

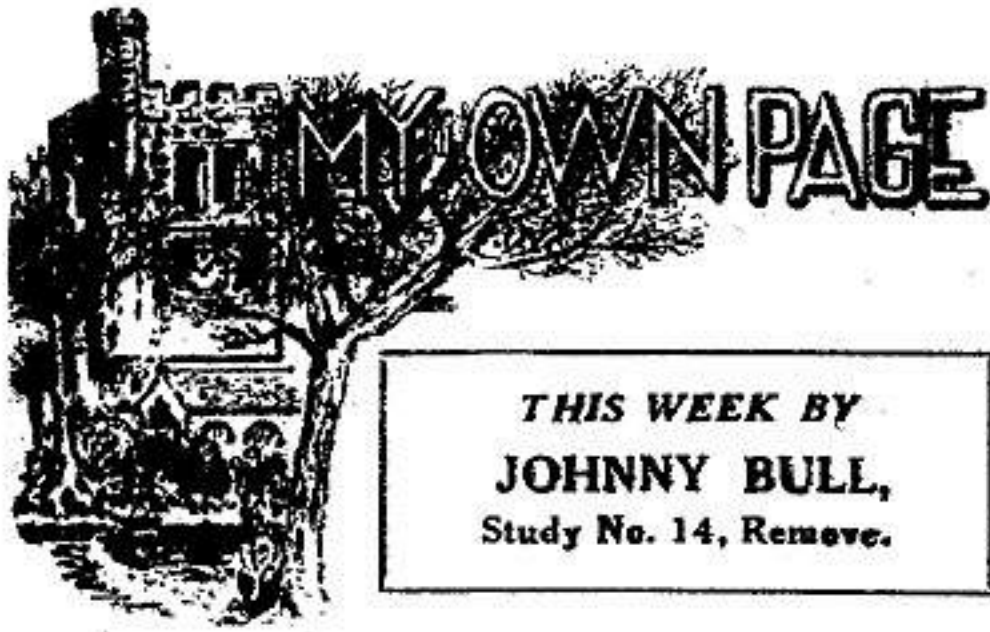
HARRY WHARTON & CO., in the BEST SCHOOL STORY of the WEEK.

The Magnet 2^D

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



THE BOUNDER'S DOUBLE!



THIS WEEK BY
JOHNNY BULL,
Study No. 14, Remove.

I'm not going to write a lot of rot. There's quite enough of that in the papers these days, judging by what I see of them. I'm not going to write about Yorkshire. If you come from Yorkshire you'll know why. A Yorkshireman can't stick talking or writing about his county. Go there and see what you think of it.

I'm not going to write about the woollen trade. For one thing, I don't know enough about it. I like to get all my facts right before I say anything. I've been in the pater's factory often enough. I know the difference between tops and noils—tops are long strands of wool and noils are short bits. I've seen it spun and woven into all sorts of things. But I've not yet worked there myself, so I'll hold my tongue.

I'm not going to write about my home. (Well, for pity's sake, what ARE you going to write about?—ED.) If you want to know, I live not far from Bradford, up near the moors. It's the finest stretch of country in the world—everyone knows that. Up on "Hikley Moor haht t' aht" there are old stone farms and trout streams and rocks to climb. You can't beat the dales and moors up our way. The scenery round Greyfriars is a bit tame after Grassington and Wharfedale.

NOTHING ABOUT GREYFRIARS!

I'm not going to write about Greyfriars. You know as much as I can tell you, anyway. It's the best school in the world—everyone knows that. Mind, I don't say it couldn't be improved, because it could. Lessons, for instance. I'm not grumbling, but I can't see what good Latin and classical history and ancient geography are going to do a fellow when he leaves school. It may be all right for fellows like Linley, for instance; he means to be a doctor, so he'll need to know Latin. But where's the sense of it?

to show the latest Austria, Albania, etc.

All the same, I dig into the work. A fellow is sent to school to learn things, and he has to play up, if only to give his pater his money's worth. I believe in sticking to the rules, too. A fellow who breaks rules is not to be trusted.

NO SPORTS TALK!

I'm not going to write sports talk. Naturally, I'm keen on sport. A fellow has to keep fit—everyone knows that. I play full-back in the footer eleven. I'm not brilliant at cricket—I admit it. I can keep my end up and get a few runs, but I'm not a class bat like Wharton or Smithy. I'm better at rowing and good at boxing.

I don't mind saying I'm good if I AM good. Some fellows are full of mock modesty. That makes me sick. I'd rather say what I really think. I'm perfectly willing to admit I'm not good at cricket. I'm just as candid about my boxing. It IS good, and if you don't believe me—come down here and try!

I can't beat Bob Cherry, Wharton, Smithy, or Russell—though I guarantee to give any of them a tough job. I fancy my chances with everyone else in the Form. I did knock Smithy out on one occasion, but he had been out on one of his putrid pub-crawls the night before, and was not up to scratch. At his best he can usually whop me. My highest score at cricket was fifty-seven against Temple's gang last season. Temple himself was bowling, that's why I scored fifty-seven. I was not out, and should be still batting at this moment if the game had lasted that long. Temple's a rotten bowler. The best bowler I have ever played against is Inky. And I don't have to play against him, thank goodness—except at the nets. He bowls fast, with a fearful swerve, and when he has wrecked a fellow's wicket he always murmurs "Bad luckfulness, my esteemed Johnny!"—which is pretty decent of him. But Inky's a white man always. (Fan me!—ED.)

Latin's a dead language. It ought to be put in a museum, where old scholars and professors can dig into it if they want to. For modern fellows like me it's a waste of time. Same with ancient geography. We each have a copy of Dr. Butler's Atlas, which costs our paters twelve shillings. Good money thrown away. Why, at the rate things are happening these days even modern geography gets out of date every month. Quelch has had to alter our Form atlas with ink details of Abyssinia,

"FRIENDS REMEMBERED NOT!"

Not that I'm going to write about my friends—because I'm not. It's not the sort of thing a fellow does. I'm quite content with them. They play the goat at times. Sometimes they're a bit reckless and I have to give them a common-sense talk. But they nearly always bump me for it, which is their loss, not mine. They know I'm right, anyway.

Another thing, they're not musical. Nobody in the Remove is musical. You'd think fellows would like to hear a cornet well played, wouldn't you? Well, they don't. They throw things. My studymates are specially gruff. Not that I care about that worm Fishy. If he objects I just kick him out, to find peace elsewhere. But Squiff isn't so easily kicked out. Like most Australians, he's pretty tough. We've had lots of arguments about my cornet, though, apart from this, he's quite a good sort.

Last night I was playing the "Lost Chord" quite well when Skinner and half a dozen other idiots barged into the study and began turning it upside down.



Skinner & Co. searching for Johnny Bull's "Lost Chord"!

"Here, what's the game?" I demanded angrily.

"We're trying to find your lost chord so that you can stop that fearful row!" explained Skinner.

I booted them out, of course. But this kind of thing would discourage some fellows. Not that I care a bean. If they don't like it, let them lump it—that's what I say!

STILL NOT WRITING!

I'm not going to write much about myself. Some fellows may like it. I don't. As for what I'm going to be when I leave school—that's a problem I shall have to face myself. My father wants me to enter the firm, naturally. My cousin Lucas is at present the manager. I am to enter the firm as a junior clerk and work my way up. Quite right, too. That's how it should always be done.

But—well, I want to join the Navy. That's my ambition at present. I can't think of no finer job in the world than to command one of the great ironclads. I've always wanted to go into the Navy. My father is dead against it.

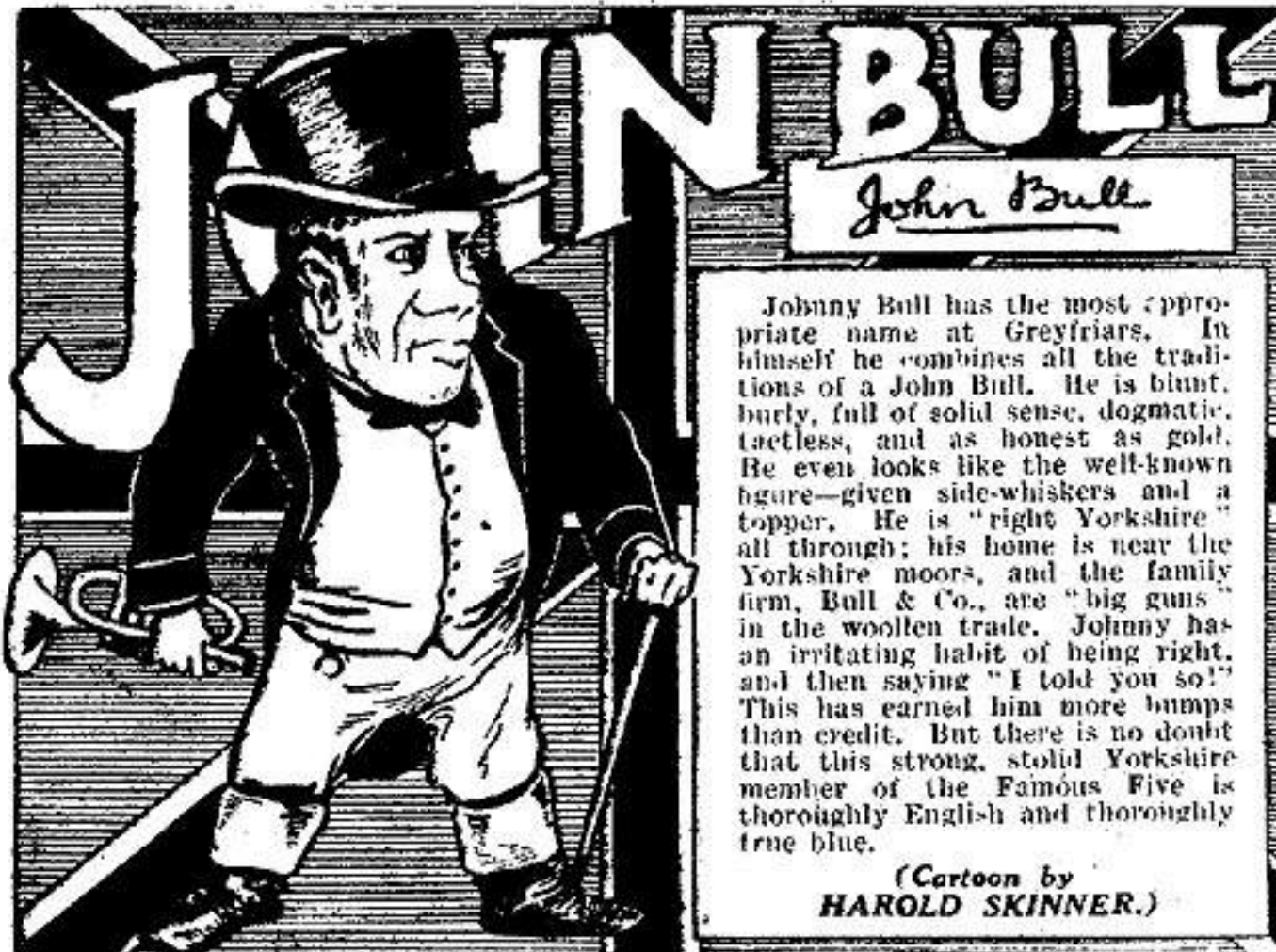
That is the matter I shall have to decide. I shall decide it for myself without asking advice. The problem is simple. Is a fellow bound to obey his father in a thing that will affect his future life? Has a father the right to expect his son to live a life previously mapped out for him? Or should that be a matter of free choice?

It's a hard question, but I hope I shall face it. And whatever decision I come to, I shall study both sides of the question.

I'm not going to write a spring poem. I've no use for poetry. It doesn't get a fellow anywhere. The same with pictures and sculpture. Very pretty to look at, maybe, but a shocking waste of time. Still, some silly asses like that rubbish, so I suppose we must put up with it. I believe in being practical. I've no use for dreamy Daniels.

AT LAST!

What I AM going to write is the opinion of an ordinary British boy on the world as it is to-day— (Some other time, maybe! No space left now.—ED.)



Johnny Bull has the most appropriate name at Greyfriars. In himself he combines all the traditions of a John Bull. He is blunt, burly, full of solid sense, dogmatic, tactless, and as honest as gold. He even looks like the well-known figure—given side-whiskers and a topper. He is "right Yorkshire" all through; his home is near the Yorkshire moors, and the family firm, Bull & Co., are "big guns" in the woollen trade. Johnny has an irritating habit of being right, and then saying "I told you so!" This has earned him more bumps than credit. But there is no doubt that this strong, stolid Yorkshire member of the Famous Five is thoroughly English and thoroughly true blue.

(Cartoon by
HAROLD SKINNER.)

NOT WANTED AT GREYFRIARS! That's what Herbert Vernon-Smith thinks of his cousin and double—"Bertie" Vernon. For when Bertie's about, it spells trouble in plenty for the Bounder of Greyfriars!

The BOUNDER'S DOUBLE!



"You young sweep!" exclaimed Loder, grabbing the youth by the shoulder, as he came out of the tobacconist's. "So that's where you get your smokes from, is it, Vernon-Smith? Well, I've caught you this time!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Six In The Soup!

"LOOKS like rain," said Frank Nugent.

"Let it look!" suggested Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton glanced at the sky dubiously.

"We don't want to get drenched," he remarked.

"Afraid of getting an extra wash, like Bunter?" inquired Bob.

"Fathead! Look at the sky!"

"What's the good of looking at the sky? We're not going that way in a plane; we're going on the jiggers!"

"Look at it, ass!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"The cloudfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bob!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry gave a snort.

Four members of the Famous Five were doubtful. One was not doubtful. That one was Bob Cherry.

It had been a glorious May morning. If half-holidays had happened in the morning instead of the afternoon nobody could have wanted better weather. Now, however, as Harry Wharton & Co. stood with their bicycles about to start, the outlook was far from promising.

A dark drift of clouds had rolled up from the sea. Out on the North Sea it was already raining. There was still sunshine over Greyfriars School, but it

was subdued. Those clouds might possibly roll by without rain. But it did not seem likely.

Nine or ten miles on the jiggers in fine weather was one thing; nine or ten miles in a downpour of rain was quite another.

"Now, look here," said Bob, "we've chucked everything else to cut over to Lantham this afternoon to see the Ramblers play the county. We've got

**Smashing School-Adventure
Yarn Starring HARRY
WHARTON & Co. and
BERTIE VERNON, the
Bounder's Cousin and Double.**

leave from Queleh, we've got out the jiggers, and we've no time to lose if we're not going to turn up just as they're shutting down! And you fellows want to stand round talking about the weather! Blow the weather!"

"Look at the sky!"

"Blow the sky!"

"Don't be an ass, old chap! They won't be playing cricket at Lantham in a rainstorm! Chuck it!" said Harry.

"It's not raining!"

"It's going to!"

"Poor little dears!" said Bob com-

miseratingly. "And did they feel nervous about a little shower of naughty rain, then! Naughty rain!"

Four members of the Co. glared at Bob.

The famous Co. of the Greyfriars Remove were hardy enough. They did not mind a spot or two of rain. But they did not want to get soaked simply because Bob declined to heed the weather signs. Getting soaked to the skin was not really the most enjoyable way of spending a half-holiday.

"Let's chuck it!" went on Bob. "Let's get back to the Rag and frowst over the fire with Bunter! Might catch a naughty cold if we go out in the naughty rain!"

"You silly ass!" bawled Johnny Bull. "Look at the clouds, you owl!" hooted Nugent.

"I'm not interested in clouds. We've come out to see cricket, not clouds. Besides, I've seen clouds before."

"It will be raining before we're half-way to Lantham," said Harry.

"It will be raining before we start if we hang about here for ever! It's bound to rain again before the end of the term!"

Bob Cherry put a long log over his machine.

"Anybody coming?" he asked. "I'm jolly well going! I've been looking forward to seeing the county play over since cricket started, and I'm not miss-

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ing it for a spot of rain—even if it rains, which it won't do!"

The Co still hesitated.

Bob waited a minute; then he gave a shove at his pedals and started.

Harry Wharton gave another glance at the sky. It was getting more and more deeply overcast. There was a chance that the clouds might pass by without letting loose a heavy flood of rain. It did not look a healthy chance. Still, there it was.

"Oh, come on!" said Harry. "If Bob's going, we're going!"

"One fool makes many!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, stick together!" said Nugent.

"The esteemed Bob is a terrific ass, but the stickfulness to our idiotic chum is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

And the four mounted and followed Bob.

Bob Cherry was going slow to give them a chance to join up. But he put on speed as they joined him.

"Made up your minds?" he grinned cheerfully. "It's all right. It won't rain this afternoon."

"How do you know it won't?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"The radio weather prophet said it would," answered Bob.

"Ass!"

"Same to you, old scout, with knobs on! Put it on! We want to see all we can at Lantham! Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Smithy! Aren't you going to Lantham, after all, Smithy?" roared Bob.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, came into view, riding back to the school. He had started ten minutes ago for the same destination, and with the same object, as the Famous Five. Evidently the weather signs had caused him to change his mind.

"It's going to pour!" he called back. "You fellows will get wet if you keep on!"

"We're not afraid of a spring shower!" answered Bob. "Ask Mauly to lend you one of his handboxes to park yourself in, old scout!"

The Bounder gave him a glare.

He passed the bunch of cyclists, but instead of keeping on towards Greyfriars he circled in the road and pedalled after them.

Signs of stormy weather had caused Smithy, very sensibly, to change his mind. But Bob Cherry's words, which he took as a challenge, caused him, less sensibly, to change it again. He rode after the five and joined them.

"Coming, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes! I'm going to show that swanking ass that I'm no more afraid of getting wet than he is!" snapped the Bounder.

"Oh, draw it mild, Smithy, old man!" said Bob, colouring a little. "I didn't mean—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Look here—"

"Can't you shut up when you can't talk sense?"

Bob Cherry shut up, with a rather grim face. Smithy had joined up for that ride against his better judgment simply because he was not going to be outdone by any man in the Remove—which was just like the Bounder. But, not doubting in the least that he was going to get soaked with rain, he had joined up in a bad and quarrelsome temper—which was also just like the Bounder.

The bunch of cyclists swept on. By way of Redclyffe they got into the wide

Lantham road, and still the rain held off, and sunshine still trickled through the drifting clouds.

On that wide, long road, however, there was no shelter if the rain came down. If it came they were for it—miles of it! They would not have heeded a shower or two. But if it came down hard and heavy it was going to be extremely unpleasant.

They rode hard, hardly speaking a word.

Bob was still confident that it was going to be all right. Bob had a way of looking on the bright side of things—which was a good way, but might sometimes be overdone. The other fellows only hoped that they would get into Lantham before it started, with very little hope of seeing any cricket there.

Half-way to Lantham it started. A few heavy drops splashed down on the dusty road.

"Here it comes!" said Nugent.

"Laying the dust for us!" said Bob cheerily. "You fellows like dust?"

"Idiot!" snapped Smithy.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You still there, Smithy? Counting the drops? There's been five or six!"

"Dummy!"

"You'll want that handbox if we get any more!"

"Shut up, Bob, old man!" said Harry.

"If I get soaked I'll punch that silly fool's silly head!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, do!" said Bob. "I'll be there when you do it! Oh, my hat! Oh crikey!" he added, as there came a sudden rush of rain.

"Still think it's going to be fine, you fathead?" inquired Johnny Bull, with almost ferocious sarcasm.

Bob did not answer that question. Only too obviously, it was not going to be fine. It was going to be rainy—fearfully rainy. Even the optimistic Bob had to admit that now.

Down it came. It seemed as if big eisterns had opened in the sky. It came at first in drops, and then in sheets, and then in floods. And through the swishing, flooding rain six cyclists slogged onward, looking as happy as a set of mouthing fowls.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

While The Cat's Away——!

BILLY BUNTER blinked out of the windows of the Rag, into a weeping quadrangle, and grunted.

"Blow the rain!" he said.

"Blow it and bless it!" agreed Peter Todd.

"What a half-holiday!" groaned Squiff "Looks like cricket!"

Plenty of Remove fellows, that afternoon, were blowing the rain. All Greyfriars School, in fact, was blowing it. It was coming down in bucketsful. The old elms in the quad were streaming—the cricket field was almost a morass—water splashed on to the old red roofs and dashed on the window-panes.

Hardly anybody was to be seen out. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had been seen to start, in macintosh and umbrella—but he had been seen to drift in again. Dozens of juniors were gathered in the Rag, most of them looking out at the weather, and making disparaging remarks about it. Billy Bunter seemed fearfully annoyed.

Which really was a little surprising, as Billy Bunter was quite content, as a rule, to spend his leisure hours frowst-

ing in an armchair over a fire—and a fellow could frowst in an armchair over a fire in rain or in shine.

But Bunter, instead of bestowing his fat person in the most comfortable armchair available, was blinking out of the window through his big spectacles, and telling the weather what he thought of it.

"Putrid!" said Bunter. "Rotten! Filthy weather for a half-holiday! Fellow can't get out on a bike in this."

"Hardly," agreed Peter Todd. "But that won't hurt you, lazybones—you don't want to get out on a bike!"

"I mean, Smithy won't be going to Lantham now!" grunted Bunter. "He was going over to see the county match. I heard him ask Skinner if he'd go—Skinner wouldn't. He wanted Skinner because he's had another of his rows with Redwing—he, he, he! Smithy's the fellow for rows, ain't he, Toddy?"

"He is—he are!" assented Toddy. "But if Smithy's rowed with Redwing again, that's nothing to gurgle about, old fat Owl!"

"He won't go now!" sighed Bunter. "The beast will be sticking indoors—smoking in his study, I dare say. He smokes in his study now—now he's rowed with Redwing! Just because he knows Redwing doesn't like it! He, he, he! Blow the rain! He won't go now!"

"Potty, if he went out in this!" said Peter. "But what the thump does it matter to you whether Smithy goes out this afternoon or not?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter. "Nothing to do with me, of course. I'm not interested in what that cad Smithy does. I bar the fellow! I wouldn't touch his toffee if he asked me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That remark from Bunter seemed to cheer up the Remove fellows gathered at the windows of the Rag.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter. "I hope I'm not the fellow to take a fellow's toffee while he's gone out. I don't know whether Smithy's got any toffee at all, if you come to that. There may be something else in that tin I saw in his study. Besides, I never saw the tin—I haven't been near his study since class."

"Oh crikey!"

"Tom Redwing steers clear of Study No. 4 now," went on Bunter. "Never goes there except for prep. So if Smithy had gone out— Oh, blow the rain! It was bound to rain on a half-holiday! Blow!"

The door of the Rag opened and a Remove fellow came in, and came across to the window.

It was Tom Redwing. He joined the little crowd, and looked out of the window with a knitted brow.

"Coming down, ain't it!" said Peter.

"Yes! Smithy will get soaked!" said Redwing. "I should have thought he'd turn back, when this came on. But he hasn't come in."

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Has Smithy gone out?" he ejaculated.

"Yes; he went out just before it started."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bunter.

And he turned away from the window and rolled across to the door.

If Herbert Vernon-Smith had, after all, gone out, in spite of the rain, Billy Bunter had pressing business in a certain study in the Remove passage.

Redwing—though no longer on speaking terms with his former chum—seemed rather concerned about Smithy getting caught in that drenching down-pour. William George Bunter was not at all concerned. William George was



Crunch, crunch, crunch! Billy Bunter was munching and crunching toffees, when the door suddenly opened and Lord Mauleverer looked in. "You fat villain!" roared Mauly. "Grooogh! Oooogh! Wooogh!" gasped the fat Removeite, as he swallowed a chunk of toffee whole.

only glad to hear that the Bounder was safe off the scene. If Herbert Vernon-Smith got soaked to the very skin while Billy Bunter was annexing the tin of toffees in Study No. 4, it was a matter of the very smallest consequence. What mattered was the toffees.

Billy Bunter ascended the stairs at unusual speed. He rolled into the Remove passage with a happy grin of anticipation on his fat face.

The door of Study No. 4 was half-open. That study was shared by Herbert Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing; though, as Bunter had observed, Redwing was not often in Study No. 4 now.

It was rather uncomfortable to share a study with a fellow with whom he was not on speaking terms. The friendship between the Bounder and his chum had been a chequered one; and often and often there had been rows—generally, if not always, due to the Bounder's arrogant and uncontrolled temper. So far, the clouds had always rolled by, sooner or later. But this time it looked as if the break was definite; and it did not look, for once, as if it was wholly the Bounder's fault, for Redwing had been seen to turn his back on him in the quad when Smithy would have spoken. Since then, there had not been a word exchanged between them.

Billy Bunter cast a cautious blink up and down the passage, and then rolled into Study No. 4.

"Beast!" he ejaculated.

Bunter had seen that tin of toffees on the study table. It was not on the study table now. Smithy, it seemed, had parked it somewhere before going out! Just as if he fancied that a fellow might be after his measly toffees, Bunter reflected bitterly—just like a suspicious beast like the Bounder.

The fat Owl of the Remove rolled

across to the study cupboard. He blinked into the same, and his fat brow cleared! There stood the tin of toffees!

In another moment a clutching fat hand was on that tin!

Bunter lifted it out and hooked off the lid! It was half-full of toffees, wrapped in tissue paper. Bunter beamed on them. He placed the tin on the corner of the table and grabbed. Another moment and the largest mouth in the Greyfriars Remove was filled to capacity.

Bunter crunched and munched. He munched and crunched! His fat face was wreathed in happy grins.

Crunch, crunch, crunch!

There was a footstep, and Lord Mauleverer of the Remove, coming down the passage, glanced in.

He frowned at Billy Bunter.

"You fat villain!" he said.

"Oh, really, Mauly—" Bunter gurgled. Speech was not easy, with his mouth full of crunching toffees. "Urrgh! Think I'm snooping these toffees?"

"Yaas!"

"Smithy asked me if I'd like to—grooogh! I mean, he said I could come here and—gurrgh!" Bunter choked. "Oooogh! Wooogh! You silly ass, Mauly, you've made me swallow a chunk of—gurrgh! Don't be a suspicious beast, Mauly! Smithy said I could—yooooooooogh!"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"Better tell Redwing that—he's coming up the passage; and he may think you're snooping his pal's toffees."

"Oh crikey!"

Lord Mauleverer passed on, grinning. Another footstep was heard coming up the passage from the landing.

Billy Bunter grabbed the toffee tin from the table, and put his fat hands

behind him, just as Tom Redwing arrived at the doorway.

Tom walked in, evidently expecting to find the study vacant. He started, as he saw Bunter there.

He frowned at Bunter. It was a dismal, rainy afternoon, and his break with his chum added to the dismal effect. But if Tom Redwing wanted company, he did not seem to want Bunter's.

"Want anything here?" he asked.

"Urrgh!"

"What?"

"Gurrgh!"

"Go and gobble in your own study, for goodness' sake!" said Tom.

"Urrgh! I—I've got a bit of a—a—a cough!" gurgled Bunter. "I'm not eating anything—especially toffee. Wurrgh! I—I—I thought I'd look in and—and—and keep you company a bit, old chap, as you're all on your own! Urrgh!"

"Fathead! Hop it!"

"I mean, I'm waiting here till Smithy comes in," said Bunter, with the toffee tin still carefully out of sight behind him. "I've got something to say to him. You needn't stop here, Redwing."

"You silly ass, it's my study!" said Tom. "I've got some work to do! What do you mean?"

"Urrgh! I mean—oh, nothing." Redwing, it seemed, was using the study as the Bounder was out; which was very annoying, in the circumstances. "All right—I'll go! Urrgh!"

Redwing stood aside for the fat Owl to pass out.

He stared at Bunter, as the Owl of the Remove approached the door. Bunter had to keep his face to Redwing, or else reveal the toffee-tin behind him. So he had to approach

the doorway with a sort of crab-like motion.

Tom was not a suspicious fellow. But when a fellow circumnavigated him like a crab, with his hands held behind him, even an unsuspecting fellow was liable to get suspicious.

"What have you got there, Bunter?" he asked.

"Eh? Nothing! I'm not holding anything behind me," said Bunter, hastily. "Why should I? Besides, it's not yours. I say, look at the rain! Ain't it pouring?"

Redwing did not look at the rain! He grabbed Billy Bunter by a fat shoulder, and slewed him round. Then the toffee-tin was revealed.

"You fat sweep!" exclaimed Redwing, and he grabbed the tin from the fat hands, and placed it on the table. "Now out, before I boot you!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. His eyes, and his spectacles, fixed on that toffee-tin. "Look here, you cad, you mind your own business! You ain't pally with Smithy now—besides, they ain't Smithy's toffees—I—I—I brought my toffees here to—to—to offer you some! Halves, see?"

"Get out!"

"Look here, you beast——"

Redwing lifted a foot.

"Are you going?" he inquired.

"I say, old chap, don't you be a beast!" urged Bunter. "Look here, you've rowed with Smithy! No wonder you can't stand his rotten temper, old chap—he's a beast, and an awful cad, and a thorough rotter, ain't he? Look here, jolly good idea to pay him out, see, by snaffling his toffees! We'll go halves, and that cad Smithy can whistle for his toffees! Now you've rowed with the beastly cad, old chap—yarrooh!"

As Tom Redwing had rowed with Smithy, and their friendship was a thing of the past, the fat Owl had no doubt that the string of fancy names, applied to Smithy, would be welcome to Redwing's ears. But quite a different effect was produced—why, Bunter did not know, and could not guess.

But he did know that Redwing grabbed him by the neck and tapped his fat head on the study door! It was quite a hard tap—almost a bang!

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Billy Bunter, in anguish and indignation. "Why, you're a worse beast than that beast Smithy——"

Bang!

"Yarroop!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down outside Study No. 4. The door closed on him.

Bunter sat and blinked at the door, spluttering for breath. It was a full minute, before the breathless fat Owl struggled to his feet.

Then he stooped to the keyhole, and yelled through it:

"Yah! Cad! Swab! Smithy's a cad! You're another! You come out of that study, and I'll mop up the passage with you!"

The door-handle turned! Bunter turned at the same moment. When Tom Redwing looked out, he had a back view of a flying fat figure, doing the Remove passage at about 50 m.p.h.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Smithy Loses His Temper!

SLOSH! Splash! Spatter! Slosh! Six fellows were not enjoying life. Even Bob Cherry was not! Bent over their handlebars, slogging through pouring rain, the six

cyclists splashed, and sloshed, and spattered, and soaked.

Even Bob was sorry that they had started. There was not much prospect of the county match at Lantham going on in this! His comrades were sorrier still: and sorry that they had not taken their over-optimistic chum by the neck and run him in, instead of starting on that horrid ride.

But the Co., exasperated as they were, managed to keep their tempers more or less. It was not so with Herbert Vernon-Smith. Smithy was not much accustomed to keeping his temper, if it pleased him to give way to the same. And he had gone out that afternoon in a bad temper to start with.

Matters were not going well with the Bounder of Greyfriars. He was always more or less in trouble—a Remove junior who set up to snap his fingers at beaks and prefects could hardly avoid it. But since the new term had started, trouble seemed to have piled on the Bounder.

He was in his Form-master's blackest books. He had barely escaped the sack for pub-haunting. He had quarrelled with his best chum—his only real friend in the school. He was on far from friendly terms with the Famous Five, whom he had joined in that unlucky ride. Everything that term seemed to be going wrong for the Bounder of Greyfriars—and now he was getting soaked to the skin, over and above.

Harry Wharton & Co. found it difficult enough to keep good-tempered, in the distressing circumstances, Smithy did not even try.

He distributed black scowls, the blackest being directed at Bob Cherry. It was really his own spirit of bravado that had landed him in this; but he put it all down to Bob's account.

They splashed and sloshed on, not thinking now of a county match at Lantham, but of getting some sort of shelter till the rainstorm blew over. But on the wide, open country road, there was nothing in the way of shelter. Trees by the roadside dripped and streamed. The woods were simply weeping. They sloshed on in a world of mud and water.

But as they came abreast of Lantham Chase, a mile or two on the higher side of the town, Bob Cherry released a hand, and waved it towards the bordering woods.

"We can get out of it here!" he called out.

Vernon-Smith gave him a glare.

"Fool!" he snarled. "It's as bad under the trees as in the open! Worse!"

"I know a place."

"Idiot!"

"Come on, you chaps!" shouted Bob.

"I tell you I know a place!"

Bob turned his bike from the rainy road, into one of the paths that led up through the weeping woods of Lantham Chase. His comrades strung out and followed him. Whether Bob knew a place or not, matters could not be much worse. Any kind of shelter was more than welcome.

Vernon-Smith followed on. He was as wet as the others, and as anxious to get under shelter—if shelter was to be had.

Up a wet grassy path, under weeping branches, Bob Cherry rode in the lead, his comrades riding after him in single file, and the Bounder bringing up the rear. The Famous Five knew that path; they had ridden up it, a week ago, in chase of the Bounder, to persuade him to return from breaking bounds. Harry Wharton had no doubt

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that the Bounder remembered the row that had happened on that woodland path, and was thinking of it now.

At a little distance, Bob jumped down. He waved a hand to his friends, and wheeled his bike off the path, by a track among the wet trees.

The other fellows dismounted to follow. Vernon-Smith gave an angry snarl, as he did so.

"There's a right-of-way through here," he snapped. "But nobody's allowed off the path! We're trespassing!"

"Fat lot you care, if we are!" grunted Johnny Bull.

The Bounder scowled, and wheeled on.

The Famous Five, as a matter of fact, were rather particular upon such points: but they agreed that a point could be stretched, to get shelter in such a heavy downpour of rain. Smithy did not care a boiled bean whether he trespassed or not—and all the other fellows were quite aware of it.

"Here we are!" called out Bob.

He had reached a small building, in the thickness of the wood. It was an open summer-house—pleasant enough, no doubt, in fine weather, but now damp and dripping. But it was a shelter from the flooding rain, and that was what all the fellows wanted.

They wheeled their bikes in, and stacked them against the seat at the back. Outside, the rain flooded down: but the roof was sound, and they were sheltered, save from rain-drops that spattered in.

"Any port in a storm!" remarked Harry Wharton, shaking off water. "We're lucky to get in here."

"The luckfulness is truly terrific!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Frightfully lucky, if somebody comes along and asks us what we're doing on private property!" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, you can cheek him if he does!" said Bob. "You like cheeking people when you're in the wrong."

"You silly fathead!"

"Oh, cheese it! Jolly lucky I remembered this place!" said Bob. "I dropped on it once, when I took a short cut through Lantham Chase, and lost my way. Hark at it on the roof!"

Patter, patter, patter! Splash!

"Nobody's likely to drop in here, in this weather," remarked Frank Nugent. "And we can explain if anybody does. The old bean who owns this place isn't a bad sort, I've heard—some old local sporting johnny."

"Old Squire Luscombe isn't here now," said Harry. "I've heard that the place is let to some retired military man."

"Let's hope he's a nice military man, then, if he roots us out of here!" said Bob. "Not likely, in this weather! Old military gents are more likely to keep snug indoors, on an afternoon like this."

"Nice to be reported to the Head for trespassing!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Wouldn't be the first time, in your case," retorted Bob. "You'd rather trespass than not! What's the good of talking rot!"

"You've landed me in this, you fool!" snarled Smithy. "I said I'd punch your silly head if I got soaked. Now look at me!"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't rag now, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "It's bad enough without that. We're all wet to the skin, and we've got to stick here for an hour yet."

"That silly fool——"

"Nobody asked you to join up!" said

Bob Cherry. "It was just your swank! I'm sorry I've landed these fellows in it, but you asked for it."

"You cheeky fool——"

"Oh, shut up!" roared Bob. "I'm fed up with your tantrums. Even Redwing won't stand them any longer, and he's got a lot more patience than I have. Shut up!"

The Bounder clenched his fists, his eyes blazing.

Harry Wharton hastily stepped between them.

"Chuck it!" he exclaimed. "If the people of the house spot us here, do you want them to find us scrapping?"

"I don't care!" snarled the Bounder.

"Well, I do! Chuck it, and keep your temper. You've been like a bear with a sore head all this term so far," exclaimed Wharton angrily. "There's hardly a man in the Remove you haven't rowed with. Blessed if I know what's come over you."

"No bizney of yours."

"Not if you keep your rotten temper to yourself. Pack it up!"

The Bounder scowled, but he was silent.

Bob Cherry looked out of the open front of the summer-house. The rain came flooding down.

"Beastly!" he grunted. "Bit different from last Wednesday, when we were over this way!"

"So you've trespassed here before?" sneered the Bounder.

"We didn't come to this summer-house last Wednesday, as you know jolly well," answered Bob.

"How should I know what you did, you fool?"

"You know as well as we do, as you were with us on that path," snapped Bob. "You trespassed when you cut off the path—we didn't."

"Are you starting that yarn again?" exclaimed the Bounder, with gleaming eyes. "Are you sticking to your lying tale that I was out of gates last Wednesday, when you know Quelch had me in detention?"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Bob.

"You never saw me anywhere near Lantham last Wednesday!" roared the Bounder.

"You know we did!"

"For goodness' sake, Smithy, chuck it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You know perfectly well that we saw you near here, and tried to get you to go back to the school——"

"It's a lie!"

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"That's enough! Shut up!"

"Blessed if I understand the chap!" said Bob Cherry. "We all know he tells lies to the beaks; but he used not to tell them in the Remove. What on earth is the good of telling five fellows that they never saw you, Smithy, when they all saw you, and you know they did?"

"Liar!"

"Look here——"

"Liar!" repeated the Bounder, his eyes blazing. "That for your lies!" And pushing savagely past the captain of the Remove, the Bounder struck full at Bob's face. His fist landed with a thud.

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

The next second he was jumping at the Bounder, and they were fighting.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Blow For Blow!

"STOP them!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Rot!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Let Bob whop him! He's asked for it long enough, and often enough."

Four juniors crowded back out of the way, against the stacked bikes. There was not much room for a fight in the summer-house of Lantham Chase, and Bob and Smithy seemed to want all there was.

Panting, thumping, scuffling, the two went at it, hammer and tongs. Bob, who was not often angry, was really angry, for once, and Vernon-Smith was deeply and savagely enraged. They tramped, scuffled, and punched with vigour, the Co. standing back and looking on.

The rain was till pouring down. But the Co. were rather glad of that, than otherwise, as it made it unlikely that anyone would come to the spot. It would have been awkward enough had the tenant of Lantham Chase dropped along, and found the Greyfriars fellows not only trespassing, but two of them engaged in furious combat.

For two or three minutes it went on fiercely. For those two or three minutes the Bounder held his own.

But fierce and determined as he was, he was no match for Bob Cherry. A heavy jolt on the chest sat him suddenly down.

He sat heavily, with a breathless grunt. Bob dropped his hands and stepped back. He was still angry; but he did not want to fight Smithy, or anybody else. Like most fellows who were really good at a scrap, Bob was never anxious to engage in one.

"Chuck it!" he said, as the Bounder sat and panted. "Nuff for me, Smithy, if you say the same."

"You rotter!" panted Vernon-Smith.

"All right—take it out in slanging," said Bob. "But keep your paws to yourself."

The Bounder staggered up. He panted and panted for breath. Then he came on again, and Bob had to put his hands up once more.

"Smithy, stop playing the fool!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

The Bounder, unheeding the captain of the Remove, attacked Bob hotly.

Hammer and tongs they went again.

"Nice—if somebody came along, and saw this!" said Nugent.

"Nobody will in this rain, thank goodness!" said Harry. "If it wasn't pouring, though, I'd push that fool out, with a boot to help!"

Crash!

The Bounder went down again, knocked fairly off his feet. This time he landed on his back, and lay sprawling.

Bob stood panting. There was a trickle of crimson from his nose, and one of his eyes was winking. The Bounder was a hard hitter. But Vernon-Smith's own case was worse. His nose was streaming red. Smithy was going to have a prize nose, which Bob had been quite unwilling to give him. But it could not be helped, when a fellow would take no denial.

The Co. hoped that it was over now. But the Bounder was not beaten yet, and he was not the man to give in while he could carry on. For a full minute he lay panting for breath; then he scrambled up at last and renewed the combat.

But he was groggy now, and not one of his savage blows reached his opponent. Bob Cherry contented himself with stalling off attack, and the enraged Bounder exhausted himself in vain against an impregnable defence.

He desisted at last, in helpless rage, and stood leaning on the wall of the summer-house, gasping.

Bob Cherry quietly dabbed his nose. There was a grim silence in the summer-house, broken only by the dash

of the rain, and the Bounder's breathless panting;

Vernon-Smith stirred at last. He did not look at Bob Cherry; he was beaten, and he could not go on. He dragged at his bicycle, to detach it from the stack.

The black and bitter look on his face showed how deeply his defeat rankled.

"You're not going, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Evidently the sulky and savage Bounder was leaving them, in spite of the splashing rain.

Vernon-Smith did not speak. He pushed his bike out, into pouring rain.

Nugent put a hand on his arm.

"Smithy, don't be such an ass!" he exclaimed. "You can't go through this—what's the good of playing the goat? Stick here with us till it's over."

Without a word, the Bounder shook his hand savagely off, and stepped out into the drenching downpour. He tramped away through the trees, in the direction of the path, the Famous Five watching him as he went, with the rain splashing heavily upon him, soaking him to the skin.

"The utter ass!" muttered Harry uneasily.

"The sulky brute!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I couldn't help rowing with him, could I?" muttered Bob. "I suppose I chipped him a bit, when we started from the school; but no other fellow would have cared a bean. Dash it all, I'd have let him call me a liar if he'd left it at that—but I couldn't let a fellow punch my face."

"You're not to blame," said Harry. "Smithy is—he always is! Blessed if I can understand the chap, this term. He seemed decent enough in the hols—but since we came back, I can't make him out. He seems to have taken to telling crammers like Bunter, and rowing with every chap who doesn't believe him. But—I wish the silly ass hadn't gone out in the rain."

"The rainfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, lugubriously.

Not in a happy mood the five juniors stood watching the rain. It showed no sign of abating yet, and they rather hoped that Smithy would think better of it, and come back to the shelter. But there was no sign of him, and they could only conclude that the disgruntled fellow had got on his bike, and was riding back to Greyfriars through the flooding downpour. Irritating as he was, they did not like to think of that.

A half-hour crawled by drearily. Then, at last, the rain showed signs of slackening. It was still coming down, but much less heavily, though it was not likely to stop for a good time yet.

Through the clouds over the tree-tops of Lantham Chase there came a pale glimmer of watery sunshine. The rain slackened more and more.

"Now we shan't be long!" said Bob hopefully, looking out into the falling drops. "Why—hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Smithy again!"

"Smithy!" exclaimed Harry.

"Here he comes!"

The juniors stared out in surprise.

After the lapse of over half an hour they had had no expectation of seeing Smithy again. They had taken it for granted that he was miles away by that time.

Indeed, looking at the fellow who was coming towards the summer-house, they would not have taken him for Smithy if they had not seen his face.

He was not wheeling a bike, and he was wearing a raincoat, which Smithy had not been wearing. He had a dark grey cap on, not a Greyfriars School cap.

What Smithy had done with his bike, where he had borrowed a raincoat, and why he had changed his cap, mystified them. But there was no mistaking the face under the grey cap—the hard features and rather jutting nose of the Bounder.

"Well, I'm glad he's coming back," said Harry. "I hope he's got over his temper. May have been up to the house and they lent him those things. I'd be glad to borrow a dry cap and a raincoat, if there were any going. Look here, you fellows, his coming back looks as if he's got over his temper; he can't be coming here for shelter, now that the storm's nearly over. If he's going to be civil, don't let's have any more rows."

"I'll kiss him on his baby brow!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Oh, let's be civil," said Bob, "he's given me a pain in my nose—but what's the odds, so long as you're 'appy? I thought he was going to have a beetroot nose himself, but it doesn't look damaged, after all! If he's got over his tantrums, wash it all out."

The boy in the raincoat came on, but did not seem to be heading for the summer-house, to enter it. He looked as if he was taking a short cut through the rainy wood, passing the little building on his way.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched him in more and more surprise. On his looks, Smithy might not have known they were there at all.

But as he drew nearer he saw them—and stared! Why he looked surprised at the sight of them the juniors could not begin to guess, but it was no surprise to see a scowl darken on his face.

He came striding towards them. The rain was still falling, but it was falling lightly now, and the fellow in the raincoat did not heed it. He stopped at the open front of the summer-house, staring at them in the most hostile way.

"What the thump are you cads doing here?" he exclaimed. "Get out of it!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Very Queer Of Smithy!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. simply stared at him.

They had hoped—but perhaps hardly expected—that the Bounder had come back in a more friendly mood, having got over his tantrums.

But there was nothing friendly in the fellow's look, or in his words. Both were angry and hostile. That, no doubt, was to be expected from the disgruntled Bounder. But why he told them to get out was quite a mystery. He could hardly have expected them to do so at his order.

"Do you hear me?" he rapped angrily as they stared at him without replying. "I know you again—"

"You know us again!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"You're the crew who came along here a week ago and had the neck to stop me in this very wood! Think I don't know you?"

They gazed at him.

"What are you up to here?" he went on. "Trespassing, or looking for something to pinch?"

"Is he mad?" asked Bob at last. "I've thought more than once that he was a bit cracked this term."

"The madfulness must be terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, in utter wonder. "My esteemed Smithy, I—"

"I've told you to get out. Are you going?"

"Of course we're not going, until we choose!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "Smithy, old man, you've been a bit queer all this term. Last Wednesday, when we came upon you in this wood, you pretended not to know us; now you're playing the same mad game again. Are you ill, or what?"

"You called me Smithy last time I saw you. I told you that my name was not Smith! I loathe the name, if you want to know. I don't want any more silly cheek from you. Get going; you're trespassing here!"

The Famous Five could only stare at him. A week ago, when they had run him down in Lantham Chase, he had denied his identity in the same way. Why, they could not begin to guess, unless he was cracked. But he certainly did not look cracked. He looked angry, disagreeable, and aggressive. Exactly as the Bounder might have been expected to look after being licked in a scrap.

The chums of the Remove had almost forgotten his peculiar conduct of a week ago. They were reminded of it now.

"Are you waiting to be booted off this land?" asked the boy in the raincoat. "I've told you to go!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Bob. "We're going when the rain stops, not before. Come in out of it, you ass!"

"Don't play the goat, Smithy," said Frank Nugent. "You make a fellow wonder whether you're quite right in the head."

"You set of cheeky fools! I suppose you took me for somebody named Smith a week ago, when you played the silly goat. Haven't you sense enough to understand that I'm not the fellow you know when I tell you so?"

"You can tell us so till you run out of breath, but you can't expect us to take any notice of it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You're not mad, you're playing some idiotic game, and the sooner you chuck it the better!"

Harry Wharton looked hard at the angry face. He wondered whether, by some extraordinary chance, there might exist a fellow so like Herbert Vernon-Smith that he might be his twin brother.

But he shook his head. The fellow spoke and acted like a stranger, as he had done on the previous occasion in Lantham Chase. But he was Herbert Vernon-Smith, unless five fellows' eyes were deceiving them. Every line in the rather hard face was the same, and the nose—a rather uncommon nose—was the Bounder's.

"Chuck it, Smithy, and come in out of the rain!" said Bob Cherry amicably. "I don't want any more trouble, if you don't."

"You'll get trouble, whether you want it or not, you gang of trespassing rotters, if you don't clear off when you're told!"

"Catch us clearing off at your orders!" snorted Johnny Bull. "Who the dickens are you to order people off?"

"Oh! Perhaps you don't know. I happen to live here!"

"You happen to live at Lantham Chase!" howled Bob.

"Anything surprising in that? Why shouldn't I?"

"Oh crikey!"

"And the place happens to belong to my uncle—at least, he's the present tenant. Is that enough for you?"

"Off his dot!" said Bob. "If Smithy's uncle was living here we should have heard about it long ago."

"You howling ass! I've told you I'm not named Smith! If you call me Smith again I'll punch your silly face!"

"Smithy!" said Bob at once.



"Stop them!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Rot!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Let Bob whop him! Smithy's asked for it long enough!" The juniors crowded back out of the way as panting, thumping, scuffling, Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith went at it, hammer and tongs!

"That does it!"

The angry fellow made a jump at Bob, hitting out.

Bob knocked up his arm, unwilling to renew the combat; but as the fellow pushed on, hitting out again, he had to defend himself. He landed a jolt on the raincoat which sent his assailant staggering back out of the summer-house.

He staggered, stumbled, and sat down in a puddle left by the heavy rain! There was a heavy splash as he sat, and water flew up in shower.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Sorry!" said Bob. "You would have it, you know."

The fellow scrambled to his feet, his face red with rage, water and mud dripping from what had been a handsome raincoat.

He made a spring at Bob, who backed away, fending him off.

"Smithy, stop that!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "There's not going to be any more scrapping. Isn't one licking enough for you, you ass?"

"Chuck him out, if he can't behave himself!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Will you chuck it, Smithy?"

The fellow in the raincoat did not heed. He attacked Bob Cherry fiercely, and the Co., with one accord, closed in on him and dragged him back. One fight was enough for one afternoon, and they were fed up with Smithy and his tantrums.

He struggled furiously in their grasp.

"Will you chuck it?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"No, I won't! I'll smash that cad!"

"Then you'll get out, and be blowed to you!"

And four pairs of arms swung the angry fellow out of the summer-house, sending him staggering.

He sat down in another puddle.

Scrambling out, he glared at the five juniors, panting with rage.

Wharton held up his hand as he made a forward movement.

"Keep out, unless you're going to keep the peace!" he warned. "We've had enough of your rotten temper. You'll be chucked out again if you begin again."

"The chuckfulness will be terrific!"

The fellow in the raincoat paused. Angry as he was, no doubt he realised that he could not handle five fellows.

"Stick there, then, till you're chucked out!" he panted. "It won't take me long to send a keeper along to shift you!"

With that, he turned and tramped away through the weeping trees in the direction of the distant house.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose Smithy can't really be mad. But if he isn't, what is he playing this mad game for?"

Harry Wharton shook his head. He was utterly puzzled and perplexed.

Bob stepped out of the summer-house.

"Not much left now," he said.

"Better push out. The sooner we get back to the school and get into dry things, the better. There won't be any cricket at Lantham this afternoon!"

"I told you so!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Fathead! Let's get going!"

And as the rain had now thinned considerably, and did not look like stopping altogether for a long time to come, the Famous Five pushed out and wheeled their bikes back to the Lantham road. There they mounted to ride back to Greyfriars—after what they agreed was the rottenest trip they had ever had on a half-holiday.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Catch!

GERALD LODER, of the Sixth Form at Greyfriars, stopped suddenly and caught his breath. It was the sight of a Remove fellow's face that startled him.

Loder of the Sixth was in Lantham that afternoon. He had been lucky enough to arrive there before the rain started; though it was not the county match on the Ramblers ground that drew Loder to Lantham. The sportsman of the Sixth had been seeing some sporting friends at a safe distance from the school, and he had been comfortably under cover, smoking cigarettes and playing banker while the rain came down.

Walking down the High Street after the rain on his way to the station, Loder stopped at a tobacconist's he knew to renew his supply of smokes. He almost ran into a fellow coming out as he turned in at the doorway.

It was enough to make Loder jump.

Last term, Loder had lost his rank of prefect. This term, he had been reinstated in that rank. Another experience of being reduced to the ranks was ahead of Loder if it came out that he patronised tobacconist's shops at a distance from Greyfriars! Smoking was strictly forbidden at Greyfriars—and Sixth Form prefects were expected to set a good example, not a bad one!

It was fearfully annoying to Loder to be spotted like that by a junior—fairly face to face. If that young rascal, Vernon-Smith, told about this at the school, it might be unpleasant for Gerald Loder.

But—as he instantly reflected—it

would be no use for Herbert Vernon-Smith to tell the story if Herbert Vernon-Smith was run in himself—for having called at a tobacconist's! Loder's explanation was simple—he had turned in at that doorway because he had spotted the young rascal.

It was his duty, as a Sixth Form prefect, to run in any junior caught breaking the rules of the school in this flagrant way. Never had the irritated and annoyed Loder set about doing his duty so keenly. Loder was not, as a rule, a whale on duty; this time he was keen on it.

"You young sweep!" exclaimed Loder, and he grabbed the youth by the shoulder as he stepped out of the doorway. "Caught this time! You're not wearing a school cap, either—no wonder, considering. Well, I've got you!"

"You silly fool, what are you up to?" "Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Loder.

That was not the way Greyfriars juniors generally addressed Sixth Form prefects.

"Let go my shoulder, you hooligan!"

Loder stared at him. For a moment he wondered whether he had made a mistake, and it was not Vernon-Smith of the Remove at all. The boy was dressed in a dark grey lounge suit of a very quiet pattern for the Bounder, who was as loud in such things as the rules of the school allowed him to be. He wore a grey cloth cap of the same material—not a school cap.

But there was no mistaking the face and the jutting nose!

After that stare, Loder compressed his grip.

"I'm going back now," he said. "I'll take you with me, my beauty! I've had an eye on you for some time! So that's where you get your smokes, is it?"

The boy stared at him.

"You silly idiot!" he said, in the most unpleasant of tones. "Are you taking me for somebody else, like those other fools this afternoon? Let go my shoulder, or I'll hack your shins!"

"Are you going to cut if I let go?" asked Loder.

"Think I want your company, you lout?"

"I'll give you six for that later!" said Loder grimly. "And I'll keep hold of your arm, my beauty, till we get to the train! I'm taking you back just as you are—with your smokes in your pockets!"

"You bubbling booby, I've got no smokes, and it would be no business of yours if I had! Are you a plain-clothes policeman, or what?"

"Come on!" said Loder.

"Do you think I'm coming with you, you lout?"

Loder breathed hard. He was strongly tempted to box Vernon-Smith's ears, right and left. But he did not want a scene in the High Street of Lantham if he could help it. Already several passers were pausing to look on.

"Will you come with me quietly or not?" he muttered savagely.

"I won't come with you at all!"

"I'll make you, then!"

"You utter idiot, let go my arm!" exclaimed the boy in the grey cap. "What are you meddling with me for, you lunatic?"

"I'm going to take you back with your smokes in your pocket, you disgraceful young rotter!"

"I've told you I've got no smokes, you fool, and that it would be no bizney of yours if I had, idiot! I've called in that shop to get a box of chocolates, dummy! Can't you see that they sell sweetsstuffs as well as smokes, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,632.

imbecile? Anyhow, it's no concern of yours, lout! Now let go my arm, before I kick your shins!"

Smack!

The list of epithets applied to him were rather too much for Gerald Loder. He had whopped fags for much less than that. Still holding the boy's arm with one hand, he smacked his head with the other.

The boy in the grey cap gave a yell. The next moment, he kicked. It would not have been much use his punching a big Sixth Form man who towered over him. But it was a vicious hack. It caught Loder on the shin, and caused him to release his hold and stagger back with a yell of agony.

"Ow!" roared Loder. "Ooogh!"

He hopped on one leg.

There was a ripple of laughter from a dozen people up and down the pavement. Loder, hopping on one leg, looked entertaining at the moment.

The boy in the grey cap did not linger. The moment Loder's grasp was loosened, he cut away.

Loder was in no state to stop him, or to pursue him. He had a fearful pain in his shin. The grey cap disappeared down Lantham High Street.

Gerald Loder limped away to the station.

He was still limping when he got into his train. There was a bruise on his shin, and it was painful. He was still limping a little when he got out of the train, and limping as he walked to Greyfriars.

But he had one satisfaction. Vernon-Smith, marched in to his Form-master with smokes on him, would have been booked for a caning, if not a Head's flogging! But a junior who kicked a prefect's shins was booked for something more serious than that—the sack! Gerald Loder had only to report what Herbert Vernon-Smith had done, and Herbert Vernon-Smith would be taken to the headmaster and expelled from Greyfriars on the spot! And it was a bitter satisfaction to Loder to think of that prospect as he limped home.

It was close on lock-up when Loder limped in at the school gates.

Wingate and Gwynne, of the Sixth, were standing near the gateway, and they both glanced at Loder.

"Had an accident?" asked Wingate.

"I've had a hack," granted Loder, "and the young villain that hacked my shin is going to be bunked for it! Has Vernon-Smith of the Remove come in, do you know?"

"Vernon-Smith?" repeated Wingate.

"Yes, I saw him coming in before the rain stopped—looking like a drowned rat! The young sweep had been in a scrap somewhere!"

"Don't be an ass!" granted Loder.

The Greyfriars captain stared at him.

"What the dickens do you mean?" he demanded.

"I mean that it was after the rain stopped that I spotted Vernon-Smith of the Remove coming out of a tobacconist's at Lantham, and he backed my shin to get away when I collared him!"

"Must have made a mistake, old man!" said Wingate, shaking his head.

"I certainly saw the kid come in, soaked to the skin—"

"You couldn't have!" yapped Loder. "If he did, he went out again!"

"Well, if he got as far as Lantham after I saw him here, it was pretty quick work!" said Wingate. "I fancy you're making a mistake!"

"Rot!"

Loder, quite sure that he was making no mistake, limped on to the House. A few minutes later he was in Mr. Quelch's study, making his report to the master of the Remove.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Puts His Foot In It!

"STICKING here?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith asked that question in his most disagreeable tone.

Tom Redwing looked up from the table in Study No. 4.

Redwing had been spending that not very happy afternoon working out some mathematical problems for Mr. Lascelles. It was the first time he had used the study, except at prep, since his break with the Bounder—and that was only because Smithy had been out for the afternoon.

But as Smithy appeared in the doorway with Skinner in his company, he rose to his feet at once, and gathered up books and papers.

"No!" he answered curtly.

"If you are, I'm not!" snarled the Bounder.

"I'm not!"

"Get out, then!"

Redwing, without speaking again, quietly left the study.

Harold Skinner looked after him curiously as he went.

Skinner, like most other Remove fellows, had often wondered how a quiet, well-conducted, and good-tempered fellow like Redwing, could stand the Bounder of Greyfriars at all. They were as unlike as chalk and cheese! Smithy, the wealthy son of a millionaire, the breaker of bounds, study smoker, the ragger who was always in rows with somebody or other, had nothing at all in common with the quiet, serious-minded sailorman's son. That friendship was surprising—and its end, really, was not surprising.

But Skinner was surprised all the same; many fellows were surprised. For this time it was fairly well known that it was Tom Redwing who was implacable. Smithy was known to have made at least one advance towards a reconciliation. And it was quite unlike Tom to keep up a grudge—especially against the fellow who had been his best chum.

Skinner wondered what deadly offence the Bounder could have given to make a kind-hearted and forgiving fellow so unforgiving. Like every other fellow in the Form, he took it for granted that the blame was on Smithy. Everybody knew how long, and how often, Tom had borne patiently with his headstrong temper.

The Bounder flung himself into an armchair and lighted a cigarette.

Skinner, after carefully closing the door, followed his example. Skinner was always ready to play jackal. He was quite aware that Smithy was only taking him up because he had quarrelled with his chum, and did not choose to be left on his own. But that did not worry Skinner so long as he captured a share of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

"Sulky brute!" muttered the Bounder.

Skinner smiled over his cigarette. That description, in Skinner's opinion, fitted Smithy a good deal better than it did his chum.

Skinner did not intend to say so while he was smoking Smithy's smokes. But the Bounder read his thoughts easily enough.

"You think I started the row with that silly fathhead?" he snapped disagreeably.

"Oh, no, old chap; not at all!" said Skinner amicably. "I say, these are jolly good smokes!"

"You do—all the fellows do!" snarled Vernon-Smith. "Well, I didn't! I don't even know why he's got his back up."

Skinner winked at the smoke of his cigarette.

"You don't believe that, of course?" snarled Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, yes, old fellow! I say, it wasn't Redwing gave you that nose, was it?" asked Skinner.

Vernon-Smith passed his hand over his nose. It was always a somewhat prominent feature. Now it fairly leaped to the eye—it was red, and it was swollen. It was likely to be some days before Smithy's nose recovered from the effect of Bob Cherry's hefty punch.

"No, you fool!" he growled. "We haven't come to that! If he chooses to keep his silly back up for nothing, he won't get much change out of me, but we haven't come to punching noses—yet! I got this from that hooligan Cherry, over at Lantham this afternoon."

"You looked rather wet when you came in!" smiled Skinner. "I'm rather glad I didn't join up! Looked rather rainy, I thought."

"You're too rotten slack to ride it, if it was the finest day in May!"

"Hem!" murmured Skinner. And he helped himself to another smoke. Smithy's smokes were good, if his manners were not.

"That cad will be here to-morrow!" muttered the Bounder, after a grim and glum silence.

"Redwing?" asked Skinner, puzzled.

"No, you ass! That rotten relation of mine, who's coming to this school," growled the Bounder. "He's not coming to the school till next week, but he's dropping in to-morrow, I hear, for Quelch to run the rule over him." The Bounder gave a savage snarl. "Quelch told me—thought I might like to meet him. First time I meet him, I shall very likely give him a nose to match this!"

"Some poor relation after the family cash?" asked Skinner.

"No; a rotten poor relation who pretends to turn up his cheeky nose at the family cash!" grunted Vernon-Smith. "His old fool of an uncle had to pick Greyfriars for him! Blessed if I know how he can stand the fees—an old military goat, with hardly twopence to his name."

Skinner smiled at the curling smoke of his cigarette. He foresaw hectic times in the Remove when that relation of Smithy's came. If the fellow was anything like Smithy, there was likely to be trouble, and lots of it.

"Anything like you, old man?" asked Skinner blandly.

"No!" yapped the Bounder. Skinner gave him a curious look. That answer came so savagely that Skinner scented a sore subject.

"People say he's like me! They like to annoy me! I loathe the fellow—we loathed one another as kids. I haven't seen him for years; but I loathe him as much now as I did when I punched his nose at ten years old."

"Oh, my hat! You started early!"

"He gave me some Vernon swank, and I gave him a Smith jolt!" sneered the Bounder. "His Vernon nose looked pretty after I'd done with it. They could tell us apart after he got that nose."

"Tell you apart!" repeated Skinner. "He must be pretty like you, if they couldn't tell you apart!"

"It was all gammon! My pater thinks he's fearfully like me," said the Bounder savagely. "He sent me his photograph, so that I could see for myself when he wrote to mention that the cad was coming. I've got it here."

"Let's see it, old man! I'll tell you whether it's like you or not!"

"If you say it's like me, I'll heave this cushion at your head! I've had enough of that away from school—I don't want any of it here!"

Skinner laughed. "Then I'll tell you it isn't, and keep mum if it is," he said. "Let's see the thing."

The Bounder groped in his pocket and flung a small crumpled photograph on the table.

Skinner picked it up and looked at it, and laughed again.

"Fathead! You've given me one of your own!" he said. "Where's the other chap's?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith gave him a look, and grabbed up the cushion.

Skinner jumped—but he jumped too late!

The cushion flew, catching Skinner under the chin!

He went over backwards, and bumped on the floor of Study No. 4.

"You mad ass!" roared Skinner, in surprise and rage. "What the thump do you think you're doing?"

"I told you I would!" snarled the Bounder.

Skinner scrambled up.

PLEASE NOTE

Owing to the Whitsun Holiday, the next issue of the **MAGNET** will be on sale **FRIDAY, May 26th.**

"You potty chump, it's your own photo you gave me!" he howled. "Look at it!"

Vernon-Smith did not look at the photograph! He grabbed up the cushion with the evident intention of hurling it again.

Skinner dodged out of the study just in time! His friendly smoke with the Bounder had come to a very sudden termination. Quite inadvertently, Skinner had put his foot in it!

The Bounder grunted angrily and crumpled the photograph into his pocket again. Either he could not, or he would not, see that photographed face was the exact replica of his own; and Skinner's mistake roused his deepest anger.

He sat smoking in sullen irritation after Skinner had gone.

A few minutes later, the study door opened, and a fat face and a big pair of spectacles barged in.

Billy Bunter blinked at the scowling Bounder.

"I say, Smithy—" he squeaked.

"Get out, you fat frog!"

"Quelch wants you!"

"Tell him to go and eat coke!"

"Ho, he, he! I say, I fancy it's a row!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Loder's with him, looking as waxy as anything—"

"Hang Loder!"

"Quelch said—"

"Hang Quelch!"

The Bounder rose from the armchair, threw away the stump of his cigarette, and left the study—wondering savagely what Quelch had sent for him for this time.

Billy Bunter watched him disappear across the landing to the stairs. Then the fat Owl rolled into Study No. 4.

Before the Bounder was half-way down the stairs on his way to his Form-master's study, Billy Bunter was stand-

ing at an open cupboard with a lid off a toffee-tin, grabbing!

The coast was clear at long, long last, and Billy Bunter, like a homing pigeon, had got to the toffees. In Study No. 4, there was once more a happy sound of crunching and munching, munching and crunching; and life, to William George Bunter, was a grand sweet song!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not Smithy!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry stared. The Famous Five had got in at last. They were coming up to the dormitory to change, when Vernon-Smith went down from the Remove passage, and they met him on the middle landing.

Five pairs of eyes turned on Smithy's red, almost flaming, nose.

That nose looked as if it had had a very hard punch—as, indeed, it had. Bob had expected it to look something like that, after the scrap in the summer-house at Lantham Chase.

But the fellow in the raincoat had turned up with an undamaged nose, so Bob had, of course, concluded that the damage had not been great, after all.

So Smithy's flaming nose now made him stare.

"Been in another scrap, Smithy?" he asked.

"No, you fool!"

"You look as if you had," grinned Bob. "I'm glad I never damaged your boko like that, old bean."

The Bounder scowled at him.

"What do you mean, you blockhead? You know you did it," he snarled. "I'll give you one like it some time. You fool, do you think I'm going to complain to a beak about your punching my nose?"

"No, ass! But I never made it blossom like that," said Bob. "It looked all right when you came back, so you must have got it since."

"When I came back?" repeated Vernon-Smith. "Came back where?"

"Still playing your funny game? Have you forgotten that you came back to that summer-house, and kicked up another row?"

"Mad, I suppose," said Vernon-Smith; and, with that, he passed the Famous Five, and went down the lower staircase.

They stared after him as he went.

"The crackfulness of the absurd Smithy must be terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "He has forgotten that he came back and kicked up another preposterous shindy."

"I give up trying to make him out," said Bob. "You fellows know that his boko never showed a mark when he came back. He's picked up that nose since in another row. Why he should tell lies about it beats me."

"Making a habit of it," grunted Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five went on up the stairs, and Smithy continued on his way down.

He arrived at Mr. Quelch's study, tapped, and entered.

Loder of the Sixth was standing by the Form-master's table, and his eyes gleamed at the Bounder as he came in.

Vernon-Smith gave him no attention. He looked at his Form-master.

"Bunter says you sent him for me, sir."

Mr. Quelch gave him a grim look.

"I have sent for you, Vernon-Smith, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,632.

to take you to your headmaster," he answered.

"What have I done now, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a bitter emphasis on the word "now."

"As you see Loder here, Vernon-Smith, you must be aware of the report I have just received," said the Remove master coldly.

"I don't see how I can know anything about it, sir," said Vernon-Smith, angry and surprised. "How should I know?"

"If it is your intention to resort to useless prevarication—"

The Bounder's eyes blazed.

"Am I to be set down as a liar before I've said a word?" he exclaimed passionately. "I haven't the faintest idea what Loder has reported. How should I have, when I haven't seen him since dinner in Hall?"

Loder gave quite a jump.

"Are you telling Mr. Quelch that you have not seen me since dinner?" he ejaculated.

"Of course I am, as I haven't seen you!" snapped the Bounder. "What do you mean? Mr. Quelch, if Loder says I've done anything, it's a lie!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"How dare you, Vernon-Smith?"

"I say it's a lie!" repeated the Bounder. "I've done nothing, except a fight with a fellow in my Form, and, if it's that, why hasn't he reported Cherry, too?"

"It is not that, as you know perfectly well, Vernon-Smith. Loder has reported you for entering the tobacconist's shop at Lantham, and kicking him on the shin in the most brutal manner when he detected you."

The Bounder stared at Loder. There was blank surprise in his face for a moment or two. Then his look grew black and savage.

"Is that supposed to have happened this afternoon?" he asked.

"You are aware—"

"Am I supposed to be a thought-reader?" hissed the Bounder. "If Loder says it happened at all, he's a liar! And if he says that it happened this afternoon, I can prove that it is a lie!"

Loder's face was crimson.

"Mr. Quelch—" he gasped.

"You need not fear, Loder, that I shall take any notice of this boy's unscrupulous accusation," said the Remove master quietly. "But we must make sure that there is no mistake in the matter."

"There is no mistake in the matter, sir. I caught him coming out of the shop, and he hacked my shin when I ordered him to come back to the school with me."

"I did not," said Vernon-Smith. "I haven't been in Lantham this afternoon, and you never saw me there, and you know you did not!"

"Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch sternly, "you were one of the Remove boys who were given leave to go to Lantham this afternoon to see the county match there."

"Is that all that Loder's got to go upon?" sneered the Bounder. "Well, as it happens, I started alone, but I picked up five other fellows on the way, and they can tell you that I never got to Lantham. We all parked in a hut in Lantham Chase to get out of the rain. I never got within a mile of Lantham."

"Can you say, Vernon-Smith, that you remained with five other boys all the while you were out of gates?"

"No," muttered the Bounder. "We had a row, and I left them, and came back through the rain."

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"At what time did you leave them?" "I don't know—between three and four, I suppose."

"It was after five o'clock that I saw Vernon-Smith in Lantham, sir," said Loder.

The Bounder burst into a laugh.

"Call Wingate, sir," he said.

"Wingate!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that it was striking five when I came in, and Wingate saw me and spoke to me. He told me I was a young ass to get drenched like that, and to go and change at once. He told me he had a good mind to give me six for fighting, too. He will remember, if you ask him."

The Bounder laughed again.

"Loder saw me at Lantham when I was changing in the Remove dorm," he said. "Silliest lie I've ever heard."

Loder's face flamed.

"Vernon-Smith is lying, and in the most reckless manner!" he exclaimed. "It is only necessary to call Wingate, sir. You can see that Vernon-Smith has been fighting. That is plain enough. Well, he had not been fighting when I saw him in Lantham. His nose was not swollen then as it is now."

"My nose has been like this ever since Bob Cherry punched it, about three o'clock this afternoon," said Vernon-Smith.

"Let Wingate be called, sir," said Loder viciously. "You have heard this junior say that the captain of the school saw his face in that disfigured state at five o'clock. I state that it was not disfigured when I saw him in Lantham a good deal after five. One word from Wingate, sir, will prove that this junior is lying."

Mr. Quelch, in silence, touched a bell. Trotter was sent to request the captain of Greyfriars to come to the study. The Remove master's face was thoughtful, and troubled.

That Loder was telling the truth, or what he believed to be the truth, was plain enough to Mr. Quelch, though the suspicious Bounder did not think so. But, to all appearance, Vernon-Smith was telling the truth, also.

That two diametrically opposed statements could both be true seemed impossible, but it brought back to Mr. Quelch's mind a mistake he had made himself only a few days ago, when he had been assured that he had found Vernon-Smith out of bounds, and it had been proved that Smithy was in gates all the time.

That strange mistake had worried and puzzled the Remove master a great deal. He could not account for it, and it had troubled his mind ever since.

But such a mistake as he had made himself might have been made also by Loder of the Sixth. It seemed inexplicable, but it was possible.

Wingate of the Sixth entered the study. He glanced inquiringly at the Remove master.

The Bounder smiled. He believed that Loder was lying to pay off some old grudge. But even the Bounder, with all his wild and reckless suspicions, did not suppose that Wingate was capable of falsehood. He was feeling quite safe.

"Wingate, did you see this junior return to the school this afternoon?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"Was his face disfigured when you saw him as it is now?"

"Yes, sir. I spoke to him about it."

"What time was this, Wingate?"

"Five o'clock, sir."

"It can't have been!" exclaimed

Loder. "For goodness' sake think before you speak, Wingate!"

Wingate stared at him.

"It was five o'clock, Loder," he answered. "Five was striking when Vernon-Smith came into the House, and I spoke to him."

"That's impossible! I tell you I saw him in Lantham, and he hacked my shin after five o'clock, and his face was not disfigured then!" roared Loder.

"That's a mistake, Loder," said Wingate, shaking his head.

"It was not a mistake!"

"Must have been! A kid can't be in two places at once! Vernon-Smith was in the school at five o'clock."

"He was not, and cannot have been!"

"Keep it up!" sneered the Bounder. "You've tried to make me out a liar; now try to make Wingate out one!"

"Silence, Vernon-Smith!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sternly. "It is your own disregard of the truth that causes you to attribute falsehood to others! A mistake has been made in this matter."

"I made no mistake, sir!" said Loder.

"A few days ago, Loder, I made a similar error," said Mr. Quelch. "It is an extraordinary thing, but it occurred. I cannot account for it, except on the supposition that there is some boy in this neighbourhood who bears an extraordinary resemblance to Vernon-Smith. This resemblance deceived me, and it must have deceived you, for it is clear that Vernon-Smith was not in Lantham at the time you thought you saw him there."

"That is quite certain, sir," said Wingate.

Loder set his lips. He had an aching shin, and he did not believe that he had made such a mistake; he could not believe so. An old ass like Quelch might, but not Gerald Loder!

"Wingate is mistaken, sir," he said.

Wingate smiled.

"Five or six other Sixth Form men were mistaken, too, then," he said. "There were quite a crowd of us looking out at the rain when the kid came in. Gwynne and Sykes and several other Sixth Form men saw the kid, and heard me speak to him."

"That matter is settled!" said Mr. Quelch; and even Loder had nothing to say to that. "Vernon-Smith, you may go!"

The Bounder went, grinning!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Last Word!

"TOM!"

Tom Redwing started. In break, the following morning, Tom Redwing was sauntering by the old elms, his hands in his pockets, a thoughtful frown on his face. His eyes were on the ground, and he did not notice the junior who leaned on one of the old trees watching him as he paced. He started at the sound of the Bounder's voice.

He glanced quickly round, coloured a little as he met the Bounder's eyes, and turned away without speaking.

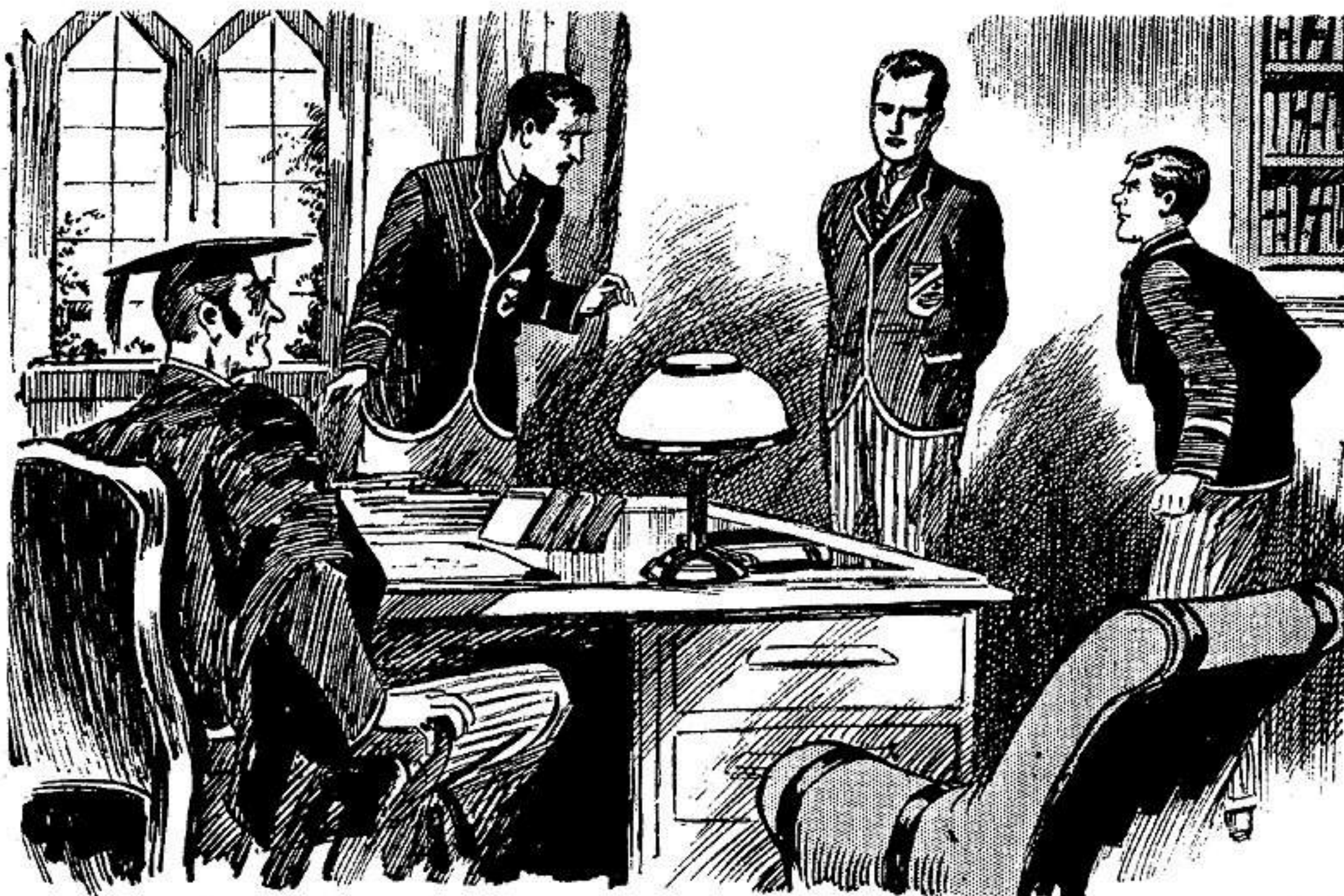
"Stop!" Vernon-Smith rapped out the word sharply.

And, as Tom did not stop, Smithy made a stride forward, grasped him by the arm, and dragged him to a halt.

Tom stopped then, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Hands off, Vernon-Smith!" he said in a very quiet tone. "I don't want a row with you; I want you to keep clear of me! Leave me alone!"

"I'm going to speak to you!"



"A kid can't be in two places at once!" said Wingate. "Vernon-Smith was in school at five o'clock." "He was not!" roared Loder. "I tell you I saw him in Lantham!" "Keep it up!" sneered the Bounder. "You've tried to make me out a liar, Loder—now try to make Wingate out one!"

"You're not!"

"Either that, or a scrap!" said Vernon-Smith. "You can take your choice, you sulky fool!"

Tom Redwing drew a deep breath.

"I don't want to scrap with you," he said, "and I don't want you to speak to me! If you insist on it, Vernon-Smith—"

"Not Smithy now!" sneered the Bounder.

"Cut it short!"

Vernon-Smith released his arm. He stood with a strange mixture of expressions on his face—anger, perplexity, bitter resentment, and, at the same time, something kinder.

"You want this to go on?" he asked in a low voice.

"If you mean that I bar you, yes."

"Why?"

"You know why."

"Lots of reasons. I dare say," admitted Smithy. "We're as unlike as chalk and cheese; we haven't a taste in common; you dislike everything I do, and I get bored stiff with everything you do. But that hasn't prevented us from being friends for a long time. I've got a rotten temper; every man in the Remove says that nobody but you would stand it. I know that. But that's nothing new. If you wanted to bar me for any of those reasons it's rather late in the day now."

"It's for none of those reasons, and you know it."

"Well, I don't know it," said Vernon-Smith. "Ever since Saturday you've been playing this stiff-necked game, and I don't know why. I never was the fellow to make the first advance after a row; but I've done it once, and I'm doing it again. It doesn't come easy to a fellow like me. If I can put my pride in my pocket, and make the first step, can't you make the second?"

"No!"

"That's that, then!" said Vernon-Smith, still in the same quiet tone. "But when you've been friends with a fellow for whole terms, and you turn him down all of a sudden, you're bound to give a reason. I've said that I know I've got a rotten temper. I may be to blame. If I am I'll make it up if I can. But I want to know. What have I said or done?"

Tom did not answer.

"Those cads, Wharton and his gang, lied when they said they saw me at Lantham last week," continued Vernon-Smith. "You didn't believe they were lying; we rowed about that. Is that it?"

"You know it isn't."

"Quelch pretended that he thought he spotted me out of bounds to get shut of me. I said he was lying; you said it must be a mistake. We had another row about that. Is that it?"

"You know it isn't."

"I got ratty when you said that that photograph of my cousin, Herbert Vernon, was like me. Is that it?"

"You know it isn't," said Redwing, for the third time.

The Bounder breathed hard.

"Well, I've run over everything I can think of," he said. "Will you tell me what the trouble is?"

"You know what it is, and it's not a thing I like to speak of," answered Tom Redwing. "Why can't you leave me alone?"

"I'll leave you alone fast enough after this if we can't clear it up!" said Vernon-Smith, his eyes flashing. "It's not my way to eat humble pie, and this is the last time ever! I want to make sure there's no silly misunderstandings before I throw you over for good. If some fellow has been making mischief—Skinner, perhaps—"

"Don't talk rot!"

"Well, what is it, then?" exclaimed the Bounder, his hard-held temper beginning to get the upper hand. "Give it a name."

"You know what you did on Saturday. What's the good of jawing?"

"On Saturday?" repeated the Bounder blankly. "I did nothing special on Saturday that I know of."

Redwing's lip curled.

"Perhaps you thought I should stand that along with the rest," he said. "I've been pretty patient—more patient than a fellow ought to be, perhaps. But there's a limit."

"What did I do?" exclaimed Smithy, angry, but more puzzled than angry. "You're talking in silly riddles!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Tom wearily.

"You're not getting on the high horse because I got out of bounds at the Three Fishers? Is that anything new?"

"I never even knew you went out of bounds—if you did."

"Oh, don't be an ass! You know that Wingate spotted me there, and you came to Quelch's study and got me clear by making out that you'd seen me in Pegg Lane, three miles away, at the time."

"I did see you in Pegg Lane, and you know it."

"You did not."

"You know I did."

The Bounder stared at him.

"Do you really think you did?" he exclaimed. "I was surprised when you came and spoofed Quelch with that yarn; I never thought you'd do it, even to save my skin! Did you really fancy you'd seen me there?"

"Oh, drop it!"

"Well, even then I don't see what

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(Continued from page 13.)

the row's about. I certainly thought you were spoofing Quelch to get me clear. But it seems that you did fancy you saw me in Pegg Lane. Well, then, what about it? Nothing for you to get your back up in that, is there?"

Redwing looked at him.

"I don't make you out," he said. "I saw you in Pegg Lane that afternoon and tried to make it up. We'd had a row, but we've always had rows, and it was always left to me to make it up; and I did, as usual. You struck me in the face for my pains. Possibly you thought I should stand for that along with the rest. Goodness knows what you expect a fellow to stand! If you did you made a mistake."

Herbert Vernon-Smith gazed at him, silent, his breath seeming to be taken away. There was utter amazement in his face.

"Are you mad?" he gasped at last.

"Oh, chuck it!"

"You say you saw me in Pegg Lane that day; you might have fancied so, though I was not there. But you say I struck you. You can't have fancied that. Are you joining up with Wharton's crew in telling lies about a fellow?"

Vernon-Smith's face flamed:

"One liar make many, I suppose," he said. "You're catching it from that crew. You cur! You've had lots of reasons for chucking me if you wanted to. I've been in the wrong often enough. Now you're going to tell a silly lie about it as an excuse. You rotter! You've asked me to leave you alone. I'll leave you alone fast enough after this, you cur! That's my last word to you, you rotter!"

Vernon-Smith's voice was raised in passionate anger.

Five or six fellows looked round at him.

"Telling the world, Smithy?" yelled out Bolsover major.

"For goodness' sake don't shout, Smithy!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "All Greyfriars doesn't want to know that you're rowing with your pal!"

The Bounder stared round at them with gleaming eyes. Then he looked at Redwing again, and seemed on the point of another passionate outburst. But he checked it, and turned his back on Tom and stalked away.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Ghost!

BILLY BUNTER stared.

After dinner that day the Owl of the Remove was adorning the gateway with his podgy person.

His thoughts were dwelling, with rappy satisfaction, on the veal-and-ham pie that had provided the school dinner. On such subjects Bunter's fat thoughts delighted to dwell. It had been a scrumptious veal-and-ham pie, and Bunter had had almost as many

helpings as he had wanted. Life once more was a grand sweet song—well worth living, in Billy Bunter's opinion.

But the fat Owl forgot even the veal-and-ham pie as a taxicab turned in at the gates. He stared at the two occupants, with his little round eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

One of them was a stocky man, with a rather military look, and a face deeply bronzed by tropic suns. He was well dressed, though a keener eye than Bunter's might have detected that the well-cut clothes were well worn. Skinner would have set him down at a glance as "shabby genteel."

Bunter had never seen him before, and was not interested in him now. It was the man's companion that interested him.

Bunter was sure, or almost sure, that Herbert Vernon-Smith had gone up to his study after dinner. He was sure, or almost sure, that the Bounder was smoking cigarettes there. Bunter was so sure of this that he had abandoned an idea he had had of exploring Smithy's study cupboard for something sweet and sticky to follow the veal-and-ham pie.

So how Vernon-Smith came to be sitting in that taxicab was quite a mystery to Billy Bunter.

But there he was. Billy Bunter's vision was not keen, but he knew at a glance that hard face and jutting nose.

He blinked at him in great astonishment.

The taxi passed on.

Billy Bunter stared after it. He saw it stop at the House, and a man and a boy alight and enter.

Billy Bunter rolled off to the House. It was really amazing that Smithy had got out without Bunter seeing him go. But he must have, as some old sportsman was bringing him back in a taxicab.

It looked to Bunter as if Smithy had been up to something out of gates, and that old sportsman had copped him and run him in. If he was taking him to Quelch, or the Head, one thing was certain—he would be clear of his study. There was nothing now to stop Bunter's explorations in that quarter.

Bunter rolled up to the Remove.

He found the Famous Five on the Remove landing. But Cherry was proposing a slide down the banisters—an exploit strictly forbidden by the laws of the House. His four friends were advising him, variously, not to be an ass, a fathead, a cuckoo, and a goat.

"I say, you fellows, seen Smithy?" asked Bunter.

"In his study, I think," answered Nugent.

"I mean, has he just come up?"

"No; haven't seen him for a quarter of an hour."

"That's all right then," said Bunter.

"I say, Smithy's in a row again! Ain't he the fellow for rows! He, he, he!"

"Oh, what's up now?" asked Bob.

"I don't know what's up, but some old johnny has just brought him back to the school in a taxi. Must have been up to something out of gates—trespassing, I expect."

The Famous Five looked at Bunter.

"Dreaming?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Smithy's in his study!"

"He jolly well ain't, unless he came up only a minute ago," said Bunter.

"Did he pass you just before I came up?"

"No, ass!"

"Then he ain't in his study. That old sportsman must have been taking him to Quelch, or the Head. I say, you fellows, what do you think Smithy's been up to this time?"

"Nothing this time, old fat man. He hasn't been out of gates since dinner."

"I tell you I saw him——"

"You want some new specs."

"Think I don't know Smithy when I see him?" hooted Bunter. "He was tiffing in the taxi—I mean sitting in the taxi——"

"Bosh!"

"And he must be in a row, or that old sketch wouldn't be bringing him back to the school. Smithy's always getting into rows, and now he's got into another."

Skinner came up the stairs after Bunter. There was a grin on Skinner's face.

"Smithy's for it again!" he remarked.

"I say, did you see him, Skinner?" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "Wasn't he with an old bean with a face like a Turkey carpet?"

"Tough-looking old johnny," said Skinner. "He was marching Smithy into the Head's study. Must be something up."

"I thought Smithy was in his own study," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, he jolly well isn't!" said Skinner. "More trouble for poor old Smithy! Don't he beg for it? He's with the Big Beak now."

And Skinner went up the Remove passage, laughing. Perhaps Skinner remembered that cushion of the previous afternoon. He seemed quite amused at the idea that the Bounder was for it again.

"Well, I'm blessed if I know how Smithy went out without passing us," said Bob. "Sure it was Smithy, Bunter?"

"He, he, he! Think I don't know his ugly mug?" grinned Bunter.

And the fat Owl rolled on up the Remove passage for Study No. 4.

That study was untenanted now. Bunter had seen Redwing in the quad, and Smithy was with the old sportsman who had brought him in. If there was anything sweet and sticky in Smithy's study cupboard, as was very probable, Bunter was going to send it down to see how the veal-and-ham pie was getting on.

He stopped at the door of Study No. 4, turned the handle, and threw the door open. He rolled happily in.

A figure rose from an armchair, staring at him, a cigarette between finger and thumb.

"You fat goat, what do you want?" rapped a well-known voice, in angry surprise.

Bunter jumped.

He fairly bounded.

His eyes popped.

In utter stupefaction, he stared at Herbert Vernon-Smith. Smithy was in the Head's study downstairs. Bunter knew that. Yet here he was in his own study. It made the fat Owl's brain reel.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oooh!"

Vernon-Smith glared at him.

"You mad porpoise, what's the matter with you? What are you goggling at mo like that for? Gone batchy?"

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, it's Smithy's ghost!" gasped Bunter. He made a backward jump out of the study. "Help!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What the thump——"

"Ow! Help! It's his ghost!" yelled Bunter. "He ain't here! It's his giggling-ghost! Oh crikey! He's in the Head's study, and here, too—— Oh lor'!"

"You mad ass!" roared Vernon-Smith.

"Ow! Help!" yelled Bunter.

The Bounder made an angry stride at him.

Billy Bunter cut down the Remove passage, yelling. He crashed into the Famous Five, coming up the passage to see what on earth was the matter.

"I say, you fellows, help!" yelled Bunter. "It's his ghost! It's after me! Keep it off! Oh lor'!"

Harry Wharton & Co. grabbed the fat junior, and brought him to a halt.

Vernon-Smith came out of his study, staring.

"What's the matter with that fat fool?" he exclaimed. "Has he gone off his dot, or what?"

"Keep it off!" shrieked Bunter.

"You potty porpoise!" roared Bob Cherry. "What are you burbling about? It's only Smithy."

"Tain't! Smithy's downstairs!" gurgled Bunter. "I saw him, and Skinner saw him, in the Head's study."

"It's Smithy, you blithering walrus!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"How can it be Smithy when he's downstairs?"

"You howling ass, how can he be downstairs when he's here?"

"He ain't here——" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Mad as a hatter!" grunted Vernon-Smith, and he went back into his study and slammed the door.

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, oh lor'!" stuttered Bunter. "He's in the Head's study—and—and—and he—he—he's here! I say, it gave me a turn, seeing him, when I knew he was downstairs——"

"You blithering owl——"

"I tell you——" shrieked Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter, and he rolled rapidly away towards the stairs.

Unless a fellow could be in two places at once, Herbert Vernon-Smith could not possibly be in his own study. He was in Dr. Locke's study. Yet there he was. In which extraordinary and uncanny circumstance, Billy Bunter preferred to get off the scene—and he got off it promptly.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Cousin I.

"CAPTAIN VERNON!"

The stocky man with the tropical complexion stepped into Dr. Locke's study, as Trotter opened the door and gave in his name.

The boy who had accompanied him in the taxi followed him in.

Trotter drew the door shut; with a compassionate glance at the boy as he did so. The House page had no doubt that Vernon-Smith of the Remove was for it: marched in to his headmaster by a stranger, who had brought him to the school in the taxicab. His impression was the same as Bunter's and Skinner's had been.

Dr. Locke rose from his chair.

He was expecting that visitor that day after lunch. Captain Vernon was bringing the boy who was related to Vernon-Smith of the Remove, and who was to enter a junior Form at Greyfriars the following week. It was as good as settled that the new boy would enter the Remove; but Mr. Quelch had to see him first, and decide upon that.

The headmaster of Greyfriars shook hands with the bronzed captain, and begged him to be seated. He did not for the moment glance at the boy who had followed the captain in; but as Captain Vernon sat down, the Head's

eyes turned on the boy and he started.

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke.

"What are you here for, Vernon-Smith? You should not come to my study without being sent for, as you know very well. Go away at once!"

The boy looked at him not very pleasantly. The name of Vernon-Smith did not seem to have a pleasing ring to his ears.

"I——" he began, in a rather sulky tone.

"Leave my study at once!"

"But——"

"I have told you to leave my study, Vernon-Smith!"

"My dear sir——" exclaimed Captain Vernon, staring.

"I understood, sir, that you were to bring your nephew with you this afternoon," said Dr. Locke.

"I have done so," said the captain. "My nephew is here."

"Please call him into the study, then," said the Head. "As for this impertinent boy——"

"I fail to understand you, Dr. Locke," exclaimed Captain Vernon.

"This boy is my nephew."

Dr. Locke blinked at him.

He blinked at the tropical captain, he blinked at the boy, and then he blinked back at the captain.

"Will you explain your meaning, Captain Vernon?" he asked. "This boy is Herbert Vernon-Smith, of Mr. Quelch's Form."

"This boy is my nephew, Herbert Vernon, cousin of the boy Vernon-Smith, who is at Greyfriars School," said the captain.

"Bless my soul!"

"I have heard that there is a resemblance between them," said the captain. "Indeed, in earlier years, they were often taken for one another, on the rare occasions when they were under the same roof."

"Bless my soul!" repeated the headmaster of Greyfriars blankly.

He fixed his eyes on the boy. He resembled the captain to some extent—they had the same jutting nose—the Vernon nose. But his likeness to Herbert Vernon-Smith was not merely a resemblance. In looks, he was the Bounder of Greyfriars over again.

Even now he knew that he was not Smithy, but Smithy's cousin, the Head could detect no difference. He could, in fact, hardly believe the statement that the captain had made.

Captain Vernon smiled faintly.

"The resemblance is, I think, striking," he said. It might have been supposed that the captain was pleased by that circumstance, though his nephew very obviously was not. "Mr. Vernon-Smith remarked on it, when I saw him a week or two ago. It has often been remarked on, though the two boys have not met for a good many years."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, for the third time.

"And you took him for his cousin, Herbert Vernon-Smith, when he entered this study, sir?" asked the captain, his eyes on the headmaster's astounded face, with a peculiar gleam in them.

"I assuredly did—and I can scarcely believe now that he is not Herbert Vernon-Smith!" said Dr. Locke. "Not only the same features—but the same expression—indeed, every detail——"

"I do not think, sir, that the resemblance will cause any confusion," said the captain. "When they are seen together, points of dissimilarity will be quite evident."

"Yes, yes, no doubt!" said Dr. Locke, still gazing at Herbert Vernon. "But—but the resemblance is really extraordinary, even between such near relatives. Very extraordinary indeed.

Bless my soul! This extraordinary resemblance may account for a very strange mistake that was made last week by a member of my staff. That is, if this boy, Vernon, was in this neighbourhood a week ago. A very singular mistake——"

"Lanham Chase is about eight miles away, I think," said the captain; "but Bertie has explored the country a good deal on his bicycle——"

"I will send for Mr. Quelch!" said the Head.

He touched the bell for Trotter.

Mr. Quelch entered the study in a couple of minutes. He bowed to the captain, gave the boy a cold look, and glanced inquiringly at the Head.

"Look at this boy, Mr. Quelch!" said Dr. Locke. "Would you not suppose him to be Vernon-Smith, of your Form?"

Mr. Quelch gave a little jump.

"I do not quite follow you, sir," he answered. "This boy is Vernon-Smith, of my Form."

"You also take him for Vernon-Smith?" said the captain, again with that peculiar gleam in his dark eyes.

"Really, sir, I fail to understand you! I must be supposed to recognise a boy of my own Form!" said Mr. Quelch, with a trace of testiness.

The boy's face was growing darker and darker. Smithy's bitter dislike of that family resemblance was evidently shared to the full by his cousin Vernon.

All this was gall and wormwood to Bertie Vernon, as his looks showed plainly enough. But even that sulky resentment in his face only reproduced the Bounder's looks. Only too often was that very expression on Smithy's face.

"This boy is not Vernon-Smith, Mr. Quelch!" said Dr. Locke.

"Sir!"

"He is Vernon-Smith's cousin, Vernon, the boy who is to enter a junior Form here next week."

"Dr. Locke!"

The boy was watching Mr. Quelch's face. His chief feeling was plainly annoyance at the discussion of his resemblance to Smithy. But there was a curious look in his eyes as he surveyed the Remove master. It was a look of recognition. This was the first time he had entered Greyfriars School; but he had seen the master of the Remove before.

"It is amazing, is it not, Mr. Quelch?" said Dr. Locke. "You are aware, sir, that Captain Vernon has lately taken up his residence at Lanham Chase, and it is possible, therefore, that you have seen this boy before and mistaken him for Vernon-Smith."

Quelch's gimlet eyes almost penetrated the sulky face of the new boy.

"Do you assure me, sir, that this boy actually is not Vernon-Smith?" he exclaimed blankly.

"Certainly."

"Then I can only say that I am amazed. It has happened before that a boy in my Form had a relative who resembled him very strangely—but nothing to this extent. Nothing at all like this! I am amazed! I can scarcely believe, sir, that this boy is not Herbert Vernon-Smith."

Captain Vernon smiled.

"He is my nephew, Bertie Vernon!" he said.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch. He scanned the boy again. "Yes, I can see now that he is not the same."

The captain gave a start.

"Indeed! In what point do you detect a difference, sir?" he exclaimed quite sharply.

"I recall now that Vernon-Smith has

a swollen nose, from some fight in which he was engaged yesterday!" said Mr. Quelch. "As this boy's face shows no such disfigurement—"

Captain Vernon smiled again.

"I see!" he agreed. "A temporary and accidental point of dissimilarity!"

"But the resemblance is amazing!" said the Remove master.

"It may account for that very strange mistake, Mr. Quelch," said Dr. Locke. "You will remember that you reported Vernon-Smith to me one day last week for having been out of bounds and having refused to return to the school at your order—and it transpired that the boy had not been out of gates—"

Mr. Quelch started. He fixed his eye on the boy again.

"Were you in Courtfield on your bicycle last Thursday?" he asked.

"Yes, I was!" muttered Bertie Vernon.

"Then no doubt it was you that I saw!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You will recall—"

"I remember perfectly, sir! I did not know then that you were a master at Greyfriars School! I had never seen you before."

"Yes, yes; quite so! But—"

"I thought you must be out of your senses when you suddenly collared me," said Vernon sulkily. "What was I to think?"

Mr. Quelch coloured.

He had never been able to understand that strange mistake—till now! Now it was clear enough!

It was very sharply in his memory that the boy at Courtfield had called him an old donkey! The Remove master's cheeks burned.

"That strange mistake is now explained," said Dr. Locke. "Had you been aware of the resemblance between Vernon-Smith and his cousin, Mr. Quelch, no doubt you would have realised—"

"Yes, yes; certainly!" said Mr. Quelch, somewhat confused. "The same mistake was made by Loder of the Sixth Form yesterday. I shall, of course, dismiss from my mind the disrespectful words this boy used in the very peculiar circumstances. He must have been—hem!—very surprised—hem! Yet surely, in view of his resemblance to his cousin, he might have guessed—"

"I'm not like him!" said Bertie Vernon sullenly.

"What?"

"If I am, I don't see it."

Mr. Quelch frowned. There was a sulky hint of impertinence in the boy's tone and manner, which was as like the Bounder as his looks.

"That will do, Bertie!" said the captain sharply. "It seems that you have been disrespectful to Mr. Quelch, and he is kind enough to overlook your disrespect in the circumstances. Please excuse the boy's remark, Mr. Quelch—his resemblance to his cousin is a sore point with him. I am sorry to say that they are not friends."

"Oh, certainly!" said Mr. Quelch, rather dryly.

"Vernon, you will go with Mr. Quelch to his study!" said Dr. Locke. "Mr. Quelch will decide whether you are to enter his Form here."

"Very well, sir!" said the boy.

Then, as if with an effort, he cleared the sulky expression from his face, and gave the Remove master a very frank look.

"I am sorry, sir!" he said. "I had no idea, that day in Courtfield, that you had taken me for my cousin. I hope you will allow me to apologise for the disrespectful words I used. I am sorry—very sorry indeed!"

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Mr. Quelch's face cleared also. The boy's look and tone at that moment were quite unlike the Bounder's.

He spoke with evident sincerity—and the fact that he was sorry for having been disrespectful to a beak, showed that his resemblance to Smithy was, after all, only skin-deep.

"My dear boy, say no more about the matter," said Mr. Quelch, quite genially. "I shall forget it entirely. Now come with me to my study."

At the corner of Head's passage, as the new boy followed his future Form-master, they passed Temple of the Fourth coming away from Mr. Capper's study.

Cecil Reginald Temple looked at Bertie Vernon and whispered to him, after Mr. Quelch had passed.

"What's the row, Smithy?" he asked.

Vernon gave him a stare.

"Don't be a silly ass!" he answered.

And he walked on after Mr. Quelch, leaving Cecil Reginald Temple staring.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Two Of Them!

TOM REDWING glanced at the taxicab turning out of the school gateway, and glanced again at the sight of the boy sitting in it by the side of the gentleman with the tropical complexion.

It was drawing near time for afternoon class; and Redwing was surprised to see Herbert Vernon-Smith leaving the school in a taxi.

Smithy—if it was Smithy, as Tom did not at that moment doubt—was not wearing his school cap or his usual clothes; he was wearing the dark grey suit he had been wearing that day in Pegg Lane, when an angry blow had terminated a friendship that had stood so many vicissitudes.

Tom felt his heart growing suddenly heavy.

Smithy was leaving—and no longer looking like a Greyfriars fellow! Did that mean that he was sacked, and that some relative was taking him away? The dark-complexioned man was plainly a relative—the family nose was unmistakable.

Tom stood staring after the taxi as it buzzed away from the school.

He was through with Vernon-Smith; that friendship was over and done with—a thing of the past. But the thought of Smithy being sacked gave him a deep pang, all the same. And what else could this mean?

Redwing turned away with a clouded face and a heart like lead.

Friendship, after all, did not perish so easily. He realised that he was still deeply concerned about the Bounder, in spite of that angry blow which rankled so deeply and made his cheeks burn when he thought of it.

He moved off slowly to the House. He had heard nothing if the Bounder was in trouble again. Smithy, on their present terms, was not likely to tell him anything—but surely there would have been talk! He knew that Smithy had been up before Quelch the previous day on account of some report of Loder's; but nothing seemed to have come of that. What could have happened since?

He joined the Famous Five in the quad.

"Have you fellows heard?" he asked.

"Which and what?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"About Smithy!"

"Smithy! Don't say he's in another row!"

"I'm afraid it's the end," said Tom.

"I've just seen him go—"

"Eh?"

"He's just left—"

"Smithy's just left!" repeated Harry Wharton blankly. A minute ago the Famous Five had passed Herbert Vernon-Smith coming out of the tuckshop. So that statement was surprising.

"Yes," said Tom. "I—I—I wish—I wish— Well, it's too late now! Poor old Smithy! But what's happened? Have you fellows heard nothing?"

"Nothing about Smithy!" said Frank Nugent. "What on earth makes you think Smithy's left?"

"I've just seen him! He went in a taxi with some relation, I suppose—not his father—"

"He—he—he went in a taxi?" stammered Bob Cherry.

"He hadn't his school cap on, and he had changed his clothes! That looks—"

"He had his school cap on a minute ago!" said Johnny Bull. "Are you seeing ghosts like Bunter, or what?"

"What do you mean?"

"Bunter saw Smithy upstairs and downstairs at the same time!" grinned Bob. "So he took one of them for a ghost! The veal-and-ham pie must have got into his head!"

"I don't understand you! I saw Smithy five minutes ago, going away in a taxi with a man who looked like a relation—"

"Ghosts, for a cert!" said Bob. "You see, about a minute or two ago we saw Smithy go into the tuckshop, and he's there now!"

Redwing compressed his lips.

"It's not a joking matter," he said.

"I know you fellows have had a lot to stand from Smithy; but I should have thought you'd be sorry if any man in the Remove was sacked."

"So we jolly well should be!" said Harry Wharton. "But nobody's sacked that I know of, or going to be. Smithy's in the tuckshop."

"Don't talk rot!" said Redwing sharply.

Wharton looked at him.

"Thanks!" he said dryly. "You seem to be picking up your pal's manners, old bean! If that means that you don't believe what I say, go and put your nose into the tuckshop!"

"Will you stop talking rot?" exclaimed Tom angrily. "This isn't fun to me if it is to you. You—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

"What?"

Tom Redwing spun round. His eyes popped at Herbert Vernon-Smith coming out of the school shop. He almost staggered.

"For goodness' sake, what's the matter with you, Redwing?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, catching him by the arm.

"That—that—that's Smithy!" said Tom huskily.

"Of course it's Smithy!" said Frank Nugent, in utter wonder. "You know Smithy by sight by this time, I suppose?"

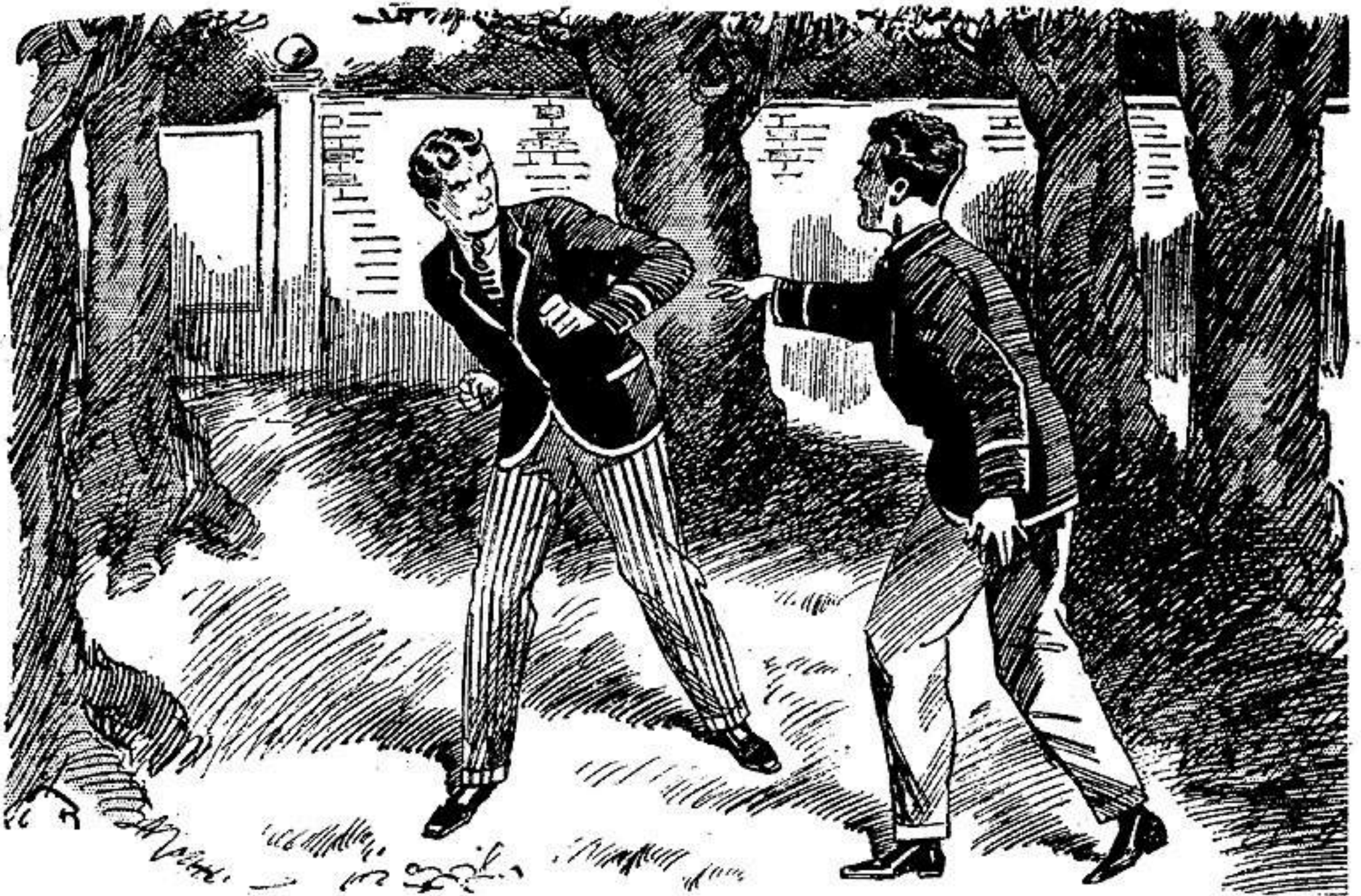
"What is the absurd upfulness, my esteemed and idiotic Redwing?" exclaimed Hurrec Jamsset Ram Singh.

Tom Redwing's look quite alarmed the Famous Five. Why he should be staring at Herbert Vernon-Smith as at a ghost they could not understand. His eyes seemed to be starting from his face.

"I tell you he went out in a taxi five minutes ago!" muttered Redwing. "If it wasn't Smithy it was his twin brother—and he has no brother. Am I going off my nut, or what?"

"You've seen somebody like Smithy?" asked Harry, utterly puzzled.

"It was Smithy, or his double. But



"Smithy!" exclaimed Tom Redwing. "You must listen to me—you can't let this go on when it's all a miserable mistake."
 "Leave me alone, you cad!" roared the Bounder. "I'll knock you spinning, if you don't keep your distance!"

—but he's gone—the taxi's half a mile away by this time! And—and Smithy is here. It—it wasn't Smithy—it couldn't have been. I can't make it out." Tom passed his hand over his forehead, the Famous Five staring at him. "It's like seeing visions."

"Well, here's Smithy, at any rate," said Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that you, Smithy, or your jolly old spectre?"

The Bounder looked round and stared at him.

"What do you mean, fathead?" he inquired, not politely.

"Redwing says he saw you go in a taxi five minutes ago," grinned Bob.

"Don't be a fool!"

"Smithy!" exclaimed Tom. He made a step towards his estranged chum. His brain was in a whirl.

Vernon-Smith stared him in the face.

"Don't speak to me, you rotten cur!" he said very distinctly. "I'm through with you!"

And the Bounder turned his back and walked on to the House.

Tom Redwing stood staring after him helplessly.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Too Late!

MR. QUELCH frowned a good deal in Form that afternoon. Likewise, he distributed lines.

Seldom or never had there been so much whispering in the Remove.

Seldom, in fact, had there been such a strange topic in the Form.

Billy Bunter and Tom Redwing were not the only Remove fellows who had seen the boy who came with Captain Vernon. Skimmer had seen him; five or six other fellows had seen him. Some had seen him arrive—some had seen him depart—all had taken him for

Herbert Vernon-Smith. But they knew now that he was not Herbert Vernon-Smith, they knew that Smithy's cousin had been due to see the Head at the school that day, and they knew that this was Smithy's cousin. And his astonishing resemblance to the Bounder was the theme on every tongue.

The Remove fellows did not need telling now why Quelch had made that mistake in Courtfield a week ago. Evidently he had seen Smithy's cousin there and taken him for Smithy.

Neither did they need telling why Loder of the Sixth had fancied that he had seen him in Lantham when he was in the school. It was Smithy's double that Loder had seen.

And the Famous Five had rather unpleasant food for thought. They had not seen the fellow during his visit with his uncle, but the excited talk on all sides enlightened them. If the fellow was so like Smithy that even Tom Redwing had taken him for the Bounder, might he not be the fellow they had seen at Lantham Chase and taken for Smithy?

Smithy had savagely and angrily denied that they had seen him at Lantham on his detention day last week. It looked now as if Smithy might have been telling the truth.

True, it had crossed Wharton's mind at the time to wonder whether by some extraordinary chance there might be a fellow about as like Smithy as a twin brother. It had seemed impossible.

Now he knew that it was not only possible, but a fact! And it was borne in on Wharton's mind and the minds of his friends that the fellow they had seen at Lantham was not Smithy, but Smithy's cousin.

It was a good deal Smithy's own fault. If he had told fellows that he had a relation about, as like him as another pea from the same pod, it would have made all the difference.

It was like the Bounder to deny that the resemblance was there, simply because it irritated him and he didn't want it to be there!

It was no wonder that there was a great deal of whispering in the Remove that afternoon. Fellows had relations who were like them—Wharton had, and Peter Todd had, and Bunter had. But this was altogether out of the common; this was not merely a striking likeness, this was the same thing over again.

There were two fellows in the Remove who did not join in the whispering on that topic—Smithy and Redwing.

Vernon-Smith sat looking savagely sulky. He could not and would not believe that the relative he barred was so like him as all that. Yet every fellow who had seen Vernon had taken him for Vernon-Smith. Every word on the subject added to the Bounder's irritation.

There was a resemblance; the Bounder grudgingly admitted that. But it was not so strong as fellows made out and he was better-looking than Bertie Vernon; on that point he was positive. His opinion of Vernon was that he was a mangy-looking blighter! Certainly that was not the description he would have liked to apply to himself. They were not, therefore, doubles! Fellows who made out that they were doing it chiefly to annoy him.

Smithy was ready to punch any fellow's head for taking Bertie Vernon for him!

He was likely to have a long list of heads to punch, for every fellow who saw Vernon made the same mistake—even Redwing, who knew him best.

Still he was not convinced. He did not want to be, and was not going to be. That was the obstinate Bounder all over.

Tom Redwing sat with a rather stunned expression on his face. He

hardly heard Mr. Quelch's voice, and hardly knew how he got through his lessons.

There was deep remorse in Tom's heart. For he, too, knew now! It had not been Smithy that day in Pegg Lane; it had not been Smithy who had struck him that angry blow.

He had taken the fellow for Smithy without the shadow of a doubt. The Famous Five had seen him, too, and taken him for Smithy.

Tom, now, could hardly wonder that the fellow had got excited and angry, even to the extent of punching Tom had taken him for Smithy, hanging about looking for a chance to dodge in at the back gate of the Cross Keys! No wonder the fellow had lost his temper at that—when he was not Smithy at all!

But all that did not matter very much. What mattered was his break with his chum—his fault this time and not the Bounder's. No wonder poor old Smithy had said that he did not know what offence he had given—when he had given none!

Tom was feverishly anxious for class to be over that afternoon so that he could speak to the Bounder.

It seemed an age before Mr. Quelch dismissed his Form.

But he did dismiss it at last. Immediately the juniors were out, Harry Wharton & Co. surrounded the Bounder in the quad. His look was not pleasant, but they had to say what was in their minds.

"Look here, Smithy," said the captain of the Remove bluntly, "we couldn't make it out—that affair at Lantham—"

"Do you mean the lies you told about me?" asked the Bounder unpleasantly.

"We saw you—or else that other fellow—"

"You did not."

"If you weren't there we must have seen him," said Bob Cherry. "We couldn't help making a mistake like that, Smithy."

"I don't believe you saw him any more than you saw me," said Vernon-Smith coolly, "and if you did see him you never took him for me."

"You're as like as two peas, old chap," said Nugent.

"We're not alike at all!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, Smithy!" growled Johnny Bull. "Every fellow here who's seen the chap has taken him for you—"

"Rubbish!"

"Well, we felt bound to speak," said Harry. "It looks now as if we saw that chap and took him for you, and I don't see that we were to blame, as everybody else has made the same mistake."

"Does that mean that you're going to chuck up telling lies about me?" asked Vernon-Smith in his most disagreeable tone.

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"Come on, you fellows," he said.

"No good talking to a chap like that!"

And the Famous Five left it at that and walked on.

Redwing had been lingering. He came up to Vernon-Smith as the Famous Five moved on.

"Smithy, old man—" he began.

"I'm Smithy to my friends!" said Vernon-Smith, staring at him. "You're not one of them, that I know of!"

"I'm sorry, old chap," said Tom in a low voice.

"Are you?" sneered the Bounder.

"Are you going to tell me, too, that you saw that cad cousin of mine and took him for me?"

"If it were not you in Pegg Lane that day, Smithy, it must have been him."

You say it was not you. I believe you."

"Oh, chuck it!" said the Bounder contemptuously. "Even if he could be taken for me, which I don't believe, what would he be doing about here last week? His uncle lived in London last I heard of him. He lives with his uncle. Asking me to believe that he did a hundred-mile trip on his bike last Saturday—just to hang about and be taken for me?"

"He must have been about last week, Smithy! Quelch saw him in Courtfield a week ago."

"Quelch never saw him till to-day."

"Smithy, old man, Quelch saw some chap he took for you. It must have been that fellow Vernon—"

"I've told you what I think of Quelch."

"And Loder, yesterday—"

"Loder told a string of lies yesterday, as those cads did last week, and as Quelch himself did!" said the Bounder, with sneering coolness. "If you've got any more to say—"

"I have, Smithy—"

"Then say it to somebody else! You asked me to leave you alone this morning! I'm going to! Now leave me alone!"

"I didn't understand then—"

Redwing broke off as Vernon-Smith swung round on his heel and walked away. He stood for a moment irresolute, then he ran after the Bounder and caught him by the arm.

"Smithy," he exclaimed, "you must listen to me—you can't let this go on when it's all a mistake—a miserable mistake—"

Vernon-Smith wrenched his arm away.

"Leave me alone, you cad! By gad, I'll knock you spinning, if you don't keep your distance! Leave me alone, I tell you!"

He tramped away.

This time Redwing did not follow him.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy's Back Up!

HARRY WHARTON had a rather worried look on Saturday afternoon.

Cricket was the order of the day now at Greyfriars, and as captain of the Remove, it filled a good deal of Wharton's thoughts.

Rows in the Remove had nothing to do with cricket, and Wharton was prepared to forget his disagreements with Smithy, so far as the summer game was concerned.

But if it takes two to make a quarrel, it takes two also to keep the peace—and the Bounder was a difficult man to deal with.

Smithy was not a man who could be left out of the Remove eleven—if it could be helped. Fellows who had the least patience with him agreed on that.

But Smithy's back was up now to a disconcerting extent.

Since the day his remarkable cousin had called at the school with his uncle, Smithy had not spoken to Redwing or to the Famous Five. His grudge, instead of dying away now that the misunderstanding was explained, seemed to be growing deeper and more bitter.

A practice match had been fixed up for that afternoon, and Wharton had posted the names of the men, as usual, in the Rag. Among the names was that of H. Vernon-Smith.

That name had been seen later with a pencil-mark drawn through it.

That alone was a dire offence. No man, but the captain of the Form, had

a right to make changes in that list. It meant, apparently, that the Bounder was going to cut cricket—in the most offensive way.

Wharton had a temper of his own, and he was very much inclined to take the Bounder at his word, and leave it at that.

But it was rather on his conscience that he and his friends had been in the wrong in the first place; though unintentionally and unavoidably.

Since it had come out about Smithy's double, they were satisfied that it was Bertie Vernon they had seen that time at Lantham, and it was rather uncomfortable to reflect that Vernon-Smith's denial that he had been there had been set down as reckless lying.

On the other hand, they could scarcely be blamed for having shared in a mistake that everyone else had made; they had made what amends they could, and any reasonable fellow might have been willing to let it go at that.

The fact was that the Bounder was sore and savage, and did not feel disposed to part with his grievance, though he was far from realising that himself.

Harry Wharton resolved to make one more effort, at least, and on Saturday afternoon he looked for Smithy soon after dinner.

He was looking for him in the quad when Loder of the Sixth called to him.

"You've got cricket on this afternoon, I think?" said Loder.

"Yes," answered Harry, rather surprised by Loder's interest in the matter.

Loder was not much of a games-man, even in his own Form.

"A practice match?"

"Yes."

"You can make up a twenty-two in the Remove?" said Loder.

"Yes, easily," said Harry, more and more surprised. "Not all good men, of course; but all right for a practice match."

"Is Vernon-Smith playing?"

At that question Wharton guessed what was Loder's interest in the matter.

He smiled faintly.

"I'm just looking for him to ask him!" he answered.

"I've heard some yarn about a fellow looking like Vernon-Smith," said Loder, in a casual tone. "I suppose you've heard about it?"

"It's the talk of the Form," answered Harry.

Loder smiled disagreeably.

"Very useful to a fellow caught out of bounds to have a double to put it on!" he said. "I quite understand that."

Wharton gave the bully of the Sixth a quick look. He did not need telling that Loder did not believe in that double!

"It's true, Loder," he said. "I've heard that you caught a fellow out of bounds the other day and thought it was Vernon-Smith. I've no doubt at all that it was the other fellow."

"The young sweep got away with that, at all events!" said Loder sourly. "He hacks a prefect's shin and gets by with a yarn like that! Have you seen the fellow yourself?"

"Twice," said Harry, "and each time I took him for Smithy!"

"You must be a fool, then!" said Loder politely. And he walked away with a knitted brow.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders. As Mr. Quelch was satisfied that the hacker of Loder's shin was not Vernon-Smith, there was nothing that Loder

could do in the matter. But he retained his own belief—perhaps because that bruise on his shin still twinged!

Loder's fixed belief was that a cheeky and disreputable young rascal had got out of a scrape by telling a falsehood of unusual magnitude. With a pain in his shin and a pain in his temper, Gerald Loder was not likely to let it go at that.

It was plain enough to Wharton that Loder was going to keep a very keen eye on the Bounder, which was all the more reason why Vernon-Smith should play cricket that afternoon.

"Seen Smithy?" he asked, as he came on Bunter in the quad.

"He, he, he!" was Bunter's reply. That question seemed to amuse the fat Owl of the Remove.

"Well, where does the cackle come in, fathead?" asked Harry.

"Smithy won't be playing cricket this afternoon!" grinned Bunter. "The races are on at Lantham to-day."

"Oh, don't be an ass! Have you seen him?"

"Look in the bike-shed!" grinned Bunter.

Harry Wharton cut away to the bike-shed at a run. He was in time to catch Smithy wheeling his machine out.

"Hold on, Smithy!" he said hastily.

"Want anything?" snapped the Bounder. "Cut it short!"

"Cricket this afternoon—"

"Haven't you looked at your list in the Rag?" sneered Smithy.

"Never mind that! Come along—"

"I'm going out."

"If you cut cricket like this, Smithy, you can't expect to play in the matches," said Harry, keeping his temper.

"Who wants to?"

"Oh!" The captain of the Remove was rather taken aback. "If that's going to be your line—"

"Just that!" said Vernon-Smith coolly. "I bar you and your gang, and you can leave me out. I'm not fond enough of liars to play cricket with them."

"Look here, Smithy, can't you wash that out?" asked Harry quietly. "It's not sense to keep up a grudge because we, like everybody else, took a fellow for you who's as like you as your own face in the glass."

"That's a lie!"

"We saw that fellow—"

"You never saw him!" answered the Bounder deliberately. "He was nowhere within a hundred miles that day. You've jumped at this to squirm out of the lies you've been telling."

Harry Wharton looked at him. The state of affairs was rather hard on Smithy; that had to be admitted. But a fellow who could carry distrust and suspicion to this length had himself to blame.

"Well, I suppose it's no use talking," said Wharton, after a pause. "But look here, Smithy, that chap must have been living in the neighbourhood at least a week ago, as Quelch saw him in Courtfield—"

"He did not!"

"Oh, don't be an ass! And listen to this—the first time we saw him over at Lantham, he told us he was living at Lantham Chase. Thinking it was you, we thought that was all gammon—but now we know it was a different fellow there's no reason to suppose that it wasn't true. He mentioned an uncle, too—that must be the Johnny who brought him here to see the Head the other day. And a lot of fellows have heard that Lantham Chase was let recently—"

The Bounder laughed scoffingly.

"Yes—I can see that uncle of his taking a place like Lantham Chase!" he sneered. "They're as poor as church mice. I don't suppose his whole income would pay the rent of the place!"

"I don't see how you know all that."

"Don't I?" jeered the Bounder. "Those precious Vernons are the aristocratic side of the family—gallons of blue blood, and not a stiver to bless themselves with. What money that half-pay goat had went in a financial crash a year or two ago—not much, I expect! His retired pay wouldn't pay the hire of Lantham Chase, or a place half the size!"

"Well, I know nothing about that," said Harry. "But that's what the chap said—and if they're living at Lantham Chase, that accounts for the fellow having been seen about."

"They're not! Have you finished?"

"Are you playing cricket or not?"

"Not!"

"Carry on as you like, then," said Harry. "But I'll give you a tip, Smithy—Loder doesn't believe in your double!"

"He's got more sense than some fellows, then!"

"He believes that you hacked his shin the other day at Lantham."

"I wish I had!"

"Well, look out for Loder, if you're going to play the goat!" said Harry. "You're the most exasperating fool at Greyfriars, but I'd rather you weren't sacked!"

And with that the captain of the Remove turned away and left him.

"Thank you for nothing!" called out Vernon-Smith as he went.

He wheeled out his bike and mounted it—and rode away for Lantham!

"Where's Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry, as the captain of the Remove rejoined his friends.

"Gone out!"

"Haven't you asked him—" began Nugent.

"Yes; nothing doing."

"Silly ass!" said Bob.

With that, the Bounder was dismissed from mind, and the Famous Five went down to the cricket.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hunting Cover!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH glanced at the deep shady woods of Lantham Chase and scowled as he spun by on his jigger. The weather was very different this time. It was a glorious May afternoon, and Smithy was enjoying the ride—though not so much as he would have enjoyed the cricket had his disgruntled temper permitted him to take part therein.

The woods of Lantham Chase, now bathed in sunshine over the leafy tree-tops, recalled what had happened there on Wednesday.

Smithy's nose had mended by this time, but he recalled the fight in the summer-house with angry resentment. He recalled, too, the falsehoods—as he was determined to believe them—that those fellows had told about him in connection with the place.

Not for a moment did he believe that the Vernons were living there. Such places were let at absurdly low rents by owners who could not afford to pay the rates and taxes on them; but the lowest rent for such a place was far beyond the means of Captain Vernon, and Smithy knew it.

Possibly the captain might take some place within a reasonable distance of the school, now that his nephew was

coming to Greyfriars. But it would not, and could not, be a place like that big mansion—unless he was drawing on the whole of his resources merely to pay rent—which was unthinkable. One of the little cheap bungalows near Pegg would be more in his line, the Bounder reflected sarcastically.

He did not believe that the Vernons were there—and he did not believe that Harry Wharton & Co. had seen his double there. It was all lies. The Bounder was a fellow who very easily suspected other fellows of lying!

It was, however, perhaps, fortunate for Smithy that he cast his glance towards the woods by the road as he cycled past Lantham Chase. For with the tail of his eye, as it were, he picked up a cyclist in the rear.

That cyclist was Gerald Loder of the Greyfriars Sixth.

Smithy's heart gave a sudden beat as he realised it. He rode on more slowly, without looking back. He knew that it was Loder.

He had taken no heed whatever of the warning Harry Wharton had given him at the bike-shed. He had not cast a single backward glance as he rode for Lantham. But he remembered that warning now.

Loder was after him! Smithy did not believe—or was at least determined not to believe—that Loder had encountered his double at Lantham. But the bully of the Sixth had his knife in him. They had had a lot of trouble last term, and Loder had not forgotten it. He was after Smithy now. It was not by chance that he was cycling to Lantham that afternoon.

The Bounder slowed still more.

On half-holidays, bounds were considerably extended. But to visit a place so distant as Lantham leave had to be asked. Smithy had not asked the necessary leave.

He was not sure that Mr. Quelch would have granted it; and in that case, the risk of breaking bounds in that direction would have been increased by letting Quelch know.

If he rode into Lantham, therefore, Loder had him! He would be out of bounds—he could not say that he had master's leave—and Loder would have him just where he wanted him. He was already perilously near the wide limit of holiday bounds.

In such circumstances most fellows would have abandoned the excursion as too dangerous. Smithy did not think for a moment of abandoning it. He only thought of dodging Loder.

It was easy enough now that he had spotted him. All he had to do was to turn into one of the woodland paths and get out of sight among the trees. Loder was not likely to hunt for him there; but if he did, the Bounder had only to keep doggo till Loder tired of it. No fellow could be run down, unless he wanted to be in those thick woods.

Suddenly—hardly a minute after he had spotted the pursuer—Vernon-Smith swerved to the right and shot off the road into one of the woodland paths that led up into Lantham Chase.

He vanished like a spectre from the eyes of the Sixth Form man riding behind.

For a hundred yards or so the Bounder drove hard at his pedals, then he jumped down, and wheeled his machine off the path into the wood.

Deep in the trees, he stopped and listened.

There was a sound of a bicycle on the path. Loder had turned off the road after him.

Smithy grinned.

Loder more likely than not suspected that he was taking a round-about course to Lantham. He was welcome to think so, and shoot onward in pursuit of a fellow who was no longer ahead of him.

Then through the trees came a sound of voices. Smithy had seen no one on the path, but someone had apparently stepped into it as Loder came. Loder's panting voice came clearly.

"Excuse me! Has a schoolboy on a bicycle passed you?"

"No!" came a quiet, rather hard voice.

"Thank you. He must have stopped, then!"

"No one is allowed to wander off the paths here. There is a right-of-way through, but the woods are private property."

"I think he must be about—I'll wait a bit, anyhow."

The Bounder set his lips.

He could see nothing of the speakers, but he knew what had happened. Some man had been coming down the path—too late to see Smithy, fortunately; but, as Smithy had not passed him farther up, Loder knew that the junior must have stopped. He knew, therefore, that Smithy had taken to the wood. He was not going to ride on in a vain pursuit.

Smithy heard no more. He guessed that the man had passed on his way and that Loder was standing on the path, scanning the woods.

From what the man had said, it sounded as if he was the owner of the place—the new tenant of Lantham Chase, probably. If that was so, Loder would have to wait till he was out of sight, if he intended to explore the wood for the Bounder.

It was exasperating enough to Smithy. Lantham Chase was the limit of school bounds in that direction; had he kept to the path, he would have been all right; there was nothing for Loder to report. Now, if Loder had spotted him, he was trespassing—a much more serious matter in the headmaster's eyes than in Smithy's!

As quietly as he could, the Bounder wheeled his machine deeper into the wood. He had to get to a safer distance from Loder before the prefect came rooting through the trees and thickets.

He remembered the summer-house in which he and the Famous Five had taken refuge on that rainy afternoon. He easily remembered the direction, and headed in it as quickly and quietly as he could.

It was possible that, on a fine sunny afternoon, someone might be there—but that was easily to be ascertained from a distance. If no one was there, it was the hide-out the Bounder wanted.

He paused on his way and listened. Behind him, a sound of rustling in the thickets floated through the wood. It might or might not have been caused by Loder—but he had no doubt that the bully of the Sixth was already rooting.

But in the thick wood the visibility was hardly more than six feet. Loder had plenty to do to spot him.

Smithy opened his saddle-bag, took out a cloth cap, and replaced it with his school cap. If he was spotted trespassing, he did not intend a report to reach Greyfriars. It had been his intention to change his cap before entering Lantham; that was a usual trick of the Bounder's when he was going out of bounds.

If any eye fell on him now there was no reason why he should be taken for a Greyfriars man at all.

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He pushed on again, and stopped at the open space in which the summer-house stood. He could see into its interior and see that it was empty. He pushed on at once, parked his bicycle at the back, where six machines had been parked on that rainy afternoon, and sat down.

A rest was not unwelcome after miles on a bike. He was going to wait there till he was fairly sure that Loder had given it up and cleared off. He was in no particular hurry, and he could afford to give that over-zealous prefect half an hour. Loder was not likely to explore so far as this—unless he knew about the summer-house, which was improbable.

Ten minutes passed, and the Bounder was thinking of passing the time with a cigarette when there was a footstep.

He started and listened, with knitted brows.

A figure crossed the open space at a little distance in front of the summer-house.

To his immense relief, it was not Loder.

It was a stocky man, with a dark, sunburnt complexion. Something about him struck the Bounder as familiar, as if he had seen him before.

But he did not know the man, though he could guess that he was the new tenant of Lantham Chase, the military johnny of whom the juniors had spoken on that rainy afternoon. He had a military air.

He was not looking towards the summer-house as he passed, and the Bounder hoped he would pass without looking round. He was prepared to spin a yarn of having been unaware that the woods were private if called to account, but he would have greatly preferred not to be observed.

The dark-complexioned man seemed to be in deep thought, walking with his eyes on the ground. His dark face was set in a hard—indeed, grim—expression. A hard nut to crack, was the Bounder's opinion of him.

The man glanced up and saw him.

Smithy set his lips. There was nothing for it now, but to spin his yarn and go—and take his chance of Loder.

But, to his astonishment, the man's hard, grim face broke into a pleasant smile, and he nodded. Then he walked on and disappeared in the trees.

Vernon-Smith was left blinking in astonishment.

The man had smiled and nodded as if he knew him—a smile that had made the dark, grim face strangely kind and pleasant for a moment.

Why, was beyond the Bounder's comprehension. He fancied that he had seen the man before somewhere; but the man could not know him. How could he? Even if he knew him, why should he smile at him in that kind, affectionate way? It was a relief, but it was an utter mystery, and it puzzled the Bounder of Greyfriars deeply. He sat amazed after the man was gone from his sight.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise For Smithy!

"WHAT are you doing here?"

The voice came sharply. It reached Vernon-Smith in the summer-house, though he could not see the speaker. It was the same voice he had heard speaking to Loder on the woodland path twenty minutes or more ago.

Loder's voice came in reply: "I must ask you to excuse me—" "I shall do nothing of the kind!"

When I saw you on the path yonder I told you that these woods were private."

"Yes, but—"

"Well, what are you doing here?"

The Bounder grinned. He guessed that it was the dark-faced man who had passed in front of the summer-house that was speaking.

Evidently he had run into Loder rooting through the wood after the truant.

It was a fortunate encounter for Smithy, for the nearness of the voices showed that Loder had penetrated very near the summer-house where Smithy was in cover. Judging by the unpleasant note in the sharp voice, he was not going to be allowed to explore farther.

"Please let me explain!" Loder's voice was flurried. "A schoolboy—a junior of my school—is out of bounds, and I am looking for him—"

"You have no right to look for him or anybody in my woods!"

"I believe he left the path and dodged me among the trees, trespassing here—"

"You are trespassing yourself!"

"I am a Sixth Form prefect—"

"Then you ought to know better than to break the law! Take yourself off at once!"

"I think—" stammered Loder.

"I am not interested in what you think! I am only interested in seeing your back!"

"Well, look here, who the dickens are you?" exclaimed Loder, his temper evidently rising. "I'm prepared to explain to Mr. Luscombe, the owner of this place—"

"I am Captain Vernon, and this place was let to me several weeks ago by Mr. Luscombe."

Vernon-Smith barely repressed a startled exclamation that would have betrayed him.

Captain Vernon—the man, so he had heard, who had brought his Cousin Bertie to the school a couple of days ago! He had not seen him then; he had deliberately avoided seeing his cousin, and so had not seen his cousin's uncle.

But he knew now why the dark-complexioned man had seemed familiar. He had seen him before, though it was several years ago.

Captain Vernon! The Bounder's brain almost spun. Captain Vernon was the new tenant of Lantham Chase, after all. What Wharton had said was correct; he must, after all, have seen that fellow at Lantham Chase. Where Captain Vernon was, his nephew would be.

All Smithy knew of the Vernons was that they lived in London—some third-rate street in Kensington. He might have believed that they had taken some cheap bungalow on the Pegg road. He had never dreamed of believing that they had taken a big and expensive place like Lantham Chase.

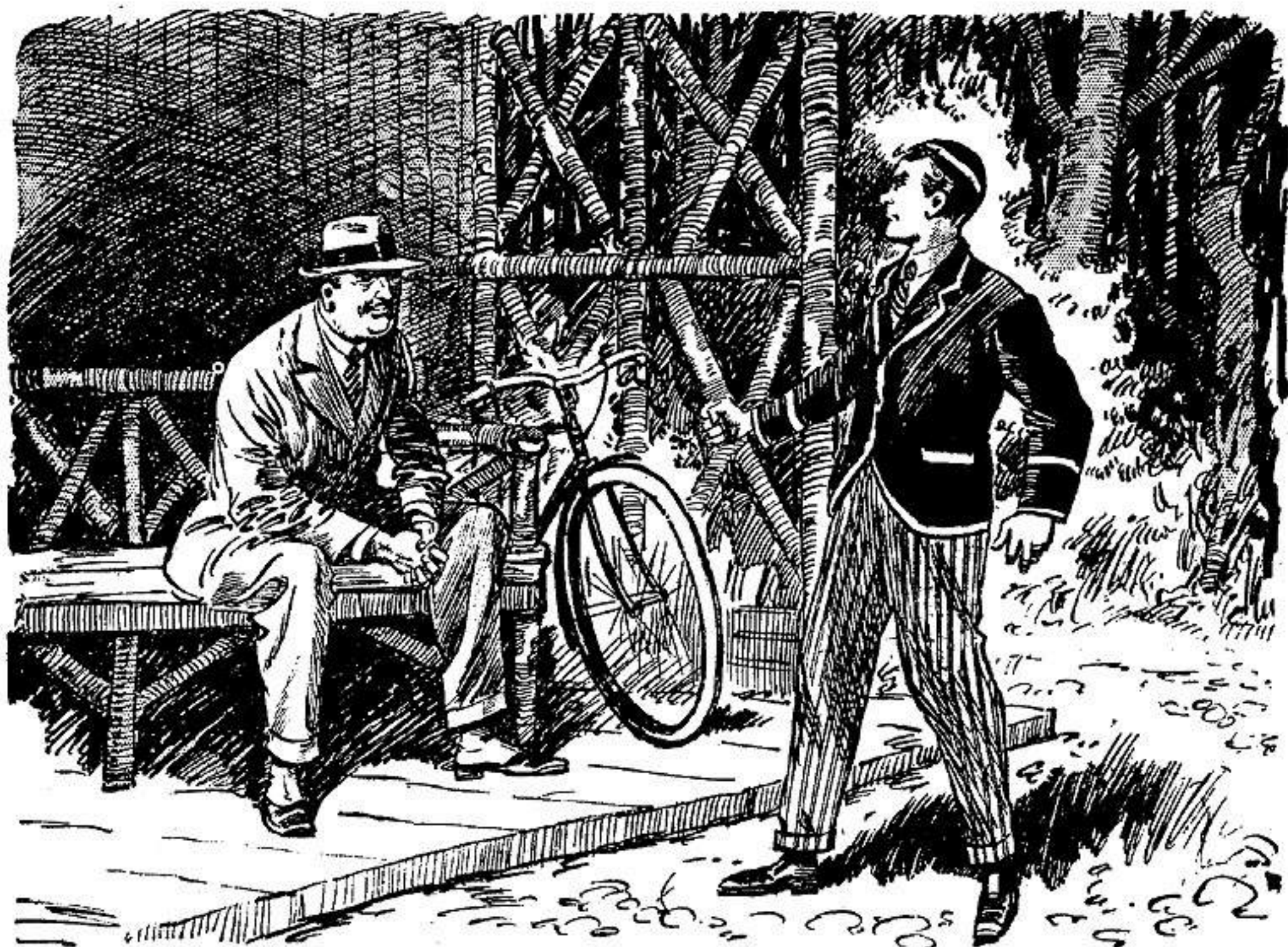
He could not understand it now; but he knew now that it was a fact, whether he could understand it or not. Captain Vernon was the tenant of Lantham Chase, and Bertie Vernon must be there. The fellow he barred—the fellow he loathed—might walk along to that very summer-house and meet him face to face!

He hardly heard what was said by the two under the trees in his astonishment at that unexpected discovery for the next minute or two.

But Captain Vernon's sharp voice came louder and sharper:

"I've told you to go!"

"Well, look here—"



"You shabby-genteel puppy!" roared Vernon-Smith. "Who are you to talk about my father, you cheeky cur? You're not decent enough to clean his boots!" Captain Vernon started. "Are you mad, Bertie?" he said. "You blind fool!" hissed the Bounder. "I'm not your beggarly Bertie!"

"I tell you I will not have the public trespassing in these woods! Get back to the path at once and go on your way!"

"Let me look in that summer-house before I go. As likely as not the young rascal is there—"

"There is no one in that summer-house but my nephew. Now go! I will see you off, too, by Jove!"

The Bounder jumped again. He heard a sound of departing footsteps; the irritated tenant of Lantham Chase was evidently seeing Loder off. But the Bounder no longer heeded.

The captain's words echoed in his ears. He understood now why the dark-complexioned man had given him that kind smile and nod in passing. He had taken him, even at such a short distance, for Bertie Vernon, his nephew. He had told Loder that his nephew was in the summer-house. Apparently, he was very fond of his nephew—the fellow the Bounder loathed. Smithy remembered very clearly how that grim, hard face had melted into kind affection at the sight of him.

His lip curved in a sneer.

It was one more proof, if he had wanted it, of his resemblance to his double. Every fellow at Greyfriars who had seen Vernon had taken him for Vernon-Smith; now the fellow's own uncle had taken Vernon-Smith for Vernon!

The Bounder reflected sneeringly that the captain would not have wasted that grin on him had he known who he was.

He had not seen the man for years, but he disliked him, and he knew that he was reciprocated. From the

time when he was a small kid, when he had seen a good deal more of his Vernon relations than he had seen since, he remembered that he had known by instinct that the man disliked him.

He knew the reason, too; a fellow like Smithy was not likely to be at a loss about that. He—the millionaire's son—had everything; Bertie had nothing.

Blue-blooded swank would not pay the butcher and baker. Even as a small boy Smithy had had money to splash about; his father had always been recklessly indulgent in that respect. He could afford to discard an expensive coat that did not please him, while Bertie had to make a cheaper one last the winter. He could throw aside an expensive bike, and merely mention that he wanted a new one; Bertie, very likely, had had only one jigger in his life, and that, very likely, a second-hand one. Such disparities of fortune did not make for affection, and Smithy was the fellow to rub them in, too.

He sat with a bitter sneer on his face.

Most of all, perhaps, he was incensed by the captain having taken him for Bertie. It had saved him from trouble, certainly. But it was a proof not to be denied of what Smithy was determined not to believe if he could help it.

He could not help believing it now. Unpleasant as it was, irritating as it was, enraging as it was, he had to admit, even to himself, that on their looks there was no telling the two apart.

"Shabby-genteel goat! Loathsome

cad!" muttered the Bounder, thinking of the uncle and the nephew.

He wondered how long it would be before Loder was safely cleared off. The captain had put paid to him, at all events! Sixth Form prefect as he was, Loder had been ordered off sharply enough.

But it was only prudent to wait and give him time to get clear. Smithy could easily guess the frame of mind Loder would be in and that he would hang about so long as he fancied that there was a chance of getting on the Bounder's track again.

Leaning back in the summer-house, Smithy sorted out a cigarette and lighted it, as he had been about to do when he sighted the captain. He sat scowling over the smoke, thinking with hostility and antipathy of the Vernons, uncle and nephew; and wondering, too, how and why the shabby-genteel captain had been able to rent such a place as old Squire Luscombe's mansion.

He started as the stocky figure of the Army captain emerged suddenly from the trees, coming towards the summer-house. He had seen Loder off the spot, and was, perhaps, coming to speak to his nephew—at all events, he was this time coming directly towards the summer-house.

But instead of the smile he had previously bestowed on the occupant, a frown knitted his brow—and the Bounder, for a moment, was puzzled. There was no avoiding the meeting—he had to face the Army man when he came. The next moment he knew the cause of the frown—it was the cigarette he was smoking.

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"Bertie, you young rascal, what does this mean?" exclaimed Captain Vernon, as he stopped in front of the summer-house. "This is the first time I have seen you at this kind of thing! Are you adopting the blackguardly habits of your cousin Smith, now that you are going to the same school?"

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hot Words!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH did not speak.

He was too deeply and fiercely enraged to speak.

The Army man was still taking him for Bertie Vernon. But that was not so galling as the reference to the Bounder himself.

He spoke of him with unconcealed dislike and contempt, and by the name of "Smith"—not Vernon-Smith. He spoke of him as a disreputable relation whom his nephew would do well to avoid imitating! This—from a shabby-genteel Army man whom Smithy's millionaire father could have bought up fifty times over without missing the money!

The rage in his heart flushed into his face. But that rush of red, perhaps, the captain mistook for a blush of shame.

Anyhow, the frown melted from his face and his voice became kinder as he spoke again.

"My dear boy! Throw that rubbish away! Surely you do not need to be reminded by me that any habit of your cousin Smith is one to be avoided."

He stepped into the summer-house and sat down a couple of feet from the Bounder on the same seat.

Vernon-Smith threw away the stump of the cigarette.

He was so intensely enraged that he would have been glad to stream out a storm of insults at the man who sat by his side. But he carefully restrained that impulse.

He had to get out of this somehow. The man was his cousin's uncle, and

so, in some sort, a relative of the Bounder's own. But whether that would make him show any consideration to a trespasser on his property, Smithy did not feel sure. But he was quite, quite sure that he would have perished rather than have asked, or taken, a favour from the man.

The blind fool took him for his cad of a nephew—that was how the Bounder put it to himself. If he kept up that self-deception long enough for Smithy to get clear off, that was all right.

And there was a certain sardonic, vindictive satisfaction in letting the man run on and make a fool of himself.

The Bounder said nothing.

"That is right, Bertie!" Captain Vernon gave a nod of approval as the Greyfriars junior threw the cigarette away. He sat back, looking before him at the woods and not looking at the junior now. "You are a young ass to think of smoking—leave that till you are older. I've never seen anything of this kind in you before—it is not a pleasant surprise, Bertie."

The Bounder muttered something inarticulately.

"Well, well, say no more about it," said Captain Vernon. "But do take heed, Bertie! It is settled now that you enter the Remove at Greyfriars—that is your cousin's Form. You will be thrown more or less into association with young Smith. For your own sake, do not be led into imitating any of his ways."

Smithy almost choked.

It was not easy to tolerate this, without shouting out who he was and telling the man what he thought of him. But he remained silent.

"From what I have heard of the boy," went on Captain Vernon, "he appears to be a pretty disgraceful blackguard. I have not seen him for some years—but I have seen a good many photographs of him—and in appearance he is your very likeness—but I am thankful to say that you have never resembled him inwardly, howsoever much outwardly."

Smithy sat silent.

"I have heard that, not very long

ago, his conduct was so outrageous that his father seriously thought of disinheriting him," went on Captain Vernon. "I have heard so from a relative—Mr. Teggers—who seems to have had a chance of inheriting in his place if the young rascal had not reformed—but I have very little faith in his reformation. To my certain knowledge he has narrowly escaped expulsion from his school since that date."

Evidently, to the Bounder, this man who disliked him had taken the trouble to find out a few things about him. Why, was rather a puzzle.

"At Greyfriars, Bertie, you would do well to take your cousin Smith as a warning rather than a model. Do nothing that he does. Don't even think the same thought, if you can help it. I do not mean that you should quarrel with him. It is bad form for relatives to be bad friends. The Smiths do not understand this—the Vernons, I hope, do."

Smithy gave a sort of gasp.

"You do not like the fellow, and I am glad of it," went on the captain, still in the happy belief that he was speaking to Bertie Vernon. "He is a bad egg—a very bad egg! But that is no reason why a civil relationship should not be established! You can hardly make friends with such an outsider—but do not let there be any open quarrelling if you can possibly help it."

Smithy registered an inward vow that Bertie would not be able to help it!

"Neither is the boy all bad, bad as he is!" continued Captain Vernon. "I believe that he has a sincere attachment for his father, and that is, at least, one good point in his character. I have heard, also, that his best friend at school is a common sailorman's son—a very respectable and quiet lad, very much too good for him—but it shows a spot of decency in him that he can make friends with such a boy—overweening and purse-proud outsider as he is."

This was how they talked of him on the Vernon side of the family! The Bounder's fury did not prevent him, from deriving a certain sarcastic amusement from the captain's talk.

"You have a strong character, Bertie, or I should be uneasy at your coming into contact with the fellow at all!" resumed the captain, after a pause. "But I feel sure that I can rely on you, my dear boy! I feel sure that you will never do anything to disgrace our name! It is nearly all we have left."

Fortunately, the captain, looking straight before him, did not see the sneer that came over the Bounder's face.

"You have asked me, more than once, why I have selected Greyfriars for you, Bertie, when your disagreeable cousin is there." The captain spoke slowly. "You may rest assured that I should not have done so without a reason. That reason I may explain to you some day—not yet! In this respect, I know that I have disregarded your wishes—you can trust me, Bertie, to have done what was best in your interests."

So the cad hadn't wanted to come to Greyfriars!

"Without a good reason, I should certainly never have placed you in contact with your cousin Smith!" said Captain Vernon. "And that reminds me—between ourselves we speak of him as Smith, which actually is his name—but you will never be guilty of the incivility of doing so at school. If these Smiths choose to call themselves Vernon-Smiths,

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it is ridiculous, no doubt—but it is their own affair."

Smithy's face became almost pale with fury.

He was, at all events, a Vernon on one side, and entitled to take the name, whatever might be his father's claim to it.

But Smithy, in point of fact, with all his swank, had no nonsense about him, and he was prouder of the Smiths than of the Vernons.

The Smiths, at all events, had done something in the world, while the Vernons were lounging about thinking how superior they were.

His father had started with almost nothing, and was now a millionaire several times over. This man Vernon had started in very much better circumstances and what was he now—a poor and envious relation of the Smiths he affected to despise. There was more ability in Samuel Vernon-Smith's little finger than in this lounging Army man from top to toe.

"You are listening to me, Bertie?" said the captain, glancing round at him as if surprised by his silence.

"Oh, yes!" breathed the Bounder.

He hardly dared speak lest his voice should be different from Bertie's. But he need have had no uneasiness. In voice, as in everything else, he was his cousin over again.

"It is quite possible, Bertie," the captain resumed, "that at Greyfriars you may come in contact with young Smith's father who, I believe, visits his son at the school fairly often. Need I caution you to treat him always with the greatest respect?"

The Bounder mumbled something.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith is, in some respect, deserving of it!" said Captain Vernon. "He is a self-made man, but he has great abilities, and I have heard of many acts of generosity on his part. Indeed, he has offered to give me assistance in seeing you through at Greyfriars; he takes some interest in you, owing to your resemblance to his son. He asked me some time ago for your photograph to send to the boy, thinking it might interest him. Of course, I declined his offer of financial aid. But it was a kind offer."

There was a long pause.

"Let me make this clear, Bertie," added the captain. "I desire you to treat Mr. Vernon-Smith with every respect, as he really deserves, and to make him like you, if you can. If he is repugnant to you in any way, I can trust to the Vernon breeding to conceal it."

The Bounder made a slight movement.

He had listened to Captain Vernon's references to himself with suppressed fury for reasons of caution. But if Captain Vernon referred to his father in the same contemptuous terms, no caution would restrain the Bounder.

"He is, in point of fact, a very worthy man," said the captain. "Very worthy indeed in many ways. A little vulgarity in a self-made man is only to be expected—a spot of purse-proud self-sufficiency—"

"You rotten cheeky hound!" roared the Bounder.

Captain Vernon started as if he had been stung.

Vernon-Smith leaped to his feet. He stood facing the astounded captain with crimson face and blazing eyes.

Caution was thrown to the winds now! "You shabby-genteel puppy!" roared the Bounder, almost stuttering with rage. "Who are you to talk about my father, you cheeky cur? You're not decent enough to clean his boots!"

"Are you mad, Bertie?"

"Bertie!" hissed the Bounder. "You blind fool, I'm not your beggarly Bertie! I'm Herbert Vernon-Smith, the son of the man you've been insulting! If I were a man myself, I'd horsewhip you for your insolence! And by gad, I'll make your beggarly Bertie pay for it when he barges in at my school, the poverty-stricken rat! By gad, I'll make him sorry he's pushed in at Greyfriars, instead of the charity school that's his proper place!"

The captain did not move or speak. He seemed too utterly astounded to do either! He only gazed at the enraged Bounder with starting eyes.

Vernon-Smith dragged his bike out of the summer-house and wheeled it away after that furious outburst.

Angry words or angry blows would not have surprised him; and he was ready to return both to the best in his power. But Captain Vernon did not speak or stir.

As the Bounder disappeared into the trees, he only sat staring—with a stunned look on his face.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Burying The Hatchet!

HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH, walking in the Greyfriars quad with Mr. Prout, glanced at a member of his Form crossing to the House.

He compressed his lips at the sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith.

It was drawing near time for calling-over, and the Bounder, evidently, had just returned to the school. It was more than two hours since Loder of the Sixth had come in—with a report for Quelch.

Loder, in the circumstances, had perhaps little to report; but he was the man to make the most of that little.

Mr. Quelch left Prout to roll on alone, and crossed to intercept that member of his Form.

"Vernon-Smith!"

Smithy came to a halt with a very respectful manner and a glimmer in his eyes.

"Yes, sir."

"You have just returned to the school?"

"Yes, sir."

"I must ask you how you have spent the afternoon, Vernon-Smith."

"I've had a spin on my bike, sir!"

"No doubt!" said Mr. Quelch dryly. "But Loder informs me, Vernon-Smith, that he saw you at Lantham Chase—"

"That is correct, sir! We're allowed to cycle through Lantham Chase."

"I have received a report from Loder, Vernon-Smith, that you were deliberately eluding him in order to keep your destination a secret," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Did you, or did you not, leave the bridle-path, which is a public right-of-way, and trespass in the woods?"

The Bounder hardly troubled to conceal a grin. He had an answer pat.

"I went into the woods, sir! Loder trespassed—I heard Captain Vernon turning him off his land. He was very angry at Loder trespassing."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"I did not ask you that, Vernon-Smith! You admit your purpose of eluding a prefect?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said the Bounder coolly. "As it turns out that some relations of mine are now tenants at Lantham Chase, I thought I'd call! No harm in a fellow calling on his relations, sir, is there?"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. He was rather taken aback.

He scanned the Bounder very keenly. It was true that the new tenants of Lantham Chase were related to Herbert Vernon-Smith, but, from his interview with Bertie Vernon, Mr. Quelch had been left in no doubt that there was no love lost between them. Still, if Smithy actually had called on his relations, certainly there was no harm done, and Loder had only tracked down a mare's nest.

"Then you did not set out to ride to Lantham this afternoon, Vernon-Smith?"

"I couldn't, without asking leave, sir!" answered the Bounder artlessly.

Mr. Quelch had his own opinion about that!

"You have been to Lantham Chase?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" The Bounder was not likely to mention where he had been after leaving Lantham Chase!

"You saw your relations?" Quelch evidently intended to have it clear.

"I was unlucky enough to miss my cousin Bertie," said the Bounder blandly, "but I had a very pleasant chat with his uncle, Captain Vernon. That was after he ordered Loder off for trespassing."

"Never mind Loder," said Mr. Quelch hastily. "If you actually saw Captain Vernon, Vernon-Smith, all that Loder had reported to me is very harmlessly accounted for."

"Lantham Chase may be on the telephone, sir!" said the Bounder. "I don't know whether Captain Vernon can afford a telephone—"

"What!"

"I don't know whether Captain Vernon can afford a telephone," repeated the Bounder, with deliberate coolness. "They're rather poor relations of mine, sir. But if they're on the telephone, it would be quite easy to ring up Captain Vernon and ask him, sir, if you cannot take my word."

Mr. Quelch looked at him fixedly.

"You should not speak of your relatives in that tone, Vernon-Smith," he said. "It is in the very worst of taste."

"Thank you, sir!"

"I can place very little reliance on your word, Vernon-Smith, as you are only too well aware."

"I'm sorry for that, sir!" said the Bounder meekly. "But if you ring up Captain Vernon, I'm sure he will tell you that we had a very pleasant chat."

"You may go!" said Mr. Quelch, and he walked away to rejoin Prout, satisfied that there was, after all, nothing in Loder's report.

Smithy lounged on with a mocking grin on his face. Only that afternoon had he learned, and with great surprise, that the Vernons were tenants of Lantham Chase. But he had coolly made use of the circumstance to pull him out of his trouble with Loder.

He came on the Famous Five as he was going in, and, after a brief hesitation, stopped to speak to them.

Smithy had been doing some thinking since the discovery he had made.

"Had some good cricket?" he asked, in quite an amicable manner.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him in surprise.

"Some jolly good practice," answered Harry.

"You were an ass to cut it, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry. "You'll have to play up, you know! You're not a man we can spare from the matches."

The Bounder laughed.

"I've found out something while I've been out this afternoon," he said. "I

take back some things I've said to you fellows."

"What do you mean?"

"I've been to Lantham Chase, and found that my shabby-genteel relations are living there."

"Oh!"

"I've no doubt now, of course, that you did see that rat Bertie there, and took him for me!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Now I know the cad's there—"

"You might have taken a fellow's word about it," said Harry Wharton dryly.

"Did you take mine?" sneered the Bounder.

"Oh, well—" Wharton paused. "Well, not knowing anything about the other fellow, we all thought—" He coloured. "Anyhow, if you're satisfied now, let it go at that, and let's hear the end of it."

"We've called one another liars, and it was the truth on both sides, so far as we know!" said Vernon-Smith. "More on my side than on yours you were making a mistake, and I wasn't."

"Admitted! Leave it at that!"

"But have you got it into your nut at last that that cousin of yours really is like you, Smithy?" asked Bob, with a grin. "Up to now, you've been ready to go off at the deep end if anybody said so."

"Yes, I've got it into my nut at last," said Smithy, quietly. "You see, I met Captain Vernon, and he took me for his precious Bertie, and had quite a confidential conversation before I put him wise! I've got sense enough to see the facts, even if I don't like them."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "You don't mean to say you let the man run on, thinking he was talking to his nephew!"

"His talk was so interesting, you know! Most of it was warning dear Bertie to have nothing to do with his scoundrel of a cousin at Greyfriars."

"Oh crikey! The old bean spilled that, thinking you were Bertie!" gasped Bob.

"Quite a lot of it!"

"He will feel a frightful ass, if he ever finds out—"

"Yes, he looked a bit of an ass, when I told him who I was—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I told him he was a cheeky hound, too!" added the Bounder. "He may report that to the Head. I shouldn't wonder! If he does, I'll call him a cheeky hound again, with the Head to hear it!"

Vernon-Smith went on into the House, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. staring. Smithy had rather taken their breath away.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry, "there's going to be a spot of trouble in the Remove, when that new kid blows in! There'll be fur and feathers flying in the Remove, my beloved 'earers!"

The Co. had no doubt about that! With the Bounder and the Bounder's double at daggers drawn, there was likely to be a very large spot of trouble in the near future.

"Well, I'm glad Smithy's seen sense, anyhow!" said Harry. "It was rotten to keep on scrapping terms with him, and it would have been rotten for the cricket. I'm glad that we've buried the hatchet, at any rate."

"Till Smithy digs it up again!" granted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bob. "Next week he'll be rowing with his relation, and will give other fellows a rest. I dare say he'll think us quite

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nice chaps—compared with his relations!"

And the Co. chuckled.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Which?

"VERNON-SMITH here?"

Tom Redwing jumped.

He was in Study No. 4; not in a happy mood.

The break with his chum was a heavy weight on his mind,

Smithy—poor old Smithy—was not to blame as he usually was: Smithy, not not even knowing what offence he was supposed to have given, had made the first advances, and had been icily repulsed; and now he had his back up, definitely, and the clearing up of the mistake had come too late.

Had Smithy been a more trusting fellow it would have been all right. Had he been a more reasonable fellow it would have been all right. But his sheer obstinacy in refusing to believe that his cousin could be mistaken for him made him deaf and blind to reason.

Redwing, however, was not blaming Smithy. Smithy had had a rotten time the last week or two, owing to that wretched double, and it was not surprising that he was deeply incensed. Redwing did not blame Smithy—but he could hardly blame himself for having been deceived like everybody else; it was just a rotten state of affairs that seemed past mending.

At the sight of Vernon-Smith, suddenly, in the doorway of the study, Redwing hoped for a moment that it meant that the Bounder had come to speak to him in the old friendly way—though it was more likely that he had a sneer or a jibe to utter. But what the fellow in the doorway did say made him jump.

It was the Bounder who was looking in—at least, Redwing had not thought of doubting that it was. But the question he asked was hardly one that could have been asked by Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Redwing stared at him.

"This is Vernon-Smith's study, isn't it?" asked the junior in the doorway.

"Ye-e-s!" stammered Redwing blankly. "Smithy, old man, are you trying to pull my leg or what?"

"I don't quite understand you! I've come here to see my cousin, Vernon-Smith! What do you mean?"

Redwing gave a gasp.

"Are you Herbert Vernon?" he stammered.

"Who the dickens do you think I am? Look here, is my cousin here or not?"

"No! He went out this afternoon—I don't know whether he's come in or not!" gasped Redwing. "I took you for him when you looked in."

"What rot!"

"Rot or not, it's the same mistake I made in Pegg Lane a week ago," said Redwing sharply. "If I'd known then that you weren't Smithy, I'd have mopped up the lane with you. You might have guessed that I was making a mistake—a perfect stranger speaking to you as I did."

"Did you take me for my cousin?"

"You ought to have guessed that I did—I suppose you know you're as like him as one pea is like another from the same shell," snapped Redwing. "Any man here who saw you now would say that you were Vernon-Smith."

The fellow in the doorway laughed. "Mean to say you can't see any

difference—now that you know who I am?" he asked.

Redwing looked at him, hard. But he shook his head.

"No!" he answered. "I can't see a spot of difference. You're dressed like Smithy now, too—that day last week you wore different clothes. If you're coming into the Remove here, you'd better make it a point to dress a bit differently, or you'll always be getting mistaken for Smithy."

"Is my voice the same?"

"Just the same."

"Bit rotten for both of us, ain't it?" said the newcomer, stepping into the study. "I suppose I can wait here till Vernon-Smith comes in?"

"Certainly, if you like."

The newcomer sat on the corner of the table, swinging his legs, and looking at Tom Redwing with a curious, whimsical expression on his face.

"It's going to be a bit tough on me, I can see that!" he remarked. "I don't want to be mistaken for that cousin of mine. From what I hear he's a bit of a bad hat."

Redwing's face darkened.

"You can cut that out, Vernon!" he said. "You're speaking to a friend of Smithy's. Cut that out to start with."

"I heard you had a row with him."

"No bizney of yours, if I have!" snapped Redwing.

"I mean if you rowed with him I suppose you're no longer friends?"

"That's my business, not yours!"

"Oh, quite! No wonder you row with him—the fellow's an awful rotter from what I've heard."

Tom Redwing drew a deep breath, and stepped a little nearer to the fellow sitting on the table. He gave him a fixed, grim look.

"Let's have this plain, Herbert Vernon!" he said quietly. "I don't want to row with a relation of Smithy's if I can help it. But if you say another word against Smithy to me, you're going out of this study on your neck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle if you like—but I mean every word of it!" said Tom. "If you're staying in this room, keep a civil tongue in your head!"

"Mustn't I tell you what I think of my own relation?"

"You can think what you like—but you'd better not tell me!" snapped Redwing.

"I shall tell you all the same!" grinned the fellow on the table. "Your precious pal Smithy has been breaking bounds this afternoon. He would be sacked, if I told his headmaster where he had been."

"Have you come here to be a sneak?" asked Redwing contemptuously.

"Oh, I'm not going to give the beauty away—I'm too fond of him for that! But such a rotten outsider—"

"Will you shut up?"

"Such a pub-crawling sweep—"

"That's enough! I've told you to shut up!" roared Redwing. "Another word and out you go!"

"Such a smoky, betting, pub-crawling blighter—" said the fellow on the table, coolly. "Such a— Oh!"

He got no further. Tom Redwing came at him, grasped him, and fairly wrenched him off the table. He went swinging to the door, struggling.

"Chuck it, you fathead!" he gasped.

"You're going out of this; I warned you!" said Redwing, and with an exertion of his strength, he pitched the fellow headlong through the doorway.

Bump!

Redwing stood looking down at the fellow in the passage! That fellow sat

up, and to Redwing's amazement, burst into a yell of laughter.

Redwing stared at him blankly. The junior in the passage picked himself up, still laughing. He came back into the doorway. Redwing's fists came up, his eyes gleaming over them.

"Keep out of this!" he said. "I'll knock you spinning if you step into this study again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, shut up!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fellow in the passage. "Reddy, old man, you're a corker! Ha, ha, ha! Can't a fellow come into his own study?"

"What do you mean?" snapped Redwing. "You're not a Greyfriars man yet; and when you are, Quelch isn't likely to put you in Smithy's study."

"Ha, ha, ha! Reddy, old bean, you take the cake!" yelled the Bounder. "You silly ass, can't you see that I was pulling your leg? Do you think that Bertie Vernon would be paying me a visit? Ha, ha, ha! Many thanks for standing up for a fellow in his absence. Ha, ha, ha!"

Redwing blinked. He stepped back, almost dazed, as the junior in the passage came into the study.

The Bounder sat on the table again, grinning at him, Redwing looking at him like a fellow in a dream.

He realised that this was, after all, the Bounder, and not the fellow he had met in Pegg Lane a week ago. It was Herbert Vernon-Smith, not Herbert Vernon. It was Smithy—pulling his leg!

"Oh!" gasped Redwing.
"Well, seeing is believing," said Vernon-Smith. "Look here, Reddy, I've found out this afternoon that that rat of a cousin of mine can be taken for me, and I for him; his own uncle took me for him. It won't be the same when we're seen together, I'm sure of that, but when we're apart there's no telling t'other from which. It's rotten, but there it is! If I'd known that the brute was in this neighbourhood I might have guessed, but I never knew till two or three hours ago."

"Oh!" gasped Redwing again.
"Reddy, old man, what about washing it all out?" said the Bounder, in a quieter and more serious tone. "I'm sorry. I know I'm a distrustful ass. But when you said I'd punched your face, and I knew I hadn't— And I never knew that rat was anywhere near Greyfriars, and never believed that he could be taken for me—or wouldn't, perhaps. But now—"

The bell rang for calling-over. When the Remove went into Hall Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing came in together, evidently on the old friendly terms. The rift in the lute had been mended, after all.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Kinsmen And Foes!

"WHARTON!"
"Yes, sir?"
"This is the new boy— Herbert Vernon."
"Oh!" gasped Harry.
After third school on Monday morning the head boy of the Remove had received a summons to his Form-master's study. He arrived there to find a junior with Mr. Quelch, and, glancing at him, wondered whether Smithy was in a row again. Mr. Quelch's words startled, but enlightened him. He gave the junior another and more scrutinising look.

He was Vernon-Smith to the last feature, but a careful survey revealed points of difference. It was a rule at Greyfriars that fellows should be quietly dressed. Smithy stretched that rule as far as he could, almost to breaking-point. Smithy's neckties, for instance, were as bright as he could venture to wear without being called to order; he often had a pin in his tie, and even a ring on his finger.

But this fellow was very quietly dressed; there was nothing about his clothes to leap to the eye. He was a fellow with a better personal taste than the Bounder's. Now that he knew that there were two of them Wharton thought that he would be able to pick out one from the other.

"Oh?" repeated Harry. "Yes, sir."
"Vernon, this is my head boy— Wharton," said Mr. Quelch.

NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME

SO Herbert Vernon-Smith's cousin has come to Greyfriars! Gee, the fat's in the fire now— what? Bertie Vernon to the Bounder of Greyfriars is like a red rag to a bull, so you can bet your sweet life there's going to be a big spot of bother in the very near future! The next yarn in this exciting series is entitled:

"THE PERFECT ALIBI!"

and it's a real gem of a story, you can take it from me. True, Smithy has patched up his differences with the Famous Five and his one real friend in the school—Tom Redwing. But with the coming of Bertie to Greyfriars, the Bounder's back is up with a vengeance. Little wonder, then, that he resolves to make Greyfriars as unpleasant as he can for his kinsman and foe. Redwing, however, tries hard to keep Smithy out of a row, but in doing so lands his chum in one instead, with what result you will learn when you read this powerful school yarn. You'll roar loud and long over the amazing adventures of Dr. Birchemall and the boys of St. Sam's in our next issue of the "Herald." It's the funniest yarn young Dicky Nugent has ever written. For our opening feature—"My Own Page"—Gerald Loder has consented to oblige with a contribution. A final warning, chums! Don't forget that next week's MAGNET will be on sale FRIDAY. Here's hoping you will all have a happy Whitsun holiday. YOUR EDITOR.

Vernon held out his hand to Wharton in a rather frank way, which was not quite like the Bounder's.

Wharton shook hands with him cheerfully enough. "I've met you before, Wharton," said the new junior, with a smile—which, again, Wharton noticed was more pleasant and frank than Smithy's. "I'm sorry we had a row. I can understand now that you took me for my cousin."

"Yes, I've found that out since," said Harry, smiling, too.
"What is this?" asked Mr. Quelch. "I was unaware that you two boys were already acquainted."
"It was a mistake, sir," said Harry. "My friends and I met this chap one day when Smithy—I mean, Vernon-Smith—was in detention. We thought he was Smithy, and tried to get him back to the school; but we found out afterwards that Smithy had been in detention all the time."
"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch. "Several such mistakes seem to have occurred. None such, I think, are likely to occur here when the two boys

are seen together. I trust there was no quarrel on the occasion you refer to, Wharton."

"Well, sir, we—we—" stammered Harry.

"I'm afraid we both got rather excited," said Vernon. "But that's all over, I hope, now the mistake's cleared up."

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Harry. "I hope we're going to be friends."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, "as I have decided to place Vernon in Study No. 1 with you and Nugent."

"Very well, sir."
"Vernon, you may wait in the passage while I speak to my head boy," said the Remove master.

"Yes, sir."
Bertie Vernon left the study and shut the door.

Mr. Quelch paused a moment or two before he went on.

"In other circumstances, Wharton, I should naturally place Vernon in Study No. 4 with his relative," he said at last, "but I have reason to believe that there exists a personal antipathy between them, in spite of their very remarkable likeness."

"I—I think they're not very great friends, sir."

"Disagreement between relations is, of course, in the very worst of taste, especially at school," went on Mr. Quelch. "I believe, from what I have seen of the boy, that I can rely upon Vernon's discretion and good breeding. I do not feel sure of Vernon-Smith."

Wharton shared the Remove master's doubt, but he said nothing.

"For this reason I am placing the new junior in your study, Wharton, and I shall trust to you to do whatever can be done to prevent any discord, and, so far as may be possible, help them to a more friendly footing."

"I understand, sir. I shall certainly do my best," said Harry.

"Very well. That is all, Wharton." The captain of the Remove left the study and joined the new junior in the passage.

"Come and have a squint at the study," said Harry, and they went to the stairs together.

On the middle landing they came on Frank Nugent. He gave a jump at the sight of Wharton's companion.

"What the thump—" he ejaculated. "Unless I'm dreaming, Smithy passed me a few minutes ago going into our passage—"

Harry Wharton laughed. "This is the new kid—Smithy's cousin," he said. "Quelch has landed him in our study, Franky; I'm taking him there now."

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank. "The chap we bagged at Lantham Chase that day, thinking he was Smithy—"

"That very chap."
"This is Nugent," said Harry, addressing the new junior. "He shares Study No. 1 with me—"

He broke off at the sight of a cloud on the new junior's brow; but Bertie Vernon smiled again the next moment.

"I suppose it's no use getting annoyed," he said, "but it gives me rather a jolt when I'm told that I'm so like my cousin. Can't be helped, I suppose. I dare say it annoys Smith—I mean, Vernon-Smith—as much as it does me."

"Better not call him Smith," grinned Nugent. "When a chap has a double-barrelled name he likes to hear both barrels fired at once."

Bertie Vernon gave a shrug of the shoulders—which was so like the Bounder that it irritated both Wharton and Nugent at once.

"I'll try to remember," he said, taking no trouble to keep a sarcastic inflexion out of his voice.

Nugent, without speaking again, went down the stairs.

Wharton, in silence, went across the landing with the new junior.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter's fat form interposed as they were about to enter the Remove passage. "I say, hold on a minute! I say, Smithy, I've heard that that relation of yours is coming to-day."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bertie Vernon.

Bunter blinked at him. "I say, it's official!" he declared. "He's coming all right! I saw him that day last week when he came to see the Head, and I can tell you, Smithy, he's just you over again. I thought it was a ghost when I saw you in your study when that chap was downstairs. I say, do you know whether he's come yet, Wharton?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, he's come."

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, where is he?" asked Bunter. "I want to speak to the chap. I'm always civil to a new kid, as you know. Smithy says he's as poor as a church mouse—"

"Shut up, you ass!" exclaimed Harry, as a red flush of anger overspread the face of Bertie Vernon.

"Well, you've heard him say so. Wharton: he's told everybody in the Form. Haven't you, Smithy? Still, I don't see why a fellow shouldn't be civil to a fellow. Do you know whether he's brought a hamper or anything, Wharton?"

"You pernicious porpoise, this chap is the new kid—Vernon!"

"Eh?" gasped Bunter.

"Kick him, Vernon!" suggested the captain of the Remove. "It's Bunter—he's always asking to be booted—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—I say, ain't that really Smithy?" exclaimed the amazed fat Owl. "I say, old chap, are you really Vernon?"

"Yes, you fat idiot!"

"Oh! I—I can see you ain't Smithy now. You're better-looking!" said Bunter. "Ever so much better-looking! Not so loud, either! I say, I'm jolly glad to see you, Vernon! If you've got a hamper, or anything, I'll help you unpack it!"

"I haven't," snapped Vernon.

"Oh!" Bunter's interest in the new junior evaporated at once. "New fellows often have. I suppose you can't help being hard up. He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter giggled. The next moment his fat giggle changed into a wild howl.

"Ow! Leggo my ear, you beast! Wharrer you up to? Yaroooh! 'Tain't my fault you're as poor as a church mouse, is it?"

Billy Bunter jerked a fat ear away and rolled across the landing. At a safe distance he turned.

"Yah! Cad!" roared Bunter. "You ain't better-looking than Smithy. You're just as ugly—just the same ugly mug! Just as loud, too! Yah!"

And, having discharged that Parthian shot, the fat Owl rolled hurriedly away down the stairs.

"Don't mind that fat ass!" said Harry Wharton.

"I don't!" said Vernon curily.

"Here's the study."

They went into the Remove passage and Harry Wharton pushed the door of Study No. 1, which stood half-open.

Then he stopped, rather dismayed.

There was a Remove fellow in the study, standing by the window. He turned as the door opened. It was Herbert Vernon-Smith. He gave the captain of the Remove a nod, and a cheery grin.

"I came here to speak to you about the cricket," he said. "Look here, Wharton, I suppose it's all washed out—what I said on Saturday. Now all that's cleared up we're starting fresh—"

"Oh, yes; of course!" stammered Harry.

Vernon-Smith had not yet seen Vernon outside the door. It was rather an awkward moment.

"O.K., then!" said the Bounder cheerily. "I was a fool to take the line I did—I don't mind admitting it. Of course, I'm as keen as anything—and we're going to beat Highcliffe, and Rookwood, and St. Jim's this term, and we're—"

He broke off sharply at the sight of a face over Harry Wharton's shoulder—a face so like his own that he might have been looking in the glass.

The cheery expression faded off his face. It was replaced by a dark, sullen, hostile scowl.

Wharton coloured uncomfortably.

"Come in, Vernon!" he said.

Vernon came in.

"What does that fellow want here?" asked Vernon-Smith. "If we're going to talk cricket, I suppose a new kid isn't taking a hand in it."

"This is Vernon's study," said Harry. "Quech has put him in here with Nugent and me."

"Oh, I see! If it's his study, the sooner I get out of it the better!"

The Bounder moved across the study to the door, Bertie Vernon, with a cool disdain in his face, standing aside to give him plenty of room.

"Look here, Smithy," said Harry Wharton, "you two fellows are going to be in the same Form. You'll be thrown together a lot. What's the good of raking up old family troubles at school? I don't see why you can't be friends—"

"Don't you?" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, really, old chap, I don't see why you can't be civil, at least!" urged Harry. "Why not—"

"I'm quite prepared to be civil!" said Bertie Vernon quietly. "I've no desire whatever to wash dirty linen in public. We can bar each other without snarling like quarrelsome dogs, I suppose."

"Yes; that's the advice your precious uncle's given you, isn't it?" sneered the Bounder bitterly. "I remember! That's what he was spilling when he took me for you the other day. What has he sent you here for? What are you barging into my school for, where you're not wanted? Aren't there plenty of other schools? What game is he playing, landing you on me at Greyfriars? Has he told you what I called him? If he hasn't, I'll tell you myself!"

Bertie Vernon clenched his hands and made a step towards the Bounder. The Bounder's fists were already clenched.

Harry Wharton, with one hand, pushed Bertie Vernon farther into the study. With the other hand he pushed the Bounder out. Then he slammed the door between them.

THE END.

(With the Bounder and the Bounder's double at daggers drawn, there's going to be some very lively times at Greyfriars. Be sure and read: "THE PERFECT ALIBI" in next Friday's issue of the MAGNET.)

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SAVED BY THE FOURTH!

Another Rollicking School Story, Starring Dr. Birchmell and the Boys of St. Sam's By DICKY NUGENT

Burleigh of the Sixth, the kaptin of St. Sam's, flung himself into the First Eleven changing-room. He cast a glance round the room and slung a look of reproach at the seniors.

TELEPHONE THOUGHT-READING MYSTIFIES SCHOOL!

"Miraculous!"—Remove Verdict

Do you believe in thought-reading by telephone? Probably not. We don't, either. But Peter Hazeldene has rudely shaken our complacency on the subject.

He wandered into the Rag on the first evening of the new term, when most of the fellows were there jawing, and called for silence. There was a peculiar smite on Hazel's face.

"I suppose you chaps would say I was romancing if I told you they'd got a new mistress at Cliff House who can read your thoughts over the telephone!" he remarked.



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 346 EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON. May 27th, 1939.



HARRY WHARTON ON NATIONAL SERVICE!

"I hope that Greyfriars is not lagging behind in National Service," writes a reader who adopts the nom-de-plume of "Patriot."

Blank amazement. "Because the gubverners have promised Dr. Birchmell a ten per cent cut in his salary if we don't win the first match of the season," snorted Burleigh.

can look through the pack to begin with to make sure they're all there, if you like. But why not try it? You can use the prefects' phone.



"Dash it all, it's a bit too steep," said Tom Brown. "Mean to say you want one of us to ring up a mistress at Cliff House—a woman we've never spoken to before—and ask her if she can tell us what card we've chosen? She'll think we're balmy."

instead of the pool; but the fact that they came to other way made no difference to him. He had been told to kidnap a team of cricketers, and here they were!

"All serene, then," assented Tom Brown. "Let's have the cards." He selected a card at random. It was the ten of diamonds.

"Foiled!" he muttered, between his nashing teeth. Dished, diddled, and done, by hok. What the merry dickens can I do wonder?"

"What ever are they doing of going out for walk just before cricket?" he demanded. "The only thing I can think of is that they funk the game."

Dr. Birchmell's shifty eyes eyed them dewbiously from under his beetling brows. "I wonder—" he mormered.



"Hooray!" "Good old Jolly!" "St. Sam's wins! Hooray!" The cheers were simply deafening!

"Probable!" When questioned by Mr. Quelch in the Form-room, Bunter denied that he had any tuck under his desk, despite the fact that he had brought a jar of ox-tongue into class with him.

"Quite a novelty!" When our tame actor William Wibley forgot to do an impot, Mr. Quelch gave him a good dressing down.

Nor does our military training end on the parade ground. We have musketry practice, too, at a miniature range. Several Remove fellows are excellent shots, Lord Mauleverer and Vernon-Smith being particularly notable examples.

Most of us think that common sense will prevent a war. But if a war does come, it won't catch us napping at Greyfriars!

INKY'S BOWLING OUR SUREST STAND-BY!

Says H. VERNON-SMITH, Our Sports Critic

The best form of defence is attack, say the military experts. I think that about cricket, too.

Having said all that, I can come to the point and tell you that our Remove team this season is going to knock spots off all-comers for the reason that we happen to have a super-bowler.

I have just been watching him at practice. He's better than ever—and if he doesn't play havoc with our opponents' wickets this summer, I'll eat my best straw boater!