed of the Bounder's words or not, he was taking no official notice of them.

"Well!" said Bob, with a deep breath, when the prefects were gone. "Some fellows ask for it, and no mistake! Does that ass Smithy want to get Loder on his track again?"

"Looks like it!"

"Only pulling his leg!" said Skinner. "He jolly well knew that Loder could hear what he said. He wants to make Loder lose his beauty sleep, sitting up and watching for nothing."

"Oh!" said Bob. He laughed. "Yes, I fancy that's it! Fancy Loder prowling round, watching for a chap who's fast asleep in bed all the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors chuckled at the idea, and most of them concluded that that was, after all, the Bounder's object.

Tom Redwing, in a worried mood, followed his chum up to Study No. 4 in the Remove. Smithy had been asking for trouble altogether too often, and too emphatically, of late for Redwing to feel easy in his mind.

"You know that Loder heard you, Smithy!" he said abruptly, as he came into the study.

"Think so?" asked the Bounder.

"Well, he did! Look here, if you were only pulling his leg—"

"Like to butt in again?" asked Smithy. "You butted in the other day and took a licking for me. I'm going to pay that cur out for that, along with the rest."

"What have you got in your head now, Smithy?"

"Nothing that I'm not going to keep there," answered Vernon-Smith coolly.

And with that, Tom Redwing had to remain unsatisfied.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Little Scheme!

"I SAY, you fellows, was it one of you?" asked Billy Bunter.

The fat Owl blinked into Study No. 1 just before prep that evening to ask that question.

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Wharton and Nugent looked at him.

"What?" asked Harry.

"Which?" inquired Nugent.

"I mean to say, if it was, you're for it!" said Bunter. "Larking in the Head's study is rather the limit, you know."

"Has anybody been larking in the Head's study?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove, while Nugent stared. "Must be somebody badly in want of trouble."

"Well, it must have been taken for a lark, I suppose!" said Bunter. "The fellow can't want it for anything."

"Which and what?"

"The key, you know!"

"The key!" repeated Wharton and Nugent together.

"The prefects are all after it now, downstairs!" said Bunter. "The Head seems to have missed it, from what I hear, when he went back to his study after tea. You see, he locks his study at night, but he doesn't lock it when he goes to his house to tea—so that's how it was! The fellow knew that, of course."

"Do you mean to say that somebody's sneaked the key of the Head's study door?" exclaimed Harry.

Nugent whistled.

A dozen fellows, at least, had heard what Vernon-Smith had said to the group before the notice-board after tea. If the key of a downstairs study was missing after that, they could hardly help thinking of the Bounder.

True, any fellow who had heard him might have taken the tip from him. But if there was a Remove fellow who had nerve enough to play tricks in the headmaster's study, that fellow was Herbert Vernon-Smith, and nobody else.

"If it was one of you fellows," said Bunter, blinking at them, "you take my tip and leave it where they can find it! 'Tain't safe to lark with the Big Beak."

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter, and he rolled on up the passage, to ask further questions in further studies.

Wharton and Nugent looked at one another when the fat Owl was gone. Their faces were serious.

"That mad ass Smithy!" said Frank.

"I can't make him out!" said Harry slowly. "He knows jolly well that Loder heard what he was saying. I believe he meant him to—anyhow, he knows he heard. If a study key is missing, Loder is bound to think of him at once."

"That can't be what he wants, I suppose!" said Frank. "I'm afraid he wouldn't mind telling crammers about it if he was questioned. But why should he do it? He couldn't be mad enough to break bounds to-night to go and see that sweep Crocker, after practically giving Loder the tip."

"Hardly! I can't make it out!"

"If he does, his number's up! Ten to one Loder will keep an eye open after lights out to-night!"

"Sure to!" agreed Harry. "He hasn't forgotten that snowball yet. He would like to catch Smithy out—and it would be his duty, too, as a prefect! Loder isn't a whale on duty, but—"

"I fancy Skinner guessed it—Smithy's leading him up the garden path!" said Frank. "He won't get out of the dorm to-night—his game is to set Loder on the watch and leave him to it."

"I hope so, at any rate."

The chums of the Remove sat down to prep. But prep was destined to be interrupted.

Very soon afterwards Mr. Quelch came up to the Remove studies, with a frowning brow.

He looked into Study No. 1.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!" Harry jumped to his feet. He could guess, after what Bunter had said, why Quelch was there; and that he was wanted as head boy.

"Kindly call the boys out of their studies, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "I have some questions to ask the whole Form."

"Very well, sir!"

Harry Wharton proceeded up the passage, calling into study after study.

The Remove turned out in a body, most of them in a state of considerable surprise; for it was very unusual for preparation to be interrupted in this way.

As a matter of fact, other Form-masters were similarly engaged in other Forms. Shell and Fourth, Third and Second, were being questioned by Hacker, Capper, Wiggins, and Twigg. Seniors, no doubt, were regarded as being above suspicion of having larked in the headmaster's study. But the whole of the Lower School was going through it.

"I say, you fellows, Quelch is after that key!" said Billy Bunter in a stage-whisper, as he rolled out of No. 7.

"What key?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I say, haven't you heard, Smithy? Somebody sneaked the key of the Head's study!"

"What rot!" said Smithy. "Why should anybody?"

"Well, somebody has!" declared Bunter. "I heard about it before prep. Somebody sneaked into the Head's study while he was gone to tea and bagged it, I heard."

Tom Redwing drew a deep, hard breath, his eyes on the Bounder. Smithy gave him a cheery wink.

"Silence!" called out Mr. Quelch. "My boys, I have to question you. It appears that while Dr. Locke was absent from his study, some boy entered and abstracted the key from the door. This foolish and disrespectful trick must be investigated at once. I trust that the offender was not a boy in my Form."

"Trusting nature, Quelch's!" murmured Skinner. He winked at the Bounder.

"If any boy here has the key, let him confess his folly and hand it over to me immediately!" said Mr. Quelch.

A good many glances turned on the Bounder. Every fellow who had heard his talk by the notice-board, in fact, looked at him.

Only masters and the Sixth Form had studies on the ground floor. A Sixth Form study key would have been useless to a breaker of bounds as the Sixth Form studies were bed-rooms at night. But a master's key enabled any fellow to pass through that master's study and drop from the window if so disposed, as the masters' bed-rooms were in the upper part of the House. Safest of all was the Head's; as Dr. Locke resided in a different building.

But safe as it was in one way, it was terrifically risky in another. It was really hardly credible that any fellow had the nerve even to think of using the headmaster's study as a means of egress from the House after lights out!

Still, it was rather like the Bounder! He loved to startle his Form-fellows and make them wonder at his nerve.

Quelch, it was clear, did not even dream that it was an intended breaker of bounds who had snaffled that key. He could not possibly envisage such audacity. He, like the other masters, only supposed that it was a silly, thoughtless lark on the part of some unthinking young rascal.

If Smithy was the man, his face gave



"Do you imagine that you will be allowed to remain at Greyfriars after your brutal ruffianism, Vernon-Smith?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "After what?" panted the Bounder. "What do you mean? What have I done?"

no indication of it. Nobody answered Mr. Quelch, the Bounder remaining as silent as the rest.

"I can hardly believe," went on Mr. Quelch, "that any boy in my Form would be foolish enough to play so insensate a trick as to abstract a key from a study door. Dr. Locke has, of course, another key; but the one that has been taken must be returned at once."

Another pause. No one spoke.

"If the key is returned immediately, the offender will be caned by his Form-master," added Mr. Quelch. "If it is not returned and a search is necessitated, he will be flogged in Hall by the headmaster."

No reply.

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch. "I shall trust that the offender is not in my Form; but if he is, I have warned him what to expect."

He paused another long moment, scanning the faces in the passage. But if the offender was there he evidently did not intend to speak.

"You may go back to preparation!" said Mr. Quelch at last. And the Removites went back into the studies.

Mr. Quelch disappeared down the stairs.

Many of the fellows went back to prep, with strong suspicions that that key was in Herbert Vernon-Smith's pocket; and that he intended to use it that night, to carry out his boast of paying a call at the Abbot's Spinney. One fellow had not the slightest doubt that Smithy had the missing key; and that fellow was Tom Redwing.

In Study No. 4 the Bounder sat down to prep again with a lurking grin on his face.

Redwing sat and looked at him for a long time in silence.

"Give it me, Smithy!" he said at last in a low voice.

"Eh? What?" The Bounder glanced up inquiringly.

"The Head's study key!"

"Think I've got it?"

"I know you have!" answered Redwing quietly. "Give it to me, and I'll put it where it can be found. For goodness' sake—"

"Likely!"

"Smithy, old chap, have a little sense! Loder will know—he must know—and if he reports what he knows, they'll search this study—"

"Loder won't report what he knows!" sneered the Bounder. "He knows, among other things, that that key won't be found in my study or in my pockets. Dear old Loder doesn't like me—but he knows I'm not exactly a fool. Besides, dear old Loder knows a trick worth two of that! The good dear man would rather catch me out of bounds, than hike me to the Head about a silly trick with a key!"

"I dare say he would!" said Redwing slowly. "You've made him feel pretty sore, and he's not a forgiving fellow. But you can't be mad enough to break bounds to-night, Smithy—and use that key—"

"Is it likely?" grinned Smithy. "Think I don't know why Loder hasn't reported what he heard me saying about sneaking a downstairs key? Dear old Loder's going to prowl to-night, keeping an eye on the Head's study—for a fellow going out of bounds by way of the Head's window."

"I—I suppose that's likely—"

"Call it a cert!" smiled the Bounder. "Don't I know him!"

"All right, then, if you stick safe in the dorm and leave him to prowl."

The Bounder laughed.

"If!" he said mockingly.

"You're not going out, Smithy?"

"No fear."

"Then, what—"

"How do I know what may happen?"

drawled the Bounder. A sneaking spy, prowling in the dark, may meet with a spot of surprise. Or he may not! Better not ask me any questions, Reddy, and I'll tell you no lies."

Tom Redwing sat and looked at him across the table. He understood the whole of it now; and he realised that the Bounder's game was to trick Loder of the Sixth into prowling in a dark spot where something might happen to him! And the glitter in the Bounder's eyes rather alarmed him.

"Smithy!" he muttered. "Wash it out, whatever it is! Don't be a mad fool! What—what are you thinking of?"

"Oh, nothin' in particular!" yawned Smithy. "A fellow prowling in the dark might get ink over his head! Fellow might be waiting for him, you know, and watching, instead of having gone out of bounds! Might be ink spilt! Such things have happened. No good askin' me what might happen, Reddy—almost anythin' might happen to a prowling spy in the dark when he's got a chap's back up."

"It's mad—just mad!" muttered Redwing. "Smithy, for goodness' sake—"

"Thomas Redwing, I regret to see that you are neglecting your preparation," said Vernon-Smith, with a sudden imitation of Mr. Quelch's manner and tone, that made Redwing jump. "This is not what I expect of you, Redwing! If you are to keep the high opinion I have formed of you, Redwing, you will give preparation your very serious and earnest attention!"

After which, the Bounder went on with his own prep and refused to say another word.

Tom Redwing settled down to his prep at last. He realised only too well that it was useless to say anything further to his headstrong and reckless studymate.

THE SEVEN TEENTH CHAPTER.

In The Night!

"THAT mad ass Smithy—" muttered Harry Wharton.

It was the sound of voices that awakened him; and he fancied for a moment that it was the radio in the dormitory over again.

But it was not the drone of the wireless announcer that came to his ears as he lifted his head from his pillow.

There were two voices—speaking in suppressed tones; one of them was the Bounder's, and the other Tom Redwing's.

The last stroke of eleven had died away.

At that hour all was silent and still in the great pile of Greyfriars School. But in the Remove dormitory the silence was disturbed by those two voices—one savagely angry, the other earnest; both suppressed.

Harry Wharton peered in the shadows.

"Smithy—Redwing—what on earth's up?" he asked.

"Nothing—it's all right!" came Redwing's hurried whisper.

"You're waking the dorm, you fool!" came the Bounder's fierce tones. "Will you shut up?"

"Smithy, old man—"

"Mind your own business! What did you stay awake for, you fool? Do you think you're going to stop me?" hissed the Bounder.

"I hope so! Do have a little sense!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"Smithy—" Redwing's tone was almost beseeching. "Don't be a mad fool! Loder may have tipped Quelch—or another prefect—"

"I don't care!"

"You'll care fast enough if you're caught out of your dorm! I tell you, you're asking for it—just begging for it."

"Leave me alone!"

Harry Wharton slipped from his bed. Dully, in the pale glimmer of starlight from the high windows, he made out two shadowy figures. The Bounder was dressed—Redwing, in his pyjamas, barred his way to the door. Evidently the Bounder's chum had jumped out of bed in the endeavour to stop the headstrong and reckless fellow from carrying on some wild escapade.

"Smithy!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Hold on—"

"Do you want to wake all the Remove?" hissed the Bounder. "Redwing, you fool, stand aside before I shift you!"

"Hold on, I tell you, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry. "You must be potty to think of breaking out when Loder heard you—and knows—"

"I'm not going to break out, you dummy! I'm going to catch that spy in the dark, and make him sorry for himself! Now do you understand?" snarled the Bounder. "And if you make a row here, I shall be spotted! Is that what you want?"

A sleepy chuckle came from Bob Cherry's bed.

"Chuck it, Smithy!" he said. "Suppose Loder catches you, instead of you catching him!"

"The catchfulness might be a boot on the other leg, my esteemed Smithy!" came Hurree Singh's voice.

The Bounder gritted his teeth. He had remained awake till eleven, to steal quietly out of the dormitory; and had not even suspected that Redwing had remained awake also, till his chum suddenly barred his way to the door. Now fellow after fellow was waking at the sound of voices.

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"Let me pass, Redwing!" he muttered, in concentrated tones. "Mind, I'll hit out if you don't!"

"Smithy, old man, I tell you you're just begging for it!" said Redwing earnestly. "You believe that Loder's going to watch for you—well, how do you know what he may have fixed up to catch you? If you go out of this dormitory, you may walk into Quelch, or Wingate—"

"Rot!"

"I think it's jolly likely, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't play the goat at this time of night!"

"I don't care! I'd go just the same if all the Sixth were up, and all the beaks, too! Now get out of the way, Redwing!"

"I won't, Smithy!" answered Redwing. "You shan't go asking for the sack if I can stop you!"

"Stick him on his bed and sit on him!" suggested Bob Cherry. "I'll lend you a hand, Reddy!"

"Same here!" growled Johnny Bull.

The Bounder's eyes gleamed. He did not think, or choose to think, that there was any great risk in carrying out the scheme he had so cunningly laid; but, in any case, the mere idea of being held back in the dormitory by force roused his bitterest temper.

He did not speak again—but he struck out suddenly and savagely at the chum who was barring his way.

A heavy thump on the chest sent Tom Redwing staggering, and he lost his footing and rolled on the floor.

"Smithy—you cad!" exclaimed Wharton, as he heard the fall. He made a quick spring towards the Bounder.

But Smithy, at the same moment, leaped for the door, his way no longer barred. He had the door open in a twinkling and leaped out.

Tom Redwing staggered to his feet. He was panting. There was a scuffle of running feet in the passage outside.

Vernon-Smith was gone.

But even then, Redwing's thought was for his chum. It was too late to stop that reckless escapade now; and his only thought was to avoid giving an alarm that might cause discovery.

"Quiet!" panted Redwing. "Quiet, for goodness' sake! Shut the door—quiet! Don't make a sound."

"By Jove! I've a jolly good mind to—" breathed Wharton.

"Oh, quiet!" whispered Redwing.

"If they find him out of the dorm—"

"Serve him jolly well right!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Quiet, I tell you!"

Redwing groped for the door and closed it without a sound. Smithy was gone, and had to be left to his own wilful way.

Redwing went back to his bed—but not to sleep! With painful intentness he was listening for a sound that might tell that his chum had found the trouble for which he was so recklessly asking.

Many other fellows were listening, too. And, as the long minutes dragged by, there came a sound from the passage without—the sound of footsteps approaching the dormitory door.

Redwing gave a groan. It was not Smithy returning—he would not have allowed his footsteps to be heard. It was a master, or a prefect—and the Bounder's game was up!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Struck Down!

"IT'S rot!" mumbled Walker of the Sixth.

"Don't jaw, Jimmy!"

"I'm sleepy!"

"Never mind that!"

"Well, I do mind it," Loder!" said Walker sulkily. "I think it's rot sticking here in the dark—"

"Think we should make a catch if we turned on a light?"

"It's past eleven."

"I don't care if it's past twelve."

"Well, I do!"

"Shut up, all the same!"

James Walker grunted, and shut up.

He was more than fed-up with that vigil. The two Sixth Form men were leaning on the wall in the Head's corridor, at a little distance from the door of the headmaster's study. They had been there ever since the Head had gone to his house, and the lights had been shut off.

It was a weary business to Walker—and no doubt to Loder also; but Gerald Loder was determined, and he kept his companion up to the mark.

"Ten to one the kid's fast asleep in bed!" grumbled Walker, after a brief silence.

"You heard what he said as well as I did!"

"Shouldn't wonder if he meant you to hear! Just one of that young scoundrel's tricks to set you watching for nothing."

"Don't be a fool! The Head's key was taken—and it was taken to be used. That blackguardly young sweep is going out of bounds, and he's going by the Head's study window! And I'm going to nail him in the very act. Prefects are supposed to do their duty, Jimmy Walker—even if they get sleepy."

"Br-r-r!" grunted Walker.

Loder suddenly clutched his arm in the darkness.

"Quiet!" he whispered. "Look!"

Walker, with a start, stared along the passage. There was a sudden flicker of light, evidently from a tiny electric torch.

Someone was there!

Nothing could be seen, save that tiny flicker. It was concentrated on a door—on the keyhole in a door.

Click!

The sound was faint, but it was audible in the deep silence of the night. Instantly the tiny beam was shut off.

Walker caught his breath. Loder breathed hard and deep.

"What do you think now?" he whispered, in the faintest of whispers. "Did you hear that door unlocked?"

"By gum—yes!" breathed Walker.

"The young scoundrel—he's in the Head's study now! By gad, what a nerve!"

"He's got nerve enough!" grinned Loder. "A spot too much for a Greyfriars junior! If he drops from the window—and he can't be there for anything else—he's out of the House at night, and it's the sack for him—and a good riddance for the school!"

"The dingy little beast!" muttered Walker. "I never believed—"

"Well, you can believe your eyes, and your ears, I suppose."

"Might only be gone to the Abbot's Spinney—that was what he was saying to the fags—"

"More likely to a pub. Wherever he's gone, he's breaking out at night, and we've got him. Quiet! I'm going to wait for him to come back, and catch him as he comes—but he's a cunning young sweep, and he might dodge in another way—I'm taking no chances. You slip off to the Remove dorm, Jimmy, and see whether any fag is missing there."

"We've no proof, so far, that it's young Vernon-Smith. Quelch would make a row if his Form was disturbed at this time of night for nothing—"

"As good as proof, I think! Don't

be a fool, Jimmy! If nobody's missing in the Remove we'll draw the other dormitories; but you know as well as I do that it's a Remove kid—young Vernon-Smith! Cut off to the dorm and see, while I keep an eye open here!"

"Oh, all right!"

James Walker slipped away in the darkness, to grope to the staircase and make his way up to the Remove dormitory.

Loder, left alone, waited a long minute. Then he stepped silently along the passage towards the door of the Head's study.

The young rascal had had several minutes, and Loder had no doubt that he had already dropped from the Head's window.

If he came back the same way, as was fairly certain, Loder had him, waiting at the study door. If, by chance, he did not, Walker had him, waiting in the Remove dormitory. If the fellow who had entered the Head's study was Herbert Vernon-Smith, his number was up! And Gerald Loder had, of course, not the slightest doubt that it was. He had expected it, watched for it, and it had happened. What could be more certain?

On tiptoe, silent, lest the breaker of bounds was not yet gone, Loder reached the Head's door.

Somewhat to his surprise, he found that door open.

Whoever it was that had unlocked that door and entered the study evidently had not the slightest suspicion that anyone was up and on the watch.

Looking in at the open door, Loder detected the flitting beam of a tiny electric torch.

Puzzled, he stared into the dark interior of the study. Faint movements were audible in the room, and showed that someone was still there, and that tiny, flitting light left no doubt on the subject.

Convinced that Vernon-Smith had used the study key as a way out of bounds, Loder was quite perplexed. But it was clear that whoever had entered the study was still there.

What was he doing?

It dawned on Loder—he had to realise—that the fellow in the study was not, after all, going out of bounds by that window. Several minutes had elapsed, and if he were going out he had no cause to linger.

But what else?

Some jape on the Head? A rag in the headmaster's study? Such a thing was almost unheard of; yet if the fellow were not going out it seemed the only possible explanation.

With his mind in doubt and perplexity, Loder stood there, staring into the darkness, and gave a sudden startled blink as the flash-lamp, circling, suddenly shone on his face.

He saw nothing but the dazzle of light, but he heard a startled gasp, and knew that he was seen. Instantly the light was shut off.

A split second more, and an unseen form was brushing past Loder, to push through the doorway.

Instantly Loder grasped at it and clutched hold.

Whatever the intruder had been doing or intending to do, he was not going to escape. Loder clutched and held.

"You young scoundrel! I've got you!" he panted.

A gasp, surprising in its strength for a junior schoolboy, was laid on Loder in return. For a few seconds there was a silent, fierce, desperate struggle in the doorway.

Then suddenly a fist lashed in the darkness. A crashing blow landed between Loder's eyes.

He gave one faint, groaning gasp and crumpled up. There was a thud as he went sprawling on the floor.

After that Loder knew nothing. That crashing blow had scattered his senses, and Loder of the Sixth lay, stunned and senseless, in the doorway of the Head's study.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Caught Out!

WALKER of the Sixth opened the door of the Remove dormitory and switched on the light.

Redwing, sitting up in bed, stared at him as he came in. Five or six other fellows stared.

All who had heard the approaching footsteps knew that it could not be the Bounder coming back. He would have come quietly, if he had come back at all. The juniors who were awake expected to see their Form-master or a prefect—and it was a prefect that they saw.

James Walker cast a quick look into the dormitory. He had joined up with Loder to keep watch that night, not very willingly, and not feeling at all sure that Loder had it right.

Even now that he knew that some unseen person had entered the Head's study by unlocking the door he did not feel so certain as Loder that it was Vernon-Smith.

Some junior had a key to that door; the headmaster had had to use a spare key to lock it that night. Loder was sure that it was Smithy; Walker was not so sure. And if Quelch's Form was roused out in the middle of the night for nothing, Quelch was certain to be very unpleasant about it.

So it was a great relief to James Walker when he spotted an empty bed, and his dubious brow cleared. Loder had been right; one of these young sweeps was out of his dormitory!

Walker stepped in. It was Vernon-Smith's bed that was empty, and, in point of fact, it had not been empty very long. But it was empty now, and that was that!

"Young rotter!" grunted Walker. "So it's that young sweep! Redwing!" Walker gave Redwing's troubled face a rather curious look. "You're awake, I see! You knew that young sweep had gone out!"

"He hasn't gone out, Walker," faltered Tom—"I mean, not out of bounds!"

"Looks as if he has!"

"I—I mean, it's only a silly lark—a silly escapade; no real harm!" stammered Redwing.

"I'm sure Vernon-Smith hasn't gone out of bounds, Walker!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, that's for the Head to inquire into," said Walker. "I don't see why he bagged that key and used it if he wasn't getting out of the House! Anyhow, he's not here, and I've got to report to Quelch."

That, of course, was a settled matter. Walker had no share in Loder's malicious feelings toward Vernon-Smith, but he had his duty to do as a prefect; and his duty was to report Smithy's absence to his Form-master, and leave it to him to deal with the matter farther.

He left the light on in the Remove dormitory when he went.

All the Form were awake now, and there was a murmur of voices from bed to bed. It was a cop, as Skinner put

it. Wherever the Bounder was, and whatever he was doing, he was fairly caught now.

"Don't you worry, Reddy, old man," said Bob Cherry. "We all know why that mad ass went down; he ain't out of bounds! He will get it warm for going down at night, but it ain't a sucking matter."

"He was after Loder," said Harry. "Let's hope that he never got Loder—as it's turned out! What was he going to do, Reddy? Do you know?"

"Some potty idea of mopping ink over him in the dark!" groaned Redwing. "He had a can of ink in the study. I suppose he went there to fetch it."

"Mayn't have done it yet."

"I—I hope not. I warned him that Loder might have tipped a beak or another prefect!" muttered Redwing. "You see now that he tipped Walker. They must have seen something of Smithy, or Walker wouldn't have come up here."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch, in a dressing-gown and slippers, appeared in the doorway. He did not speak; he cast a grim glance at the Bounder's empty bed. All the Remove looked at him, and at Walker in the passage behind him.

After that grim stare at the bed which should have been occupied by Herbert Vernon-Smith, but was not, the Remove master turned away.

Then the juniors heard his voice, speaking to the prefect in the passage.

"You saw him downstairs, Walker?"

"I did not see him, sir. Loder and I heard the door of the Head's study unlocked, that is all, and somebody go in. It seems clear now that it was Vernon-Smith who took away the key. Loder thought so."

"As the boy is missing from his dormitory, there can be little doubt about that, Walker. You say he entered the headmaster's study?"

"We heard him go in, sir."

"And Loder—"

"Loder stayed there, sir, while I came up to the dormitory. He is waiting for Vernon-Smith to come back through Dr. Locke's study."

"I shall not conclude that the boy has gone out of bounds, Walker, until it is beyond doubt. It may be some foolish practical joke in the study—bad enough, certainly, but not so serious as breaking out at night. However, it is easy to ascertain. Come with me."

Master and prefect went down the passage to the landing and the stairs.

Mr. Quelch's face was set and grim as he went.

Walker, as he followed him, was feeling a spot of compassion for the wretched junior who, he had no doubt, had gone out at night, and was booked for the sack in consequence. They went down the stairs in silence.

All was dark in Head's corridor, and there was no sound to be heard there.

Mr. Quelch switched on the corridor light, and rustled towards Dr. Locke's study. He gave a sudden, startled exclamation.

"What—"

"Oh!" gasped Walker.

They exclaimed, together, as they saw, in the light, something that lay half-in and half-out of the doorway of the Head's study.

Mr. Quelch broke into a run, his dressing-gown whisking about him. His face was strangely startled.

"Good heavens!" he gasped.

"Loder!" muttered Walker. "Loder, what—"

No answer came from Gerald Loder, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,615.

sprawling limp in the doorway. Master and prefect gazed down at him, in utter horror! Loder of the Sixth, his face bruised and black from a savage blow, lay senseless at their feet—only a faint moan indicating that consciousness was returning.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Guilty!

HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's Smithy!" Herbert Vernon-Smith stepped quietly into the Remove dormitory.

Every eye was fixed on him; even Billy Bunter was awake, and staring. The Bounder was cool, but he was a little pale.

The dormitory door was open—the light full on—the whole Form awake—and Smithy knew, if he had not known before, that his absence had been discovered. He came quietly in.

"I've been missed?" he asked.

"Yes!" muttered Redwing.

"Quelch?"

"Walker first—he called Quelch here," answered Redwing.

"Walker!" The Bounder set his lips. "Then Loder got another pro. to prowl with him—the cunning rotter! Two of them!"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, they've got me! But you needn't look as if you fancied I was going to be hanged, Reddy! It's not a fearful crime for a fellow to go down to his study, even at this time of night."

"Is that all you've done?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

The Bounder sneered.

"It isn't all that I was going to do! But, as it happens, it's all that I've done!"

"Thank goodness!" breathed Redwing.

"I spotted something up," sneered Vernon-Smith. "I went to my study for a can of ink that I had ready for that spying cad Loder. I was coming away with it, when I saw the light go on on the dormitory landing—Walker turned it on, I suppose, as you say he came here."

"I suppose he turned it on when he went to call Quelch!" said Harry. "Quelch came here and looked in."

"I fancied the game was up when I saw the light." Smithy shrugged his shoulders again. "I kept doggo for a bit, hoping it would go out again! I heard somebody going down the lower stairs—"

"Quelch and Walker—they're gone to the Head's study!" said Harry.

"So here I am again!" drawled the Bounder. "I hoped it might be on somebody else's account—they might have spotted Angel of the Fourth, or Price of the Fifth, you know! No such luck, as it turns out."

"And you've done—nothing?" asked Redwing, his eyes on his cham.

"Luckily, nothing! With Quelch on the war-path, I'm rather glad that Loder never got that can of ink! It will keep!"

"I can't make it out, then! We heard Walker say that you'd gone into the Head's study—"

"He was dreaming, then! I haven't been anywhere near the Head's study." The Bounder stared. "I tell you I haven't been farther down than the Remove studies. Walker must have dreamed that."

"Loder dreamed it, too, then!" grinned Skinner. "They both heard it, from what Walker said. That's why

Walker came up here—and he left Loder watching for you at the Big Beak's study."

"Rot!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Walker said so, Smithy!" said Tom Redwing, with a deeply troubled look. "They must have heard somebody go into the Head's study, whether it was you or not. Walker wouldn't have come up here at this time of night without something to go on, too."

"Some other sportsman on the tiles, then!" said Vernon-Smith. "I tell you I never went down the lower staircase at all."

"Smithy, old man—"

"Don't you believe me?" asked the Bounder, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Yes, yes, of course. But—but—whoever went into the Head's study must have had a key!" stammered Redwing.

"Dr. Locke always locks his study at night—and you heard Quelch say that he had another key. The door must have been locked, as usual—and—and anybody who went in must have had a key—"

The Bounder gave a start.

"That's queer!" he said. "Perhaps nobody went in, and they fancied it, in the dark! I know I never did."

No one answered that, but the Bounder could read, in many faces, strong doubt of his statement.

The Remove fellows, in fact, knew that Loder and Walker together had not fancied it! That was impossible. Someone had been heard to enter the Head's study and whoever it was, he had a key, as that door was always locked at night. And most of the Remove knew, by this time, who had abstracted the key from the Head's door that afternoon. Smithy had a key to that study—and no one else had, excepting the headmaster.

The Bounder's eyes glittered.

"I tell you," he said distinctly, "that I never went anywhere near the Head's study! If you had a spot of sense you'd know that without my telling you. You say Walker said that Loder was left watching the Head's study—"

"He said so."

"Well, if I'd been ass enough to go into the study, how could I have got out again without Loder spotting me, if he was watching the door?"

"Oh!" said Redwing.

"I've seen nothing of Loder—or he of me!" snapped the Bounder. "I've been lying doggo in the Remove passage ever since I saw the light come on."

"Somebody went into the Head's study!" said Harry.

"It was not I, then."

"Did you lend somebody that key?" grinned Skinner. "Some chap in another Form?"

"No!"

"Then it looks as if that somebody must have gone in through the key-hole!" said Skinner. "Think that's likely, you fellows?"

The Bounder gave Skinner a fierce glare. But Harold Skinner was not the only fellow who doubted. Even Redwing was sorely dubious and troubled.

"I say, Smithy," came a fat squeak, "how did you get out of the Beak's study without being copped? Did you butt Loder over like you did Prout the other night?"

"I'd have butted him over fast enough if he'd been in my way!" snarled the Bounder, with a glare at Bunter. "But I've not seen anything of him."

"He, he, he!" from Bunter.

Vernon-Smith sat on the edge of his bed and began to take off his shoes. Every fellow was looking at him, but no one spoke. The Bounder was quite cool. He had, with utter recklessness, asked

for this trouble, but he had the nerve to face it, now it had materialised.

There was a rustle in the passage.

"That's Quelch!" muttered Bob Cherry.

Mr. Quelch, in rustling dressing-gown, reappeared in the doorway.

The juniors started as they saw the expression on his face. They had never seen that look on their Form-master's face before.

"Has Vernon-Smith—" began Mr. Quelch. He was about to ask whether Vernon-Smith had returned, but the next moment he saw him.

He entered the dormitory, his eyes on the Bounder, with an expression in which anger, horror, and scorn were so strangely mingled that every fellow felt a chill.

The Bounder's face paled a little.

"Vernon-Smith!" Mr. Quelch's voice was low, but it seemed to cut like sharp steel. "So you are here."

The Bounder rose to his feet.

"Yes, sir!" In spite of his nerve he quailed a little at that look from his Form-master. "I've been out of dormitory bounds, sir—but you know that! I've not been out of the House."

"I am aware that you have not been out of the House, Vernon-Smith! I have no doubt that such was your intention, however, had not Loder of the Sixth Form found you in the headmaster's study."

"I have not been to the headmaster's study, sir!"

"What?"

"I've been down to my own study, in the Remove—nowhere else."

"Silence! Silence, I say! I will not hear this!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Wretched boy, do you suppose, for one moment, that such palpable falsehoods will serve you now—after what you have done?"

The Removites hardly breathed. What had the Bounder done? Redwing's face was as white as chalk.

"I—I don't understand you, sir!" Vernon-Smith's voice faltered. "I've done nothing, that I know of—"

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch. "Enough! You will follow me, Vernon-Smith—I have directed the punishment-room to be prepared for you; you will pass the remainder of the night there, and remain there until you leave Greyfriars—"

Vernon-Smith caught his breath.

"Leave Greyfriars!" he stammered.

"You do not imagine, I presume, that you will be allowed to remain here, Vernon-Smith, after such an act of brutal ruffianism?"

"After what?" panted the Bounder. "What do you mean? What have I done? What do you think I've done? What's happened?"

"Say no more! I will not listen to falsehoods! You will be expelled from Greyfriars in the morning. Meanwhile, you will be locked in the punishment-room."

"What have I done to be sacked for?" yelled the Bounder.

"Enough! Come with me!"

"What has Smithy done, sir?" panted Redwing. "He never meant any harm. Only a silly trick—"

"What Vernon-Smith has done will be known to the whole school to-morrow," said Mr. Quelch. "He was caught in the headmaster's study by a prefect, and, in attempting to escape, he struck Loder of the Sixth—struck him so violently, so savagely, so brutally that he was stunned—"

"Oh!" came in a gasp from all the Remove.

"I found Loder," said Mr. Quelch, "lying senseless in the Head's study doorway—just beginning to recover

consciousness when I reached him—his face black with bruises. He has had to be carried to his room to bed. The boy who has done this—"

"Are you mad?" yelled the Bounder desperately. "I never touched Loder—never came near him! Never went near the Head's study—"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in a formidable voice.

He grasped Herbert Vernon-Smith by the shoulder, and led him out of the dormitory.

The light was shut off; the door shut on the Bounder of Greyfriars. The Remove were left in a silence of horror and dismay.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

A Loyal Chum!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. turned out at the clang of the rising-bell in the morning, with grave and serious faces.

One bed had been unoccupied in the dormitory.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had passed the night under lock and key in the punishment-room. After what he had done—or, at least, was believed to have done—it was clear that he was to be allowed no further contact with his schoolfellows. There was to be an expulsion in the school that morning. The Bounder of Greyfriars, after so many narrow escapes, had done it at last.

Even Redwing had to realise that there was no chance for his chum. And even Redwing had to admit that if Smithy had done this, he deserved the sack, and more. But had he done it?

Redwing was the only fellow who doubted.

After breakfast that morning every Form, as well as the Remove, was buzzing with what had happened overnight. And every fellow in every Form agreed that Smithy would be bunked for it, and that he jolly well deserved to be.

Loder of the Sixth was not seen at breakfast.

It was rumoured that Gerald Loder had two black eyes, and that rumour was confirmed when one or two fellows glimpsed him at his study window.

They reported that Loder had two eyes as black as the ace of spades, a swollen nose, and that the rest of his face was fearfully sick-looking.

Loder was not much liked. Among juniors he was extremely unpopular. But fellows rather compassionated him now. It was clear that he had stopped a terrific jolt, and had been utterly and absolutely knocked out. Judging by results, it was amazing that a junior of the Lower Fourth had been able to deliver such a terrific punch.

Smithy must have been utterly desperate when he hit out like that, the juniors agreed. No doubt he had hoped to escape in the dark, unidentified, after knocking the prefect out. That Smithy had done it was a settled thing.

The Head's door had been unlocked. Only Smithy had a key. That settled it for the Remove—apart from knowledge that Smithy had gone down, fully intending to do something or other to Loder. Only Smithy had been missing from his dormitory when it happened. Nobody could doubt, except Redwing, who perhaps clung to a doubt because Smithy was his chum, and he could not, or rather would not, believe that he had done such a brutal thing.

"Smithy never did it, you fellows!" said Redwing, joining the Famous Five in the quad, while they waited for the

bell for class. "His father ought to know. His father ought to be told before they turf him out."

Harry Wharton shook his head. "The Head will send him away by an early train, Reddy," he answered. "I expect a prefect will be sent with him with a letter for his father. Mr. Vernon-Smith could do no good here, old chap."

"If Smithy never did it—"

"He did, you know," said Bob dismally. "Loder got him, and he hit out without stopping to think. That's Smithy all over."

"Smithy all over!" agreed Johnny Bull. "Look how he butted Prout over that night! He would have been

sacked for that if they'd got him! Smithy always took too many chances!"

"I know he never did it."

Harry Wharton smiled faintly. "Well, if you know he never did it, old fellow, you'd better tell the Head, before he bunks him," he said. "Looks to everybody else as if Smithy did!"

"I've seen Loder," said Tom quietly. "His face is in an awful state! Quelch said he was stunned—and there's no doubt that he was knocked unconscious for some minutes, at least. Smithy's pretty strong, and he has a good punch—but he couldn't have done that—he just couldn't!"

(Continued on next page.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

THIS week's mail contains a letter from a reader who signs himself "Worried, of Wolverhampton," and who says he finds life "rather a misery" because he's left-handed.

Really, it is surprising how some sensitive people will take small, insignificant things to heart and build upon them until they assume gigantic proportions. Now what's wrong with a fellow who is left-handed, anyway? Nothing at all, of course. Yet this old MAGNET chum is frightfully upset about it. If he takes my advice he'll stop worrying his head about such a trivial matter. I expect he is just as capable of work and play as the fellow who is right-handed. And what's more—this should cheer him up—it is said that a left-handed person is "born lucky." If such is the case, "Worried" ought to feel mighty pleased with himself.

The next letter comes from Jack Watson, of Exeter, an old reader who really does need sympathy. Jack informs me that he suffers from frostbite and asks me if I can suggest a cure for it. Personally, I'd advise my chum to see a doctor at once. The treatment for frostbite consists in very gradual restoration of circulation in the affected area. The patient should be kept in a cold room, the temperature of which is slowly raised, and the frozen part rubbed with snow or bathed in cold water. As I've already said, pay a visit to your doctor, Jack.

Before dealing with the next letter, here's something that will make you laugh—it did me, anyway. While walking through a certain street on my way to the office this morning, I overheard a woman having an altercation with her coalman. The woman, who had evidently been watching delivery of coal from her window, said in an acid voice: "I think, coalman, that there are several pieces of coal in your cart that have dropped

from my sacks." "Oh, I'll fetch 'em, mum!" retorted the coalman. "And there's some in my eye that you can have as well, when I get it out!"

Now for the next letter. Dick Russell—no, not of Greyfriars fame—who lives in Brighton, has been arguing with a chum as to what exactly is the foreshore and asks me to settle the quarrel. The foreshore is the part of a beach or seashore which lies between the extreme limits of high and low water marks, i.e. covered at high tide and uncovered at low tide. The extent of the foreshore depends partly upon the slope of the ground and partly upon the height of the tides.

I'm afraid that is all the letters I can answer this week.

Now let me glance at my diary and look up the special attractions for next week's MAGNET.

The piece-de-résistance is:

"THE MYSTERY MAN OF GREYFRIARS!"

by Frank Richards.

another tip-top school yarn featuring your old favourites. As you already know, Gerald Loder has been roughly handled, and the identity of his assailant remains a secret. Vernon-Smith, his biggest enemy, declares that he's innocent. Who, then, out of the hundreds of "men" at Greyfriars, is the culprit? You cannot afford to miss this great yarn, chums. The "Greyfriars Herald" is bang up to date with snappy school news, and our opening feature, "My Page," contributed by James Hobson, is well worth reading. Now what about doing me a favour? Show this week's issue of the MAGNET to your chums. They'll thank you for doing so—and the odds are that they'll become regular readers, too!

Meet you again next week, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,615.

The Famous Five stood silent. They felt deeply enough for Redwing, about to see his chum expelled from the school in disgrace. The night before, the Bounder had savagely struck him aside when he had striven to restrain the headstrong fellow from the escapade that had turned out so disastrously. Redwing did not give that a thought.

"No junior schoolboy could have struck such a blow," said Redwing. "I'm sure of that! Even you couldn't, Bob!"

"Well, I shouldn't like to try on any chap's face," said Bob. "But you're talking awful rot, old chap! Are you trying to fancy that a senior did it?"

"I know that a junior couldn't, and didn't!"

"Um!" said Bob. "He was pretty desperate when he gave Loder that jolt. He must have put all his beef into it. He did it, you know, old chap!"

"He said he did not!"

"Um!"

Redwing's face flushed painfully. He knew, as the Famous Five did, that in any row with beaks or prefects, Vernon-Smith's word was not to be relied on.

"Well, I believe him," said Tom. "I believe him all the more, because I know that no fellow in the Form could have hit with such force. Even a big senior would have had to put a lot of beef into it—even a fellow like Coker of the Fifth! I tell you, Smithy couldn't, and never did!"

"Let's hope the Head will think so," said Harry uncomfortably. "My dear chap, we all know that Smithy went down to hunt for trouble with Loder! Then this happened!"

"Somebody else——"

"Well, who else?" asked the captain of the Remove.

Redwing could not answer that. That only a big senior could have struck so stunning a blow, he felt, or tried to feel, sure. But trying to think of any actual fellow in the Fifth or the Sixth was useless.

"Poor old Smithy!" said Bob. "He was a jolly good chap in a lot of ways—but—this is too awfully thick, you know! The Head can't do anything but bunk him!"

Redwing winced as Bob spoke of the Bounder in the past tense, as if Smithy was no longer a Greyfriars man. But no man in the Remove expected to see Smithy again.

"His father's going to know!" muttered Redwing at last. "He may be able to help!"

"He will know fast enough when Smithy gets home!" said Harry. "Leave it at that, old fellow!"

"I'm going to let him know—in time," said Redwing quietly. "If he knew, he would reach here before Smithy goes—and it might do some good. A telegram——"

"You can't go out and send a telegram, old bean!" said Bob.

"I can phone, if I get a chance."

"Oh, my hat!" Bob whistled. "Better not let Quelch catch you at it, old scout!"

"I don't care if he does!"

"Um!"

"Smithy's been a good pal to me!" muttered Tom, with a catch in his voice. "I'm going to do anything I can. A fellow never had a pal like old Smithy!"

The Famous Five thought of that angry punch in the dormitory the previous night, but they said nothing. They liked Redwing all the better for his loyalty to his chum, but they certainly could not think as he did. If Smithy was not guilty, he had done everything that a wilful and headstrong fellow could do to make himself appear so.

Redwing, with a clouded face, left them and went into the House. He saw Mr. Quelch leave his study to go to the Head before class, and as soon as the Remove master was out of sight, he almost ran into the vacant study.

He shut the door, cut across to the telephone, and hastily rang up the exchange and asked for "Telegrams."

His heart was beating painfully as he stood at the telephone. It was not long to class now, and Quelch was sure to come back to the study before he went to the Form-room. He did not want to be caught there by his Form-master. But he was going to do what he had come here to do.

"Telegrams!" came a voice over the wires, after what seemed to Tom an interminable delay.

Hurriedly, Redwing dictated the telegram. That Mr. Vernon-Smith, if he learned that his son was to be expelled from Greyfriars, would arrive at the school as fast as a high-powered car could carry him, Tom was assured. Whether he could do any good when he got there was another matter. Tom clung to the hope that he could.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith, 17, Courtman Square, London. Smithy in bad trouble. Come at once."

"REDWING."

Redwing dreaded to hear the study door open before he could get through. He did not need telling that Mr. Quelch would allow no such telegram to be sent, if he knew of it.

But the study door did not open—yet! From the exchange the message was read over in the usual way, and then, at long last, Redwing replaced the receiver.

And as he did so the study door opened and Mr. Quelch came in.

For a moment the Remove master did not see the junior there; then, as

his eyes fell on him, he started and frowned.

"Redwing, what are you doing here?"

He did not wait for an answer. He could see that Redwing had been using the telephone.

A startled look came over his face, succeeded by a thunderous frown. Tom could see the suspicion that had flashed into his mind.

"Redwing! You have telephoned——"

"I've sent a telegram, sir!" faltered Tom.

"To whom?"

Redwing did not answer.

"To whom?" repeated Mr. Quelch, raising his voice. "Redwing, is it possible—is it barely possible—that you have telegraphed, without leave, on the subject of the boy who is to be expelled to-day?"

Evidently, Quelch had guessed.

Redwing drew a deep breath.

"Yes, sir," he said in a low voice.

"To whom?"

"To Smithy's father, sir."

"You—you have ventured—you have dared—to intervene in this matter which does not concern you——" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"It does concern me, sir! Smithy's my pal, and I know—I know—I know that he never struck Loder——" panted Tom.

"Silence, you foolish boy! Silence! You will be severely punished for this, Redwing! Your act will cause Mr. Vernon-Smith unnecessary pain and anxiety—it may cause the Head a painful and unnecessary interview! Upon my word, Redwing, I hardly know what to say to you! Mr. Vernon-Smith may come here——"

"I'm sure he will, sir!"

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard.

"No doubt!" he said. "No doubt! You have done harm, Redwing! But your foolish and impertinent act will not have the result you expected—I shall send another telegram immediately, and Mr. Vernon-Smith will know that his son is on his way home. And now——"

The Remove master picked up the cane from his table.

But, as he looked more closely at the junior's face, he hesitated and laid it down again.

"Leave my study!" he barked.

Tom Redwing left the study in silence. He had done what he could—but whether he had done any good he could not know. He could only hope!

THE END.

(Things look rather black for Vernon-Smith, what? Will he clear his name, or will he be kicked out of Greyfriars? See: "THE MYSTERY MAN OF GREYFRIARS!" next week's super story of Greyfriars.)

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MR. PROUT PATRONISES GAMES STUDY!

Fifth Verdict: "Thanks For Compliment, BUT—"

The Fifth were awfully lucky last Tuesday evening. Quite unexpectedly, they had the honour of a social visit to their Games Study by Form-master Paul Prout.

It's not the good fortune of every Form to have a Form-master with a democratic outlook like Prouty's.

You don't find Mr. Quelch, for instance, paying cheery social visits to the Rag of an evening. If he does look in, it's to remind somebody he hasn't had his impot, or to give out a licking or two because some of us are making too much noise!

Nothing like that about Prout, lads! Not likely! When the portly old Fifth Form beak entered the Games Study, he was simply radiating kindly condescension and pompous and patronising good will.

"Good-evening, boys!" he puffed. "Mind if I come in?"

The Fifth said they didn't mind at all. Blundell put forward an easy-chair, which, however, Prout declined with a wave of a podgy paw.

"No formalities, Blundell! We are out of class now, and when we are out of class, I like to think you boys look on me as one of yourselves."

"Hem! Exactly, sir!" remarked Blundell.

"Very good of you, sir!" said Hilton.

"Not at all—and while I am on the subject, there is no need to stress the 'sir,'" beamed Prout. "Carry on what you were doing, boys. Don't let me stop the fun."

"Oh! Ah! Yes, sir!"

"Er—I was just thinking of playing



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January 28th, 1939.



DICK RUSSELL Answers the Question—

IS GREYFRIARS TOO ROUGH FOR MY SONNY?

I was surprised during the last vac. to get several inquiries from fond mothers of Greyfriars fags-to-be as to whether our school isn't too rough for their young hopefuls.

"Those ghastly 'rags'!" one dear lady exclaimed to me. "I really can't imagine dear Sonny surviving them! And those brutal prefects! And the savage masters!"

And lots more in the same strain! Just to calm the fears of this good lady and others who may share her anxieties, I will now reveal the reassuring truth.

When Sonny comes to Greyfriars, madam, he will have to face no rags that can by any stretch of imagination be called "ghastly."

He will not be pounced on by a yelling horde of young fiends and torn to pieces and distributed in small chunks all over the quad. He will not even be branded by hot irons or bludgeoned with cudgels.

The most he will have to endure will be a scragging in his Form-room, a bumping in Hall, and a lamming with knotted towels in his dormitory. A mere nothing, in fact.

Then about those much-maligned prefects, madam! Take my word for it, they are nothing to worry about!

Will they hurl bricks on poor Sonny or stretch him on the rack or give him something lingering, with boiling oil in it? Nothing of the kind!

They will merely give him a playful kick and half-a-dozen stinging cuts with an asphalt about twice a day.

As for the masters, dear lady, why, they have hearts of pure gold! Don't think for a single moment that there is any danger of their biting Sonny or jumping on him. They would never dream of doing such things.

From them, Sonny can expect nothing worse than thousands of lines and an occasional flogging.

I hope I have said enough to convince the fond mothers of youngsters who are booked for Greyfriars that their information about Greyfriars being a rough school is absolutely exaggerated.

(And we hope that the mothers in question will take Dick Russell with a grain of salt.—Ed.)

Answers To Correspondents

W. G. B. (Remove).—"What's the use of those uneatable slabs of bread they serve for tea in Hall?"

We have found them very effective if used for re-soling shoes.

"GOSSIPER" (Third).—"Chankley's, of Courtfield, are going to add another story to their building."

Their customers will no longer be able to complain that they make no provision for "higher" purchase!

C. R. T. (Upper Fourth).—"You kids haven't the brains to appreciate my wit; but I can tell you that wherever I go I keep people in fits of laughter." You ought to wear a mask, old chap!

Does This Make You "Bristle"?

Rumours are rife that the Head intends to provide brooms to enable all juniors to keep the floors of their studies clean.

Sounds as if we are in for some "sweeping" changes!

table-tennis, sir—I mean, Mr. Prout," corrected Blundell. "I suppose you wouldn't care to take me on for a set?"

"Why not?" beamed Mr. Prout. "Delighted, of course, Blundell!"

So Mr. Prout played Blundell at table-tennis.

It was an amusing game, though not all the spectators saw the funny side of it. Hilton, who received a terrific backhanded swipe from Mr. Prout's bat right on the tip of his nose, found



that the humour of it eluded him completely. It was just the same with Potter, who was knocked spinning when Mr. Prout charged him in trying to field a wide ball, and with Price, whose toes were practically crushed when Mr. Prout jumped on them!

Blundell having won the game, Mr. Prout turned his attention to other pastimes. His face was red and his expression not quite so benign as before the game.

GREYFRIARS ON TOP AGAIN! Whoops H. Vernon-Smith

Happy days are here again—and every member of the Remove team is to-day wearing an expansive smile. For the unexpected has happened, and we're back again at the top of the championship table, with a complete point in hand!

Thanks for the cheers, chaps! Blushing with becoming modesty, we bow our acknowledgments!

I don't mind admitting that it was more than I expected. True, I had thought we could bank on at least holding Rylecombe to a draw on the Rylecombe ground. But after Bagshot's failure to beat Abbotsford last week, I certainly had not anticipated that they would lower the St. Jim's colours.

It would have done you good to see our jubilation after the Rylecombe game. We were elated, of course, at our 3-nil victory over the home side; but when Wharton phoned through to Bagshot to find out the result of the game there, and then turned round and told us St. Jim's had gone under, our sedate elation changed to vociferous joy!

Our victory, by the way, though a handsome one, was by no means a walk-over. Gordon Cay and his colleagues, though not quite up to our standard, put up a stubborn fight, and it was not till the second half of the game was well advanced that Hurree Singh opened the scoring after a brilliant solo run down the wing.

Even then, the home team were not disheartened, and several determined attacks on our goal intervened before our front line was able to advance again. After the second goal, scored by Wharton as a result of a neat bit of combination work by the three inside forwards, however, Rylecombe fell away; and when Cherry, at centre-half, headed in the ball from a corner-kick just before the finish, we were receiving no more than our due.

A vote of thanks is due to Bagshot for their kindness to us in taking full points from St. Jim's. I am told that Tom Merry, with typical sportsmanship, acknowledged after the game, that the better side had won. In doing so, he was paying a well-deserved compliment to a team which has certainly played consistently well right through the season.

Apart from their one bad lapse

He noticed Bland, Fitzgerald, Smith major and Tomlinson at a table. Bland was teaching the other three bridge. Mr. Prout listened for at least three seconds before his kindness compelled him to chip in.

"I know you won't mind my pointing it out in a friendly way, Bland," he then said, "but if your friends rely on you to learn how to play bridge, I'm afraid it will take them all the rest of their lives! Let me take over the task from you!"

Now, how many masters would you get making a nice, kind offer like that? Not many, we'll wager!

Mr. Prout spent the next half-hour teaching bridge.

The half-hour subsequent to that he spent teaching Coker chess. Coker thought it was he who was teaching Prout chess, but apart from the minor difficulties arising out of that little misunderstanding the lesson was quite satisfactory.

Finally, the friendly old Fifth Form-master joined the group of fellows engaged in talking politics round the fire and kindly showed them exactly why they were wrong in all the opinions they held.

Kindness could hardly go further than that, could it? In fact, by this time you must, dear reader, be enviously telling yourself what a lucky lot of barges the Fifth at Greyfriars must be!

Yet—amazing as it may seem—the Fifth actually don't appreciate how lucky they are. We've even heard a whisper that they are plotting to strew the passage with banana-skins next time Mr. Prout is expected, in the hope that he won't be able to reach them.

Ungrateful lot of lads, aren't they?

against Abbotsford last term, Bagshot have not played a bad game since September. We shall certainly have to be on our mettle when we visit them later in the term!

Meanwhile—once again—watch Rookwood! Their progress up the table is slow, but deadly sure.

RESULTS. (Home teams are shown first.)

Saturday.			
Bagshot	.. 2	St. Jim's	.. 1
Claremont	.. 0	Redclyffe	.. 1
Rylecombe G.S.	0	Greyfriars	.. 3

Wednesday.			
Rookwood	.. 3	Claremont	.. 0
St. Jude's	.. 5	Highblyffe	.. 2

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE.

	Goals	Pts.
1. GREYFRIARS	12 8 4 0 35	8 20
2. ST. JIM'S	12 9 1 2 30	14 19
3. BAGSHOT	12 7 2 3 21	14 16
4. ROOKWOOD	11 6 2 3 24	15 14
5. HIGHBLYFFE	13 5 3 5 25	24 13
6. ST. JUDE'S	12 3 2 7 18	28 8
7. REDCLYFFE	11 3 2 6 10	16 8
8. ABBOTSFORD	11 3 2 7 14	26 6
9. RYLECOMBE	12 2 2 7 13	26 6
G.S.		
10. CLAREMONT	12 1 4 7 7	26 6

HARRY WHARTON CALLING ALL CHUMS

Ever had your bumps read, chums? I had my first experience of it this week, and I must say the experience quite took me aback.

If you had asked me what I thought about phrenology a week ago, I should probably have said it was a lot of bosh.

Now—well, I'm not quite so sure about it as I was before.

The phrenologist who read my bumps was operating at Chunkley's big stores in Courtfield. I was there with the rest of the Co., and when Frank Nugent egged me on to spend a bob on a consultation with the bump-reading expert, I treated it entirely as a joke.

Much to my surprise, however, the phrenologist, after a rapid survey of

my crown, told me as much about myself as most people who have known me all my life could have told!

While flatteringly informing me that I was one of the select few who are "born to command," he warned me that I should never make the most of my capacity for leadership unless I mastered my temper.

Bob Cherry's comment on this diagnosis was "How's that, umpire?"

I cheerfully admit that I felt as if I had been howled right out!

After I had had my shillingsworth, the others decided to follow my example.

The phrenologist gave readings of Bob, Frank, and Inky that were really uncanonically accurate.

We naturally expected after that, that he would find no difficulty in analysing Johnny Bull. But in his case, strangely enough, the bumps' expert came completely unstuck.

He told Johnny that he must take care not to study too much and not to neglect sports for books! We simply gasped to hear the most athletic and least studious fellow in the Remove addressed in this fashion. But worse still was to follow. Not content with two glaring mistakes, he went right off the target altogether by warning Johnny not to be too emotional and tender-hearted!

Well, you all know Johnny Bull. It's hardly necessary for me to tell you he's stolid and tough.

We couldn't fathom it at all. Neither could Johnny for a time. But after we had left Chunkley's, the explanation suddenly occurred to him.

He had had a bad fall the day before, and that fall had slightly altered the shape of his head and raised several new bumps that had never been there before.

HARRY WHARTON.

DISGUISED AS SACK OF COAL!

Wharton's Fake Foils Prowling Prefect!

There was a smile on Loder's face last Wednesday afternoon.

This rare phenomenon attracted a good deal of attention. Loder smiles on the average about three times a year. The last time anyone could remember seeing him smile was when Bob Cherry received a knock-out blow on the chin from a cricket ball in the middle of the summer term last year.

So everybody was naturally anxious to know what dire calamity had befallen somebody to cause Loder to smile!

The reason turned out to be Wharton. Loder had succeeded, after many efforts, in getting Mr. Quelch to detain Wharton for the afternoon for alleged acts of insubordination. And Loder had reason to suppose that Wharton was defying the order and going to tea at Cliff House with his pals.

Loder was cheerfully looking forward to catching Wharton in the very act of slipping back into the School House. Furthermore, having received very definite information from a crony in the Lower School as to the time when Wharton was returning via the back entrance, Loder was intending to have Mr. Quelch with him when Wharton arrived. Altogether, Loder

was in a very happy and expectant mood last Wednesday afternoon!

Just to make sure that the bird had duly flown, Loder searched the House from cellar to attic during the afternoon. There was no trace of Wharton. Loder almost danced with joy!

After posting scouts on all sides of the House, he went to see Mr. Quelch—masking his radiant happiness with a look of grave concern.

"Sir," he said, "I have to report a very serious offence on the part of one of your boys. Wharton, whom you ordered to remain indoors this afternoon, has had the temerity to go out with his friends."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed, Loder! How do you know this? Did you see him go out?"

"Well, no, sir, but I am told—"

"Are you satisfied that he is not in some little-frequented part of the House? This is an extensive building, you know, Loder!"

"I am sure he is not, sir. In any case, I think I can

give you proof. If you will accompany me later to the back door of the House, I think I shall be able to show you Wharton returning from his illegal outing."

"Very well, Loder.

Mr. Quelch dismissed Loder with a wave of his hand—not a very affectionate wave if Rake, who happened to see it from the passage, is to be believed!

Some two hours later, Loder went back and fetched the Remove master. To-



gether they waited at the back door of the House.

They saw the gardener's boy sweeping the yard and a coalman emptying sacks of coal down the School House coal-chute.

But they never saw Wharton—for a very good reason!

Wharton, had they known it, was in one of the coal sacks which the coalman

up-ended over the hole leading to the cellars.

Rake, overhearing some of the dialogue in Mr. Quelch's study, had kindly sallied forth to meet Wharton and warn him that Loder's scouts were posted all round the House, and that Loder and Mr. Quelch were waiting at the back door.

Seeing the coal cart going to Greyfriars, Wharton had promptly had the bright idea of bribing the coalman to deliver him to the cellar!

The wheeze worked like magic. Wharton was duly dumped without either of the watchers from the back door suspecting that he was anything other than a sack of coals; and in a few ticks he was upstairs in a bath-room, giving himself a wash and brush-up.

Loder's face, as he passed through Hall with Mr. Quelch, after abandoning his vigil, was like the Demon King in a pantomime, when he spotted Wharton standing before the fire unconcernedly chatting with his chums. Mr. Quelch's face was cold and disdainful.

He pointed out Wharton to Loder and passed on. Loder glared fiendishly and nearly passed out.

It remains only to add that, rather than permanently deceive the Beak, Wharton afterwards saw Mr. Quelch and owned up. He was let off, we are glad to relate, with fifty lines and a caution.

You know, it almost looks as if Loder didn't make a very good impression!