

Great Greyfriars Yarn Inside: "THE MYSTERY of VERNON-SMITH!"

The Magnet ^{2^D}

Billy Bunter's
Own Paper



"STOP, VERNON-SMITH, STOP!"



THIS WEEK BY
Mrs. MIMBLE,
the lady of the tuckshop.

MR. EDITOR and Young Gentlemen, I have just seen a drawing by Master Skinner, which shows me being polite and pleasant to a boy who looks like Master Temple or Lord Mauleverer, and then frowning grimly at Master Bunter. But I assure you, sir, that I cannot help being short with Master Bunter. He worries a body to death.

If it rested with me, as well you know, I would be glad to give free cakes and sweets to all the young gentlemen, bless them! But what is a poor woman to do? I have to make my living. I hate to keep saying no, even to Master Bunter; but just imagine the result if I let him have what he liked without paying for it? Why, I should be in the workhouse to-morrow!

You may not believe me, sir, but I give you my solemn word that I have seen that boy—Master Bunter, I mean—eat no fewer than nine doughnuts at once, without stopping for breath. After which he demanded some cold apple dumplings. I felt alarmed, and thought he must be joking; but imagine my feelings when he proceeded to devour six of them—SIX—one after the other. Now, how can a body cope with an appetite like that?

Before I knew Master Bunter as well as I do now I believed his story about a postal order and allowed him to have a light lunch on credit. Never again, sirs, believe me! He started with a dozen fourpenny tarts and bottles of ginger-beer. After that he had a three-and-sixpenny fruit cake. After that he had another, and some more ginger-beer. Cream buns came next, followed by chocolate eclairs. Having taken the edge off his appetite, Master Bunter then began to feed in earnest.

A rabbit pie, washed down with lemon-squash, was followed by a long succession of dainties, until I had to remind him that he had accounted for over two pounds' worth of food. He just waved his hand and said it was "all right." He said he was expecting a specially big cheque from his father, who lives in a place called Bunter Court.

"Well, Master Bunter," I said, "I'm sure I don't want to make difficulties, but the headmaster doesn't allow me to let young gentlemen run up large accounts, and I should get into trouble if it became known. But if you're quite sure the cheque will arrive to-day—"

"Oh, really, ma'am," replied Master Bunter, very loftily, "I hope you don't doubt my word. If it didn't come I should ring up my pater and ask him what the jickens he meant by it. But, of course, it will be all right."

So he went on to the tune of £5 17s. 4d. Then came a delay in the post, which was the fault of the Government, he said; and the cheque did not arrive. It did not arrive the next day, or the day after. It has not arrived YET. And, meanwhile, I am all that money out of pocket, for I daren't complain to Mr. Quelch. I am not supposed to allow credit to any young gentleman—at least, not to that extent—so I have to bear the loss myself.

Is it any wonder, Mr. Editor and Young Gentlemen, that I have no very pleasant smile for Master Bunter?

came in once and offered to collect my bad debts for a commission of twenty-five per cent—whatever that may be. When I refused, he wanted to know how much I would take for the shop, including stock and goodwill, and said he could get a cheque from his "popper." He is the first boy who has ever offered to buy the shop.

Master Dupont of the Remove is also rather queer. He came in one day for what he called a "pate d'escargot." I asked what that was, and he said it was a pie made of snails. I told him indignantly that I had never heard of such a thing, and then he asked for some stewed frogs.

"If you are trying to insult me," I said warmly, "I shall have to tell Mr. Quelch about it. The idea! Snails and frogs! My goods are absolutely pure—"

"But certainly, madame," he said. "Why not? Where I come from we eat ze frog and snail. Zey are very good."

What kind of country it is which eats frogs and snails I can't for the life of me imagine, but I wouldn't go there—no, not for a ten-pound note! Disgusting, I call it! But there, these foreigners never have any sense.

ME AND MY SHOP!

My shop is quaint and curious, and I will gladly show you round if you come to Greyfriars. It is part of the old monastery building, with walls built of flint and about six feet thick. There's the remains of a secret passage in the cellar, and they say that the abbey treasure may be buried somewhere down there, though I have never had the luck to find it. Spiders there are in plenty, so you never catch me down there if I can help it.

Once the shop was used by the Remove in a famous barring-out, and there was some damage done then, I can tell you. All the windows were broken and the door battered down. But that has all been repaired, and

for two buns and a glass of milk. He poured the milk down the sink and threw the buns out into the quadrangle. Next day he did the same thing. He did it every day. When I asked him why, he explained:

"My Uncle Bob gives me the money to buy two buns and a glass of milk every day, and I loathe buns and hate milk; so that's why!"

He was a very queer boy indeed. Master Fish is hardly a queer client, because he has never bought anything in my shop; but he

the place is quiet enough now, except when Master Coker forgets himself.

My husband is the Head's gardener, and I have a little boy, Johnny, who goes to the Courtfield County School. The young gentlemen usually call him "Small Mimble," and they all envy him for living at the tuckshop. They needn't worry. If I catch Johnny's fingers in the sweet-bottles or cake-boxes he hears from me about it—take my word for that!

Running a school shop is very hard work, and yet I wouldn't ask anything better. There are times, maybe, when the young gentlemen worry a body's life out of her, all shouting to be served at once, and only one pair of hands to do it. But I am respectfully fond of them all, and proud of them, too. And they don't forget me. There's many a famous man looked in to see me when he has visited his old school.

"Bless me, you still there, Mrs. Mimble?"

"Still here, sir," I say proudly.

"And you don't look a day older! I'd never have believed it. Well, that's fine!"

And I'm very glad to see them, as you may guess.

A gentleman told me once that he was having tea with another gentleman—I



The Tuckshop

mustn't mention names—on the terrace of the House of Commons, and when they tasted the cakes they both said: "Not so good as Mrs. Mimble's were!"

That pays for all the fuss and bother, eh?

KEEP SMILING, BOYS!

When you have got the hump, and feel down in the dump; when troubles on your track are like a wall of black; when all your gay and jolly days have turned to melancholy days: it's no use saying, with a frown: "The world is upside down!" Take your troubles like a man, as bravely as you can, and they will bid good-bye in the twinkling of an eye. No earthly use re-pining, for there's a silver lining behind the dark clouds shining. Away with gloom and tear! Keep smiling, full of cheer! A merry heart and gay will take you all the way!

Yours respectfully,

JESSIE MIMBLE.



"Two Points of View" featuring
MRS. MIMBLE
THE TUCKSHOP DAME

The worthy lady of the tuckshop is a pleasant, buxom, and good-tempered person. Her husband, Joseph Mimble, is the Head's gardener. Mrs. Mimble serves excellent food; her cakes are in great demand, and her special Greyfriars pudding is a welcome dainty for tea. She is haunted by Billy Bunter, but has long lost patience with that youth. Although quite a good business woman, Mrs. Mimble is very kind-hearted, and most Greyfriars fellows like her as much as they like her cakes—which means a lot!

(Cartoon by
HAROLD SKINNER.)

CURIOUS CLIENTS

A school shop often gets curious clients, believe me, sir. Master Bunter is, of course, the curiousest I've ever had. But there are some who run him close. At one time there was a young gentleman named Belgrove at the school. On his first day here he came in

TWO OF A KIND! One Vernon-Smith in the Greyfriars Remove is quite enough for Harry Wharton & Co. to have to put up with! And the prospect of a second edition is not a happy one, to say the least!

The MYSTERY of VERNON-SMITH!

By **FRANK RICHARDS**



"It is not necessary to give me particulars, Mr. Quelch, on a subject painful to you," said Dr. Locke. "What you have told me is more than enough. Vernon-Smith, you will pack your box immediately and I will make arrangements for you to leave Greyfriars at the earliest opportunity!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Smithy Is Shirty!

SNORT!

A dozen fellows glanced round at Herbert Vernon-Smith. Some of them smiled. Bob Cherry winked at the other members of the Famous Five. Billy Bunter emitted a fat giggle.

In break that morning some of the Remove fellows were looking for letters in the rack. There was one for the Bounder; and Billy Bunter, whose eyes and spectacles found interest in everything that did not concern him, had noticed that it was addressed in his father's hand.

Smithy had taken that letter down quite cheerfully and opened it, with a cheery face. Smithy was rather a hard nut to crack, and the milk of human kindness was not a conspicuous element in his make-up; but he was an affectionate son, and he always liked getting a letter from his pater—quite apart from the munificent tips such epistles often contained.

But this particular letter, it was clear, disgruntled the Bounder.

The cheery expression died off his face as he looked at it, and was replaced by a scowl. Having finished perusing the letter, he gave an angry snort. The fact that a dozen fellows were round about him made no difference to Smithy. He seldom or never took the trouble to disguise his feelings. When Smithy was shirty, everybody in the offing knew that Smithy was shirty. That was one of the reasons why he had

been given his nickname in the Remove.

He stood scowling at the letter regardless of glances and smiles.

"Not bad news, old chap?" asked Tom Redwing.

The Bounder grunted angrily.

"Yes—rotten!" he answered.

"I say, Smithy, has your pater gone bankrupt?" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Bunter wanted to know! Bunter always wanted to know. But the fat Owl of the Remove did not receive an answer to that question.

The Bounder glared round at him, and then, suddenly reaching at him,

A Grand School Yarn of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS, with Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, taking the leading role.

took a fat little nose between finger and thumb.

"Ooooooh!" spluttered Bunter. "Wooogh! Leggo, you beast! Leddo by dose—grooogh!"

"Smithy!" exclaimed Tom Redwing. He was the Bounder's chum, and it always irked him to see Smithy giving way to his temper.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Will you leggo? 'Tain't my fault your pater's gone bankrupt, is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Mind your own business!"

"Look here, Smithy——"

"Shut up!"

And, to let it be seen that he did not care a boiled bean for the head boy and captain of the Remove, Smithy compressed finger and thumb on that fat little nose, and Billy Bunter wailed with anguish.

Harry Wharton's face became grim, and he made a step towards the Bounder.

But at the same moment there was a rustle of a gown, and a sharp voice rapped out:

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Oh!" ejaculated the Bounder, and he released Billy Bunter's nose as if that nose had become suddenly red-hot as Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, appeared on the scene.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Wow! Ow!"

Bunter clasped that fat little nose with a fat paw. It was as red as a peony, and evidently had a pain in it. Bunter was not the fellow to make the least of a little damage. He was the fellow to make the most of it. He roared.

"Vernon-Smith," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, "what were you doing?"

"Pulling Bunter's nose, sir!" answered the Bounder.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Smithy was the man to be cheeky to a beak! He was always very near the

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limit in that direction. Now that he was annoyed and angry, he over-stepped the limit.

Mr. Quelch gave quite a jump at that answer.

"What?" he ejaculated. "What? How dare you, Vernon-Smith!"

"You asked me, sir."

"Ow! Yow! Wow!" roared Billy Bunter. "Ow! My nose! Wow! My boko! Ow!"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir! Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"Cease that absurd noise at once, Bunter!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir! Ow! Wow!" wailed Bunter. "I've got a fearful pain in my nose, sir! Ow! I can't help Smithy's pater going bankrupt! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Vernon-Smith, I have spoken to you many times on the subject of your uncontrollable temper!"

said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Bunter's foolish remarks are no justification for such a bullying action."

"The fat fool was cheeky!" said Vernon-Smith.

"What?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"What did you say, Vernon-Smith?"

"I said that the fat fool was cheeky."

"Well, some fellows ask for it, and no mistake!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"The askfulness is truly terrific!"

breathed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Mr. Quelch stood looking at the Bouncer of Greyfriars in silence for a long moment. His breath seemed to be rather taken away. The other fellows looked on, wondering what was going to happen next. It was like Smithy to let his temper rip. But no fellow could expect to talk to his Form-master like this without trouble to follow.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch, at last. "Vernon-Smith, follow me to my study at once. I shall cane you for your impertinence, Vernon-Smith!"

The Remove master, with a knitted brow, stalked away.

He did not glance round to see whether Vernon-Smith was following; he took that for granted.

But Smithy, as a matter of fact, did not follow. He stood where he was, his face set and sullen and savage.

"Smithy, old man, get a move on!"

whispered Frank Nugent. "Don't play the giddy ox!"

"Mind your own business!" snarled Smithy.

"You cheeky ass——"

"Oh, let the fathead rip, Franky!"

grunted Johnny Bull. "If he asks for it, why shouldn't he have it?"

Tom Redwing quietly took his chum by the arm, and pulled him in the direction taken by the Remove master.

Vernon-Smith gave him a fierce look, and shook his arm savagely.

"Come on, Smithy!" said Tom.

"Leave me alone!"

"Don't be an ass! Come on!"

And Smithy, no doubt realising, in spite of his headstrong temper, that there was no help for it, gave in and came on.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! Look at my nose, you fellows!"

"Is it a nose?" asked Skinner.

"Looks more like a danger signal to me!"

"I say, you fellows—lugging at a fellow's nose, just because a fellow asked him a civil question——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well going after him,"

said Bunter. "I'm going to hear him howl. And when he comes out of Quelch's study, I shall laugh, see?"

"Better steer clear of Smithy after he's had a whopping!" said Bob Cherry warningly. "Smithy won't be safe."

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Heedless of that warning, Billy Bunter rolled away on the Bouncer's track.

Bunter had a pain in his nose and a pain in his temper. He was going to derive consolation from hearing the Bouncer howl.

But he did not receive that consolation. Outside Mr. Quelch's study he found Redwing waiting. Within the study could be heard the sound of a whopping cane.

Smithy was getting six! But no sound was heard from Smithy! He was going through it in stubborn silence.

"Clear off, you fat ass!" muttered Redwing.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter.

The study door opened, and Vernon-Smith came out.

His brow was black, and his eyes gleamed like steel. Though he had uttered no sound, he had plainly had it hard.

Bunter grinned at him.

"He, he, he!" he cackled. "Had it bad? Serve you jolly well right, you beast! He, he, he!"

The Bouncer did not speak. He grabbed Bunter by the collar, and banged his head against the passage wall.

So near Quelch's study, the fat Owl had not expected even the Bouncer to break out again. Quelch was likely to step out at a sound.

But six had not made Smithy less reckless; it had made him more so.

With a single swing of his arm, he banged Bunter's head on the wall, and pitched him over on the floor.

He walked away with Redwing as Bunter sprawled and bellowed.

The study door flew open.

Quelch appeared in the doorway, and his gimlet eyes fixed on the sprawling, roaring Owl!

"Bunter!" he thundered.

"Yaroooh!"

"What are you doing here, Bunter?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Take fifty lines and go away at once!"

"Oh crikey!" Bunter scrambled up.

"I—I say, sir—I——"

"Go!"

"But it wasn't me—I mean——"

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh jiminy!"

Billy Bunter faded out of the picture before Quelch could make it two hundred!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Rough Luck!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

The Remove were gathering at their Form-room door for third school.

Most of the Form were there when Billy Bunter rolled up.

The fat Owl blinked over them, and up and down and round about, through his big spectacles.

"Smithy ain't here yet, is he?" he asked.

"Want some more from Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Smithy's going to be late, just to show Quelch that he don't care a bean for him!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Swanking ass!" said Bunter. He gave another careful blink round.

"Rotten cheeky swab! Cad, you know! I'd say just the same if he was here!"

"Is that why you're making sure he's not?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! Lugging at a fellow's nose!" said Bunter indignantly.

"I say, do you fellows think that old Smith's gone bankrupt?"

"Fathead!"

"Well, these new-rich people, you know!" said Bunter. "Here to lay and gone to-morrow, you know! There was something in that letter that put Smithy into a fearful temper! What do you think it was, Bob?"

"Haven't thought about what doesn't concern me, old bean!"

"What do you think, Wharton?"

"I think you'd better mind your own business, and leave Smithy alone!"

answered the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, ain't it queer, though?" said Bunter. "What do you think, Franky?"

"I think you're an inquisitive fat ass!"

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull.

"That's what I think, too!"

"The thankfulness is terrific!"

grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Perhaps his pater's coming to see him!" suggested Bunter. "That might annoy a fellow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Still, old Smith generally shells out something when he comes to see young Smith, so it can't be that. I mean to say, any fellow can stand his pater coming if he shells out! I wonder if it was the photograph annoyed him? Why should it?"

"The what?" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"There was a photograph in the letter—I saw it when he opened it!"

said Bunter. "I didn't see it very plain—I'm a bit short-sighted, you know! It was an ugly mug—like Smithy's, I thought——"

"Better let Smithy hear that!"

grinned Skinner. "He's in a nice frame of mind to hear that kind of compliment!"

"Who cares for Smithy?" sneered Bunter. "I'd knock the cad down as soon as look at him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled a dozen fellows as they spotted Herbert Vernon-Smith coming up the corridor.

The look on Smithy's face showed that he had heard Bunter's words.

Bunter, having his back to Smithy, did not see him coming. So he rattled on cheerfully.

"You can cackle! I'd handle the cheeky cad all right! Who cares for Smithy, I'd like to know? Smoky cad—smokes in his study—breaks bounds after lights out—sneaks in at the Three Fishers on a half-holiday! Yah! If the Head knew what we know he would be sacked, and serve him jolly well right!"

"Shut up, you fat ass!" said Harry Wharton.

Smithy's face as he came up the corridor was quite a picture.

Bunter, who could not see that picture, carried on.

"Shan't! I'm not afraid to say what I think of Smithy! He's got something on for this afternoon—you know Smithy on a half-holiday—disgraceful cad! I saw him going over the Lantham paper—races on at Lantham this afternoon! Guess where Smithy's going! He, he, he!"

Crash!

Vernon-Smith arrived on the spot. He signalled his arrival by landing his foot on Billy Bunter's tight trousers with a terrific crash.

Billy Bunter spun.

There was another crash as he rolled on the floor. It was quite a loud crash. But it was not so loud as the terrific yell that pealed from Billy Bunter. That yell woke every echo, far and near.

It reached many ears, among others those of Mr. Quelch, who was coming to the Form-room to let in his Form.



Bob Cherry let Smithy have his left, causing the Bounder to sit down with a bump and a grunt. Then Bob snatched up the tube of solution and squeezed its contents over the face of Aubrey Angel. "Ooogh!" howled the sportsman of the Fourth.

Bunter rolled and roared, and roared and roared again.

Vernon-Smith stood glaring down at him. His father's letter, whatever it had contained, had irritated Smithy in the first place, and the subsequent events had added to his irritation and he was now in the worst temper ever.

"You fat freak!" hissed the Bounder. "If you were a fellow who could put his hands up, I'd thrash you till you couldn't crawl!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Keep off, you beast!" roared Bunter.

"I've a jolly good mind to boot you to the end of the passage!"

"Beast! You kick me again, and I'll tell Quelch you're going to Lantham races this afternoon!" roared Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!" panted Tom Redwing. Quelch was due at his Form-room now, and liable to appear at any moment.

"Here comes Henry!" murmured Bob Cherry.

A tall and angular figure appeared round a corner up the corridor. Henry Samuel Quelch swept on the scene.

Even the Bounder quailed a little as he realised that Quelch must have heard not only Bunter's yelling, but his words also.

"Bunter!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "Why are you on the floor?"

"Owl! That beast! I—I—I mean that—"

"Get up at once!"

Bunter got up, spluttering.

"Are you responsible for this, Vernon-Smith?" asked Mr. Quelch, his eyes gleaming at the Bounder's sullen face.

"I kicked him!" said the Bounder sulkily. "He was calling me a lot of

pretty names! All these fellows heard him!"

"Bunter!"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I never called him anything but a cad, and a swab, and a smoky beast, and—"

"I heard what you said about Lantham races, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never meant anything, sir! I never meant to give Smithy away, sir—I—I wouldn't! I—I dare say he's only going to Lantham to see the cricket—I mean, I don't suppose he's going at all! I don't know anything about it, sir! I never heard him speaking to Angel of the Fourth, and he never said he had to get to Lantham by two-thirty and—"

"That will do, Bunter! Vernon-Smith, you will stay in detention this afternoon!" said Mr. Quelch.

The Bounder set his lips.

"I'm going to Lantham, sir," he said. "Can't a fellow go to Lantham on a half-holiday to see a cricket match?"

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Quelch. "I understand that other boys in my Form are going to Lantham with that object. I cannot trust you, Vernon-Smith. You are detained for giving way to your temper—but, in any case, I should not allow you to go out of gates this afternoon, as you are not a boy to be trusted!"

The Bounder's face flamed.

"I'm going to Lantham!" he snarled. "You've no right to take any notice of the babbling of a fool like Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"You will be in detention this afternoon, Vernon-Smith, until half-past five!" he said. "I am unwilling to cane you again, as I have caned you

already this morning; but another word of insolence—"

The Bounder choked back the angry words on his lips. He was tough, but he did not want another six!

Mr. Quelch opened the Form-room door, and the Removites went in.

The Bounder sat in his place with a black brow. The glitter in his eyes told how hard he found it to control his temper. But Henry Samuel Quelch was not a master to be trifled with, and he did control it and sat silent.

When the Remove were dismissed after third school, school was over for the day, for all excepting Vernon-Smith. And before dismissing the Form Mr. Quelch addressed the Bounder in a quiet, icy tone. Probably he read, easily enough, the mutinous thoughts of the scapegrace of the Remove.

"Vernon-Smith! You will return to this Form-room at two o'clock and I shall let you in, and set you a task. I shall be absent from the school this afternoon. You will remain in this Form-room during my absence until half-past five!"

The Bounder did not answer, but the quick glitter in his eyes showed how little likely he was to remain in detention while his Form-master was absent from the school.

Mr. Quelch went on very quietly.

"Last term, Vernon-Smith, you broke detention, on a similar occasion, and were flogged for that offence. I have now a serious warning to give you. You will not be allowed to repeat that disobedience and insolence. If you should leave your detention this afternoon, I shall report your conduct to the headmaster, and make a formal

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request to him to expel you from Greyfriars."

Vernon-Smith shut his teeth, hard. "I will not be dictated to, Vernon-Smith, by a wilful and headstrong boy. If you cannot make yourself amenable to discipline, Greyfriars is no place for you! I advise you to reflect on the warning I have given you. Dismiss!"

The Remove went out. And every fellow who wished the Bouncer well could only hope that he would give up what was obviously in his mind.

For there was no doubt that Quelch meant every word he said; and that if the Bouncer of Greyfriars added one more act of defiance to an already long list, the school gates would close behind him for the last time.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Takes A Hand!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry uttered that ejaculation as he came into the bike-shed after dinner that bright spring day.

Bob had a puncture to mend before he started with his friends on a ride to Lantham to see the cricket at the Ramblers ground there.

There was a fellow already in the shed—with his hand on a bike.

It was Herbert Vernon-Smith, and he looked as if he was about to lift the machine down.

He started at Bob Cherry's voice, and glanced round quickly, catching his breath as he did so.

Bob's face became very grave.

He was not feeling specially cordial towards the Bouncer just then. Angry uncontrolled temper was not popular

in the Remove, and when Smithy was in a disgruntled state he tried severely the patience of his chum, Redwing—and other fellows had no patience at all to waste on him. But Bob was rather alarmed now for the reckless fellow.

All the Remove knew that the Bouncer was the man to break detention if he had a sporting chance of getting clear. He would risk six, or even a Head's flogging, as carelessly as another might have risked fifty lines for sliding down the banisters.

But Quelch's grim warning might have been expected to produce an effect even on the obstinate and arrogant Bouncer. Yet here he was, evidently toying with the idea of going out on his bike, although he was due for detention in a quarter of an hour or less.

"Smithy, old man," said Bob quietly, "don't do it, old chap! Quelch meant every word he said in the Form-room!"

"The old fool's going out!" said Smithy. "How's he going to know?"

Bob compressed his lips. Fellows in the Remove did not use epithets like that in speaking of their Form-master. There was no doubt that Smithy's nickname was a well-chosen one.

But Bob made no remark on it. He was too anxious about Smithy to want to quarrel with him.

"You've got to go in at two," he said. "Quelch will look for you if you're not on hand."

"I know that! But after he's gone— Look here, if I cut, I shall have to cut on the q.t.," said Vernon-Smith. "I should be spotted wheeling out a bike. Will you take it out for me—safer if you do."

Bob shook his head.

"You'll be missed," he said. "Quelch doesn't trust you, old man! Ten to one he will speak to the prefects, as he's going out."

"I'm not asking you for advice—I'm asking you if you'll run this bike out and leave it in the spinney for me!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"No, I won't!" answered Bob. "If you're going to ask to be bunked from Greyfriars you're getting no help from me."

"Shut up, then, and leave me alone, and mind your own business!" snarled Vernon-Smith.

Bob's blue eyes gleamed. But he kept his temper, and turned away without another word. He had his puncture to mend, and he up-ended his bike and got on with it, taking no further notice of Vernon-Smith.

The Bouncer wheeled his machine to the doorway and stood there, with his hand resting on the handlebars, looking out.

His mind was, perhaps, not fully made up. Every rebellious instinct in his headstrong nature urged him to mutiny and defiance of authority. But some saving spot of common sense made him hesitate. It was not going to be a licking this time; it was going to be the sack, if he was spotted; a brief visit to the Head's study, and the train home. Even the reckless Bouncer hesitated at that thought.

As he stood there uncertain, Aubrey Angel of the Fourth Form came lounging in.

Angel, the bad hat of the Fourth, gave Smithy a nod.

"Ready?" he asked. "I'll get my jigger out in a jiffy!"

He passed the Bouncer, and went into the bicycle-house.

Smithy's scowling brow looked blacker. He had fixed up that trip with Angel; and if he turned it down, Aubrey would think he funked it. That was a bitter idea to Smithy.

Bob Cherry, who had heard the words spoken in the doorway, glanced up from his bike at Angel. What Bunter suspected, Bob knew now to be the fact; Smithy's engagement that afternoon was sure to be a shady one, if he was going out with Aubrey Angel.

"Smithy's detained, Angel!" said Bob. He disliked speaking to the sportsman of the Fourth, but he felt that he had to put in a word.

"Eh? What?" Angel, taking down his own handsome and expensive jigger, stared round at him. "Is he?"

"Yes; he can't go out."

"I suppose he can say so if he can't go," said Angel curtly. "No need for you to butt in that I know of." He looked across at Vernon-Smith. "You're comin', Smithy?"

There was a pause before the Bouncer answered.

"I don't know," he said at last. "I've got a detention."

"Can't you cut?"

"Well, yes, but—"

"If it's an extra French with Mossoo you can cut. Mossoo will take no notice— Ten to one he won't, anyhow."

"It's not that! It's a spot of Latin in the Form-room; Quelch is taking me there at two!" grunted the Bouncer.

"Then you're safe as houses!" said Angel. "I happen to know that your beak is going out with Capper this afternoon. Get back before the old bean comes in, and you'll be all right."

"Shut up that, Angel!" said Bob Cherry. "Quelch has told Smithy that it will be the sack if he's copped out this afternoon."

Angel gave Bob another stare.



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"Has Smithy asked you to manage his affairs for him?" he inquired. "If not, you may as well keep your oar out. Chance it, Smithy! Dash it all, you never were the fellow to funk a spot of risk!"

The Bounder reddened.

"I'm coming!" he said. "Look here, wheel my bike out for me and leave it in the spinney, where I can pick it up later. I can drop over the cloister wall when I get out."

"Good egg!" said Aubrey. "I'll take yours out, and come back for mine! Nobody will spot a thing."

Bob Cherry rose to his feet, a tube of solution in his hand. He had a rather bad puncture to repair, and he wanted to give it his attention. But he could not help feeling that any fellow was called upon to intervene here, to save the Bounder from his own unthinking folly. Aubrey Angel was about the worst counsellor any fellow could have had at such a time.

"Stop that, Angel!" said Bob quietly, as the Fourth Former put a hand on Vernon-Smith's bike. "I've told you that it's the sack for Smithy if he breaks detention this afternoon. You're not going to help him get it in the neck."

Aubrey stared at him with cool and supercilious contempt.

Vernon-Smith's face flushed with rage.

"Who asked you to butt in?" he roared.

"Nobody! But I'm butting in all the same!" said Bob coolly. "That beastly cad isn't going to land you in the soup if I can stop him."

"Will you mind your own bizney?"

"No!" answered Bob.

He stepped to the doorway; Aubrey had taken the handlebars from Smithy, to wheel the machine out. Bob grasped it by the saddle, and with a wrench of his strong arm, tore it away from Angel and sent it curling up inside the bike-shed.

Angel uttered an angry exclamation.

Vernon-Smith, his face red with rage, fairly hurled himself at Bob Cherry, hitting out with both fists. If Smithy was not to be controlled by his Form-master, he certainly was not to be held in check by another Remove fellow.

Bob's hands flew up at once. He dropped the tube of solution and guarded promptly.

A sharp tap landed on his nose, and he gave a grunt. But he kept his temper and contented himself with guarding, and did not hit out in return. He was a good deal more than a match for the Bounder; but he did not want a fight with Smithy; he wanted to save him from what was coming to him if he followed his own wilful ways.

"Get that bike out, Angel!" shouted Vernon-Smith, as he attacked Bob with fierce energy.

"Smithy, old man, don't be such a fool!" panted Bob. "That cur doesn't care a bean whether you're sacked or not! You know I do."

The Bounder did not answer. He pushed the attack fiercely. And Aubrey Angel stepped to the fallen bike, picked it up, and wheeled it doorward, while Bob was hotly engaged with Smithy.

"Stop!" shouted Bob.

Angel laughed, but made no other reply. In another minute the bike would have been wheeled out and gone.

Bob Cherry's eyes blazed. He let Smithy have his left, causing the Bounder to sit down with a bump and a grunt, then he snatched up the tube of solution and jumped at Aubrey Angel.

The bike went over with a clang. Bob's left hand grasped Angel's arm, his right squeezed the sticky solution out in a stream over the face of the sportsman of the Fourth.

There was a fearful howl from Aubrey as he got it. He struggled and yelled and howled and kicked—but he got it, to the last spot in the tube, streaming.

Then Bob dropped the empty tube and turned with his hands up to face the Bounder, as he scrambled up and rushed at him.

Aubrey Angel—sticky all over with solution, his collar sticking to his neck, and his hair to his head—fairly howled with rage and horror.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Strange Tale!

"CHUCK it, Smithy!"

"You meddlin' fool!" yelled the Bounder.

"Oh, keep it up if you like till Quelch calls for you!" said Bob.

Vernon-Smith, almost beside himself with rage, attacked furiously.

Bob had to hit out, or give ground, and he backed away round the bike-shed.

Angel stood, the picture of horrified dismay. Aubrey of the Fourth was very particular about his appearance, and his appearance now was simply horrid. Aubrey was in no state for a ride to Lantham, keenly as he was interested in the three and the three-thirty.

What Aubrey needed now was soap and hot water—and plenty of both. He almost tottered out of the bike-shed and disappeared. For the next hour or two Aubrey was going to be far too busy to think about Lantham races.

"Angel!" shouted the Bounder as he went.

But Aubrey did not heed; he just went. Aubrey had enough to go on with, and he did not want any more.

"You rotter!" panted the Bounder. "You meddlin' rotter!"

"You silly ass!" retorted Bob.

"Ow!" A second tap on his nose caused Bob's temper to rise a little.

"Look here, chuck it!"

"I'll smash you, you interferin' fool!"

"You'll get a jolt on the boko if you don't chuck it!" exclaimed Bob impatiently. "Well, if you will have it—"

Tap!

Herbert Vernon-Smith had a rather prominent nose; it rather jutted from the Bounder's face. Now it felt as if it was a nail being driven in as Bob's knuckles tapped on it.

The Bounder gasped and tottered, but he rallied at once and came on hard and fast. What stopped him suddenly was the sound of booming strokes from the clock tower.

It was two o'clock. That was the hour that Smithy was due for detention.

He dropped his hands and jumped back.

"Chuck it, you cad!" he panted.

"Ready and willing!" said Bob cheerfully. "It's two, Smithy. Cut off to the House before Quelch starts looking for you; you've got the old bean's back up already."

Vernon-Smith's only answer was a snarl. He ran to his fallen bike and hurriedly picked it up. The pump had fallen off, and he snatched it up and jammed it on again, then he rushed the bike to the doorway.

"Smithy!" exclaimed Bob. Evidently the Bounder was going to

carry on. Aubrey Angel was no longer available to wheel the bike out for him—he was going to wheel it out himself.

Bob stared after him in dismay as he rushed it out.

"Stop!"

It was a sharp voice outside.

Wingate of the Sixth met the Bounder in full career.

Smithy stopped just in time to avoid crashing the machine into the captain of Greyfriars.

Wingate gave him a very grim look.

"Where are you going with that bike, Vernon-Smith?" he asked very quietly.

Smithy made no reply.

The Sixth Form prefect looked at him hard.

"Put it back on the stand!" he said.

Breathing suppressed fury, the Bounder obeyed.

"Now," said Wingate, "you're due for detention, Vernon-Smith. Your Form-master asked me to round you up, as you haven't turned up. I won't mention to Quelch that I caught you wheeling a bike out. Take that scowl off your face and come with me to the House."

Herbert Vernon-Smith obeyed the second injunction, though not the first. His scowl was blacker than ever as he followed the Greyfriars captain.

There was no help for it; he had to go, or to be taken by the collar—and he went. That bike was not going to be hidden in the spinney outside the school walls, ready to be picked up by the Bounder when he cut detention.

That was so much to the good, in Bob Cherry's opinion. Smithy could hardly get to Lantham that afternoon without a bike, and he could hardly venture to wheel a bike out if he cut out of the Form-room.

Bob, as he resumed work on his puncture, hoped that the difficulties in his way would have the effect of making the Bounder give up the reckless idea.

Having completed that repair, Bob Cherry left the bike-shed and went back to the House. He came on Redwing by the door.

"Smithy gone in?" he asked.

Redwing nodded with a worried face. "Yes. Quelch marched him in. I was afraid he had cut. And I'm afraid he's thinking of cutting as soon as Quelch's back is turned."

"It's the boot this time if he does, Reddy," said Bob. "Quelch has got his jolly old back up."

"I know. Only old Smithy is so excited; you know what he is," said Tom ruefully. "He's a splendid chap, as you know as well as I do, but he's got a rotten temper—poor old Smithy!"

"If you're staying in gates, Reddy, keep an eye open for him," said Bob. "If you see him out of the House grab him by his back hair and hook him in again. I jolly well would!"

Redwing laughed.

"I shall keep an eye open, at any rate," he said.

Bob nodded and went in search of his chums. He had done all he could for Smithy, and could only hope for the best. He rubbed his nose as he went up to the Remove studies. Smithy's knuckles had landed on it twice—not gently.

In Study No. 1 four juniors were discussing toffee from a tin when Bob tramped in.

Harry Wharton pushed the tin across the table to Bob, and then stared at his nose.

"Walked into the banisters coming up?" he asked.

"Eh? No!"

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"Been trying to push a wall over with your face?" asked Nugent.

"Oh!" Bob rubbed his nose again. "That was Smithy. I've been arguing with him in the bike-shed."

"In the bike-shed!" repeated Harry Wharton. "He's not gone out?"

"No; old Wingate walked him back to the House. But I fancy it will be touch-and-go with Smithy this afternoon," said Bob. "He's got his back up, and so has Quelch. About even betting whether he gets bunked, I should say."

"If a chap can't toe the line, nothing to do but to bunk him!" observed Johnny Bull oracularly. "Who the dickens is Smithy that he can't toe the line like any other chap?"

"Well, yes," said Harry slowly. "But I do hope he won't make a fool of himself. We don't want Smithy sacked. I fancy he's been a bit upset, too, by something in his father's letter this morning. May be some sort of trouble at home. And that fat-ass Bunter got his rag out with his silly rot—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter did not scot; he came into the study. There was a spot of excitement in Bunter's fat face. He did not even notice the toffees on the table.

"I say, you fellows, think Smithy's gone mad?" he asked.

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated all the Famous Five together, quite startled by that unexpected question.

"I say, I looked into the Form-room to speak to him after Quelch went," said Bunter. "I was going to ask him to lend me his bike, as he won't want it this afternoon, you know, being detained. And what do you think he was doing?"

"Latin!"

"He was looking at that photograph!" said Bunter. "You remember I told you he got a photograph in his letter this morning! Well, there he was with the photograph in his hand, and I saw it plainly. It was his own photograph."

"What about it, ass? Can't a chap look at his own photograph?"

"But that ain't all," said Bunter. "He was scowling at it like billy-o. And he said— I'll have some of that toffee!" Bunter spotted the tin.

"He said he'd have some of that toffee?" repeated Harry Wharton blankly. "What do you mean, you fat chump?"

"No. I said that," explained Bunter. "Smithy said— Look here, shove that tin over this way! He said— You fellows seem to have scoffed most of them."

Billy Bunter promptly annexed the toffees left in the tin. Having loaded his capacious mouth to capacity, he resumed, in a rather muffled voice.

"He said, 'Who wants that cad at Greyfriars?' Staring at his own photograph, you know."

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter.

"Smithy said, 'Who wants that cad at Greyfriars?' Looking at his own photograph!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"His very words!" declared Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Rot!"

"He jolly well did!" said Bunter. "Of course, he's a cad all right, and nobody wants him at Greyfriars, but Smithy doesn't know that, does he? I mean to say, he wouldn't own up to it, would he? Think he's mad?"

"Must be, if you've got it right," grinned Bob. "More likely you haven't, old fat fathead!"

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"Looking fearfully savage, too," said Bunter. "Scowling at his own photograph like billy-o! I hadn't time to ask him about his bike. The minute he saw me he buzzed a book at my head, and I cut. Ill-tempered beast, you know. A fellow can't speak a word to Smithy. You saw how he cut up rusty this morning, when I asked him if his pater had gone bankrupt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't ask the chap a civil question, you know, without him going off at the deep end," said Bunter. "But I say, fancy him staring at his own photo and saying, 'Who wants that cad at Greyfriars?' Queer, ain't it?"

"Very; if true," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The queerfulness is terrific, but the truthfulness is probably not preposterous," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I tell you I heard him!" hooted Bunter. "I dare say he wasn't pleased with the photo. He wouldn't be, you know, with an ugly mug like his. He couldn't expect it to be good-looking, could he—that nose of his, and all that? Smithy's awfully rich, but I'd rather be handsome, on the whole," said Bunter. "Bet you he'd give a lot of his quids for some of my good looks!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!"

"Oh, really, you fellows, what are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

And they left Study No. 1, leaving Billy Bunter to finish the toffee, and to wonder what on earth it was that he had said to make them cackle like that.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Out Of Bounds?

"LOOK!"

"What?"

"Is that Smithy?"

"Oh!"

Five cyclists were bowling swiftly along the Lantham road.

Harry Wharton & Co had covered most of the miles they had to cover, and they were thinking of the match they were going to see on the Ramblers ground, and Vernon-Smith had been quite dismissed from their minds.

But they were reminded of him as Bob unloosed one hand from his handlebars, and pointed to a cyclist ahead.

The juniors were passing Lantham Chase, a mile or two out of the town. For some little time they had noticed that there was a cyclist ahead of them, going in the same direction as themselves, but had taken no special heed of him. There were plenty of bikes on the Lantham road.

But they gave him their very special attention, as Bob pointed.

His back, of course, was turned to them; but there seemed to their eyes something familiar in the set of the figure.

"Can't be Smithy," said Harry. "It looks a bit like him in figure—but so might a dozen fellows."

"I saw his face when he turned his head towards the wood a minute ago," said Bob. "I'd have sworn it was Smithy's. You don't often see a boko like Smithy's. I mean, it's quite a nice boko, but there ain't a lot just like it knocking about."

"Not Smithy," said Frank Nugent, shaking his head. "He's not got a Greyfriars cap on."

"Well, very likely he wouldn't have,

out of bounds," said Bob. "Much more likely to leave his school cap off."

"Well, yes; but—"

"That chap's in dark grey," said Johnny Bull. "Never seen Smithy in that suit. Bit louder, as a rule."

"Well, let's hope it isn't Smithy," said Bob. "But I jolly well believe it is, all the same. If it is, he must have cut out almost the minute Quelch left him, to get ahead of us on the road."

"But his bike was in the shed when we left," said Harry.

"Might have borrowed another chap's outside the school. He wouldn't risk being seen wheeling out a bike when he was breaking detention."

"The fathead!" muttered Wharton. "Quelch meant it, about the sack. If that's Smithy, his goose is cooked."

"Was Smithy going alone?" asked Frank Nugent.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"No. Angel of the Fourth was going with him. But I'll bet Aubrey hasn't got all that solution off yet. He's still washing. I let him have a tube full to keep him off the grass."

"Oh gum!" exclaimed Harry Wharton suddenly. His eyes were on the rider ahead.

That rider had turned his face towards the dark, shadowy woods of Lantham Chase, on the right of the road. It seemed as if he was looking for a path, of which there were several, leading up from the road into the wood.

His movement showed for a moment his profile. It was only a glimpse, but there was hardly any mistaking, at least, the nose; not a bad-looking nose, but undoubtedly noticeable. And if it was not the Bounder's, a twin to it.

"Smithy!" breathed Wharton.

"Did you see—" exclaimed Nugent.

"I think so. I'm afraid it's Smithy," said the captain of the Remove. "Look here, put it on a bit, and let's make sure."

The juniors accelerated.

"What's the good, anyhow?" asked Johnny Bull. "We can't stop him."

"Can't we?" said Bob. "I told Reddy to grab him by his back hair, if he spotted him breaking out. Why shouldn't we?"

"Oh, rats! We're going to see the cricket at Lantham—not grabbing a silly chump by his back hair."

"Look!" exclaimed Nugent.

The cyclist ahead turned to the right, where a path led up into Lantham Chase. Leaving the road, he pedalled into the path, under the thick branches of oaks and beeches.

Every one of the Famous Five, who were quite near him now, saw his face, side view, and unmistakable.

"Smithy!" said Bob.

"Oh, the awful ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "The reckless fool! This is the finish for him."

He slowed down. His friends followed his example.

Wharton's face was sorely troubled.

He had recognised Vernon-Smith now, without a doubt.

The Bounder, who should have been sitting in the Form-room at detention, was eight or nine miles from the school. The utter reckless folly of it, after the warning Quelch had given, was really appalling.

"Look here, you men," said Harry, "we're bound to speak to him—to try to get him to see sense! His father treated us jolly well in the hols, and it would be a fearful knock for him if Smithy was buzzed off home, right at the beginning of the term. We've got to stop him!"

"Think he'll take any notice of us—"



"Let me pass!" said the youth. "My name's not Smithy, you fool!" "Wha-a-at?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Are you trying to make out to fellows who know you perfectly well that you're not Smithy?" "You don't know me," said the youth. "You've never seen me before!"

an obstinate ass like that?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"We'll make him, somehow."

"What about the Ramblers match?"

"Oh, blow the Ramblers match! We're not going to see a Remove man bucked, if we can help it. Dash it all, Smithy's not a bad sort, when he's not in his blessed tantrums! His father was awfully decent to us, too. Look here, we've got to stop him!"

"Oh, all right!" said Johnny. "But you won't stop him, unless you're going to yank him back to the school by his ears."

"We'll try, anyhow."

"Looks as if he's seen us, and dodging us, cutting off into the wood like that," said Bob. "I know he was going to Lantham."

"That may be a short cut to the races!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Come on!" said Harry.

He swept round off the road into the grassy path under the trees. His comrades strung out after him. There was no space for a bunch of riders on the woodland path in Lantham Chase.

If the fellow ahead was dodging, he was not putting on speed for that purpose. He had slowed down a good deal, and Harry Wharton & Co., pedalling hard, very quickly overhauled him.

The sound of so many bicycles on the path behind him caused him to look round, and all the juniors saw his face again—a full view this time. There was no doubt about it now. It was a face they knew as well as their own faces in the glass.

"Stop!" shouted Harry.

"Hold on, old bean!" bawled Bob Cherry.

A look of surprise came over the face ahead, as it looked back again. The

rather steely eyes stared at the Famous Five.

The cyclist did not stop, but he slowed still more, to allow them to draw near. Then he called back.

"What do you want?"

"You, old bean!" called Bob.

"What?"

"Stop!" exclaimed Harry.

"Why the dickens should I stop? What the thump do you mean?"

"I mean what I say!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "For goodness' sake don't be such a fool! Look here, will you stop?"

"Why should I?"

"Will you stop?"

"No, I won't!"

Harry Wharton set his lips. The chums of the Remove were giving up their afternoon's excursion on account of the headstrong, obstinate fellow who was asking for trouble that would be overwhelming, if it happened. Harry Wharton was concerned about him and anxious for him, but he was very nearly as angry as he was anxious. The breaker of bounds was going to stop—whether he chose to or not!

Wharton shot on, and rode by the side of the fellow ahead. There was barely room for two abreast, and the rider gave him a sharp stare.

"Do you want an accident, you fat-head?" he snapped.

"Will you stop?"

"No!"

Harry Wharton said no more, but he grabbed him by the shoulder. Both bikes rocked wildly, came together, and rocked over. Wharton jumped clear just in time, but the other fellow went over with a bump, sprawling beside his bicycle, and the Co. jammed on their brakes behind in a hurry and jumped down.

"Sorry!" gasped Wharton. "But you had to stop, you know."

"You fool!"

The sprawling figure scrambled up. The face was red with anger, as the fellow panted for breath. He had had rather a heavy bump. He clenched his fists and stared savagely at the Famous Five.

"What do you think you're up to?" he shouted. "Who the dooce are you, and what do you want?"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. stared at him.

They had rather expected Smithy to be angry and excited. But they had not expected this! The glare of rage in the rather hard face with its jutting boko was only to be expected. But the words made them wonder whether they were dreaming.

"Smithy!" gasped Harry.

"Gone potty?" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Who are we?" repeated Johnny Bull blankly. "Are you trying to be funny, you silly owl, or what do you mean?"

"My esteemed Smithy—" gasped Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I asked you who you were and what you wanted!" came the angry reply. "What are you doing here, anyhow? This is private ground. There's a right-of-way through—but you can't hang about here! If you're going anywhere, go."

"Potty!" said Bob. "Bunter said he was potty—and he jolly well is! When did this come on, old bean?"

"You cheeky fool, what do you mean?"

"Well, among other things, I mean to punch your nose, if you're not a bit more civil!" retorted Bob.

"Hold on, old man," said Harry hastily. "We haven't come here for a row. Now, look here, Smithy—"

"Are you calling me Smithy?"

"Eh? You know I am."

"Then what the thump are you calling me Smithy for, you fool?"

Harry Wharton jumped.

"Smithy, old chap, what do you mean?" he gasped. "Are you ill, or— or what?"

Really, it seemed to the Famous Five that the Bounder must be wandering in his mind, to put it mildly.

"Look here! I've asked you who you are, and what you want? I don't care a straw who you are, if you come to that, but what do you want? What have you stopped me for?"

"We want you to come back with us!" said Harry.

"To come back with you?"

"Yes; before it's too late."

"Is this a joke, or what? Why should I come anywhere with you—a mob of silly fools I've never seen before?"

Harry Wharton & Co. could only look at him.

It was the Bounder of Greyfriars they were looking at—unless their eyes were deceiving them. He was dressed differently from the Bounder, and was not wearing a Greyfriars cap—but that was quite a usual trick with Smithy when he went out of school bounds. His face, his features, his figure, the very tones of his rather strident voice, were Smithy's. Yet he spoke as if they were perfect strangers to him.

Unless it was some extraordinary delusion on Smithy's part, they did not know what to make of it.

Bunter, only an hour ago, had asked them whether they thought that Smithy was mad—from his peculiar action in the Form-room. They wondered now whether Bunter's strange tale was true.

Certainly there was something queer about a fellow who, staring at his photograph, uttered the words Bunter declared that Smithy had uttered. And now he was denying his own identity to fellows who knew him as well as they knew one another.

Dumbfounded, they stared at him.

He stared back and then, grunting, picked up his machine. As they did not speak, he seemed to intend to go on and leave them.

Harry Wharton promptly pushed his machine across the path, blocking the way.

Mad or sane, the Bounder was not going on.

BRITAIN'S AIR POWER.

That the people of Great Britain are more air-minded to-day than they have ever been has been proved by the constant stream of applicants for service in the Royal Air Force. A further proof, if any were needed, is the enormous success of "The King's Air Force," a special publication just issued at 6d. and edited by Clarence Winchester, A.R.A.S.I., in co-operation with the Air Ministry. "The King's Air Force"—the story of Britain's air power to-day—is a most fascinating publication, printed in photogravure throughout, which should be in the hands of every patriotic citizen. The contents describe the work of, and conditions applying to, service in His Majesty's Air Force at home and in the Dominions and Colonies, and readers will find the contribution a source of valuable and useful information about this fascinating subject. "The King's Air Force" is on sale everywhere, price 6d.

"You cheeky fool!" came an angry roar. "What are you stopping me for?"

"You know perfectly well why I am stopping you!" said Harry quietly. "For goodness' sake don't be such a goat, Smithy!"

"My name's not Smithy, you fool!"

"Wha-a-t?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Now let me pass! If you've mistaken me for somebody else, I suppose you can't help being a fool! Now let me pass!"

"Are you trying to make out, to fellows who know you perfectly well, that you're not Smithy?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, don't be a fool! You don't know me, as you've never seen me before—"

"Never seen you before!" stuttered Nugent.

"Not that I know of, at any rate! If you've seen me, I've not seen you. This is the first time I've seen you, and I hope it will be the last! Now let me pass, you cheeky fathead!"

"Mad!" said Bob. "Bunter said he was mad, and he jolly well is."

"The madfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed fathead has gone off his preposterous rocker."

The angry face turned on the Nabob of Bhanipur, and its scowl relaxed into something like a grin. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's fine flow of English seemed to strike the fellow—as it often struck strangers!

"Oh gad!" he exclaimed. "Where did you pick up that lingo? Mind saying that over again?"

"I remarkably observed that the madfulness was terrific, my esteemed Smithy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar.

"Well, what are you cackling at?" demanded Bob Cherry. "You're used to Inky's English by this time, I suppose?"

"Inky! Who's Inky?"

"Oh, come off!" grunted Johnny Bull. "What's the good of playing this silly game, Smithy? Think we're going to believe that you don't know us? If you're not mad, chuck it!"

"The chuckfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed and idiotic Smithy."

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it! I like to listen to you! Never heard anything half so funny on the radio! Carry on."

"Will you come back with us?" asked Harry.

"Of course I won't! I'm going home, even if I wanted your company, which I certainly don't."

"Home!" repeated Harry blankly. "Are you really potty? If you're fool enough to go home, your number's up."

"Don't be a silly idiot, if you can help it! Have I fallen in with a gang escaped from an asylum, or what? Why shouldn't I go home?"

"You know that better than I can tell you. You've got one chance—to come straight back with us, before it's too late."

"A set of lunatics, I can see! When I get in, I'll ask my uncle to put the police wise that a lot of lunatics have escaped from an asylum. Now get out of my way—I've got to get in to tea."

"To get in to tea!"

"Anything surprising in that, at tea-time?"

"Smithy, do stop talking rot! If you've gone off your dot, you've got to be taken care of."

"I've told you that my name's not Smith, you fool!"

"You can tell us silly lies till you're black in the face," grunted Johnny Bull. "Think we're going to believe them?"

"Are you calling me a liar?"

"Of course I am!"

"Well, you can call me names while you're five to one. I'd knock it back down your neck if you were here on your own."

"Get on with it!" said Johnny. "The other fellows will stand round and see fair play."

"By gum, if that's square, I'll give you what you're asking for."

"Shut up, Johnny!" Bob Cherry interposed. "We're not here to scrap with Smithy. Now look here, old chap—"

"Do you generally call a fellow 'old chap' when you don't know him, and have never seen him before?"

"Oh, chuck that, you ass! Look here—"

"I'd rather look at something more attractive, thanks! Now, you cheeky fool, whoever you are, get out of my way! I've got to get home."

"Home—on that bike!" said Harry.

"Why not?"

"Is he mad?" said Harry blankly.

"If you're not mad, as I'm beginning to think you must be, your home's a hundred miles from here."

"I've told you you're taking me for somebody else! My home's at Lantham Chase, not ten minutes' walk away."

"I don't understand this!" said Harry. "If you believe what you say you've gone cracked, and you can't be allowed to wander about. If you're trying to pull our legs you can't expect to get by with it. In either case, you're jolly well coming back with us."

"That's that!" agreed Bob.

"You can come quietly, Smithy, or you can come otherwise—but you're coming" said the captain of the Remove.

"You fool—"

"That's enough! Are you coming?"

"Of course I'm not coming! Why should I come with a gang of fools I don't know? Leave me alone!"

"Chuck it and come."

"Will you get out of my way?"

"No."

"Then I'll make you!"

And the angry fellow rushed his bike at Harry Wharton, crashing it on Harry's machine, sending the latter spinning.

Instantly Wharton grasped him.

The next moment a fist crashed on Wharton's chin, and he staggered back and fell.

The Co. made a forward movement at once, and in another second the fellow would have been grasped. But in that second, leaving his bike on the earth, he leaped away into the trees.

There was a rustling and crashing of the thicket as he ran, and in a twinkling he was lost to sight.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Again

"OH, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton staggered up.

He stared round, his hand to a bruised chin. The fellow, whether he was Vernon-Smith or not, had vanished into the wood.

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"He's gone!" said Nugent. "No good hunting him through this wood, I suppose. He's left his bike."

Harry Wharton rubbed his chin, his face set and angry. But he shook his head. Hunting the fugitive through

the thickness of the tangled wood was not a very hopeful proposition.

"No good!" said Harry. "He could dodge us for hours—or for ever! He doesn't mean to come back to Greyfriars. We can't make him—now."

"I feel a great deal more inclined to boot him than to keep him out of a row with Quelch after this!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Wharton set his lips.

"We've done all we can," he said. "More than most fellows would have done. He wouldn't have come back willingly anyhow, and we should have had a pretty tussle getting him back against his will. If he chooses to get sacked, let him get on with it—we've done our best."

"Well, we can't do any more!" said Bob, with a worried look. "But—but I can't make him out. What could he possibly have meant by pretending he wasn't Smithy? He couldn't expect us to believe it."

"Unless he's really cracked——" said Nugent.

"He didn't look cracked; only in one of his tantrums! I—I suppose Smithy can't have a twin brother knocking about, that we've never heard of——"

"Hardly!"

"It was Smithy, all right, but whether he's gone cracked, or was trying to stuff us, I'm blessed if I can make out!" said Harry Wharton. "Anyhow, we can't do any more; let's get on to Lantham. Still time to see something of the Ramblers match."

"He will have to come back for his bike some time!" said Bob.

"He won't come back while we're here."

"No, I suppose not. Let's get going."

The Famous Five wheeled their machines away, back to the Lantham road, leaving the other fellow's bicycle leaning on a tree.

In a few minutes they were back on the high road, where they mounted and resumed their way to Lantham.

They went in a puzzled and worried mood. Smithy had to be left to his own devices, practically certain to result in expulsion from Greyfriars. But even that was not so disturbing as his disclaimer of his own identity, which was unaccountable, except on the theory that he had gone cracked. But the hard-headed Bounder of Greyfriars seemed really about the last fellow in the wide world to go cracked.

However, they dismissed Smithy from their minds when they reached the Ramblers ground and went in to watch the cricket. Harry Wharton was reminded of him every now and then when he rubbed his chin!

And they all remembered him when, at the close of play, they went back to their machines to ride home to Greyfriars.

Passing Lantham Chase, on their way home, they glanced at the deep, shady woods that surrounded the mansion, a distance from the road and out of sight. But they did not expect to see anything of Smithy there.

They had no doubt that he had returned for his bike, after they had cleared off, and gone to his destination—no doubt the races.

"The ass!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"He may have got in in time," said Wharton. "As Quelch was out this afternoon, I suppose he had a sporting chance—if he got back before half-past five."

"Not likely! Wingate knew he was thinking of cutting; he caught him with his jigger at the bike-shed! Bet you

Quelch told a prefect or two to keep an eye open."

"Must have!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, in that case, he's copped," said Harry, "and a fellow never asked for it so much!"

"It's rotten, though," grunted Bob. "We don't want the old Bounder sacked."

"No." Harry Wharton released a handlebar and rubbed his chin. "I feel like giving him a hiding, but we don't want him sacked. Can't be helped, though—he must have it if he won't have anything else."

They rode on in glum silence. Exasperating as the Bounder was, much as he made them want to punch him, it was a dismaying thought that they were going back to Greyfriars to see him sacked.

"Hallo hallo, hallo!" howled Bob suddenly. "There he is!"

Hardly half a mile from the school they sighted a cyclist ahead, going the same way. They stared at him. Although they could not see his face they knew that it was the Bounder.

"He's changed his clobber!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"And he's got on a school cap now," said Nugent.

"That's his own bike!" said Bob. "It's not the one he was riding at Lantham Chase; it's his own!"

They put on a spurt and overtook the rider ahead.

It was Herbert Vernon-Smith, and he gave them an unsmiling glance.

"So you've got back!" said Harry Wharton.

"Eh? Back from where?" grunted Vernon-Smith.

"Lantham."

"Don't be a fool!"

"Thanks! Your manners haven't improved since we saw you last."

"Well, what do you mean?" snarled the Bounder. "You know I've been in detention, and had to cut out Lantham."

"Still mad?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"What do you mean, you idiot?"

"Well, have you pulled through with Quelch?" asked Harry. "You can't have, if you're only just going in. It's nearly half-past six now, and just on lock-up. Have you been in and come out again, or what?"

The Famous Five were quite puzzled. Seeing the Bounder there they had quite supposed that he was on his way back, after breaking detention. But he certainly did not look like a fellow who was going to be sacked. He looked disgruntled, as he had looked all day, but that was all.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" snapped Smithy. "Quelch let me out at half-past five, and I got out for a run on the jigger, after being stuck in the Form-room all the afternoon. What about it?"

"Then you were in the Form-room when Quelch came in?"

"Of course I was."

"You got back in time?"

"Got back from where, you silly owl?"

"Lantham."

"Oh, don't be a fool!"

"You're not going to tell us that you never went out this afternoon, Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I should have, only Wingate had his eye on me!" snarled the Bounder. "I hadn't a chance!"

"Then we only dreamed that we saw you at Lantham?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

The Bounder stared at him.

"You dreamed it, if you fancied you

saw me!" he snapped. "What are you getting at? Trying to pull my leg, or what?"

"No; you're trying to pull ours."

"Oh, stop talking rot!"

"Well, if you've pulled through, I'm glad!" said Harry. "You jolly well deserve to be sacked, and booted, too; but I'm glad you've pulled through."

"Thank you for nothing."

"But you needn't try to tell us that you never went out!" snorted Johnny Bull. "Think we should give you away to Quelch?"

"I never went out, you fool, till after Quelch let me out for a run on my jigger!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Johnny, in disgust. "Come on, you fellows, I've had enough of this, for one!"

And the Famous Five accelerated and shot ahead, the Bounder staring after them with an angry scowl as they went.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Extraordinary!

MR. QUELCH frowned. It was the following day, and, after class, the Remove master had walked into Courtfield. As he progressed up the High Street of that ancient market town, he was thinking of that most troublesome member of his Form, Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Smithy, always a thorn in the side of his Form-master, had been, so to speak, rather more thorny than usual that day. He had been exactly as troublesome as any fellow could venture to be in Form—but, at the same time, so wary that Quelch found it difficult to pin him down.

Quelch was certain that the dropping of a desk-lid which had resounded through the Form-room like the report of a rifle was no accident. But he was not quite certain enough to give the Bounder lines for it.

He was as good as certain that it was Smithy who had projected the ink-ball that made Billy Bunter suddenly bound up with a loud yell. But again he was not certain enough to whop the Bounder.

Once more he could hardly doubt that it was Herbert Vernon-Smith who had spilt ink on the seat of his high chair at his desk. But there was no evidence to back up that moral certainty, and Quelch was a just man.

It was really not easy for a man determined to be just to deal with so very wary a bird as the Bounder in a raging mood.

Quelch did not intend to give up being exactly, precisely, and meticulously just! But he was exasperated; and he did intend to make the Bounder sorry for his sins once unmistakably just cause was given.

And now——

Coming up the High Street, and passing the bun-shop, Quelch's eyes fixed on a youth sitting at one of the tables outside that establishment.

He gazed at the well-known features of Herbert Vernon-Smith!

True, there was no harm in that youth's occupation. He was sipping a glass of ginger-beer at his table, as a Greyfriars man might be seen doing any day.

But—there was a but!

On half-holidays the town of Courtfield was within school bounds, and Herbert Vernon-Smith, or any other Greyfriars fellow, was at perfect liberty to imbibe ginger-beer at the bun-shop.

On other days, it was out of bounds; THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,631.

and any fellow desiring to go to Court-field had to ask leave from his Form-master.

Smithy had not asked leave!

He was, therefore, out of bounds; and there he was, sitting right under his Form-master's eye, drinking ginger-beer, and apparently recking nothing if the whole staff at Greyfriars walked by and beheld him.

Even that was not his whole offence. He was not wearing his school cap!

Greyfriars fellows had to wear the school colours, and generally were quite pleased to do so. Fellows who discarded their school caps when they were out of gates could only be supposed to do so from one motive—a desire not to be recognised as Greyfriars fellows! Which, again, could only mean that they contemplated sojourning in places that Greyfriars fellows were not allowed to enter.

Which Mr. Quelch had not the slightest doubt was Smithy's idea. Smithy was suspected—or rather more than suspected—of sneaking into the Three Fishers, and getting cigarettes from the back door of the Cross Keys. At the moment he was quite harmlessly occupied, but the plain grey cloth cap on his head hinted of lawless intentions.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard, and he breathed deep! All through that day this boy had irritated him—a hard-worked and dutiful Form-master. Now he was out of bounds and not in his school colours. Quelch bore down on him with a grim brow.

And he stared at Quelch as if he did not care a boiled bean! He did not rise to his feet; he did not cap the Form-master; and he did not seem in the slightest degree alarmed. If anything could have added to Mr. Quelch's intense annoyance that would have done it.

He halted at the table, and fixed his gimlet eyes on the boy with a gleam in them.

"How dare you?" he asked.

The youth in the grey cap, already staring at him, stared harder.

"Speaking to me?" he asked.

"You know perfectly well that I am speaking to you, you impertinent young rascal!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"Mad?"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Well, what are you calling me names for, you old donkey?"

Mr. Quelch stood rooted. He could hardly believe his ears.

He was accustomed to impertinence from that particular member of his Form. He was accustomed to Vernon-Smith being as disrespectful as a fellow could venture to be. But he had never been addressed like this before! He had never dreamed that any schoolboy could think of so addressing him. He was so utterly astounded, so utterly taken back, that he could only stand staring at the boy—almost gibbering at him!

"Boy!" he gasped at last.

"Man!" came the cool retort.

"Come with me!" Quelch's voice trembled with anger. "If that is your bicycle, you may wheel it! Come with me at once!"

A bike was leaning against the back of the seat. But the boy made no movement to get up and take it. He only stared.

"Do you hear me?" breathed Mr. Quelch.

"I'm not deaf, old bean! If you're not a gibbering maniac, will you tell me what you're driving at?"

Quelch gasped! He did not answer that! No Form-master could possibly

have answered such a question. It was a time for action, not for words. Quelch went promptly into action.

He grabbed a collar and hooked the youth to his feet. He gave him a shake, which elicited a gasping yell, and then another.

"Now come!" he breathed.

"You old fool——"

"Silence! Come with me at once!"

"You mad old goat, let go my collar! What the dickens do you mean? I'll back your shins if you don't let go my collar!"

"I order you——" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Who cares for your orders, you old fool?"

"Upon my word! I—I—— Stop!"

With a sudden wrench, the boy tore his collar loose. He grabbed his bike, and ran it across the pavement into the street.

"Stop!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

With a leg over the machine, the boy looked round and laughed.

"You thumping old ass, you'd better go back to your keepers!" he said. "Are you as mad as a hatter, or what's the matter with you?"

Quelch made a rush across the pavement. The bike shot away before he could establish contact.

At a cooler moment, Quelch would have realised that he had no chance in a race with a bicycle. But he was not cool at that moment. He was boiling. He rushed after the bicycle.

Down the High Street went the cyclist. After him flew the Remove master of Greyfriars. Dozens of people on both sides of the street stared at them, and there was a sound of loud laughter.

"Go it, old 'un!" shouted a butcher's boy. A chorus of encouragement followed.

"Put it on, old boney!"

"Ketch him! Ketch him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Op it, old 'un!"

Thus encouraged by the public, Quelch raced.

But the bike shot far out of his reach, turned a corner, and vanished.

Quelch slackened. Laughter and shouts of encouragement from butchers' boys were not really what Quelch wanted; and he realised, with crimson face, that he had quite forgotten the dignity of a Form-master.

He dropped into a walk; but he walked quite quickly till he was out of view of the interested public in Court-field High Street.

Quelch had come into town that afternoon to call at the library. He dismissed the library from mind now. With a grim brow, he set out on his return to the school; and the expression on his expressive countenance boded ill for the Bounder of Greyfriars when he arrived there.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Row In The Rag!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag, his eyes gleaming with excitement behind his big spectacles.

"Smithy here?" he gasped.

"Here!" answered Herbert Vernon-Smith, staring at him. "What's the matter with you, you fat Owl?"

A good many fellows were in the Rag before tea.

Smithy and some of them were talking about the series of rags that the Bounder had perpetrated in the Form-room that day.

Skinner, Snoop, Stott, Bolsover major, and two or three other fellows

were highly amused, and thoroughly appreciative. Others were neither.

Lord Mauleverer, in an armchair, expressed mild disapproval in his face. Tom Redwing looked very grave. Harry Wharton & Co., talking cricket by the window, gave Smithy no heed—but the chuckles from the group reached them, and they could only wonder that the Bounder, after yesterday's happenings, was fool enough to hunt for more trouble with Quelch.

Bunter's excited howl as he rolled in drew general attention.

Bunter blinked at Smithy through his big spectacles.

"Oh, you're here!" he exclaimed.

"Why shouldn't I be here, fathead?"

"Well, Quelch can't know you're here," said Bunter. "If he knew you were here, he wouldn't be asking about you."

"Is he asking about me, ass?"

"I heard him ask Wingate if you'd come in——"

"I haven't been out, fathead!"

"He, he, he!"

The Bounder's brow darkened. Bunter's fat giggle showed that he did not believe that statement; and the Bounder made a movement towards him.

Billy Bunter promptly dodged round the Famous Five.

"Here, you keep off, you beast!" he exclaimed. "If you haven't been out, Quelch jolly well thinks you have, as he asked Wingate whether you'd come in!"

"Smithy hasn't been out!" said Skinner.

"He, he, he!"

"You fat octopus——" roared Smithy.

"Well, Quelch asked Wingate if you'd come in! Wingate said he didn't know. I heard him ask Coker of the Fifth, and Hobson of the Shell if they'd seen you! He fancies you've been out. He, he, he!"

The Bounder scowled.

"I don't see why he should!" he snapped. "He would like to get a chance at me, I know that; but I'm not fool enough to give him one. Besides, I could go out if I liked—it's nowhere near lock-up!"

"He, he, he! What have you been up to out of gates?" grinned Bunter.

"I tell you I've not been out of gates, you gibbering fat sheep!"

"He, he, he!"

"Is anything up, Bunter, you fat ass," asked Harry Wharton, "or are you only gabbling out of the back of your silly neck, as usual?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Has Quelch really asked for Smithy?" snapped Tom Redwing.

"Yes, rather! I say, you fellows, he's fearfully wild! Grinding his teeth!" said Bunter impressively. "Never seen Quelch in such a fearful bat! Smithy must have done something pretty awful. I say, Smithy, has he spotted you at the Three Fishers?"

"Smithy," exclaimed Harry Wharton, "for goodness' sake, have you been mad enough to play the goat to-day—after yesterday?"

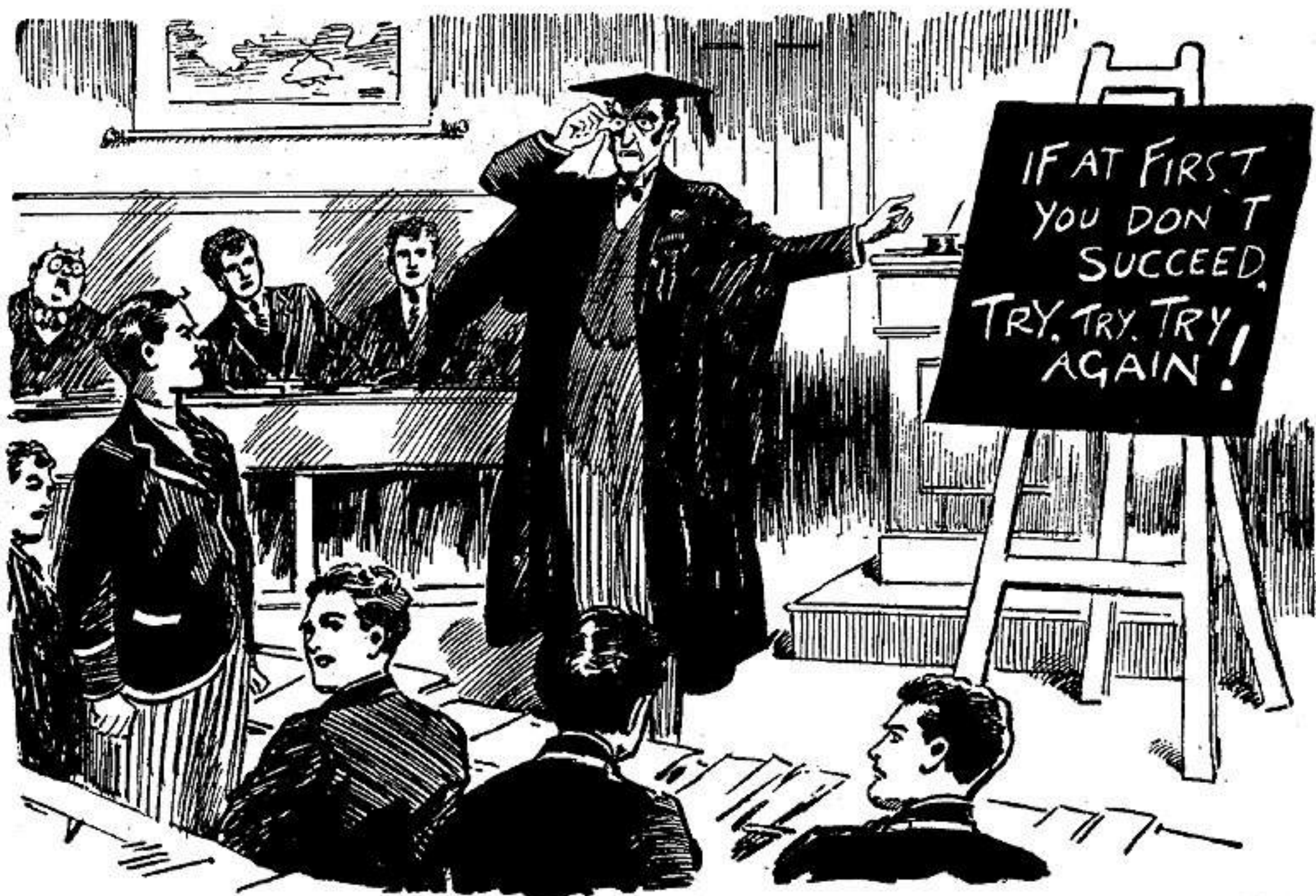
"I've said that I haven't been out of gates since class to-day, Wharton!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth.

"Yes, and you said that you never went out of detention yesterday," snapped the captain of the Remove impatiently. "Don't be an ass!"

"Are you calling me a liar, Harry Wharton?" asked the Bounder, his eyes blazing, and his fists clenched.

"I'm telling you not to be an ass!"

"Smithy never went out of detention yesterday, Wharton!" said Tom Redwing, staring at the captain of the



Mr. Quelch's face flushed, and he turned towards his Form, with an expression that made even Vernon-Smith's heart beat faster. "Vernon-Smith!" His voice fairly rumbled. "Did you chalk those words on the blackboard?" "I, sir!" The Bounder's face registered innocent surprise.

Remove. "I was waiting for him to come out of the Form-room when Quelch let him out at half-past five."

"He got back in time!" said Harry. Redwing gave his chum a startled look.

"Smithy, old man! You never—" "No, I never!" sneered the Bounder. "I was going to, but Wingate had his eye on me, and I couldn't! Otherwise I should have."

"Thank goodness you never did, at any rate!" said Tom, with a deep breath. "For goodness' sake, Wharton, don't talk such rot—any talk like that getting to Quelch would set him going—"

"I'm not going to talk about it," answered Harry, "but I'm not going to pretend to believe that Smithy's telling the truth when I saw him at Lantham yesterday, when he was supposed to be in the Form-room."

"You couldn't have—" "I did!" "It's a lie!" yelled the Bounder furiously.

"If it's a lie, we're all in it together," said Harry Wharton contemptuously. "Every fellow who was with me will say the same."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry promptly. "What are you getting at, Smithy? You know we saw you!"

"Liar!" Bob's blue eyes glinted. "Pack that up!" he said curtly. "You can tell all the lies you like, Herbert Vernon-Smith; but you're not going to call me what you are yourself!"

"Liar!" yelled the Bounder, "Lies all round, if you make out that you saw me out of gates before half-past five yesterday! What's this game, you rotters? Are you trying to land me in a row with Quelch, or what?"

"Is the fellow cracked?" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Smithy, are you going to deny that we ran you down on your bike, and tried to get you to come back to the school?"

"Good little Erics!" sighed Skinner. "Shut up, Skinner!"

"You all say the same, do you?" demanded the Bounder, with a fierce glare at the Famous Five.

"Yes, we do; and you know it!" said Johnny Bull.

"Then you're liars all round, and you're doing this to get me into a row with Quelch!" roared the Bounder.

Harry Wharton's lips curled.

"We tried our hardest to keep you out of a row with Quelch," he said. "You know that, without my telling you. I can't understand now how you got back in time without being spotted. I'm glad you did—"

"You're mistaken," exclaimed Redwing. "I'm as good as certain that Smithy never left the Form-room—apart from his saying so—"

"Think we dreamed that we saw him—five of us, all dreaming the same thing in broad daylight?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"He, he, he!" from Bunter.

There was a buzz of excitement in the Rag. Every fellow was listening, and looking on, with breathless interest, at that strange altercation.

Vernon-Smith stood facing the five with clenched fists and flashing eyes. He seemed on the very verge of rushing at the whole group, and hitting out right and left.

"You rotters! You rotters!" breathed Vernon-Smith. He seemed almost choking. "Making up lies like Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—" "I tell all you fellows," said Vernon-Smith, looking round at the circle of

staring faces, "that I never left the Form-room yesterday, after Quelch walked me in a few minutes after two, till he let me out at five-thirty! Now what do you think of those lying cads?"

The cool contempt in the faces of the Famous Five was a sufficient answer to that. Every fellow in the room knew that they were speaking the truth, or, at all events, what they believed to be the truth. But the Bounder's reputation for veracity was far from being as good.

Disbelief and derision were to be read in most of the faces at which the Bounder stared. Even Skinner & Co. did not affect to believe him.

"What rot, Smithy!" said Bolsover major. "No good ganmoning us! We're all friends here! No man in the Remove would give you away!"

"I tell you I never went out!" almost shrieked Vernon-Smith.

Bolsover shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Oh, all right, have it your own way—I don't care!"

"It's a lie—a lie!" panted Vernon-Smith passionately. "I can't make out why they've invented this, unless it's a trick to land me with Quelch! But it's a lie from beginning to end. They never saw me within ten miles of Lantham yesterday—and they know they never did!"

"Oh, let it go at that!" said Harry Wharton contemptuously. "We tried to do you a good turn, and I've still got a bruise on my chin where you gave me a knock!"

"I gave you a knock—yesterday!" panted the Bounder. "I had a row with Cherry in the bike-shed—I never even saw you!"



(Continued from page 13.)

"Oh, cut it out! I'm fed up with it!"

The Bounder strode towards him. His face was working with passionate rage.

"I say it's a lie!" he shouted. "Every one of you is a liar, and I'll knock your lies back down your necks! You first, Wharton—put up your hands, you lying rotter, and—"

"Cave!" gasped Hazeldene, as the door opened.

Mr. Quelch stepped in.

There was a sudden hush.

Vernon-Smith, about to spring at the captain of the Remove, dropped his hands, still panting with rage.

Mr. Quelch's glance swept over the crowd in the Rag. They fixed on the Bounder's flushed, furious face.

"Vernon-Smith!" he said, in a voice like iron. "Follow me to your headmaster's study at once!"

The Bounder set his lips.

"What for?" he snarled. "What have I done?"

"I will tell you!" said Mr. Quelch, in the same hard, grim tone. "You have so far exceeded the limit of your usual insolence, Vernon-Smith, that I should resign my position in this school if you were allowed to remain here one hour longer. I am taking you to your headmaster to be expelled from Greyfriars. Now come!"

The Bounder almost reeled.

"Mr. Quelch—" exclaimed Redwing, overwhelmed with dismay.

"You need say nothing, Redwing."

"What have I done?" shrieked the Bounder, almost beside himself. "If you've heard those fellows saying that I went out of detention yesterday, it's a lie!"

"I have heard nothing of the kind, Vernon-Smith."

"Then what can—" panted the Bounder.

"Follow me at once! If you have anything to say, you may say it to your headmaster! I decline to hear one word from you! Come!"

The Bounder gave him almost a wild look. Then, with a dumbfounded, haggard expression on his face, he followed his Form-master from the Rag.

He left a dead silence behind him. It was the sack at last for Smithy—and the Remove fellows could only wonder what it was he had done to ask for it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Up Before The Head!

DR. LOCKE raised his eyebrows slightly.

The expression on Mr. Quelch's face as he entered the Head's study rather startled the headmaster. And the red rage in Vernon-Smith's face, following the Remove

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master in, more than startled him—it displeased him deeply.

"Mr. Quelch—what—" he exclaimed.

"I have brought this boy to you, sir, to demand his expulsion from the school!" said Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with suppressed feeling.

"But what—"

"I will tell you, sir! I walked to Courtfield after class to-day and saw this boy, Vernon-Smith, there—out of bounds, without leave!"

"You did not!" shouted Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Quelch made a sort of convulsive movement. Thunder gathered in the brow of the headmaster.

"Vernon-Smith—silence! How dare you? Silence!"

"I never—"

"Be silent!" exclaimed the Head. "Another interruption while your Form-master is speaking, Vernon-Smith, and I will expel you, without waiting to hear what you have done! Silence!"

The Bounder shut his teeth.

"Thank you, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, in a gasping voice. "I hardly understand this boy. He has always been rebellious and disrespectful! You have yourself, sir, more than once, considered whether he should be sent away from the school! But what he has done to-day—" Mr. Quelch choked.

The Bounder opened his lips. A glint came into the headmaster's eyes and he shut them again.

"Please tell me what this troublesome boy has done now, Mr. Quelch, and I will deal with him without loss of time!"

"As I have said, sir, I saw him in Courtfield, out of bounds without leave. I spoke to him, intending to order him to return to the school, and he replied with such insolence that I do not care to repeat the words he used."

Mr. Quelch's cheeks burned at the recollection that he had been called an old donkey!

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the Head.

"I took him, sir, by the collar to take him away and he wrenched himself loose, jumped on his bicycle, and fled!"

Vernon-Smith stared at the Remove master. He seemed more amazed than enraged now, though he was still enraged.

"Enough!" said Dr. Locke. "It is not necessary to give me particulars, Mr. Quelch, on a subject painful to you. What you have told me is more than enough. Vernon-Smith, you will pack your box immediately, and I will make arrangements for you to be taken to your home by the earliest possible train."

The Bounder gasped.

"May I speak, sir?"

"If you have anything to say, you may speak; but be brief."

"I have not been in Courtfield to-day, sir!"

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"Say no more! You are expelled, Vernon-Smith! If only for daring to cast doubt upon Mr. Quelch's word, I will not allow you to remain in this school another hour!"

"I'm not casting doubt on Mr. Quelch's word, sir!" panted the Bounder. "I'm saying that he has made a mistake."

"A mistake!" repeated the Head. He stared at the Bounder's flushed, excited face and then looked at Mr. Quelch. "You saw the boy plainly, I suppose, Mr. Quelch? There is no possibility of error?"

"None, sir!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I

cannot understand the boy's insensate insolence in making such a statement! I not only saw him perfectly plainly, but spoke to him and, as I said, took him by the collar. I should not be likely, sir, to mistake the identity of a boy in my own Form!"

"Impossible!" said Dr. Locke. "If you have nothing else to say, Vernon-Smith—"

"I've got plenty to say!" panted the Bounder. "Mr. Quelch says that he saw me in Courtfield since class to-day. It's hardly more than an hour since class. I can prove that I have not been out of gates for one minute. I've not been out of the school. How could I be in Courtfield when Mr. Quelch was there? A fellow can't be in two places at once!"

The Head looked at him hard. There was something convincing in the junior's passionate earnestness. On the other hand, there was the Form-master's positive statement.

"Send for Wharton, sir!" panted Vernon-Smith.

"Wharton! What has Wharton to do with it?"

"He was at the nets after class. I was there, too—half the Remove were there. They'll say I was there—till half an hour ago. Ask any fellow—Wharton—Nugent—Field—Todd—Hazel—Russell—Ogilvy—half the Form saw me there all the time!"

"Was it more than half an hour ago, Mr. Quelch, that you saw this boy at Courtfield?"

Mr. Quelch looked at his watch.

"It was exactly twenty-five minutes ago," he said. "I took a taxicab back to lose no time—but Vernon-Smith, being on his bicycle, returned first."

"Quite so," said the Head. "Now there—"

"That isn't all!" shrieked the Bounder. "After I came in from cricket, I was in the changing-room—a dozen other fellows there—some of my Form, and some of the Fourth, and Potter and Greene of the Fifth—you can ask any of them!" Smithy panted for breath. "Coker will remember—I chucked a wet sponge at his head!"

"This is a very extraordinary story, Mr. Quelch!" said the Head.

"Very extraordinary indeed, sir," said Mr. Quelch, "as any of the boys named will disprove these reckless statements, if asked."

"Ask them!" hissed Vernon-Smith. "Ask any fellow in the Rag if I haven't been there for the last half-hour nearly. I haven't been out of sight of at least six or seven fellows since class!"

Mr. Quelch looked at Vernon-Smith. In spite of himself—in spite of the evidence of his own eyes—he could not help detecting the ring of truth in the Bounder's passionate voice.

Dr. Locke pursed his lips.

"You are absolutely certain, Mr. Quelch, that there is no possibility of error?" he asked.

"Absolutely, sir!"

"Then—"

"Will you send for any of the fellows I've named?" hissed the Bounder. "If they deny what I say, you can sack me, and I won't say a word. I tell you, sir, that Mr. Quelch has made a mistake, and that I can prove it if you give me the chance!"

"I have made no mistake!" said Mr. Quelch. "Such a mistake would be impossible. You are deliberately wasting time, Vernon-Smith."

"Dr. Locke! You'll see justice done!" exclaimed the Bounder, almost in despair. "Give me a chance to

prove what I say! I tell you, sir, dozens of fellows know that I haven't been out of gates to-day."

Dr. Locke pau-ed.

That Vernon-Smith was telling the truth seemed impossible to believe. Yet if he was speaking falsely, it was only necessary to put a single question to one of the fellows he had named.

The Head was perplexed. Mr. Quelch broke a rather painful silence.

"It shall not be in the power of this unscrupulous boy to say that he has been condemned unheard!" he said. "With your consent, sir, I will send for my head boy, and Wharton shall speak."

"Do so, Mr. Quelch!"

And the Remove master touched the bell and sent Trotter to summon the captain of the Remove to the Head's study.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Alibi Complete I

HARRY WHARTON entered the Head's study.

He gave a quick glance at the Bounder's flushed, almost desperate face, and then looked at the Head.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Wharton! Your Form-master will question you."

Wharton transferred his attention to the Remove master.

"I desire your evidence, Wharton, in support or otherwise, of a statement made by Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch. "I dismissed my Form at four o'clock this afternoon. Kindly tell me what you did subsequently."

"I went down to the nets, sir, with some other Remove fellows," said Harry, astonished by the question.

"Other Remove boys, do you mean?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Give me their names."

"I'm not sure that I remember every fellow, sir," said Harry, more and more astonished.

"Give me the names you remember."

"Nugent, Bull, Hurree Singh, Cherry, Field, Hazeldene, Ogilvy, Vernon-Smith—"

Mr. Quelch suddenly interrupted.

"Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure that Vernon-Smith was present?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Squiff—I mean Field, gave him some bowling, and—"

"Was this immediately after class?"

"Yes—a few minutes—"

"Did Vernon-Smith remain at the nets with you?"

"Yes, sir, till we left."

"When was that?"

"About half-past four."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips. It was very soon after half-past four that he had taken a fellow by the collar at the bun-shop in Courtfield. If Smithy had got there on his bike in the time, it had been quick work.

"You are sure it was as late as half-past four, Wharton?"

"Quite, sir! I heard the half-hour chime a few minutes before we left."

"Before—or after?"

"Before, sir," said Harry, in utter wonder.

There was a long pause.

"You rely upon Wharton's statements, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head, breaking a long silence.

"He is my head boy, sir, and I trust him implicitly," said Quelch. "There is no question that Wharton's statements are correct. Vernon-Smith can

have lost no time to reach Courtfield—"

Harry Wharton started. He understood now what his evidence was wanted for. The Bounder was accused of having done something in Courtfield, since class, and he was trying to establish an alibi.

"You did not see Vernon-Smith after you left the cricket nets, Wharton?" asked the Remove master.

"Not till I went into the Rag, sir. He was there then."

"When was that?"

"About a quarter of an hour ago."

"Then that is not to the purpose. Vernon-Smith states that he went to the changing-room. You did not see him there?"

"No, sir, I went to the tuckshop with my friends."

"Very well; you may go, Wharton! Please find Coker, of the Fifth Form, and request him to come here."

"Very well, sir!"

Wharton left the study. There was a long, grim silence while Coker was waited for.

The Head took up his pen, but he did not dip it into the ink.

Mr. Quelch's brow was puzzled and thoughtful.

He had not made a mistake! He could not have made a mistake! Yet it began to look as if he had! It was certainly not later than a quarter to five that that scene had been enacted outside the bun-shop in Courtfield. Vernon-Smith's time was accounted for fully till turned half-past four.

Certainly a good man on a bike could have done it in the time. But the fellow sitting outside the bun-shop had shown no signs of undue haste or hurry. Quelch was getting puzzled.

There was a tap at the door at last, and Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, came in.

Coker's rugged brow was worried. He gave the Head a very uneasy look.

"I'm sorry, sir!" he began. "I haven't had time—"

"What? What do you mean, Coker?"

"I mean, about that book, sir—"

"What book?"

"The book Prout gave me, sir—I mean Mr. Prout! There's over seven hundred lines in it, sir," groaned Coker. "I really haven't had time, sir, to work through it. I never expected Mr. Prout to report it to you, sir—"

"I have received no report from Mr. Prout, Coker, and you are not sent for in connection with anything of the kind," said the Head testily.

"Oh!" said Coker, and his rugged face brightened. Evidently Horace had taken it for granted that he was up before the Head for having failed to deliver his lines to Prout!

"You were in the changing-room after class this afternoon, Coker?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Eh? Yes, sir!"

"At what time?"

"I don't remember, sir."

"Kindly try to remember!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes! Does it matter, sir?" asked the astonished Coker.

"I should not be asking you, Coker, if it did not matter!" snapped the Remove master.

Coker did not feel so sure of that! Coker had no high idea of the intelligence of schoolmasters! However, he did not tell Mr. Quelch so.

"Was it after half-past four, Coker?" asked the Head.

"Well, it must have been, sir," said Coker, "because I heard the half-hour

strike, as I was going there with Potter and Greene."

"Did Vernon-Smith throw a sponge at you?"

"I don't want to make a fuss about that, sir! It was cheeky throwing a sponge at a Fifth Form man, but I don't want him whopped for it, sir."

"You utterly stupid boy—"

"Eh?"

"I am asking you to state a fact!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "Answer me sensibly, if you can."

"Well, he did chuck a sponge at me, if you want to know, sir!" said Coker, rather bewildered. "He will say so, if you ask him, I've no doubt."

"When did this happen?"

"While I was in the changing-room, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"I mean at what time?"

"I never noticed."

"How long were you in the changing-room, Coker?" asked the Head.

"About a quarter of an hour, sir! You see, I was speaking to Blandell, the captain of my Form! He's leaving me out of the practice game on Saturday—"

"Never mind that—"

"Well, I do mind, sir," said Coker.

"A cricketer like me—"

"Never mind that now, Coker! Was it immediately after you entered the changing-room that Vernon-Smith threw the sponge at you?"

"Oh, no, sir! Just before I left! You see, he cut, after chucking it, and I cut after him, and I'd jolly well have walloped him, only he dodged."

"If it was just before you left, Coker, and you entered at half-past four, it must have happened about twenty minutes or a quarter to five."

"About that, if it matters, sir!" agreed Coker.

"You did not see Vernon-Smith afterwards?"

"Not after he dodged into the Rag, sir."

"The Rag?"

"I mean the junior day-room, sir! The fags call it the Rag!" Coker kindly explained.

"You may go, Coker!"

"Yes, sir!" And Horace Coker went, in a quite bewildered frame of mind.

Why a headmaster and a Form-master were interested in such an incident as a Remove fag chucking a sponge about in the changing-room was quite a mystery to Coker of the Fifth.

When the door closed after Coker, headmaster and Form-master exchanged a long look.

Herbert Vernon-Smith suppressed a grin. His time was now accounted for that afternoon from class till nearly, if not quite, a quarter to five. On Mr. Quelch's own words, the scene at Courtfield must have happened just about the time, or just after, Smithy was dodging into the Rag to get clear of Horace Coker.

The evidence given was irrefragable. Neither of the masters thought of doubting the statements of Harry Wharton or Coker of the Fifth. Those statements, obviously, were true. But if Henry Samuel Quelch did not doubt the truth of those statements, it looked as if he had to doubt the evidence of his eyes.

Dr. Locke coughed.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Did you remain in the junior day-room after entering it?"

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"Yes, sir; until Mr. Quelch came in and brought me here."

"Were other boys present all the time?"

"Plenty, sir."

"Name them!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Skinner, Snoop, Stott, Bolsover major, Mauleverer, Redwing—"

"Mauleverer—Redwing!" Mr. Quelch interrupted. "Wharton, I understand, came in later. But Mauleverer and Redwing—"

"Will you send for them, sir?" asked the Bounder, in a very respectful tone, but with a mocking glimmer in his eyes.

Mr. Quelch paused. Unless Vernon-Smith had travelled on the Magic Carpet out of the Arabian Nights, he could hardly have got to Courtfield at the time of the scene at the bunshop. At the most, it was a matter of a few minutes after Coker of the Fifth had chased him to the door of the Rag to the time when Quelch had grabbed him by the collar at the bunshop. And it was a good two miles to Courtfield.

Yet Quelch had seen him there!

With set lips, the Remove master touched the bell. He was going through this to the very end. If he had made a mistake—an extraordinary, unaccountable, bewildering mistake, there was going to be not the smallest spot of doubt left on the subject.

Trotter was sent to summon Lord Mauleverer and Tom Redwing from the junior day-room.

They entered the Head's study together in a couple of minutes.

Redwing cast a quick and anxious glance at his chum, and started as the Bounder winked at him. Lord Mauleverer looked at the Head.

"Redwing," said Mr. Quelch. His voice was troubled. "You were in the junior day-room while Vernon-Smith was there?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"How long had he been in the room when I came to take him away?"

Redwing reflected.

"I think nearly half an hour, sir. He had been in the Rag some time when I heard five o'clock strike."

"Do you say the same, Mauleverer?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Did either of you notice the time when he came in?"

"It was a quarter to five, sir," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Are you sure of that, Mauleverer?"

"Yaas, sir. Hazel asked me the time and I told him, just before Smithy came in."

"Oh!"

It was as good as certain already. But Mauly's statement washed away the last shred of doubt. Herbert Vernon-Smith had been under the eyes of indubitable witnesses practically every minute since Mr. Quelch had dismissed the Remove at four o'clock, and in all that time he had not been outside the school.

Mr. Quelch gestured to the two juniors to leave the study. The Bounder stood waiting. A rather expressive expression was gathering on the headmaster's face.

Quelch had made a positive statement involving the expulsion of a Greyfriars boy. That statement had been incorrect. He had been mistaken, in a matter in which it was scarcely possible to be mistaken—the recognition of a boy of his own Form in broad daylight. It was an amazing mistake—an incredible mistake! It certainly was not the kind of mistake

that the headmaster of Greyfriars expected members of his staff to make.

Quelch's face was growing crimson, with utter dismay and discomfort.

He was, too, feeling a deep pang of remorse.

Vernon-Smith was innocent. Whomsoever his Form-master had mistaken for him in Courtfield Vernon-Smith had not, and could not have been, there.

Quelch knew that, and the knowledge was both painful and bewildering to him.

Dr. Locke broke a rather dreadful silence.

"I think this boy may be dismissed, Mr. Quelch."

Quelch nodded; he could not speak.

"It is established now that an error has been made, and that Vernon-Smith was not the boy you saw in Courtfield."

Another silent nod.

"Very well. Vernon-Smith, you may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said the Bounder demurely.

He chuckled as he went down the passage. He did not envy his Form-master the next ten minutes with the Head.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

What Smithy Suspected!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH strolled into the Rag, his hands in his pockets, and a sardonic grin on his face.

Every eye was fixed on him.

The Bounder had the house as it were. He was the centre of breathless interest.

That was the kind of thing that Smithy liked. He enjoyed the spotlight.

"Sacked?" asked a dozen voices.

The Bounder laughed.

"Do I look sacked?" he grinned.

"But Quelch said—" exclaimed three or four fellows at once.

"Dear man!" said Smithy. "Poor dear man! He hasn't got by with it this time. He won't get rid of me so easily as all that. There's always an appeal to Cæsar, you know. The Head's an ass, but he's a just ass!"

"Did you tell him that?" asked Harry Wharton dryly.

"Hardly! Good old bean!" said Vernon-Smith. "He put paid to Quelch and his little game. Quelch is going through it now, I fancy. Bit of a jolt for a beak to be caught out telling lies."

"What?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Smithy, you cad, chuck it!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer. "You ought to be kicked for sayin' that!"

"Well, let's call it a terminological inexactitude, for the sake of politeness," said the Bounder, laughing. "Quelch was rolling out terminological inexactitudes quite like Bunter."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"If you mean that Quelch uttered a single word that wasn't perfectly true," said Harry Wharton, "you're talking rot, and caddish, rotten rot!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"Oh, stand by him, if you like!" said the Bounder contemptuously. "One liar makes many. Perhaps you fellows picked it up from Quelch. Anyhow, he's got it right in his bony neck!"

"What did Quelch tell the Head, then?" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"I'll tell you, and you can judge exactly how veracious the dear man is getting," chuckled the Bounder.

"Have I been out of gates since class?"

"We all know you haven't," said Skinner. "But what—"

"Quelch told the Big Beak I had."

"Oh!"

"You see, I might have been," grinned Smithy. "In fact, I was thinking of a run down to Friardale, after we came away from the nets. Most likely I should have gone, only I had a shindy with Coker of the Fifth, and dodged in here. Suppose I'd gone out—on my own? Might have—very nearly did. Shouldn't have been in yet if I had. Then Quelch would have got by all right."

"But what—"

"Oh, it's rich!" said the Bounder. "Quelch reported me for being out of bounds in Courtfield, and cheeking him when he ordered me back to the school. Calling him awful names, and all that—getting away after he grabbed me, and scooting off. That's what he told the Head. He said that I did all that—at the very time that I was standing here, talking to a dozen fellows."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Harry.

"But—but—but—" stammered Redwing. "If Quelch said so, he must have thought so. Don't be an ass, Smithy!"

"Thought so, did he?" said the Bounder viciously. "Well, will any man here tell me how Quelch could have thought so?"

There was silence.

"You didn't tell the Head that Quelch was fibbing, surely?" asked Tom Brown, at last. "You couldn't!"

"Quite; I couldn't. I said he was mistaken. I fancy the Head knew just how mistaken I thought he was. Ever heard of such a mistake, anybody?"

"Let's have this clear," said Harry Wharton. "You say that Quelch told the Head he saw you in Courtfield since class?"

"Exactly!"

"So that's why we were called in to—"

"Exactly again! Absolutely unbreakable alibi, as it happened," said the Bounder. "But if I'd gone out on my bike, what about that? Think the Head would have taken my word that I'd biked down to Friardale, when Quelch said that he had seen me in Courtfield, out of bounds?"

"Blessed if I make it out!"

"It doesn't want a lot of making out," sneered Vernon-Smith. "Quelch is fed-up with me. Nothin' surprisin' in that. As I don't give him an openin', he's got to make one. This is a bit over the limit, though."

"If Quelch saw a chap from a distance he might make a mistake," said Nugent slowly.

"He didn't! Face to face—no margin for error!" grinned Smithy. "He told the Head he grabbed me as I refused to obey orders."

"Oh, my hat!"

Skinner whistled.

"Well, that wasn't true," he said. "You were here—everybody knows you were in gates—and if Quelch says he grabbed you, he can't make out that it was a mistake. He never grabbed you two miles away while you were standing here."

"Hardly!" chuckled Smithy. "But he told the Head that he did—and if the old bean hadn't been a whale on justice I should have got it right in the neck. If I'd been out of gates I should have come back to catch my train home."

"I can't understand it!" said Redwing.

"I can!" said Smithy.

"By gum it looks like it!" said



Stepping just behind the unsuspecting youth, Coker drew back his foot. Thud! The foot shot out, landing on the trousers of the pumper of the bicycle tyre, and taking him entirely by surprise. "Ooooh!" he yelled, as he shot forward.

Bolsover major. "You've put Quelch's back up a lot, Smithy, to make him get down to that."

"Quite! And I'll put his back up some more!" said Vernon-Smith. "I know now what he's capable of, and I'm going to be on my guard. By gad! I'll watch him like a cat after this!"

"It's utter rot!" said Harry Wharton. But he spoke slowly and in perplexity. "I can't understand it, but you must be a fool to think for a moment that Quelch would say a single untrue word if he knew it."

"You think Quelch thought he saw me in Courtfield, when I was standin' in this very room in the middle of a crowd?" asked the Bounder banteringly.

"He must have thought so if he said so."

"The thoughtfulness must have been terrific."

"Perhaps the dear man has visions, then?" said Vernon-Smith. "Perhaps he sees ghosts! Or do you think he had been drinking and saw double?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Quelch fancied he saw Smithy in Courtfield to-day he must be cracked!" said Hazeldene. "Is the old bean cracked?"

"If he is, there's method in his madness, as jolly old Shakespeare says!" grinned Smithy. "He didn't fancy he saw you or Wharton or Cherry or anybody else—only poor little me! Why me specially? Because he sat down in ink in the Form-room. What?"

"Oh, rubbish!" said Harry Wharton uneasily. And he went out of the Rag with his friends, leaving the crowd in a buzz.

Vernon-Smith cast a bitter look after him as he went.

"I'm up against it!" he said. "Quelch pretends that he saw me out of bounds to-day! Those cads pretend that they

saw me out of bounds yesterday! They're all in the same tale! Quelch's dear head boy has taken on the job of sneak and false witness, and his pals are backing him up! I've got to keep my end up against Quelch and a gang of sneaks in my own Form!"

"That's piffle!" said Mauleverer.

"Rot!" said Squiff.

"Draw it mild, Smithy!" murmured Skinner. Ever Skinner balked at this.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"Think as you like!" he sneered. "I know what to think! I was in detention yesterday and those lying cads say they saw me in Lantham. I was in this room an hour ago and Quelch says he saw me in Courtfield. The whole lot of them are telling the same tale! And it's all lies!"

"Shut up, for the love of Mike!" exclaimed Ogilvy. "There's Quelch—just under the window!"

Vernon-Smith glanced round.

The window of the Rag was wide open, letting in the May sunshine. A tall and angular form was passing on the path outside.

All eyes turned on Mr. Quelch.

He did not glance towards the windows of the Rag. His brow was knitted in an expression of deep and troubled thought. Obviously, Quelch had left the Head's study in a deeply perturbed mood. Apparently, he was taking a walk in the quad to think the strange matter over.

A sympathetic eye might have read signs of distress in that frowning, thoughtful face. The Bounder's eye was far from sympathetic.

He moved a little nearer to the window to make sure that Quelch, in passing below, would hear his voice. Then he went on in raised tones, while the other fellow, seeing that some insult to the Remove master was coming, watched him in something like horror.

"The old bean has muffed it this time! He will have to try again!"

The horrified juniors saw Mr. Quelch give a convulsive start and his eyes sweep round to the window.

They fully expected the Remove master to step to that window and the thunderstorm to burst.

Smithy mentioned no names. He was far too wary for that! But it was impossible for Quelch to misunderstand him. He was accusing his Form-master to his face of falsehood and a false accusation!

There was a breathless silence in the Rag! All eyes were fixed on Quelch outside.

Quelch stood rooted. A flood of crimson came over his angular face. He seemed hardly to breathe.

Then a thrill ran through the Rag as the angular figure stepped to the open window and the gimlet eyes looked in.

"Vernon-Smith!" Quelch's voice seemed to tremble.

The Bounder faced him with a cool hardihood.

"Yes, sir?"

"I heard your words, Vernon-Smith!"

"Did you, sir?"

"And I command you, Vernon-Smith, to state what you intended to imply by those words!"

"Got him this time!" whispered Skinner. And every fellow in the Rag agreed with Skinner! Smithy had, by those insolent words, put himself fairly in the lion's jaws!

But the Bounder knew what he was about!

"I was speaking about Wingate, sir," he said calmly. And all the fellows in the Rag jumped.

"Wingate?" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

"Yes, sir!"

"I do not believe you, Vernon-Smith!"

"I am sorry for that, sir," said the Bounder meekly.

"If you were speaking of Wingate of the Sixth Form, Vernon-Smith, to what did your words refer?"

"The first eleven were beaten at St. Jude's, sir, last week," said Vernon-Smith, with icy coolness. "I said that the old bean had muffed it and that he would have to try again."

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Skinner, and he almost laughed.

"Oh gad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

Every fellow in the Rag, of course, knew that Smithy was lying. Every fellow could see that Mr. Quelch knew it, also. Every fellow could see that Smithy meant Quelch to know it!

By placing that innocent construction on his words, he was, as it were, spiking Quelch's guns. No names had been mentioned. Any fellow could say what he liked about a first eleven match. Smithy had accused his Form-master of falsehood and got away with it.

For there was nothing that Quelch could do! The words in themselves were harmless enough!

Mr. Quelch gave the Bounder a look and turned away from the window. He walked on with a heightened colour.

And his ears burned as he heard the sound of laughter following him from the open window.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Putting It Plain!

"OH!"

Almost every fellow in the Remove gasped at the same time.

Mr. Quelch glanced round irritably.

In was in third school the next morning. After break, Mr. Quelch had let his Form into the Remove room, as usual. He was going to his desk, while the juniors went to their places.

The blackboard, which was to be used in the lesson, stood facing the Form. The juniors, therefore, as they took their places, saw its face, while Quelch, at the moment, saw only its back on the easel.

That blackboard should have been blank. It was not blank. A sentence was chalked across it in large letters.

"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, TRY, TRY, TRY AGAIN!"

That, in itself, was quite good advice for any fellow. But it was evident that Quelch had not been chalking proverbial wisdom on the board for the edification of his Form.

Every eye turned on the Bounder.

Taken in conjunction with Smithy's suspicion and his words at the window of the Rag the previous day, there was no doubting whose hand had chalked that sentence and what it was meant to imply.

Obviously, Herbert Vernon-Smith had somehow got into the Form-room during break, and chalked those words on the blackboard. Every fellow knew that without being told. Every fellow knew that Quelch would know it as soon as he saw the blackboard. They wondered whether he would be able to pin the wavy Bounder down. Smithy had put it plain!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows— Oh crikey!"

"You awful ass, Smithy!" Tom Redwing almost groaned.

Skinner giggled.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes shot round

at his Form. Quelch was not in the best of tempers that morning. Ever since that scene in the Head's study, he had been disturbed, puzzled, and perplexed. The strange mistake he had made at Courtfield haunted his mind with worry. He was in no mood for trouble with his Form.

"Take your places in silence!" he snapped. "Bunter, what do you mean by uttering those ridiculous ejaculations?"

"Oh, nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter in terror. "It wasn't me, sir."

"What?"

"I mean, I never did it, sir! I couldn't climb in at the Form-room window if I tried!" stuttered Bunter. "Besides, I was in the tuckshop."

"What do you mean, you utterly absurd and stupid boy?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily.

"I mean, Bob knows, sir! He was there, too! I asked him to cash a postal order for me, sir—one I'm expecting shortly! He will remember."

Mr. Quelch gave the fat Owl a fixed look. He gathered from Billy Bunter's burbling that some fellow had been in the Form-room during break, which was against the rules. Something had been done of which he was not yet aware.

"Go to your place, Bunter, and be silent!" he snapped.

"Oh, yes, sir! Thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch glanced round the Form-room. He glanced specially at the high chair at his desk, on which he had sat in ink the previous afternoon. But nothing amiss caught his gimlet eye.

He was puzzled and annoyed. The Removites, sitting in their places, wondered how long it would be before he came round the blackboard and spotted what was written on it. Eyes were glued on that blackboard.

But Mr. Quelch, after scanning his surroundings with a searching eye, turned to his desk and lifted the lid.

Then the Bounder spoke.

"If you please, sir—"

Quelch's eyes shot at him.

"Did you speak, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir! Are we to copy that?" asked Vernon-Smith, with respectful meekness.

The Removites caught their breath. As Quelch had not yet seen that gibe on the blackboard, Smithy was coolly drawing his attention to it.

"What! I do not understand you!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"I mean what is written on the blackboard, sir."

"There is nothing written on the blackboard, Vernon-Smith."

"Oh, yes, sir!" went on Smithy. "I thought it was put there for us to copy, sir."

Mr. Quelch gave him a look and stepped towards the blackboard. He guessed now what had happened in break. Something had been chalked on the blackboard! He looked to see what it was—his Form watching him breathlessly.

He gave a start as he read on the board: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again."

For a moment he seemed puzzled. He had suspected a rag, but there was no rag in that sentence of innocuous wisdom.

Then suddenly the meaning rushed on his mind—as all the Remove could see! His face flushed and then paled! He turned towards his Form, with an expression that made even the Bounder's heart beat faster.

"Vernon-Smith!" His voice rumbled. "Did you chalk those words on the blackboard?"

"I, sir!" The Bounder's face registered innocent surprise.

"Answer my question, Vernon-Smith."

"No, sir!" answered the Bounder coolly.

It was hardly an untruth, for there was no possibility of the statement being believed.

There was a tense silence.

Quelch knew. Everybody knew that he knew. Smithy wanted him to know, as far as that went. But he was powerless. Any fellow might have written those words on the board, and the words, in themselves, were harmless. It was impossible to pick on Herbert Vernon-Smith, though Quelch knew that Smithy had handled the chalk, just as certainly as if he had seen it in his hand.

Quelch broke the silence at last. To the surprise of the Removites he did not thunder. His voice was low and quiet.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir!" drawled the Bounder.

"I believe that you chalked those words on the blackboard."

"Oh, sir!"

"I cannot but believe," continued Mr. Quelch, in the same quiet tones, "that they refer to an unfortunate incident yesterday—a mistake that was made by your Form-master, Vernon-Smith—an unfortunate mistake for which I cannot yet account."

"Indeed, sir!"

"It appears," went on Mr. Quelch, "that you have allowed a base, an unworthy, a miserable suspicion to enter your mind, Vernon-Smith. It is so extraordinary that I should mistake another boy for a boy in my Form that there is some slight—some very slight excuse for you. But such a dreadful suspicion would not enter a healthy or upright mind. I fear, Vernon-Smith, that it is a proof of a doubting, suspicious mind, and a bad heart."

The Bounder reddened.

"I can only trust," added Mr. Quelch, very quietly, "that on reflection, Vernon-Smith, you will be sorry for this! I shall say no more about it. I advise you to reflect!"

Quelch took the duster, wiped the blackboard clean, and, to the astonishment and relief of the Remove, the incident was dismissed.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Tit For Tat!

"THAT cheeky young cad!" said Coker.

"Let him rip!" said Potter and Greene together.

Coker came to a halt.

Horace Coker, of the Greyfriars Fifth, was not the fellow to nurse a grudge. On the other hand, a Fifth Form man was a Fifth Form man, and had to remember and consider his dignity and standing as a Fifth Form man.

The sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith naturally reminded Coker of the episode in the changing-room the day before.

On that occasion that cheeky junior had buzzed a wet sponge at Coker's head—a Fifth Form man's head! He had escaped Coker's vengeance by dodging into the Rag, where Coker had not followed him, not desiring to rouse a hornets' nest about his ears. Nevertheless the fitness of things demanded that a junior who cheeked a Fifth Form man should be duly booted. This was a golden opportunity, not to be missed.

Coker, Potter, and Greene were walking to Redclyffe after class. Coker was going to stand tea at the Redclyffe Arcade; which was worth a walk in Coker's company.

Coker halted at the sight of the youth who was bending beside a bicycle at the roadside, about a mile from the school.

One glance at the rather hard face and the nose thereon was enough to identify him. Wherefore did Horace Coker halt—unheeding the advice of his comrades to let him rip!

The boy with the bicycle was pumping a tyre. He had, apparently, some small puncture, and the tyre required refilling to carry him on his way.

He glanced up at the three Fifth Formers as they came on, but without the least interest, passing them over with his glance as though they were total strangers. He went on pumping. Coker grinned.

"Wait a minute, you two!" he murmured.

"I say, come on!" urged Greene.

"I said wait a minute."

"But look here——" said Potter.

"Didn't you hear me say wait a minute?"

Potter and Greene exchanged a look, and were silent. They gave in to Coker.

Coker supposed, as usual, that this was because he, Horace James Coker, was a natural leader of men, to whom fellows like Potter and Greene naturally gave in. Really it was because Coker was going to stand a spread at the Arcade in Redclyffe!

However, they gave in, and stopped to watch Coker!

Coker stepped towards the boy who was pumping the bike—behind him! He grinned as he stepped! The cheeky young sweep who had buzzed a sponge at Coker's nut was going to get what was coming to him.

There was no pavement beside the Redclyffe Road. The bike stood with a pedal resting on a large stone, to keep it erect while its owner pumped.

Stopping just behind that unsuspecting youth, who, after one careless glance was taking no further notice of the Greymfriars men, Coker drew back his right foot. That foot shot out.

Thud!

The pumper of the bicycle was well placed to receive it! It landed on his trousers, taking him entirely by surprise.

It was rather a hefty kick! Naturally, it up-ended a fellow who was stooping down and not expecting anything of the kind.

The boy shot forward, crashing on his bike, and sending it crashing over. He sprawled across it, headlong, and yelled, and yelled again in surprise and pain and rage.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

Coker had not intended that. He had intended to boot Herbert Vernon-Smith, as he richly deserved, for cheeking a Fifth Form man. But Coker had not foreseen—though really he might have—that a fellow in such a position, taking the kick, was bound to tumble over headlong, knocking over the bike and falling on it.

Sprawling on the bike, he yelled and yelled.

Obviously, he was rather damaged. He could not fail to be rather damaged. A sprawling bike was quite an unpleasant thing to sprawl on.

"Oh, my hat!" said Potter.

"Mad ass!" murmured Greene, not loud enough for Coker to hear.

The boy scrambled up from the machine. He turned round at Coker,

his eyes blazing and his face red with rage.

"You silly hooligan!" he roared. "Was it you kicked me?"

"Don't call me names," said Coker warningly. "I didn't mean to tumble you over. You're a clumsy young ass to sprawl like that. I gave you what you asked for yesterday. Any cheek, and I'll give you another!"

"You mad idiot!"

"Chuck it!" said Coker. "That's enough!"

The cyclist, only too obviously in a towering rage, glared at him, with clenched fists. Plainly, he was on the verge of hurling himself at Coker and hitting out right and left.

But the hopelessness of tackling a burly fellow a head and shoulders taller than himself checked him. No Remove man at Greymfriars could handle a big Fifth Form man like Coker. When the Removites had to deal with Coker they dealt with him in bulk, as it were!

"You fool—you rotter—you mad hooligan!" panted the owner of the bike. "You potty ruffian!"

"That will do!" said Coker, with a wave of the hand; and he turned away, rejoined Potter and Greene, and walked on.

The next moment he yelled and staggered.

His back being turned, the boy had a chance. He shot out after Coker like a stone from a catapult and kicked Horace with all his force, landing his boot almost like a sledge-hammer.

Coker staggered, and, losing his balance, fell on his knees. He yelled as he fell.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Potter, staring round.

"One good turn deserves another!" murmured Greene. "Cheeky young cad, though, booting a Fifth Form man!"

"Ooooh!" roared Coker, on all fours in the dust of the Redclyffe road, and seeming hardly to know how he had got there. "Wooooh!"

The boy shot back to his bike. He grabbed up the pump, but did not stay to jam it on the machine. No doubt he knew what to expect when the burly Horace got up from all fours.

Fortunately for him, Coker was slow on the uptake and slow in motion.

He threw a leg over his machine with the pump still in his hand, grasped the handlebars, and pedalled.

He had started by the time Coker got on his feet—with dusty knees, dusty and scratched hands, and terrific fury in his rugged countenance—glaring round for him.

"Stop!" yelled Coker.

He hurtled after the bike.

It was already in motion, but the flat tyre slackened it, and the rider, in his hurry, missed a pedal and wobbled.

Coker's fierce rush brought him alongside.

Another second and Coker's mighty grasp would have dragged the cyclist from the saddle.

But in that second the rider freed the hand that still held the bike pump and struck out, with the pump as a weapon.

It was a reckless blow, though perhaps justifiable in the circumstances, for certainly otherwise Coker would have had him.

The bike pump crashed across Coker's face, fairly ringing on his nose, and Coker sat down. Quite dazed and dizzy, with a crimson spurt from his nose, Coker sat.

The cyclist shot away.

Potter and Greene made a rush to collar him—too late! The bike fairly whizzed as the rider drove at the pedals

and went like an arrow down the Redclyffe road.

Coker staggered up with both hands to his nose. His fingers were red. He gasped and spluttered.

"Ooogh! The young villain! Look at my nose! Ooogh!"

Potter and Greene stared after the vanishing cyclist. They stared at Coker.

Coker dabbed his nose with his handkerchief, spotting it with crimson. He breathed fury.

His nose was red and raw. It was swelling. It was not a handsome nose, at the best of times. Now it looked really awful. And it had a pain in it—a severe pain! Coker gurgled with rage. He dabbed, he gurgled, and he gasped.

"Well, coming on?" asked Potter at last.

Potter and Greene had walked nearly a mile, with the prospect of a spread at the Arcade ahead. They sympathised with Coker and his nose, but time was passing.

"Think I'm coming to Redclyffe with a nose like this?" roared Coker. "I'm going back. I'm going to smash that young ruffian, Smith! Look at my nose!"

"But——" said Potter in dismay.

"But——" objected Greene.

"Don't jaw!"

Coker, still rubbing his nose, started to walk back to the school.

Potter and Greene, with deep feelings, followed him.

Horace Coker was yearning to get hold of Smithy and mop him up! And his friends, thinking of the spread they were missing at the Redclyffe Arcade, were equally divided between a desire to mop up Smithy and a desire to mop up Horace Coker!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Grouse!

TOM REDWING coloured uncomfortably.

He was coming up to the Remove studies to tea with his chum, Smithy, and they passed the Famous Five on the Remove landing.

Redwing had always been on friendly terms with the five. Smithy generally was. True, they had had rows last term, but they had been together a good deal in the Easter holidays, and had turned up for the new term on a very cordial footing.

All that was over now. Smithy had his back up—and the Famous Five were far from pleased. They were, however, prepared to be civil. Smithy was not.

He passed them with his nose up, only bestowing on them a stare of dislike and contempt as he passed.

Redwing, red and discomfited, lingered a moment, and then followed him up the passage. There was nothing he could say—or do! He did not want a row with the five, but was sticking to his chum.

Harry Wharton's brow darkened as he looked after them. Even Bob Cherry looked a little grim. Johnny Bull breathed hard.

"I've a good mind——" began Bull.

"No good rowing," said Harry. "But I feel like you do, Johnny—jolly near swiping that look off Smithy's face."

"What's he got his silly back up for?" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly. "I suppose we couldn't help seeing him at Lantham the other day!"

"I suppose he's sore because we colared him, to yank him back in bounds," said Harry. "Now he's had

time to think it over he ought to be glad we did. Catch me stopping him again, though, if he goes begging for the sack!"

"I can't make him out," said Bob. "He pretends he never went out of detention on Wednesday, and we know he did. He's generally the fellow to brag of it if he did it. Now he says he never did, and says we never saw him out! I think I shall be punching Smithy's nose before the term's much older."

"Steer clear of him, if we can," said Nugent. "He's got plenty of trouble on with Quelch."

"He's asked for it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "But let him rip! I don't envy Reddy. Blessed if I know how he stands the chap."

Vernon-Smith and Redwing had gone into Study No. 4.

The Bounder flung himself into an armchair, with a scowling brow. He took a cigarette from a packet and was about to light it when he caught Redwing's eye. He gave a grunt and threw it away.

"Look here, Smithy, what's up with you?" asked Redwing quietly. "You've been like a bear with a sore head for days now."

"Those cads—lying about a fellow!" snarled the Bounder. "Greasing up to Quelch—telling the sort of lies he would like to hear—"

"That's rubbish!"

Smithy's eyes glittered at him.

"I've told you I never went out of detention on Wednesday, Tom Redwing. Do you believe me, or do you believe those cads?"

"I believe you, Smithy; but they're saying what they believe, and you'd know it if you weren't so distrustful."

"How can they believe it when it isn't true?"

"Well, they do. Quelch made the same mistake the next day."

"Quelch made no mistake—he couldn't have," answered Smithy.

"He did, Smithy. I can't understand it, but, of course, he did! What he said to you in the Form-room was right. You suspect people much too easily. You don't give a fellow the benefit of the doubt. If Quelch and those fellows made the same mistake about me, do you think I should set them down as a lot of liars?" exclaimed Redwing hotly. "Of course I shouldn't!"

The Bounder sneered.

It was true that he had a doubting and suspicious mind. Unfortunately, he rather prided himself on it.

Smithy was not a fellow to be taken in. It did not occur to him that he might be taken in by his own suspicious doubts.

"But that's not what started you scowling and grouching," went on Redwing. "You've been jumpy ever since you had your father's letter on Wednesday morning. I suppose there was some bad news in it. I'm sorry if there was. But it's not cricket to make yourself an unpleasant brute all round because you've had a knock of some kind."

The Bounder stared at him. This was unusually plain language from Redwing to his chum, and looked as if his patience was wearing thin.

"Well, I have had a knock," grunted the Bounder. "How would you like to have a relation bunged on you at school?"

"Is that what you call a knock?"

"Yes."

"I've no near relations, except my father," said Tom quietly. "But I

should think myself lucky if I had. You've got crowds of relations—"

"Swarms!" sneered Smithy. "And most of them after my father's money-bags."

Tom made a grimace.

"I suppose there's a lot of that sort of thing when a man's a millionaire three or four times over," he said. "It's not all honey to be fearfully rich. But, to tell the truth, Smithy, you're the fellow to suspect them of being after the money, whether they are or not."

"Go it!" sneered the Bounder. "You're the only fellow at Greyfriars who could talk to me like this without having his face pushed in."

Tom smiled.

"We won't come to pushing in faces in this study," he said. "I'll say just one word more—if you've got a relation coming to this school, give the chap a chance, and don't set him down as a money-hunter without any evidence."

"Oh, he's not that sort! Quite the reverse. Swanking independence is his line," said Vernon-Smith, with a bitter sneer. "He wouldn't touch my money or my father's with a barge-pole."

"Well, you're hard to please, and no mistake!" said Tom, staring. "If you don't want him to be one thing or the other, what do you want?"

"I want him to keep clear of my school!" snarled the Bounder. "Plenty of other schools in the country, aren't there? What do they want to bung him into Greyfriars for?"

"Well, that's for his people to decide," said Tom. "Is he a near relation?"

"A rotten cousin!" grunted Smithy. "One of about ten or twelve cousins I've got and never want to see!"

"I shouldn't be sorry to have a cousin or two."

"That's because you've got none. I don't want him here! They say he's like me!" snarled Vernon-Smith. "I believe there's a bit of a resemblance; he's got the family boko, anyhow. I haven't seen him since I was a small kid, and the last time I saw him I had a scrap with him."

"Oh!"

"I remember I punched his nose, and I'm glad to remember that I punched it hard!" said Vernon-Smith. "I dare say I shall be punching it again in a week or two when he comes here."

"I think I'd stop short of that."

"Oh, he's like me—fearfully like me, they say!" sneered the Bounder. "Same happy disposition. Fancy two of us, Reddy!"

"Um!" said Redwing. He was strongly attached to his chum, but the idea of two of them was a little startling.

"If I'm civil to him he'll think I'm patronising him because I'm rich and he's poor. Exactly what I should think in his place, isn't it?"

"I'm afraid so, Smithy."

"And if I bar him he'll think I'm ashamed of a poor relation; and if I treat him exactly like any other fellow he'll fancy offences where there aren't any. Me all over—what?"

Redwing did not answer that. The Bounder had a cynically clear knowledge of his own character. Smithy was rich—richer than was good for him. But he knew exactly how he would react to the position of a poor relation.

"And he's like you in looks?" asked Redwing.

"So they say! Ugly brute—very flattering to me!" sneered Vernon-Smith. "I've been told so dozens of times. It's said just to annoy me, of course. I can't see it myself—at least, not so much as they make out. I know

that if I believed I had a face like Herbert's I'd stick a gas-mask on it and keep it there."

"Is his name Herbert?"

"Yes—same as mine! Surname jolly near the same, too—Vernon. The Smiths are on my father's side!" said the Bounder in the same jeering tone. "I remember why I punched the cad when I was a little kid; he told me I was a Smith, and not a Vernon at all. I made his Vernon nose pour."

Redwing's face was clouded. The prospect of a second edition of Smithy at Greyfriars, on fighting terms with the first edition, was not a happy one.

"I don't want him here!" said the Bounder savagely. "His old fool of an uncle should send him somewhere else. Eton or Harrow would be welcome to him. I don't see why I should have the cad landed on me here. By gum!" Smithy's eyes blazed. "Let him give me any of his Vernon swank! I'll show him that a Smith can knock a Vernon face through the back of a Vernon head! Let him—"

The Bounder clenched his hands as if in readiness for a punch at the Vernon face. It was plain that there was going to be no love lost between the Vernon and the Vernon-Smith when they came in contact at Greyfriars School.

"When is he coming?" asked Redwing.

"Next week, my father said in his letter. He sent me a photograph of the cad; thought I should be interested to see how like he was to me!" sneered the Bounder. "I can't see it myself. The pater thinks he can. He spouted a lot of advice about forgetting old quarrels—"

"That's good advice, Smithy."

"Ever known me to have any use for good advice?" jeered Smithy. "I've always disliked the cad—and always disliked that branch of the family. Too much swank for me. Poor and proud; gallons of Vernon blood, and about twopence-ha'penny in the bank!" The Bounder laughed with savage scorn. "They've got titles, some of them, on that side of the family, and my father lets them figure on his prospectuses and chuck them a few hundred guineas. Pan!"

"Anyhow, Smithy, start civil when the chap comes. Time enough to row with him if he makes himself offensive."

"Two surly dogs in the same kennel!" said Smithy. "Why can't they send the cad somewhere else? This time next week I shall be tapping the Vernon claret from the Vernon boko. I know it's coming."

Tom Redwing sighed. It was not a happy prospect. Smithy was about to resume in the same bitter, jeering strain when there came an interruption.

A fat excited squeak floated in at the half-open door from the Remove passage.

"I say, you fellows, Coker's coming up! I say, look at his beezel! I say—He, he, he!"

There was a ripple of laughter in the passage.

Coker of the Fifth, it appeared, was coming up to the Remove, and there was something about Coker of the Fifth that evoked hilarity.

"Oh, my hat! What a boko!" came Bob Cherry's voice.

"Where on earth did Coker dig up that nose?"

"Must have won it in a raffle!" came a suggestion from Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Been stopping a tank with your nose, Coker?" came Bob Cherry's roar.

Then there was another roar in the



There was a ripple of laughter in the passage as Coker passed the Removites on his way to Study No. 4. "Oh, my hat! What a boko!" roared Bob Cherry. "Been stopping a tank with your nose, Coker?" "Must have won it in a raffle!" suggested Skinner.

well-known bull-voice of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form.

"I don't want any cheek from you, Cherry! I want the young hooligan who banged me on the boko! I'm going to smash him!"

There was a heavy tread in the Remove passage. Coker of the Fifth was coming up the passage. Evidently he was coming on the warpath.

A buzz of voices followed him.

"Who's the happy man, Coker?"

"Think you can throw your weight about in this passage, you Fifth Form fathead?"

"Get after that ass!" called out Harry Wharton. "If Coker's come up here for a row we'll see him home again."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

There was a patter of feet on the trail of Horace Coker.

The Famous Five did not know what the trouble was, and perhaps did not care very much. But they knew that no Fifth Form man was going to carry matters with a high hand in the quarters of the Greyfriars Remove. On that point opinion was unanimous in the Remove.

Smithy rose from the armchair. He was on bad terms with the Famous Five, but more than ready to lend them a hand in handling Coker of the Fifth if that obstreperous youth had come up to the Remove hunting for trouble. Indeed, in his present mood Herbert Vernon-Smith welcomed the prospect of a shindy.

The heavy tramp of Coker's footsteps rang up the passage, the Famous Five close behind him, and a dozen other fellows gathered for the fray. Those heavy footsteps stopped at the door of Study No. 4. Smithy's study, it seemed, was the Fifth Former's destination.

A kick sent the half-open door flying wide open.

Coker, it appeared, was not in a ceremonious mood. The next moment Horace Coker's burly figure bulked in the doorway of Study No. 4.

"Oh! You're here!" he roared, his eyes fixing on Herbert Vernon-Smith with a deadly glare.

Smithy stared at him.

"I'm here, if you want me!" he said. "What do you want—another sponge buzzed at your silly head?"

"So you've got in!" said Coker. "I thought you would, on your bike!"

"Mad?" asked Smithy. "I haven't been out on a bike that I know of!"

"Haven't you?" said Coker grimly.

"Well, perhaps I fancied I saw you on a bike! Perhaps I fancied that you whopped me across the face with your bike pump! I fancy I'm going to make you sorry for it, anyhow!"

And Coker rushed.

The next second Herbert Vernon-Smith was struggling in a mighty grip, yelling and kicking, as Coker of the Fifth thumped him right and left.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Was It Smithy?

THUMP, thump, thump!

Smithy yelled and struggled. The other fellows stared, taken by surprise by that sudden fierce outbreak on the part of Horace Coker.

Thump, thump! Bang!

Coker was going it, hot and strong. His nose was damaged. It was likely to be a study in scarlet for a week, at least. It had a pain in it. Coker had consoled himself, all the way back to Greyfriars, with the prospect of what he was going to give that cheeky junior in return! Now he was giving it to him! Coker was enjoying life!

Smithy was not! Thumped and

banged, the Bounder struggled frantically in Coker's powerful grasp, resisting with all his strength.

The Famous Five stared in.

Redwing was the first to rush to the rescue.

He leaped at Coker, grasped him round the back, and dragged him off.

Coker swept round a mighty arm, and Redwing flew across the study, crashing.

Thump, thump, thump!

Then the Famous Five rushed in. They fairly hurled themselves on Horace Coker.

"Collar him!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Pile in!"

Coker was collared right and left. Five pairs of hands were more than enough for even the mighty Horace. Coker was dragged bodily over, and went down on the study floor with a crash.

Vernon-Smith, breathless, crimson, panting, tottered.

Coker, on the floor, heaved up, and was promptly squashed down again.

"Pin the silly fathead!" gasped Bob.

Redwing staggered up, gasping.

"Hold that mad ass!" he exclaimed.

"We've got him!"

"Let go!" roared Coker, struggling.

"I'm going to smash that young cad! I'll smash the lot of you! Look at what he's done! Look at my nose!"

"It's a beauty!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"Never saw such a boko outside a Punch and Judy show! Where did you dig it up?"

"I tell you that young cad did it—banged it with a bike pump!" roared Coker. "I'm going to smash him!"

"Hold the fool!" gasped Vernon-Smith. "He's as mad as a hatter! I haven't touched him, and I haven't had a bike pump in my hand to-day!"

"What?" bawled Coker. "Why, you lying young sweep—mean to make out

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that I never saw you on the Redclyffe road, and booted you, and you hit me across the face with your bike pump?"

"You mad chump, I haven't been out on a bike, and I haven't been anywhere near the Redclyffe road. I walked up the river after class, and I haven't even seen you since in the Head's study yesterday."

Coker blinked at him. He ceased to struggle in the grasp of the Famous Five, and just blinked.

"Listen to him!" he gasped. "Listen to him! Look at my nose! He did it with a bike pump! Now listen to him!"

"Well, if you booted a Remove man, what did you expect?" asked Skinner, from the passage. "Serve you jolly well right."

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. He had no doubt that Coker had asked for the trouble, and that he had been a high-handed and heavy-handed fat-head, as per usual. Still, there was a limit! Whopping a fellow across the face with a bike pump was not the sort of thing that was done.

"Your rotten temper will land you in trouble one of these days, Vernon-Smith!" he said quietly.

"You fool!" yelled the Bounder. "If that bullying fathead had booted me, I'd have whopped him with a bike pump, or anything else that came handy. But he never did, and I never did! He's gone potty if he thinks I did! I tell you I haven't been anywhere near the Redclyffe road to-day."

Wharton's lip curled.

"And you said that you never went near Lantham on Wednesday!" he retorted. "You'd better chuck it, I think."

"Will you let me go?" raved Coker. "I tell you I'm going to smash that young hooligan. I tell you he cracked his bike pump across my chivvy—Potter and Greene were there and saw him do it."

"I did not!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"You did!" yelled back Coker.

"I tell you—"

"Will you let me gerrat him?" spluttered Coker. He heaved and struggled. "I'll spifficate the lot of you! I—I'll—leggo!"

"Well, even if he did, you've thumped him enough, old bean!" said Bob Cherry. "This is where you chuck it!"

"Enough's as good as a feast!" said Frank Nugent. "Chuck it, Coker!"

"I'll smash the lot of you—"

"Get on with it!" grinned Bob. "I'll sit on your head while you're doing it, Horace, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith, red with rage, grabbed the inkpot from the table. He jumped at the sprawling Coker and up-ended the inkpot over his crimson face.

Splash!

There was a suffocated gurgle from Coker. His mouth, wide open for an angry roar, captured a good deal of the ink. He spluttered and gurgled horribly. His flaming nose became suddenly black.

"Urrgh!" gurgled Coker.

"Gurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now get out of my study, you mad ass!" shouted the Bounder. "By gum, I'll boot you out!"

"Urrgh! Oooogh!"

"Keep your hoofs to yourself, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, pushing the Bounder back. "Roll him out, you men!"

Coker, streaming ink and spluttering fury, was rolled headlong to the landing, and down the Remove staircase. Not for the first time, Horace Coker made the discovery that the Remove passage was a hornets' nest.

It was an inky, breathless, dishevelled Coker that tottered away into the quarters of the Fifth. He was as wrathful as ever, in fact, more so; but disinclined, at present, for any more warlike exploits.

In Study No. 4 the Bounder was left panting with rage. Redwing remained with him, silent and troubled. Several times Smithy glanced at him with bitter eyes, but he did not speak.

"You fool!" said the Bounder at last. "I've said that I never ran into that fathead to-day! I've been up the river! He must be mad to fancy that I banged his silly nose—if he does fancy so!"

Redwing did not speak.

"Or he's telling lies!" said Smithy, between his teeth. "Banging a fellow's face with a bike pump is the sort of thing a fellow lands in trouble for! It would mean a row with the Head, if it got to him! By gum, is that Fifth Form cad in the game, like those cads in the Remove?"

"Don't be an ass, Smithy!" said Redwing curtly.

"He says he had a row with me on the Redclyffe road!" yelled the Bounder. "I say I haven't been there."

Redwing did not answer.

"Do you believe me or not?" hissed Vernon-Smith.

"Coker came straight here to pitch into you for banging his nose!" said Redwing. "Unless he's mad, you did it."

"He's mad, then; I never did it."

"Well, I can't make it out, then!"

"Fool! He says Potter and Greene of the Fifth saw me do it! Go and ask them, if you like. They're not mad, if Coker is."

"Oh, let it drop!" said Redwing.

"That means that you don't believe me?"

"Do be sensible, old chap! You lost your temper, and hit Coker with your bike pump! It was rather thick—but the hot-headed fool asked for it. Let it drop."

The Bounder, with a set, enraged face, stepped towards his chum. His hands were clenched, and his eyes burning.

Redwing stepped back towards the door.

"Don't be a fool, Smithy," he said. "I'll try to believe you—but—Have a little sense! How can I?"

Vernon-Smith's answer was a furious blow aimed at his face.

Redwing stepped quickly out of the study, eluding it, and went down the passage.

He did not, and could not, believe Smithy's denial. If he wanted proof, he soon had it, for as he came on to the landing, Potter and Greene of the Fifth were there, and two or three Remove fellows were asking them questions.

"Coker says Smithy whopped him on the dial with a bike pump!" He heard Bob Cherry speaking, as he came out of the passage. "Did you fellows see him?"

"We saw him all right!" answered Potter.

"On the Redclyffe road?" asked Nugent.

"Yes. That ass Coker booted him when he was pumping his bike! Coker asked for it, but it was a dirty trick, all the same! The young rotter ought to be jolly well whopped!"

"Smithy says he didn't!" grinned Skinner.

"Oh, my hat! Does he? He's got a nerve!" said Greene. "Lot of good saying he didn't, when he did it under our eyes."

Tom Redwing, with a clouded face and a heavy heart, went down the stairs.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bumps For The Bounder!

"THEY call that chap the Bounder in his Form!" said Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth. "Have they got him right, d'you think?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. Fry of the Fourth grinned.

It was in break on Saturday morning that Herbert Vernon-Smith drew the

They Took His Boots

Hawkins snapped a few words to a gigantic black who was obviously the chief of the armed band surrounding Jerry. Jerry had no time to draw his Webley before he was smothered by three hefty natives and thrown flat on his back. Jerry's shirt was dragged over his head, while another savage tore his boots and stockings off. Hawkins himself snatched Jerry's hat and placed it on top of the car's engine. It seems an extraordinary sort of attack to make, but you'll get the idea in game-poacher Hawkins' mind when you read the great new story—

"GET THAT POACHER!"

ONE OF 8 GRAND YARNS IN TODAY'S

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lofty and supercilious attention of Cecil Reginald.

Smithy, in break that morning, was on his own.

He had not spoken a word to Redwing since the row in Study No. 4 the previous day. There was a rift between the Bounder and his chum.

He was on the worst of terms with the Famous Five, and on far from good terms with many other fellows.

If there had been any doubt in regard to his controversy with the five, the affair of Coker had settled it. Nobody was likely to take Smithy's word after that—not even his best chum.

Smithy, of course, could tell fibs if he liked. It was a matter of taste. But he could not expect fellows to believe them. That was asking too much. And angry resentment of disbelief was altogether too much in such circumstances. Smithy was getting on bad terms all through his Form.

At the present moment he was standing leaning on one of the old Greyfriars elms, all by himself, with something in his hand that looked like a photograph.

He was staring at it, and scowling.

Hence the lofty remark of Cecil Reginald Temple. Greyfriars fellows did not scowl! They did not wear their hearts on their sleeves. They did not display their feelings for all the world to run and read! Smithy did things that were not done!

Heedless of the Fourth Formers, the Bounder stood scowling at the photograph in his hand, and suddenly, crumpling it, threw it to the ground. Obviously, Smithy did not like the photographed fellow, whoever he was. Temple shrugged his shoulders.

He walked on with his friends, lofty and disdainful of such manners and customs on the part of a Public school man!

But the Bounder, the next moment, uttered an angry exclamation, and ran towards the photograph he had thrown down. It was a small, thin sheet, unframed, light as a feather, and the wind had caught it and whirled it away.

He had thrown it down in anger, but not with the intention of throwing it away. But, in a gust of wind, it whirled away from him and flew over the heads of the three Fourth Form men as they walked on.

Cecil Reginald, lofty and disdainful as he was, was an obliging chap! The flying object whirled past him, and he caught at it as it whirled, and captured it.

He turned his head, and waved it to the Bounder.

"Here you are!" he called.

With the photograph in his hand, Temple could hardly have helped seeing it if he had wanted to. He saw it—and then stared at it! The face in the picture was the face of Herbert Vernon-Smith himself—which was really amazing, considering that Smithy had been scowling at it and had flung it down in anger.

"Why, it's Smithy's own mug!" said Dabney, in wonder, staring, too.

"Not a bad photo, either!" said Fry. "Makes him look a bit better-looking than he is—the photographer must have caught him at a lucky moment."

The Bounder came running up.

"Give that to me!" he snapped.

Temple looked at him with an expression as if he were looking down from immense heights.

"I caught it for you," he answered. "Think I want to keep your photograph, Vernon-Smith?"

"You silly fool, it's not my photograph!" snarled Vernon-Smith. "Are

you making out that it's like me, like the other silly fools?"

The three blinked at him.

"Not your photograph!" repeated Temple.

"Not yours!" ejaculated Fry.

"No, you gabbling asses, not mine, and not like me, either! No bizney of yours if it was!" snarled the Bounder, as he grabbed the photograph from Temple's hand.

Cecil Reginald Temple breathed hard, and he breathed deep, with pink coming into his cheeks. Temple was a lofty, but an easy-going fellow. But the best-tempered fellow might have been annoyed by the Bounder's manner and words.

"You ill-tempered, rotten-mannered booby!" said Cecil Reginald, in measured tones. "I don't care a boiled bean whether it's your photo or not, but I jolly well know it is, and I can't see what you're telling whoppers about! It's yours, unless you've got a twin, which I know you haven't. And if you're not satisfied with it, you ought to be, because it makes you better-looking than you are."

"Oh, rather!" grinned Dabney.

"What's the big idea, Smithy?" asked Fry curiously. "I've heard that you're getting into rows in your Form for telling crammers and ragging fellows for not believing them. New game, or what?"

Vernon-Smith shoved the crumpled photograph into his pocket. Temple & Co.'s remarks seemed to exasperate him.

"You silly, gabbling, empty-headed noodle!" he said, addressing Cecil Reginald. "You stiff-necked, pasty-faced tailor's dummy, I've told you that it's not my photo, and that it's not like me—or not much, anyhow! And if you say it is again, I'll punch your silly fat head!"

Temple of the Fourth was not usually a man of war. Neither did he want a row with the hard-hitting Bounder. But Temple was not taking that.

"It is, again!" he retorted.

"What?"

"It is, again!" repeated Temple.

Dabney and Fry grinned.

The next moment, Herbert Vernon-Smith was punching. It came so quickly that the knuckles landed on Cecil Reginald's lofty nose before he knew that the knuckles were coming.

Temple gave a spluttering gasp.

Dabney and Fry jumped at Smithy as if moved by the same spring. They grabbed him, swept him off his feet, and bumped him down on the quad.

"Oh gad!" gasped Temple, rubbing his nose. "The dashed hooligan! Bump him! Bump the cad! Give the cheeky Remove rotter a lesson!"

Vernon-Smith struggled savagely. He could have handled any one of the Fourth Formers with ease! But he could not handle two together.

Dabney and Fry swung him up and landed him again.

Bump!

"Give him another!" said Temple, still rubbing his nose.

Bump!

The Bounder smote the quad again, struggling and wrenching.

Temple leaned over him, jerked off his cap, and stuffed it down his back, while he struggled in the grasp of Dabney and Fry.

"Now give him one more, and let him rip!" smiled Temple.

Bump!

The three Fourth Formers walked away, laughing, leaving the Bounder sitting on the earth, gasping for breath.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coming To Blows!

"YOU again, you silly cads!" Six fellows came to a halt at those words.

The Famous Five, that afternoon, had trotted out after games practice for a ramble on the cliffs.

Bob Cherry, spotting Redwing mooching about on his own, grabbed him and made him join up, willy-nilly.

The half-dozen of them were walking along Pegg Lane when they sighted a well-known face and form sitting on the gate of the footpath in Friardale Wood on their way back to the school.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy!" murmured Bob. "I wonder if he feels civil enough to come back to tea in the study."

The fellow on the gate did not look very civil. He stared at the juniors as they came by, and his brow darkened. He took no notice of Tom Redwing; but his glance, from face to face of the other five, was distinctly hostile.

A bike leaned against the gate near him. Apparently he had stopped there for a rest, and perhaps for a view of the sea, rolling wide and blue in the distance. His words, as the juniors came up, sounded anything but civil. They halted and looked at him.

"Are you always as polite as that, old bean, when you find yourself in good company?" asked Bob affably. "And me thinking of asking you to tea, too!"

"Oh, shut up, you gaby!"

"Asking to be knocked off that gate, you cheeky swab?" demanded Johnny Bull belligerently.

"Try it on, if you like!" sneered the boy on the gate.

"By gum! I'll jolly well—"

Tom Redwing caught the warlike Johnny by the arm.

"Chuck it, old man! What's the good of rowing?" he said.

"Well, why can't a chap be civil?" he said. "Come on, you fellows! If he wants to sulk, leave him to stew in his own juice! We're late for tea, anyhow!"

The Famous Five moved on, but Redwing lingered. His break with his chum was heavy on his mind. And he was worried, too. Pegg Lane was not very far from the back gates of the Cross Keys. And the boy on the stile was not wearing a Greyfriars School cap, or Smithy's usual clothes. That looked like kicking over the traces.

"I'll come on, you fellows!" said Tom; and the Famous Five went on without him.

Tom leaned on the gate.

The boy sitting on it stared at him, far from cordially.

"Want anything?" he asked.

"You don't want my company?" asked Tom.

"Why the dickens should I?"

"Look here, old chap," said Tom patiently, "what's the good of keeping up a row? I can't make you out. Those fellows are quite ready to be civil, if you'd say the word—"

"I've no use for their civility, the silly cads—or yours either, if you come to that! What the dooce do you mean?" snapped the other. "If I ever drop on them one at a time, I'll make them sorry for handling me, as they did at Lantham the other day!"

Tom gave a start.

"Then they did see you at Lantham last Wednesday?" he exclaimed. Up to that moment, Vernon-Smith had denied that he had been at Lantham on Wednesday, and Tom, with an effort, had believed him. "You admit it?"

"No secret about it that I know of!" The scowling face stared at Tom. "They grabbed me off my bike, acting like a mob of lunatics, so far as I could make out. I had to dodge away from them in Lantham Chase. I gave one of them something to remember me by, though—there's still a mark on his chin!"

Tom stood looking at him. He was silent for a long minute, and the boy on the gate slipped down and put a hand to his bike.

"You're going?" asked Tom.

"Think I want your company?"

"I thought you might," said Tom quietly. "I'd rather not row—much rather! What's the good of it?"

"Who wants to row?"

"Look here, old chap, if you give me your word that you didn't whop that Fifth Form fathead with your bike-pump yesterday, I—I'll try to get it down," said Tom. "I can't make it out, but—"

The boy stared at him across the bike.

"You seem to know all about it," he said. "Are you speaking of the overgrown lout who kicked me when I was pumping up my bike on the Redclyffe road yesterday?"

Again Tom gave a start. Having admitted the Lantham episode, it seemed that Vernon-Smith was going to admit the Redclyffe episode also.

"Have you seen the lout?"

"Yes, I've seen him," said Tom quietly. "You gave him a prize nose. I suppose he was making a fool of himself, as usual, but—"

"He was grabbing me off my bike, and I had the pump in my hand! He was twice too big for me to tackle! Think I was going to let him do as he liked?"

"Never mind that! You own up that you did it!"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"No reason why you shouldn't, and I'm glad you have, as it's true," said Tom. "Look here, don't go, old fellow! I can guess why you've changed your clothes and stuck that cap on—"

"Gone mad?"

"What do you mean?"

"My hat! This part of the country seems to be a sort of lunatic asylum, from what I can make out. What have my clothes and my cap got to do with you, or with anybody but myself?"

"Nothing, perhaps," said Tom. "But if it means that you're going to the Cross Keys, and I'm afraid it does, I'd like you to take a friend's advice and chuck it!"

The boy stared at him and then replaced the bike against the gate. His hard face was dark with anger.

"The Cross Keys?" he repeated.

"Do you mean that low pub on Fria-dale Lane?"

"You know I do."

"Yes, I know you do! And you've got the cheek to ask me if I'm going to a den like that, where no decent fellow would be found dead?"

Tom stared at him.

"You've been there often enough," he said. "What do you mean?"

"I've been there?"

"What the dickens do you mean? You know you have—a dozen fellows know you have!" exclaimed Tom impatiently. "Do you think I don't know that that's where you get your cigarettes? Talk sense!"

"So I go to a low pub and get cigarettes there, do I? And you've got the cheek to tell me so!" came an angry

snarl. "Well, there's only one of you, not five as there were the other day at Lantham, and I'll show you what I hand back for cheeky impudence like that!"

Smack!

An open palm came across Tom Redwing's face with a crack like that of a whip.

Redwing gave a startled cry, and his face blazed. In another second his grasp was on the other fellow, who crumpled up in it, struggling.

But his anger lasted only a moment. The next, he released the fellow he had grasped, leaving him to stagger against the gate.

"That's enough!" he said, in a low voice. "That's enough! You won't get another word from me! Go your own way!"

"You cheeky fool—you—"

A panting voice followed Tom as he walked down the lane in the direction Harry Wharton & Co. had taken. He did not heed it, and did not turn his head. He was silent, and his face was set as he walked on to Greyfriars with the Famous Five.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Spotted!

"OH gad!" breathed Herbert Vernon-Smith.

He jumped.

Wingate of the Sixth Form gave a simultaneous jump.

"You young sweep!" he exclaimed.

It was at an unlucky moment for the Bounder of Greyfriars that George Wingate was pulling in his skiff that afternoon. For the Greyfriars captain was level with the gate of the Three Fishers, a riverside inn with an extremely unsavoury reputation—just as Vernon-Smith was opening that gate from within to step out on the towpath.

Smithy, casting a glance round with his usual caution, spotted the Sixth Form prefect in the skiff a second before Wingate saw him.

But it was only a second, and he had no time to pop back out of sight. He was, in fact, popping back as Wingate's eyes fell on him.

Another moment, and he was backing behind the fence.

But he knew that the Greyfriars captain had seen him. Whether in that brief glimpse he had recognised him, Smithy did not feel sure—and on that doubt depended his fate.

There was no need for him to worry about Herbert Vernon coming to Greyfriars the following week if Wingate had spotted him in those forbidden precincts. For in that case, Herbert Vernon-Smith would no longer be at Greyfriars when Herbert Vernon came.

He panted as he squeezed into the cover of the hawthorns.

Wingate had seen him! He knew that he was a Greyfriars fellow. But had he recognised him—recognised him with such certainty as to be able to report him for the sack? The Bounder's heart beat fast as he threaded his way through the bushes in the weedy, ill-kept gardens of the Three Fishers.

Behind him he heard the click of a gate. Wingate had landed from the skiff and was entering. Then the Bounder heard a calling voice.

"Vernon-Smith!"

His heart sank.

"Vernon-Smith! I saw you! You are to come back to the school with me! Where are you, you young rascal?"

The Bounder, with a set and desperate face, skulked his way on in cover.

His game was up. Often and often had the reckless scapegrace of the Remove taken long chances, trusting to his luck not to let him down. This time it had let him down with a bump—he had almost walked into a prefect's hands as he was leaving the Three Fishers.

But he did not give up hope yet.

Wingate could only have glimpsed him for a split second. If he escaped now—if he got back to the school before Wingate—there was a chance—a remote chance, at least. Hard lying cost the Bounder nothing. Among his friends he would not have stooped to a falsehood, but in dealing with beaks and prefects, he would have piled one on another, like Pelion on Ossa. That was the Bounder's peculiar code of ethics, the result being that no master or prefect would have thought of taking his word.

He heard no further sound of pursuit. A Greyfriars prefect was not likely to hunt him in the precincts of the Three Fishers.

Wingate, probably, had gone back to his skiff.

Vernon-Smith cut across the weedy grounds of the riverside inn to the fence on Oak Lane by Courtfield Common. If Wingate pulled directly back to the school boathouse, he would be at Greyfriars before Smithy could hope to get there. Still the scapegrace of the school did not give up hope. There was always a chance in the chapter of chances.

He clambered up the fence, scanned the lane outside, swung over, and dropped.

No one was in sight, and he was now, at all events, outside forbidden precincts.

But a mile lay between him and the school. Wingate had been pulling down-stream when he passed the Three Fishers. By this time he was more than half-way home. If the Bounder had a chance, it was by getting in first—and there was no chance of getting in first!

He set his teeth and ran.

As he came speeding out of Oak Lane into the Courtfield road, there was a buzzing of bicycle bells, and three riders swerved to avoid him.

Vernon-Smith came to a breathless halt. He recognised Highcliffe fellows.

"Pon!" he shouted. "Hold on! Pon!"

Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson were riding into Oak Lane—to a destination the Bounder could easily have guessed. They braked and stopped as the Bounder shouted to them.

"Anythin' up, Smithy?" drawled Pon, as he stepped off his machine. "Comin' along with us, old thing?"

"Lend me your bike!"

"Wha-at?"

"I've just been spotted!" muttered the Bounder, husky with breathlessness. "If I get in before that dashed prefect I've a chance! Lend me your bike, old chap!"

"Oh gad!"

Ponsonby laughed, and handed the Bounder his machine. Ponsonby of Highcliffe was not a good-natured fellow as a rule, but he was willing to do a fellow-blackguard a good turn.

"Go it!" he said. "Trot the jigger over to Highcliffe to-morrow—if you're still at Greyfriars! Ha, ha! Best of luck, old tulip!"

The Bounder did not stop to speak again. He threw himself on Ponsonby's bike, and fairly flew.

The three Highcliffians stared after him, grinning, till he vanished from sight, and then walked on to the Three Fishers, Gadsby and Monson wheeling their machines. Vernon-Smith was going like an arrow.

There was traffic on the Courtfield road, and several startled drivers yelled to that rapid and reckless cyclist—unheeded! The Bounder drove at the pedals like one possessed.

On a bike, he could get in first! Once in, before Wingate, there was a chance. The remotest chance was priceless to a fellow who stood on the brink of being turfed out of the school and sent home in disgrace.

Some fellows might have been dealt with more leniently—not Herbert Vernon-Smith! His record was too dubious, and he knew how little lenience to expect from the Form-master he had insulted and defied. Believing as he did that Quelch had descended to a false accusation to get rid of him he could not doubt that the Remove master would welcome this.

He was aching with breathlessness as he reached the school and ran Pon's bike into the bike-shed. He wiped perspiration from his damp brow and panted for breath, but he lingered there hardly a moment. Calming himself as much as he could, he walked away to the House, savagely aware of the red flush of exertion in his cheeks.

"I say, Smithy, you look warm!" Billy Bunter met him in the quad. "Been racing?"

Smithy gave the fat Owl a scowl, but he banished it the next moment. It was just as well for Wingate to see him in conversation with a Remove fellow, when he came in.

"Yes, I rather put it on," he answered. "I'm late for tea. Has Redwing come in yet?"

"Yes. Looking fearfully down in the mouth," answered Bunter, with a grin. "Been rowing with him again?"

"You fat fool!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"I've been looking for him, out of gates—round about Friardale and Pegg," said the Bounder.

"Then it's jolly queer you never found him—he went over to Pegg with Wharton and his gang!" answered Bunter. "I say, Smithy," went on the fat Owl, encouraged by the unusual circumstance of Smithy lingering in his enjoyable company. "I say, Redwing's gone to tea with that gang—if you'd like a fellow to tea, I'll turn down Mauly. You don't want to tea all on your own, old chap! If you've got anything you want cooked—"

Vernon-Smith did not heed him. A stalwart figure in flannels was coming across to him. Wingate had come in; Smithy had been less than five minutes ahead.

"Vernon-Smith!" rapped the Greyfriars captain.

"Yes, Wingate!" murmured Smithy, his heart beating.

"Come with me to your Form-master."

Smithy breathed hard. But his manner was cool and casual. Hard lying was his cue now, and plenty of it.

"Anything up, Wingate?" he asked.

Wingate stared at him.

"I should say so!" he answered curtly. "It's for your Form-master to decide whether he takes you to the Head—all I've got to do is to report you for pub-haunting. Come with me."

"But I haven't—"

"Chuck that! You're not going to deny that I saw you coming out at the gate of the Three Fishers half an hour ago?"

"I jolly well am!" said Vernon-Smith. "Never been near the place! I've been over by Pegg and the cliffs—"

Wingate's lip curled with contempt. "You can tell that to Quelch!" he said. "Come!"

And the Bounder, wondering whether, after all, there really was the smallest spot of hope, followed him to Mr. Quelch's study.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Truth!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Scat!"

"I haven't come to tea—"

"You haven't!" agreed Bob Cherry. "You think you have! But you haven't!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Buzz off, you bloated bluebottle!"

"He, he, he! I'll bet Redwing would like to hear the news!" grinned Bunter. "All right—if you ain't interested in hearing that Smithy's gone to the beak to be sacked—"

Tom Redwing was at the table in Study No. 1 with the Famous Five.

Smithy had been still out, when he came in with the chums of the Remove. But after what had happened in Pegg Lane he did not care to tea in Study No. 4.

He had taken no notice of the fat Owl in the doorway. But at those words from Bunter he gave a violent start and rose to his feet. He gave the grinning fat Owl a glare.

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.

MARTIN CLIFFORD or Frank Richards? Which is the better writer?

Here is a letter, received last week from a Manchester reader, which raises a point of immense interest to every MAGNET reader—and "Gem" readers also:

"Dear Editor,—I took the advice you gave in a recent issue and bought the 'Gem,' in order to read the new St. Jim's series that Mr. Martin Clifford is writing. I found the story simply topping—so good, that now I am wondering whether Martin Clifford is not as good a writer as Frank Richards—or even better! I always thought that no writer could touch good old Frank R., but now I'm not so sure. What do you think?"

Well, as Editor of the MAGNET, I am prepared to admit that Martin Clifford is marvellous, and that his latest series about the mysterious black box that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy carries around with him all over Europe is a real winner. But I'm not going to ask Frank Richards to take a back seat in favour of any other author living! I am ready to say that I know of no one, except Frank Richards, who can write a better school yarn than Martin Clifford. You can't expect me to say more than that!

I expect most readers will agree with me.

"What do you mean, you gabbling ass?" he exclaimed angrily.

"Oh, really, Redwing—"

"Has anything happened to Smithy since we saw him?" asked Harry Wharton. "By gum, he's the fellow to ask for it!"

"He, he, he! I should jolly well say so!" chuckled Bunter. "Wingate spotted him at the Three Fishers half an hour ago—"

"What?"

"So he said, anyhow! He's walked him in to Quelch! That's where Smithy's been this afternoon!" grinned Bunter. "Playing the goat, you know! I always said he'd be copped sooner or later. They've got him this time."

"What is that fat chump burbling about?" asked Harry Wharton, in wonder. "It's not much over half an hour since we passed Smithy in Pegg Lane."

"And that's a good three miles from the Three Fishers!" said Frank Nugent. "What are you burbling about, Bunter?"

"Well, that's what Wingate said," declared the fat Owl. "He's jolly well walked off Smithy to Quelch, and chance it! Smithy told me he'd been round by Pegg—"

"So he had," said Bob.

"He, he, he! Wingate doesn't think so," chuckled Bunter. "He said he was going to report him for pub-haunting at the Three Fishers. And he's doing it now."

Tom Redwing's face was set. "There's some mistake about this," he said. "I'm not friends with Smithy (Continued on next page.)"

They say that everyone has a double in this world! Well, now you've met Vernon-Smith's double, what do you think of him? Can you imagine these two cousins in the same Form at Greyfriars? You've read of the complicated situations that have arisen this week, but wait until you read

"THE BOUNDER'S DOUBLE!" the next yarn in this grand new series. "Bertie" Vernon is booked for Greyfriars, and in consequence Herbert Vernon-Smith is booked for trouble! To what extent, I'll leave you to find out next Saturday. "My Page" will be taken over by Johnny Bull, and, as usual, there will be another super issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," containing a full-of-laugh story of Dr. Birchmell and his boys of St. Sam's, and more snappy and interesting articles contributed by the leading lights of Greyfriars. In all, a rattling fine number. Order your copy right now!

RAPID FIRE REPLY

WALTER SMITH (Notts).—Married, and not ashamed to read the MAGNET! Why should you be? I quite believe that you forget all about your troubles when you are reading the exciting adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. I know I do!

Time I wound up now, so here's wishing all my chums happy reading,

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,631.

now, but I'm not going to see him sacked for what he hasn't done. I'm going down to Quelch."

"Go it, old man!" said Harry Wharton. "And if we're wanted, we'll come and bear witness all round. Can't understand old Wingate making a mistake like that, but he has."

Tom Redwing hurried out of the study.

Billy Bunter cheerfully dropped into his empty chair.

Redwing was anxious, the Famous Five puzzled and perturbed; Billy Bunter was neither. It was all right for Bunter.

Redwing did the staircase two or three at a time. He sprinted into Masters' Passage.

Mr. Prout, from his study doorway, gave him a grim frown.

Redwing did not even see Prout. He knocked quickly at Mr. Quelch's door and opened it.

Mr. Quelch was standing at his table. His brow wore its grimmest frown. Wingate had just finished making his report. Herbert Vernon-Smith stood with set lips.

All three looked round as the study door suddenly opened.

Mr. Quelch barked: "Redwing, do not interrupt me now!"

"If you please, sir—" panted Tom.

"Be silent! You may wait, but be silent. I am occupied now, as you can see, Vernon-Smith!" The gimlet eyes fixed on the Bounder. "You have heard Wingate's report. You were seen leaving the most disreputable resort in this neighbourhood. What has been suspected more than once is now proved. Have you anything to say before I take you to your headmaster?"

The Bounder's heart was like lead; but his voice was cool and even as he answered:

"Wingate's making a mistake, sir. He says he saw the fellow just for a moment. He couldn't have seen him clearly. It was not I. I've been cycling round by Pegg, miles from the place."

"Was anyone in your company?" asked Mr. Quelch, with grim sarcasm.

"No, sir."

"I thought not. You will now come with me to Dr. Locke—"

"Mr. Quelch!" broke in Redwing. "I have told you to be silent, Redwing!"

"I must speak, sir!" panted Tom. "I can prove what Vernon-Smith says, sir."

"What?"

The Bounder's eyes shot round to Tom Redwing. There was blank amazement in his face for a moment.

"It's the truth, sir!" panted Tom Redwing. "Wingate must have made a mistake, sir. He will admit it when I tell you—"

"What have you to tell me, Redwing?"

"What time does Wingate think that he saw Vernon-Smith at the Three Fishers, sir?"

"Half an hour ago, or just over," said the Greyfriars captain, with a very curious look at Tom's flushed, excited face.

"Then it was not Vernon-Smith!" exclaimed Tom. "Only a little over half an hour ago Vernon-Smith was in Pegg Lane at the gate on the wood, three miles from the place. I saw him there."

"You saw me there!" breathed the Bounder.

Tom looked at him.

"You know I did," he said. "And you know what you did. Mr. Quelch, please listen to me! I was coming back from the sea, and stopped to speak to Vernon-Smith, at the gate of the wood in Pegg Lane—at the very time that Wingate thinks that he saw him at the Three Fishers, three miles away."

"Wingate, do you think that a mistake was possible?"

"I can't, sir" said Wingate. "It's true I only saw him for a second, and I can't quite see how he got back to the school first. But—"

"Redwing," said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice, "if you have come here to tell untruths to save this unworthy boy from just punishment—"

Redwing's face crimsoned.

"I did not think you would think that of me, sir!" he exclaimed. "But I was not alone; five other fellows were with me, and they all saw Vernon-Smith when I did. Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Bull, and Hurree Singh. They're all ready to come and say so, sir."

"By gum!" murmured Wingate. He stared at Redwing, and stared at the Bounder. "I can only say, sir, that I was absolutely certain that it was Vernon-Smith who I saw. But, after what Redwing says—" The Greyfriars captain shook his head hopelessly. "I was in my boat, and he was at the gate, and it was only for a second I saw him. I—I suppose it's possible—"

There was a long pause in the study. "I shall question the boys you mention, Redwing," said Mr. Quelch at last. "But—" He paused again. It was plain that he no longer doubted.

"But, for the present, you may go, and you, also, Vernon-Smith."

"Thank you, sir!" said the Bounder, with the very faintest inflexion of mockery in his voice.

He followed Redwing from the study, his eyes dancing. Unexpectedly, amazingly, he had escaped. He caught Redwing by the arm in the passage.

"Reddy, old man, would that crew really back up what you said?" he whispered.

Redwing shook his arm loose.

"Of course they would!" he snapped. The Bounder whistled.

"Then I've been mistaken about them," he said. "But—but I don't get it. They lied about me at Lantham, and now—well, I don't get it! Anyhow, Quelch will have to take their word, whatever it's worth, and that pulls me through. Reddy, old man, you've saved my bacon! I never dreamed you'd do this for me."

"I had to tell the truth, I suppose!" snapped Tom.

"The what?" stuttered Vernon-Smith.

"The truth! I'm done with you, Vernon-Smith—done with you for good, but I wasn't going to let you get sacked for what you hadn't done. But don't speak to me again!"

"Are you mad?" asked the Bounder.

Tom Redwing made no answer to that. He turned his back on his former chum, and walked away, leaving the Bounder of Greyfriars still staring like a fellow in a dream.

THE END.

(It's bad enough for Smithy to lose his pal Redwing, but there are worse troubles ahead, as you will learn in next week's tip-top yarn—"THE BOUNDER'S DOUBLE!")

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THE HEAD'S ARTFUL DODGE!

Screamingly Funny School Story of the Heroes of St. Sam's By DICKY NUGENT

"Fishy!" Frank Fearless, of the St. Sam's Fourth, said that word. "If you mean this ice-cream, you're right!" remarked Jack Jolly, eyeing a spoonful of ice-cream very dewbiously before swallowing it.

"All screen, Mrs. Buxom!" grinned Fearless. "I didn't mean your ice-cream. I meant the Head. Just look at him, you chaps!"

Jolly and Merry and Bright looked out of the tuckshop window into the sunny St. Sam's quad. They were just in time to see Dr. Birchmall sneak up to Tallboy, of the Sixth, and whisper something in his ear.

"That's just what I'd like to know," said Fearless. "I've been watching the old fogey for the last five minnits and he's doing the same thing over and over again. He did it to Mr. Lickham, and he did it to Mr. Justias; then he started on the Sixth. I've seen him go up to Burleigh and Swotter in the same way, and now he's done it to Tallboy. And every time he gets the same reception. Each chap he whispers to looks at him with skorn and kontempt and walks away. It's fishy!"

"Perhaps he's trying to borrow some munny," suggested Merry. "It can't be that; Tallboy would never have shrunk from him like he did if that was the explanation," said Bright, with a shake of his head.

Frank's forecast proved correct. Doctor Birchmall tramped straight across to the tuckshop and ordered a ginger-pop at the counter. There was a furtive look on his face and a cunning gleam in his shifty eyes.

would, I can tell you an easy way of doing it!" The chums of the Fourth frowned suspiciously. It was not like Dr. Birchmall to throw out tips on how to earn free feeds.

The Head, however, was not put off so easily as that. You could always rely on Dr. Birchmall to be as obstinate as a mule; and

now he sank his voice to a horse whisper. "Let me come to the point at once," he said. "I want you boys to kidnap the St. Bill's team when they come to play the First Eleven at cricket next week."

"Wha-a-at?" "Look here, sir—" "St. Bill's must never reach St. Sam's next Wednesday," hissed the Head. "I will tell you for why, boys. If they do, then I shall suffer a reduction of ten per cent in my salary!"

Jack Jolly & Co. grinned. They had suddenly remembered the threat of Sir Frederick Funguss—that he would knock off ten per cent from the Head's salary unless the First Eleven won the first match of the season.

"Oh! So that's the idea, is it?" chuckled Fearless. "You want to keep the St. Bill's team out of the way so that the First Eleven can play a much weaker team and win!" "Eggactly!" nodded the Head. "I thought of fixing up a match with the Second Form team instead!"

Bill's team—and this is where you come in!" "You mean this is where we go out, sir!" retorted Jack Jolly, slipping down from his stool.

"Nothing doing, sir!" "The St. Bill's team are bound to walk up from the station, Jolly. Now, what I want you to do is to ambush them half-way and force them to march into the barn that stands in the field near the bend in Muggleton Lane.

The Head whipped out the birchrod he was carrying under his arm. "Why, you disrespectful young raskals, I'll—" He went from words to deeds and made a rush at the chums of the Fourth, lashing out right and left.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! "Yaroooooo!" "Stoppit, you rotter!" "Woooooop!" Jack Jolly & Co. scattered wildly, in an effort to dodge that flailing birch.

There they left him—flaying the air wildly with his legs and uttering muffled sounds from the interior of the ice-cream container! As Fearless yewmously remarked, the others had treated the Head with cold disdain and they had treated him with cold ice-cream!

By the time Dr. Birchmall had managed to extricate himself from that container, Jack Jolly had vanished. The Head wasted no time in searching for them. After tipping most of the ice-cream saw from his napper and pacifying Mrs. Buxom by giving her an iced half-a-crown, he quitted the tuckshop and tramped out of the gates.

ending that I trotted it out and had a go myself. I didn't really expect to see any visions, but I must be one of the gifted ones, for I saw Greyfriars in it as clearly as if it had been the real thing.

Among the odds and ends Inky had with him during the Easter vac. was a crystal he bought last term in an antique dealer's shop at Courtfield. Inky claimed that any fellow with a gift that way could see the future by gazing into it.

NO WASTAGE WHEN FISH KEEPS FIT! By MONTY NEWLAND

When I returned to Greyfriars early for the new term and found I had two days to spend with only Fisher T. Fish for company, I mapped out tennis for two.

"Well, then, a boat out on the Sark? Rowing's a fine exercise and—" "I'll say you don't get this chicken pulling a boat down that darned ditch!"

"Not for me!" said Fish derisively. "Go for a swim on our bikes, uh? Hyer me smile! Heh, heh, heh!" "Look here, Fishy, this is serious," I said. "If you don't play tennis, swim, row, or cycle, then you can't be getting any exercise. Ergo, you don't keep fit!"

What on earth Fish meant was beyond me. That afternoon, however, I went to

A CHIN-WAG WITH HARRY WHARTON

Side and Wingate will certainly be bowled out sooner or later—though more probably later than sooner! It seemed quite queer, that crystal-gazing bizney, at the time, but I expect it was just imagination on my part.

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The GREYFRIARS HERALD



No. 345. EDITED BY HARRY HARTON. May 20th, 1939.

OUR BEST BATSMAN'S A BEAK!

Says H. VERNON-SMITH

Who's the best batsman at Greyfriars? If the question was, who was the best all-round cricketer, most fellows would probably answer: Wingate. Certainly, when you consider Wingate's consistent brilliance as batsman, bowler, and in the field, it's pretty clear that he's as good an all-rounder at the great summer game as you'd find at Greyfriars or anywhere else.

I suppose nobody outside this little coterie could be considered really seriously, though it is possible to make out a case for Blundell and Tomlinson major, of the Fifth. I may say, however, that my own selection for the honour is somebody I have not yet mentioned at all.

Yes, Larry Lascelles is the man! Take a look at him, next time he plays on Big Side. Note that marvellous sense of discrimination that enables him, by instinct it seems, to treat each ball—whether slow, medium or fast, and from whichever side it may break—exactly as it should be treated; and then ask yourself if he isn't 100 per cent. flawless.

HOBBIES UP TO DATE!

By HAROLD SKINNER Juggling.

Before you can call yourself a juggler, there are several elementary tricks you must know. Catching balls in your hand and balancing sticks on your nose are two of the most important.

Start with tennis balls. Throw the balls up one at a time, catch them as they come down, and then throw them up again. Put in a couple of hours a day at it.

Once again, lack of space prevents me from going fully into the details of a delightful hobby. My concluding tip is: practice makes perfect. After about ten years, you ought to be a juggler. If not, you ought to be in a home!

