

Meet BILLY BUNTER—FATTER AND FUNNIER THAN EVER—Inside!

# The Magnet <sup>2<sup>D</sup></sup>

*Billy Bunter's  
Own Paper*



# MY OWN PAGE



**This Week By  
HERBERT  
VERNON-SMITH,  
the Bounder of  
the Remove.**

**W**ELL, at any rate, I'm no stranger to most readers. I write in the "Herald" a good deal, chiefly about sport, and I expect you're fairly used to me by now. I'm going to keep sport out of this page in order to make a change from my "Herald" style. It seems to be the fashion to use "My Own Page" as a sort of personal confession.

I suppose I have the reputation of "a bad egg." I admit I have occasionally asked for the sack, and more than once my career at Greyfriars has nearly come to a sudden full stop. Actually, I've very little doubt that I shall eventually be turfed out by the Head. He won't put up with me for ever.

Then why don't I reform? I'll tell you—because I can't. I loathe that silly word "reform." No fellow ever reforms—not really. He may simmer down a bit if it suits him, but if he has a kink in him, it's bound to show sooner or later. My kink is that I can't stand rules and restrictions.

I break rules because I like the fun and excitement of it, and because I want to show that no dashed rule can pin me down. If I want to do a thing, I do it, and hang the consequences. Let the Good Little Georgies stick to the rules, if they like—they're the sort who never get anywhere. I believe in taking a chance, whatever other people may say about me.

My pater is a millionaire, but that won't make any difference to me. I should become a millionaire if I was as poor as Penfold—simply because I'm the sort who gets things done. I don't stand about waiting for opportunity. I go out and make my own opportunities. If anyone gets hurt, that's their look out. "Get On or Get Out," is the motto, and I've no time to worry about lame ducks.

Look at Penfold, for instance. His pater is a cobbler. He mends boots and shoes. Well, that's all right—good luck to him, as far as that goes. Where he's a fool is that he's quite content to go on being a cobbler. If a villager can't pay for his repairs, old Penfold will tell him to leave it over till things get better. That's his idea of business.

If I did the job, I'd have the villager up in the County Court and get my money to the last farthing. It may be "hard," but what of it? It's a hard world. You have simply got to look after yourself first if you ever want to get anywhere. If I started life as a cobbler, I bet you I'd soon be a boot manufacturing company, with a factory as big as a town and 500 branches. You wouldn't catch me being satisfied with a cottage in Friardale. (Not even one next door to the Three Fishers?—ED.)

Some fellows may call it unscrupulous. I call it common sense. Do you think my pater made his million by looking round for somebody else to help? Not likely. He helped himself. After all, there's only a certain amount of money in the world, and every ha'penny you have means that someone else is a ha'penny short. Two people can't have the same ha'penny, so why shouldn't I have it as well as anyone else? That's my viewpoint—and I go and get it.

Please don't compare me with that worm Fishy. He's just a feather-brained bandit when it comes to business. While he's "shooting off his mouth," I'm sizing up his weak points—and you can always tackle any man when you spot his weak points. That's the first rule of business. I guarantee to

make Fishy come out of the little end of the horn any time he likes. And then some.

Well, that's all about me—and quite enough, too.

**My EXTRA-SPECIAL NAP THIS WEEK is:**  
MOONRAKER in the 3.30 at Wapshot.  
(Each way.)

## LAUGH THESE OFF!

There's a silly young fathead named Stott, who thinks he's wise, but he's not!

He once had a tip  
For a horse called "The Pip,"  
Which was just what he afterwards got!

Then he heard of a horse named "Sedan,"  
From the selfsame reliable man,  
Who took all his tin

And said: "He'll walk in!"  
And he did—but the other gees ran!

Then the tipster, a person named Bert,  
Gave Stott what he called "a dead cert!"

Stott ventured a pound,  
And very soon found  
It was not only dead, but inert!

Yes, Stott is as keen as a knife;  
But he's asking for trouble and strife,  
For he won't find it cheap

If he's going to keep  
This Bert for the rest of his life!

## COKER'S LETTER.

Heres' a letter stolen from Horace Coker's study—maybe.

"Deer Aunt Joody,—I thank you for the Tuck Hamper, koosisting of 1 kake, 1 duz tarts, 1 duz kreem bunnns, 1 fig pooding, 2 Swiss Roles, and a stake-and-kidderny pi. Please eggscuse blott, but that fat bownder Bunter looked in and I had to kick him owt. I must leve off riting for a minnit as old Prowt has just called me from the passaje owtside.

"It's an eggstraordinary thing, but Prowt said he hadn't called me, and gave me 100 lines. The phool! As I was saying, thank you for 1 kake, 4 duz tarts, 3 kreem bunnns, 1 fig pooding, 1 Swiss Role, and a stake-and-kidderny pi— Bother! Wingate is calling me from the passaje. Eggscuse, please.

"The iddlott said he never called me. Kan you beet it? I think they're all mad. Anyway, thanks for the 3 kreem bunnns, 1 Swiss Role, and a stake-and-kidderny pi— Koufound! Blundell is calling from the passaje. Why can't be cum into the studdy?"

"Absolootly barny! He said he never called. He must be off his krumpet! Well, old deer, thanks for the stake-and-kidderny pi— Oh krikey! Bunter ses the Head wants to see me. I must push off.

"Well, that takes the biskit! He didn't! He's owt! I'll kick that fat bownder! Well, I must close now. Thanks for the stake-and— Why, where's it gonn? Funny! I thort I left it on the table, Must be in the cubbord, I eggspekt.

"Yores affeckshionitly,  
"HORACE."

## POEB OD SPRIG!

Id the sprig a livelier iris chages od the burdish'd dub,  
Id the sprig a yug bad's fadey lighdly turds to thoughtds of lub,  
Id the sprig the tedder labkids gabbol gaily id the fold,  
Id the sprig the Egglish clibate gibbs us all a beastly gold.



To see Bunter put the tart in his mouth, hold the page six inches from your face and then bring it slowly forward until the tip of your nose touches the white dot on Bunter's sleeve.

## INTELLIGENCE TEST!

(1) Who were the speakers of the following famous speeches?

- "Beast!"
- "Unparalleled!"
- "Oh, rather!"
- "Eh?"

(2) If you had ten pounds on a horse which came in at 50 to 1, what would you get from Joey Banks?

(3) What is wrong with this sentence? "Bunter's postal-order will come to-day."

(4) A word in the following sentence is wrongly spelt. "Fishy gave away ninepence this morning." What should it be?

ANSWERS: (1) Bunter, Prowt, Dabney, Dutton. (2) A wide berth. (3) The word "not" has been omitted. (4) Should be "none pence."



## "The Bounder" HERBERT VERNON-SMITH

The Bounder of the Remove shares Study No. 4 with Tom Redwing. Smithy is one of the outstanding juniors at Greyfriars. The son of a multi-millionaire, he is hard and unscrupulous, rather vulgar in his tastes, loose and shady in his habits, yet he is brilliant at sport and can be, when he likes, a thoroughly decent fellow. Skinner's cartoon is unusual, but it sums up Smithy very happily indeed. We see him as a Knave (which he is), the Diamonds representing his wealth and loud taste in jewellery. He is frowning and smiling, which is a hit at his quick and uncertain temper. Moreover, he is a decided "card," and he frequently gambles with the pasteboards. Many a time and oft has Smithy been within an ace of the "bullet" for breaking bounds or some other shady act. He loves the limelight, and is led into reckless scenes as a result. Still, Greyfriars would not be the same without the Bounder.

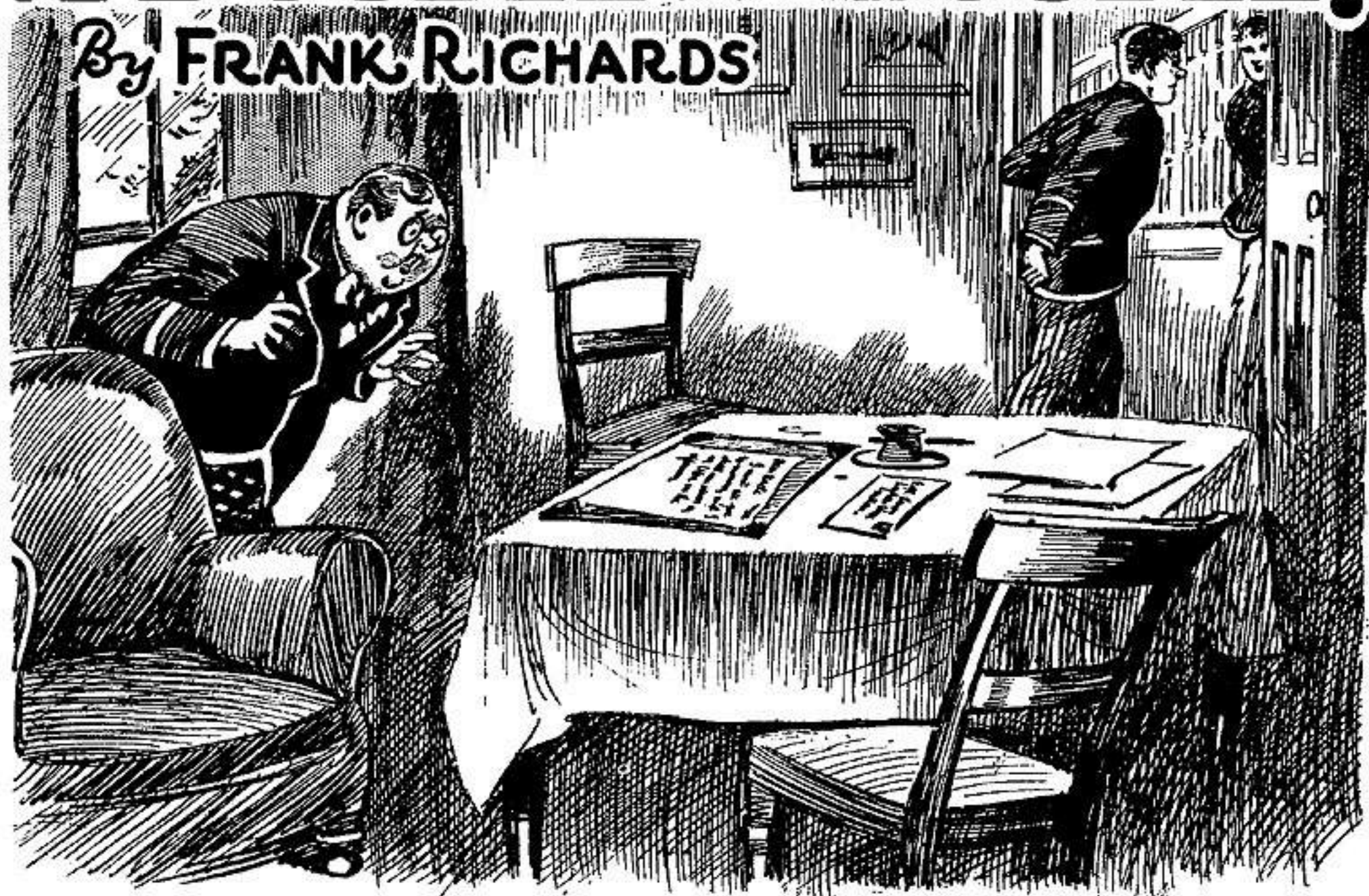
(Cartoon by HAROLD SKINNER)

Herbert Vernon Smith

**UNDER ANOTHER'S NAME.** Herbert Vernon-Smith, of the Greyfriars Remove, has played the part of his cousin and double—Herbert Vernon—with success. Now comes the time for Herbert Vernon to play the part of the Bounder.

# A DOUBLE *in* TROUBLE!

By **FRANK RICHARDS**



Billy Bunter peered out from behind the curtain. He gave one blink at Vernon's back in the doorway, and another at the letter on the table. He read at a glance what the junior had written so far.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Just Like Bunter!

**M**R. QUELCH, master of the Greyfriars Remove, gave quite a jump.

Quelch was seated in a deck-chair under a shady elm in the old quad of Greyfriars. He had a batch of Form papers on his knee, which he was reading over and correcting. On that sultry July afternoon the Remove master preferred the open air to his study. So there he was when Billy Bunter rolled in at the school gates, with a fat, excited face, and squeaked:

"I say, you fellows, seen Smithy?"

Billy Bunter did not notice Quelch in the deckchair under the elms. The Owl of the Remove never noticed anything a few yards off. Bunter's big spectacles were turned on Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent, who were near at hand, and he squeaked at them with a loud, excited squeak.

"Smithy?" repeated Bob. "He's in his study, I believe."

He glanced round the quadrangle, but there was nothing to be seen of Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Cut in and call him, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "I'm out of breath! If he's in his study I don't want to go up all those stairs. You don't mind stairs, old fellow?"

"Not a lot," agreed Bob Cherry. "I haven't a couple of tons to carry up a staircase, old fat bean! But what the

thump do you want me to call Smithy for? Think he'd come like a dog if I called him?"

"He's wanted!" grinned Bunter. "I say, what do you think? I say, I've just seen a man——"

"I've seen lots!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—I mean to say, he wants to see Smithy!" explained Bunter. "He was squatting on the fence of the old spinney at the corner

"Bill Lodgey, from the Cross Keys!" grinned Bunter. "I fancy Quelch would sit and stare if he walked into Greyfriars. Smithy would get sacked, I expect! I say, cut in and tell Smithy—— What are you making faces at me for, Bob Cherry?"

Bob was making Bunter frantic signs to be silent. But it was too late. Every word uttered by the fat Owl floated to the ears of the Form-master in the deckchair under the elm.

It was at this stage of the proceedings that Mr. Quelch jumped.

He forgot all about the batch of Form papers on his knee. He sat up and stared at the fat Owl of his Form. The expression on his face was fearfully expressive.

Bunter—still happily unaware of Quelch—rattled on:

"I say, you fellows, Smithy will get into a fearful row if that frowsy swab walks in here to see him! Ho jolly well means it; I could see that he was ratty with Smithy about something. Think Smithy owes him money on a horse?"

"Shut up!" breathed Nugent.

"Well, I think you might cut in and give Smithy the tip. Lodgey said he would wait for him half an hour, no longer. I came in to tell Smithy——"

"Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped the fat Owl, as that dread voice fell upon his fat ears.

Billy Bunter spun round like a fat humming-top, his eyes almost popping through his spectacles at Mr. Quelch.

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of Friardale Lane, you know, when I passed, and he called to me and asked me to tell Smithy to come. And he said tell Smithy if he didn't come, he'd come and see him here. He, he, he!"

"Well, why shouldn't he come here and see him if he wants to see Smithy?" asked Frank Nugent, staring at the fat Owl.

"He, he, he! It's Lodgey!" chuckled Bunter.

"Who?" gasped Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent together.

"Oh!" he repeated. "Oh crikey!"

Bunter blinked at his Form-master; rather like a fat rabbit fascinated by a serpent. Quelch's speaking countenance was quite terrifying.

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Come here, Bunter!"

"Oh scissors!"

Billy Bunter rolled reluctantly towards his Form-master.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet, laid the batch of Form papers in the deckchair, and fixed his gimlet eyes on the quaking fat Owl.

"I heard what you said to Cherry and Nugent, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch in his grimmest tone.

"Did—did—did you, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"I did!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Cherry! Nugent!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

Two juniors were moving off quietly in the direction of the House. Quelch's gimlet eye was upon them. Probably he could guess that their idea was to convey a friendly tip to the Bounder of Greyfriars of the trouble that was impending.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Stay where you are!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

The two juniors stayed where they were.

Having frowned at them severely, Mr. Quelch gave Bunter his attention again.

"You were taking a message to Vernon-Smith, Bunter, from a disreputable character with whom no Greyfriars boy is allowed to exchange a word!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes—I—I mean, no!" gasped Bunter, overwhelmed with dismay. "I—I never saw you, or I wouldn't have said anything, sir! Oh lor'!"

"I have no doubt of that!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "How dare you take a message from such a man to a Greyfriars boy, Bunter!"

"I—I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean to say, I—I never saw Bill Lodgey squatting on the spinney fence, and he never called to me!" stammered Bunter. "He never said anything about Smithy, and I—I never came in to tell Smithy, sir! I—I—I don't suppose Smithy knows him, any more than I do, sir! I don't even know the man by sight, and—and I've never heard his name, so far as I remember."

If Billy Bunter hoped that Mr. Quelch would believe that statement his hope was entirely unfounded.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch. "You utterly obtuse and untruthful boy—"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You will be punished for taking a message from such a man, Bunter—"

"But I—I—I didn't!" wailed Bunter. "I—I only came in to tip Smithy to keep him out of a row! I—I mean, I—I thought you wouldn't like that man to walk into the school, sir! I—I don't mean that I've seen him—I—I haven't; and as for speaking to him, I wouldn't. He isn't there—"

"You will take two hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

Mr. Quelch picked up his batch of Form papers, and walked away with a rapid stride towards the House.

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent glanced after him, and then looked at one another eloquently.

"Poor old Smithy!" murmured Bob.

"He's for it!" said Nugent. "I—I—"

suppose he's asked for it, playing the giddy ox as he does, but— Poor old Smithy!"

"Beast!" breathed Billy Bunter. He addressed that remark to his Form-master's back in the distance. "I say, you fellows, fancy old Quelch popping up like that! I never saw him till he barked! I say, do you think he's gone in after Smithy?"

"Yes, ass!" grunted Bob. "You've given Smithy away pretty completely, you blithering fathhead!"

"Well, I never meant to," said Bunter. "I was going to tip him to see that man Lodgey before he blew in here. I say, Smithy must be an ass to let his bookie pals come rooting after him at the school! I say, I wonder if Smithy will be bunked? What do you think?"

"I think I'll boot you across the quad, you fat chump!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter departed without waiting to be booted.

In the distance Mr. Quelch disappeared into the house. Evidently he was going to see Herbert Vernon-Smith; he was going to take that message instead of Bunter. It was likely to cause consternation in Study No. 4 in the Remove.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Under Another Name!

"COMING out, Smithy?"

"No!"

Tom Redwing stood in the doorway of Study No. 4 in the Remove. He was looking across the study at the junior who lounged in the window seat, with a book on his knees.

The junior was reading a volume of Shakespeare. He looked up for a moment to give Redwing that curt answer, and then dropped his eyes to the book again.

Redwing stood looking at him in silence.

A taste for the immortal works of William Shakespeare was quite a new taste on the part of his chum, Herbert Vernon-Smith. Smithy was not much of a reading man, and Shakespeare bored him. This was one of many little changes that Tom Redwing had noticed in his chum during the past week, and that perplexed him and gave him an odd sense of not really knowing the fellow that he had thought he knew so well.

No doubt it was a change for the better if Smithy liked Shakespeare better than pink papers that dealt with the odds on the geogees. But it was not like Smithy, and Tom Redwing had liked Smithy as he was—with all his faults and failings.

Smithy had improved during the week that had elapsed since his cousin and double, Bertie Vernon, had left Greyfriars School.

That was not to be doubted!

Shakespeare was a great improvement on "Racing Tips." It was a week since Redwing had scented cigarette smoke in the study. He knew that Smithy had not once been out of bounds during that week—a great change for the reckless Bounder. As for breaking out at night after lights-out, Smithy seemed to have forgotten such escapades completely!

It was all to the good, and yet somehow Redwing felt and realised that he did not like his chum as he had always liked him. He blamed himself, for surely he should have been glad to see the reckless scapegrace of Greyfriars

mending his ways! But there it was, and he could not help it!

Even now, when he asked Smithy if he were coming out and was a little hurt at his curt refusal, he was conscious of the fact that he did not really want Smithy's company!

He had always wanted it, disagreeable as it often was. Now he did not—though he was loth to admit it to himself. But at the bottom of his heart he knew it, and it gave him a discomfited feeling of being a disloyal friend.

The junior in the window-seat went on reading, as if unaware that Tom was still there.

Tom broke the silence at last.

"What about a spot of cricket, Smithy?"

"I'm reading!"

"Well, yes, but there's the Redclyffe match coming on," said Tom. "Now that Vernon has gone all that trouble with the cricket is over, and Wharton will want you in the team. You were always keen—"

"I'm keen enough! But I'm not at all sure I want to play in the match at Redclyffe!"

Redwing stared at him.

"Smithy, what on earth do you mean? You made fuss enough about being dropped out of the Form match with the Shell last week because Bertie Vernon was playing. Now he's gone you're surely not thinking of keeping up a row with Wharton on his account?"

"No; but—"

"You're wanted in the eleven, Smithy, you know that!" said Tom warmly. "The fellows would be glad enough to have Vernon for his bowling if he were here; but he's gone! Your batting—"

"I'm not sure I shall play! Look here, I'm mugging this stuff up for an essay; give a fellow a rest!" said the junior in the window-seat irritably.

Tom Redwing compressed his lips. It seemed that his disinclination for his chum's company was shared by his chum.

"All right!" he said shortly, and he left the study, shutting the door after him rather hard.

The junior in the window-seat did not resume reading when he was gone. He laid down the volume and sat staring moodily before him.

Tom Redwing—the fellow who knew the Bounder best at Greyfriars—had addressed him as "Smithy"—nothing doubting! Not a fellow in the Remove, not his Form-master, not his headmaster, doubted that he was Herbert Vernon-Smith!

No one at Greyfriars knew or suspected, or even dreamed, that it was not Bertie Vernon who had left the school a week ago—but Herbert Vernon-Smith—and that his double had taken his name and his place and stayed on at Greyfriars as the Bounder!

Only Bertie Vernon knew, and his uncle, Captain Vernon, at Lantham Chase, who had planned the whole thing and struck when the time was ripe—and who had half persuaded, half driven, the reluctant junior into playing that strange part!

It had gone like clockwork!

In form and feature Vernon was the Bounder over again! In the Bounder's clothes nobody would have taken him for Bertie Vernon, even had not Bertie been supposed to have left the school.

Bertie had doubted at first whether so tremendous a spoof could be possible. He had found it as easy as falling off a form.

To all Greyfriars he was Herbert Vernon-Smith. He had become so used



Herbert Vernon roared with rage as he hurled back the bedclothes. The bed was fairly floating in ink. His pyjamas were drenched with it. He sat in a sea of ink, spluttering with rage. "Good gad!" gasped Wingate. "Who's done that?"

by this time to playing the part that he played it unconsciously, and almost forgot at times that he had once borne another name.

There were plenty of difficulties to be encountered, all the same.

He was no bad hat like the vanished Bounder. Every fellow in the Remove, as well as Redwing, had noticed the change in the supposed Smithy's manners and customs in that respect.

'Too sudden a reform might awaken doubts; but he could not help that. He would not smoke cigarettes with Skinner and Snoop, he would not join in any risky escapade out of bounds, he had no taste for ragging in class, and he was determined to steer clear of the Bounder's dingy and questionable acquaintances outside the school.

Even cricket, that he was very keen on, presented difficulties. He was a bowler and rather below than above the average at batting. Smithy was a great man with the willow.

If he played for the Remove he could never hope to get anywhere near the Bounder's batting form, and it would be perilous to reveal his uncanny skill with the ball.

Bang! came on the study door, and Harry Wharton came in.

The junior in the window-seat seemed to be reading again as the captain of the Remove entered.

Harry Wharton glanced across at him and laughed.

"Frightfully lousy, Smithy?" he asked.

"Well, yes!"

"Wash it out and come down to the cricket! Look here, what's this game of yours?" asked Wharton. "You never could pull with your relation,

Vernon, but you seem to have picked up his tastes since he left. He always had a giddy Shakespeare about the study, now you've always got one about

yours!" The captain of the Remove chuckled. "Have you chucked 'Racing Tips' for good?"

"Yes," granted Vernon.

"Glad to hear it, old bean," said Wharton cordially. "And I hear you've chucked smoking, too, and I'm jolly glad to hear that! It never was worth your while to play the ox like Skinner and Snoop. But don't carry it too far; cricket's cricket, and you know we want you in the match at Redelyffe."

"I'm not in much form lately," muttered the junior in the window-seat.

"All the more reason for a spot of practice at the nets," said Harry. "Come on—and I'll get Inky to give you some bowling."

Vernon sat silent.

There were few batsmen in the Remove who could deal with Hurreo Janset Ram Singh's bowling. Smithy was one of the few—Smithy's double certainly was not! At bowling he could beat even Hurreo Singh; but that he dared not do in the changed circumstances. At batting he was nowhere!

There was a footstep and the rustle of a master's gown in the passage.

Both juniors looked towards the doorway as the rather angular figure of Henry Samuel Quelch, the Remove master, appeared there.

Vernon rose to his feet as the gimlet eyes fixed on him grimly. He felt a qualm at his heart.

For the moment it seemed to him that his imposture had been discovered and that his Form-master had come to tell him so—and to take him to the Head! Otherwise, what did that look on Quelch's face mean?

"Vernon-Smith!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

His tone was sharp—his very sharpest. But it brought relief to the startled junior. He was not discovered—or Mr. Quelch would not have addressed him as Vernon-Smith!

"Yes, sir!" he faltered. Something was wrong, he could see that, though it was not what he had for a moment feared.

"I have to ask you a question, Vernon-Smith!" said the Remove master grimly, his gimlet eyes fixed on the flushed face and unheeding the presence of Harry Wharton in the study. "What do you know of a man named Lodgey—a disreputable racing man at the Cross Keys in Friardale?"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### A Bolt From The Blue!

**B**ERTIE VERNON caught his breath.

The question was utterly unexpected.

But the boy who was playing a part at Greyfriars School was quick on the uptake.

Bill Lodgey was one of the Bounder's disreputable acquaintances outside the school—supposed to be his, now that he was supposed to be the Bounder!

"Lodgey!" repeated Vernon, to gain time.

"That is the name! What do you know of him?"

"Nothing!" answered Vernon.

Harry Wharton gave him a quick look, but at once turned away his glance. A fellow could not, perhaps, be expected to own up to conduct that might have led to expulsion. But it made the captain of the Remove feel sick to hear a fellow lying like this.

All the Remove knew that Herbert Vernon-Smith knew Bill Lodgey. In his own Form the Bounder made no secret of his reckless escapades—rather he gloried in them. Harry Wharton had himself seen the Bounder in talk with Lodgey at a distance from the

school. Dozens of fellows knew that Lodgey carried out betting transactions for Smithy and Skinner and Angel of the Fourth—the bad hats of the Lower School.

Certainly, it would have been dangerous to own up to knowing Lodgey. But how any fellow could stand there and tell so cool a falsehood was beyond Harry Wharton's comprehension.

He would have been glad to get out of the study. But Mr. Quelch filled the doorway, and he could not shove past his Form-master. He moved away to the window, and stood looking down into the quadrangle.

Mr. Quelch did not heed him. His gimlet eyes were almost boring into Vernon's flushed face.

"You say that you know nothing of the man, Vernon-Smith?" he demanded.

"Nothing at all!" answered Vernon. "I've heard the name—I think I've seen the man loafing about the village. That's all."

"Have you ever spoken to him?"

"Never!"

"You have had no dealings with him?"

"None!"

Harry Wharton's ears burned as he heard what seemed to him falsehood after falsehood, uttered in cool, calm tones.

Yet, as a matter of fact, Vernon's answers were perfectly true. Bertie Vernon had never had anything to do with the disreputable racing man at the Cross Keys, and had never spoken to him or thought of speaking to him. Under another fellow's name, he had to answer for another fellow's sins!

"Then why," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice, "is this man waiting for you at the spinney in Friardale Lane, Vernon-Smith?"

The hapless impersonator started.

"Is—is he?" he stammered. "I never knew—I certainly have no intention of seeing him."

"He has sent in a message by Bunter that if you do not see him there in half an hour he will come on to the school!"

"Oh!" gasped Vernon.

"Bunter has been punished for carrying a message for such a man," went on Mr. Quelch. "Am I to understand from you, Vernon-Smith, that the man has sent in this message to a boy he does not know and who has never had any dealings with him?"

Vernon breathed hard.

Captain Vernon, when he had planned the part that his nephew was to play at Greyfriars in the place of the kidnapped Bounder, had foreseen most eventualities; but he had not foreseen this!

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch grimly, as the junior did not speak. "What have you got to say, Vernon-Smith?"

"I've said that I don't know the man and have nothing to do with him," answered Vernon as steadily as he could. "I'm not answerable for what may be said or done by a man I don't know."

Mr. Quelch scanned his face keenly. He was puzzled.

Only too well he knew that Herbert Vernon-Smith was not particular in the matter of truth when he was dealing with beaks or prefects. But he could not feel sure that Vernon-Smith was lying now.

"Then, if what you say is true, Vernon-Smith, it is a matter of no consequence to you if that man carries out his threat and comes to the school?" he said.

"None whatever, sir!" was Bertie's cool reply. "Perhaps there may be some mistake in the matter. He may have had dealings with someone like me and made a mistake!"

Mr. Quelch's brow grew very grim.

"That is an utterly inadmissible suggestion, Vernon-Smith. There is—or rather was—only one Greyfriars boy who could be mistaken for you—your cousin Vernon, who has now left. You were constantly being mistaken for one another while Vernon was here, it is true. But Vernon was a boy of irreproachable character—I am absolutely certain that he never had dealings with disreputable persons outside the

school. I cannot say the same for you—far from it."

If Bertie Vernon had had any concern for his relative locked in the turret-room at Lantham Chase this would probably have banished it!

This was the kind of thing he had to face in his rival's name. His bitter dislike for the Bounder had never been deeper than at that moment.

"I shall not condemn you, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch. "I shall see this man when he comes—he shall be shown into my study, and I shall, I trust, ascertain from him the facts of the case. If it should prove that you have had dealings with him you will be taken to your headmaster—and I can hold out little hope that you will be allowed to remain at Greyfriars!"

With that, the Remove master turned away and rustled down the passage to the stairs.

Bertie Vernon stood staring at the doorway after he had gone.

Lodgey was coming! He might, for all Vernon knew, have a pocketful of proofs of his dealings with the Bounder. One proof would be sufficient! Then it would be the sack!

The sack!

Captain Vernon had planned all this—planned for Vernon to take his rival's name, his rival's place, his rival's inheritance when the time came! He had planned for the poor relation to replace the millionaire's son! And he had succeeded—for this!

For his nephew to be taken, only too completely and thoroughly, for Herbert Vernon-Smith—and expelled from the school in his name! Sacked—in the Bounder's place! What an end to that astute scheme! What news for the Army man, gloating over his success at Lantham Chase!

Vernon burst into a harsh laugh.

Harry Wharton turned from the window. Vernon, who had forgotten that he was in the study, stared at him. The captain of the Remove crossed to the door without a word. But at the door he turned back.

"Look here, Smithy—" he said quietly. "You're a fool to lie to Quelch like that! If that man Lodgey comes here he will give you away all along the line! If you owned up—"

"Owned up!" repeated Vernon.

If he owned up to the reckless rascality of his double whose name he had taken! Wharton did not know what he was asking.

"I can't understand you!" went on Harry. "You've always been a bit of a blackguard—"

"Thanks!"

"But you used to have a spot of sense! Why, for the love of Mike, have you let the man come here after you?"

Vernon laughed again—discordantly.

"Oh, I suppose the man hasn't seen his young Greyfriars friend for so long he fancies the acquaintance has been dropped and he's got his back up!" he answered.

Wharton stared at him.

"Look here, Smithy, if that means that you've chucked him and he's trying to stick on to you, for goodness' sake go to Quelch and tell him how the matter stands, before it's too late—"

"Oh, don't be a fool!"

"I'm giving you good advice, Smithy. I suppose, from a schoolmaster's point of view, you ought to be sacked—but nobody in the Remove wants you to be turfed out of Greyfriars. Go to Quelch—"

## THE MAD MAJOR



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"Oh, stop talking rot!"

Harry Wharton gave a shrug of the shoulders and walked out of the study.

Vernon kicked the door shut after him.

He was left alone—pacing the study restlessly.

Sacked—in Vernon-Smith's name! A week of successful deception—and now, like a bolt from the blue, this!

Either he could own up that he was not Vernon-Smith and that he was an impostor and a cheat—or he could keep the name he had borrowed and be kicked out of the school under it!

That was the choice that was now before the Bounder's double!

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Horace Takes a Hand!

"HOLD on!" said Coker.

Horace Coker of the Fifth came to a halt in Friardale Lane.

Potter and Greene of that Form came to a halt also. They saw no reason for holding on; but when Horace Coker said hold on, it was for lesser mortals to obey.

Coker & Co. had started to walk down to Friardale after class. But they had not progressed very far from the school gates when Coker came to a halt and bade his comrades hold on.

They were passing the fence of the old spinney at the corner of the lane. On that fence a man was leaning, smoking cigarettes one after another and surrounding himself with a collection of stumps.

He was a horsey-looking man, with a bowler hat tilted rakishly on one side of his head and a necktie that could be seen from afar.

Horace Coker fixed his eyes upon him inimically. Horace Coker knew Bill Lodgey by sight. And he did not seem pleased to see the disreputable Mr. Lodgey lounging so near the school—obviously waiting for somebody.

"See that rotter?" said Coker, quite careless of the fact that his loud voice reached Mr. Lodgey's ears and apprised him of Coker's opinion of him.

"I say, come on!" said Potter hastily.

Potter did not want a row with the racing man from the Cross Keys—if Coker did!

"I said hold on!" answered Coker calmly. "What's the blighter hanging about here for?"

"He can hear you," whispered Greene, as Lodgey turned an evil eye on Coker of the Fifth.

"What does that matter?" asked Coker.

"Oh!"

"That frowsy rotter is waiting for somebody there!" said Coker. "I fancy I can guess whom. I've seen Price talking to him more than once."

"No bizney of ours," muttered Potter. "Come on, old chap!"

"Let him rip!" said Greene. "Do come on!"

Potter and Greene were not interested in the sporting proclivities of Price of the Fifth.

Coker, it seemed, was. Seldom or never did Horace Coker mind his own business. Most of his time was taken up in minding that of others.

"You fellows don't mind that sort of thing going on in our Form?" asked Coker sarcastically. "Well, I do! That man's moving off. I'm going to tell him to shift."

"For goodness' sake, old man, chuck it!" implored Potter. "Suppose Prout came out and saw you speaking to him, and—"

"Suppose a prefect did!" urged Greene.

Heedless of remonstrance, Coker of the Fifth walked across to Mr. Lodgey.

That dingy gentleman eyed him shiftily and evilly. Coker was only a schoolboy, but he was an outsize in schoolboys. Coker was big enough and brawny enough to knock Mr. Lodgey into a cocked hat, if the spirit moved him so to do. Coker was prepared, if necessary, to do it, and would not have cared if Mr. Prout, his Form-master, and the whole body of Greyfriars prefects had seen him doing it.

"What do you want here?" demanded Coker. "Waiting for somebody from the school—what?"

"P'r'aps I am!" retorted Mr. Lodgey. "But I ain't waiting for you, and you can 'ook it!"

"Well, shift!" said Coker.

"I'll shift soon enough, if the covey I'm waiting for don't show up," said Mr. Lodgey grimly. "I'm going in to see him if he don't come out—like I sent him a message to say. Mebbe you'd like to cut in and tell him I'm coming."

"I said shift!" Coker pointed out. "I'm going down to Friardale now. I'll see you off. Get going!"

"Pack it up!" said Mr. Lodgey.

"Are you going?" asked Coker.

"No," said Mr. Lodgey emphatically, "I ain't!"

Coker pushed back his cuffs in a businesslike way.

Potter and Greene exchanged a hopeless look, and edged farther off.

The bare idea of a Greyfriars master, or prefect coming along and finding them mixed up in a shindy with a character like Bill Lodgey made them shiver.

It did not make Horace Coker shiver. Coker did not mind if the whole county of Kent saw him mixed up in a shindy with Bill Lodgey.

"Where are you fellows going?" called out Coker. "Don't go! It won't take me long to shift this blighter!"

"I—I—I say—" stammered Potter.

Having pushed back his cuffs, Horace Coker advanced on Mr. Lodgey, his hands up and his eyes gleaming over them.

Bill detached himself from the fence. He threw away a half-smoked cigarette and backed. Coker followed him up.

Potter and Greene, almost in anguish, glanced in the direction of the school gates. Fortunately there was no sign of Prout or a prefect.

"Get going!" rapped Coker.

"I ain't going!" roared Mr. Lodgey. "You mind your own business, blow yer! You lay a 'and on me, and I'll go on to your 'eadmaster!"

Mr. Lodgey, having backed several paces, stood his ground. He was not going to be ordered off by a schoolboy. Not Mr. Lodgey, if he could help it. The question was, whether he could help it.

Coker rushed.

"Oh gum!" gasped Potter.

"Oh crikey!" moaned Greene.

They gazed at the scene that followed. Mr. Lodgey, not unaccustomed to scraps at the races, or in public houses, stood his ground and put up a fight. For two or three minutes both Lodgey and Coker put in some lefty work.

A spurt of crimson from Coker's rugged nose rewarded Mr. Lodgey's efforts. A punch in Coker's waistcoat

made Coker gasp. A thump that landed on his ear made his head sing.

Then a jolt with all Coker's weight behind it caught Mr. Lodgey on his stubby jaw.

Crash!

Bill Lodgey landed on his back, scattering the dust of Friardale Lane. He uttered a yell that could have been heard in the school. He rolled in the dust, still yelling.

"Oh!" roared Mr. Lodgey. "Ow! Oh! Whoooh! Ooooh! Oh!"

Horace Coker dabbed his nose. But he grinned as he dabbed it.

"Have a few more?" he asked.

"Oh! Yow! Oh! Wow!"

"I'm waiting," said Coker.

Mr. Lodgey sat up dizzily, with his hand to his jaw. He felt as if a mule had kicked him there. He felt his jaw tenderly, as if to make sure that it had not been pushed through the back of his head. It felt as if it had.

"Going?" asked Coker.

"Oh! Ow! Oh! Yow! Oh!" spluttered Mr. Lodgey. He tottered to his feet. "You keep off, blow yer! You keep—"

Coker of the Fifth did not keep off. He came on.

Bill Lodgey jumped back just in time to escape another jolt. He jumped back again, and again, and then he made a desperate jump at Horace Coker.

Horace met him with left and right. His left landed in an eye, his right on a red and bulbous nose. Once more Mr. Lodgey smote Friardale Lane with his back. Once more he rolled and roared.

"Going?" grinned Coker. "By gum, I'll roll him into the ditch! A wash will do him good. He looks as if he hasn't had one for months."

Bill Lodgey fairly bounded to his feet. It was true that he was in want of a wash, but it was clear that he did not desire to get one in the ditch. He bounded up and ran.

After him rushed Coker of the Fifth. His boot landed on Mr. Lodgey's trousers, and Bill yelled and accelerated.

"Dribble him!" shouted Coker. "Come on, you men! Dribble him back to his pub!"

Bill Lodgey put on speed. He had been anxious to see Herbert Vernon-Smith—determined to enter Greyfriars if the Bounder did not come out. But he forgot all about Herbert Vernon-Smith now. He had much more pressing matters to think of than the scapegrace of the Greyfriars Remove. Coker's boot was the most pressing thing at the moment.

Lodgey flew.

After him flew Coker, letting out one foot after another. Potter and Greene brought up the rear, glad, at all events, that they were getting farther away from the school, and out of sight of masters and pre's.

It was rather unfortunate for Mr. Lodgey that too many cigarettes and whiskies-and-sodas had left him in no condition for a foot race. Horse races were in Mr. Lodgey's line, but in a foot race he was nowhere. He made frantic efforts to get out of reach of Coker's boot—in vain. He ran, he tore, he leaped, he bounded. He streamed with perspiration; he puffed and he blew. His hat flew off, and was left in a hedge. But still behind him came the grinning Coker, and still the largest size in boots at Greyfriars School landed, and landed again, on Bill Lodgey's dingy trousers.

Not till they reached the Cross Keys, on the outskirts of the village, did that

hot chase cease. By that time Bill Lodgey was at the end of his tether, almost falling down with exhaustion.

He tottered from the lane into the yard of the inn, a final hefty kick catching him as he went. With a last howl, Mr. Lodgey disappeared into the Cross Keys.

"Come on, you men!" Coker looked back for his friends. "Come on, you dawdlers! Why didn't you give him a few?"

Coker chuckled as he walked on into the village with Potter and Greene. Coker was feeling highly satisfied with his performance.

"I fancy that frowsy swab won't feel like going to see Pricey to-day—what?" he remarked complacently. "He won't be seeing Price, you men."

Which, as Bill Lodgey had had no idea or intention of seeing Price of the Fifth, was probable.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### A Double Takes a Hand!

"I SAY, you fellows! Smithy's still here!"

Billy Bunter made that cheery remark when the Remove went up to their studies to prep.

Some of the Removites grinned. Some of them looked very curiously at the junior who in the Remove was believed without a doubt to be Herbert Vernon-Smith.

By that time Billy Bunter had told every fellow in the Remove about Bill Lodgey. And a good many fellows would not have been surprised had the Bounder been missing at prep that evening.

But Vernon had not been called into his Form-master's study. Lodgey, for some reason unknown, had not carried out his threat.

Vernon knew nothing of Coker's performance in Friardale Lane; but he knew that he had a respite, though what use it would be to him he did not know. Bill's threatened visit hung over him like the sword of Damocles.

The Bounder's double took no heed of Bunter or of the curious looks of the other fellows. He went into Study No. 4 with Redwing; and Skinner followed them in.

Harold Skinner had heard Bunter's tale and it had alarmed him. Skinner felt a deep inward qualm at the idea of Bill Lodgey walking into the school and seeing his Form-master. Something might come out that would be very uncomfortable for Skinner.

Vernon gave him a black look as he stepped into Study No. 4.

Since he had taken Smithy's name and place, he had cut Smithy's former friends with very little ceremony about it. He could not stand Skinner, with his cigarettes, and his dingy talk about the odds and the gees.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"I want a word with you, Smithy, you fool!" answered Skinner. "You must be off your rocker, I think, to let that man Lodgey come here."

"Tell me how to stop him, and I'll stop him fast enough!" sneered Vernon. "Think I want him here?"

"You've got to stop him!" said Skinner savagely. "Goodness knows what might come out about other fellows as well as you, if Quelch got hold of him. He's never done this kind of thing before—you must have put his back up! If you want to drop him, you could be civil about it—not cut the man right off without a word!"

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"Oh, get out!"

"I want this settled!" snapped Skinner. "You've treated him shabbily—but that's not all; that wouldn't make him go as far as this! Have you squared him over Blue Barney?"

"Blue Barney?" repeated Vernon blankly. "What the dickens do you mean?"

"You know what I mean well enough," snarled Skinner, "and you needn't mind Redwing hearing—he knows all about your games. Mean to say that you haven't paid up over Blue Barney?"

Vernon stared at him, slowly understanding.

He was not so well up in such matters as Skinner; but he could guess that Blue Barney was the name of a race-horse. It dawned upon his mind that Herbert Vernon-Smith—before his disappearance from Greyfriars—must have backed that horse with Lodgey, and lost. The Bounder was the man to pay such a loss on the nail; but he had had, of course, no opportunity of doing so, since Captain Vernon's trap had closed on him at Lantham Chase.

No wonder Bill had his back up and was ready to give trouble, all the trouble he could, if his young sporting friend at the school had not only cut him without a word, but left him unpaid on a betting transaction! Bill Lodgey was about the last man in the blackguard business to be swindled.

"You can't have forgotten, Smithy!" exclaimed Skinner, staring at him in wonder. "Look here, have you paid Lodgey over Blue Barney, or not?"

"No!" muttered Vernon.

"Then that's it! Why haven't you—you're not short of money, I suppose?" sneered Skinner. "You've got lots of that, at least. Great pip! Do you think you can drop the man without paying him? Think Lodgey's the man to be diddled like that? You must be mad!"

"So that's it!" breathed Vernon.

"Of course that's it! The man wants his money! If you've got a spot of sense, you'll cut out after lights out to-night and square him. No wonder he cut up rusty! A week ago—and you haven't seen him—or paid him! Are you off your rocker?"

Bertie Vernon breathed hard. Not only his rival's juicy reputation, but his rival's debts, had fallen on him, in his rival's place! It had never occurred to the Bounder's double; though, now that Skinner mentioned it, he realised that it might have!

"How much is it?" he asked.

"How much is it?" repeated Skinner. "Are you cracked, Smithy? Blessed if I make you out at all this last week! What's come over you?"

"I—I've forgotten—" stammered Vernon.

"Rot! I put a quid on Blue Barney, and you put a tanner, and you know it as well as I do! What are you trying to pull my leg for?" snarled Skinner. "I settled my quid on the nail when Blue Barney lost—I've not got the nerve to swindle a tenth-rate bookie, if you have! And if you don't want Bill to come here and show you up, you'd better settle, too, before he barges into the school!"

And with that, Skinner stamped out of Study No. 4 and shut the door after him with a slam.

Tom Redwing had sat down to his books. His lips were compressed, and he did not speak. Neither did Vernon speak as he sat down to prep.

He knew what the trouble was now. Smithy owed a man at the Cross Keys ten pounds on a race. Ten pounds was a very large sum to a junior schoolboy;

few boys in the Remove ever possessed anything like so much. But the Bounder of Greyfriars always had plenty of money—much more than was good for him. His millionaire father never stinted him. Smithy could, and would, have paid Bill Lodgey long ago—had he ever returned from the fatal bike ride to Lantham Chase.

It was different with Bertie Vernon! He had no more prospect of raising the sum of ten pounds than the sum of ten thousand. His pocket-money for a whole term did not amount to so much.

No doubt it could be obtained from his uncle at Lantham Chase—Captain Vernon would have to see him through this! But that meant delay—and in the meantime, the blow might fall at any moment. By some chance, Lodgey had kept away that day—but on the morrow—

The Bounder's double did not put his usual careful work into prep that evening. He had other matters on his mind.

Hardly a word was spoken in Study No. 4 during prep.

Redwing had been accustomed to give patient help to the careless Bounder—but that custom had dropped a week ago. Vernon did not want help; neither was he aware of all the manners and customs in Smithy's study. Something like an estrangement was growing up between the two—painful enough to Redwing, but a relief to the impostor who was playing another fellow's part.

Prep over, Redwing paused before he went down. He was still concerned about his chum, even if the old attachment was wearing thin.

"Is the trouble with Lodgey as Skinner said, Smithy?" he asked.

"I suppose so!" granted Vernon, without looking up.

"Are you short of tin?"

"Am I ever?" sneered Vernon, quite in the Bounder's tone.

"No; but I can't imagine any other reason why you've put that rascal's back up! If it's that, I can help!"

"Wait till I ask you!" said Vernon curtly.

Redwing coloured and walked out of the study.

Bertie Vernon threw his books aside and moved about the study. He had to see Lodgey, somehow, and keep him quiet till he could get ten pounds from Lantham Chase. That meant breaking out after lights-out; sneaking in at the back door of a pub—a thought at which he ground his teeth. That kind of thing came easily to the Bounder—it did not come easily to him! It did not occur to him that, bad as it was, what he was actually doing was worse.

"I say, Smithy—"

A fat face and a large pair of spectacles looked into Study No. 4.

Billy Bunter gave Vernon a cheery nod.

He received the blackest of black scowls in return. The trickster was in no mood to be bothered by the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove.

"I say, about those lines, old chap!" said Bunter, as he rolled in.

"What do you mean, you fat fool?"

"I mean to say, old Quelch gave me two hundred lines for bringing in that message from your sporting pal—"

"Serve you right!"

"What?" yelled Bunter indignantly.

"Now get out!"

"Why, you—you beast!" Billy Bunter blinked at him, his very spectacles glittering with wrath. "I came in to give you the tip, just to keep you out of a row! This is the thanks I get, is it? Why, you swab—"

"Get out!" roared Vernon.

"I've got two hundred lines, just for





"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I say—oh lor!" The angular figure of Mr. Quelch was framed in the doorway. Billy Bunter sat up in tangled blankets and sheets and blinked at him. "Bunter!" rapped the Form-master. "What are you doing out of bed?"

doing you a good turn!" roared back Bunter, fairly spluttering with wrath and indignation. "I jolly well wish I hadn't done it now—but I've got the lines! You're going to do half! Any decent chap would do the lot! But you ain't decent—you never were, Smithy! But if you don't do half the lines, all I can jolly well say—Yaroooop!"

A sudden grasp on his collar spun the fat Owl round. With a swing of his arm, the angry junior sent him spinning through the doorway.

Billy Bunter shot into the passage and sat down with a terrific bump!

"Oh!" roared Bunter. "Ow! Whoop!"

"Man down!" came Bob Cherry's voice along the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yarooop! Ow! I say, you fellows! Yoo-hoop!"

Vernon slammed the study door.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**

**The Worm Will Turn!**

"GOING for the supper beer?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Really, it was not probable that Billy Bunter was going for beer for supper! But what he was going to do with a jug was rather a mystery.

A dozen fellows stared at Bunter when he appeared in the Remove passage after prep with a jug in his hand. It was a rather large glass jug, and had been seen filled with lemonade in Study No. 7. There was nothing in it at the moment; and Bunter was not heading up the passage towards the tap at the end, so it was not, apparently, a supply of water that was wanted. He rolled down the passage, and blinked into Study No. 1.

That study which belonged to Wharton and Nugent, and which they had to themselves since Vernon was no longer there, was empty at the moment. Wharton and Nugent had left it after prep.

Bunter, it appeared, did not want to see them there. He rolled into the empty study.

Bunter's vision being limited, he had not observed that Wharton and Nugent were on the Remove landing, a few yards away, talking to Johnny Bull, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, who had joined them after prep.

All the Famous Five saw Bunter come down the passage, jug in hand, and disappear into Study No. 1. They gazed at him as he did so.

"What is that fat frump up to?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The whatfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He's after something with that jug," he said. "Let's go and see!"

And the Famous Five, grinning, trod up the passage to the doorway of Study No. 1 and looked in. Then they stared blankly at Billy Bunter. His occupation was an extraordinary one.

The jug was standing on the study table. Bunter was pouring the ink from the inkpot into it.

It was really surprising. Had Bunter been exploring the study cupboard, in search of cake or jam-tarts or doughnuts, there would have been nothing surprising in it. Had he been searching for lemonade to fill that jug it would not have been surprising. But it was ink that he was annexing—and even Bunter, who could scoff almost anything, could not scoff ink!

Under the astonished stare of five pairs of eyes, the fat Owl finished pouring the ink into the jug. Then he blinked over Harry Wharton's desk

where there was another inkpot. This also was poured into the jug. Then he found a bottle of red ink and began uncorking it—with the obvious intention of adding its contents to those in the jug.

But at that point there came an interruption.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "What's that game, Bunter?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He jumped. The bottle of red ink dropped on the desk—fortunately, not yet uncorked.

"You benighted ass, what are you up to?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Why are you bagging all the ink in the study?"

"Oh!" The fat Owl blinked round, through his big spectacles. "I—I say, you fellows, I thought you'd gone down to the Rag. I—I mean, I came here specially to speak to you and ask you to lend me some ink. I say, I suppose you don't mind if I have this ink?"

"What do you want it for?" demanded Nugent.

"Oh, nothing! I—I mean, we've run out of ink in our study, and Toddy asked me to get him some. He's waiting for it now."

Bunter poured the red ink into the jug, mixing it with the black. He blinked round, apparently in search of more.

"Toddy waiting in his study?" asked Bob.

"Yes, old chap."

"Wonderful man, Toddy," said Bob. "Fancy a fellow being able to be in two places at once."

"Eh?"

"I saw Toddy go down, about five minutes ago! He hasn't come up again. So if he's waiting in his study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I mean, Mauly asked me to get him some ink!" explained Bunter

hastily. "I—I wonder what made me say Toddy! I—I meant Mauly."

Lord Mauleverer was coming down the Remove passage in his usual leisurely manner, to go down to the Rag after prep.

Bob Cherry bawled to him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Mauly! What do you want all that ink for?"

"Ink!" ejaculated Mauly.

"Bunter says he's collecting ink for you—"

"First I've heard of it," said Mauleverer, in astonishment.

"Oh crikey! Is Mauly there? I didn't mean Mauly, you fellows! I—I meant—I—I—I meant— What I really meant was, I've got my lines to do for Quelch, and I—I want some ink—"

"Red and black mixed, for lines for Quelch?" asked Nugent.

"Yes—no! I say, can I have this bottle of gum?" asked Bunter. "And—and I'd like this marking-ink, if you fellows don't mind."

"You howling ass!" roared Bob. "What are you up to? Are you thinking of mopping that jug of ink over somebody?"

"Oh, no! 'Tain't for Smithy!" said Bunter hastily. "'Tain't for anybody! I—I just want it, you know."

"Smithy!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat! If you mop that over Smithy, there won't be a grease spot left of you afterwards. You'd better hunt a tamer animal than Smithy!"

"I ain't going to mop it over him," explained Bunter. "I don't want a scrap with the fellow. I'd jolly well have thrashed him already, but I don't want to get mixed up in a shindy with a low cad like Smithy!"

"I wouldn't," agreed Bob, with a chuckle. "Smithy's jolly dangerous! I'd give Smithy a wide berth, old fat man!"

"I'll watch it!" said Bunter, his little round eyes gleaming behind his big, round spectacles. "Look what I did for him to-day—you fellows know what I did—"

"Yes; you gave him away to Quelch," chuckled Nugent.

"How could I help Quelch hearing, when he popped up like a Jack-in-the-box?" hooted Bunter. "I was going to warn Smithy about that swab waiting for him in the lane. Well, I got two hundred lines! I asked Smithy to do half, and he chucked me out of his study! You saw him!"

"O what a fall was there, my countrymen!" sighed Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not going to thrash the cad," said Bunter—"he's beneath me! But I fancy he will be sorry for himself to-night! He, he, he! He may like sticking his legs in a lot of ink in bed, or he may not! He, he, he!"

"Oh, that's it, is it?" gasped Harry Wharton. "You frightful chump! If you shove that mixture in Smithy's bed, there'll be a fearful row! The house-dame will want to know who inked the bedclothes."

"I don't care what she wants to know so long as she doesn't know!" said Bunter. "That's important! I say, you fellows, got any more ink in the study?"

"I think you've got more than enough there," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"You'd better chuck it, you fat ass!"

"No fear! If I chucked it Smithy would know it was me—and I'd rather he didn't know! I'm going to shove it in his bed in the dorm."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, drop it, you fat ass!"

"Well, it would rather spoil your

carpet if I dropped it! What do you want me to drop it for?"

"Oh crumbs! Wash it out!" roared Wharton. "Don't do it! Smithy will burst you all over the dorm."

"He won't know," said Bunter. "Besides, as a matter of fact, this ain't for Smithy. Don't you fellows get mentioning to Smithy that I'm going to pay him out when I ain't thinking of anything of the sort. If Smithy finds any ink in his bed it won't be my fault—I shall know absolutely nothing about it. You fellows remember that if Smithy makes a fuss!"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter rolled out of the study with the jug of mixed red-and-black ink and gum. He rolled into Study No. 2, and as Tom Brown and Hazeldene had gone down he was able to annex that study's supply of ink unquestioned. He rolled out again, with the jug nearly full to the brim.

"Bunter, you ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Bunter, you goat!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Bunter, you terrific fathead!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Bunter, you blitherer!" hooted Frank Nugent.

"Bunter, you podgy piffler!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Heedless, the fat Owl rolled away to the study landing, to go up the dormitory staircase.

The Famous Five hurried after him. It was, perhaps, no concern of theirs if Bunter ragged the Bounder's bed in the Remove dormitory, in retaliation for having been chucked out of the Bounder's study. But they could not help feeling concerned about what was scheduled to happen to the fat Owl afterwards.

"Bunter, you priceless ass!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "For goodness' sake—"

The fat Owl blinked round at him from the dormitory stair.

"It's all right," he said. "This ain't for Smithy! If Smithy finds any ink in his bed, don't you say anything about this jug. He might think I did it if you did—and I ain't going anywhere near the dorm—nothing of the kind!"

And having put suspicion off the scent in that masterly manner, Billy Bunter disappeared up the dormitory staircase with the jug of ink, leaving the Famous Five gurgling.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Inky!

WINGATE of the Sixth saw lights out for the Remove that night.

The Greyfriars captain glanced rather suspiciously at the Removites from the doorway, wondering whether something was on in the Lower Fourth, from the number of grinning faces in that Form.

Billy Bunter's fat face was irradiated by an extensive grin, which stretched from one fat ear to the other. The Famous Five were smiling. Skinner was chuckling. About a dozen other fellows showed signs of suppressed merriment.

Half the Remove had seen Bunter with that jug! Most of them knew what he had done with the ink. They were quite entertained to anticipate seeing Herbert Vernon-Smith's face when he shoved his legs and his expensive pyjamas into that sea of ink in his bed. Bunter was most entertained of all!

Bunter had done the scapegrace of the Remove a good turn! Certainly it had turned out unfortunately for Smithy from the way Bunter had done

it! In return, the beast had chucked him out of his study instead of doing half the lines with which Quelch had rewarded Bunter. If ever a beast deserved to be made to sit up, Smithy did, in the fat Owl's opinion.

He would sit up all right when he got that ink all over him! He would sit up and howl!

And he was not going to know that Bunter had done it! Bunter was very particular about that! That was, in fact, important—very important!

Vernon's face was not smiling like most of the others in the Remove. It was gloomy and sullen. Bill Lodgey weighed like a leaden weight on his mind. That night he had to get in touch with the racing man at the Cross Keys, and induce him to wait quiet for a day or two, till he could be paid and done with. He hated the thought of paying Vernon-Smith's disgraceful betting debts; but there was no help for that in the strange circumstances—that was an inevitable part of the price of deception.

Worse than that was having anything to do with Smithy's disreputable associates. It was strange, perhaps, that a fellow who had consented to play a part involving deceptions and actual fraud should be so particular on lesser points of wrong-doing. But Bertie found some sort of justification in the thought that Smithy was a thorough rotter who deserved no consideration—an unscrupulous enemy, who had been done by as he would have done! This, if it did not satisfy his conscience, deadened it.

Anyhow, he was thinking very little of the kidnapped Bounder and a great deal of the disgrace and unpleasantness that the Bounder's recklessness had landed on him.

Certainly he was not thinking of the fat Owl or any schemes of vengeance that might have germinated in Bunter's podgy brain.

If he noticed the smiling faces in the Remove dormitory he did not heed them or think of those smiles in connection with himself.

"He, he, he!" came from Bunter, as Vernon stepped towards his bed.

"Now then, turn in, you kids!" called out Wingate. "What are you dawdling about for, Bunter?"

"Oh, nothing! I wasn't waiting to see Smithy turn in, Wingate!" exclaimed the fat Owl hastily.

"What the dickens are you waiting for Vernon-Smith to turn in for, you young ass?" demanded the astonished prefect.

"I—I ain't! I said I wasn't, Wingate! I—I'm just getting in!"

The Greyfriars captain stepped into the dormitory, frowning.

"Look here, you young sweeps, what's up here?" he demanded. "I can see that something is! What is it?"

Wingate did not need an answer to that question! It came suddenly, in the form of a roar of rage from Herbert Vernon-Smith's bed.

The occupant of that bed hurled back the bedclothes!

Wingate stared at him. The whole dormitory stared. Then there was a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That bed was fairly floating in ink! Vernon's pyjamas were drenched with it! He sat up in a sea of ink, spluttering with rage.

"Good gad!" gasped Wingate. "Who's done that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon scrambled out of bed. His face was crimson with fury; his pyjamas hung about him, soaked with ink, red and black, and gum, and

purple marking-ink mixed therewith. A jugful of mixed inks went a long way! Vernon was dripping!

Tom Redwing stared at him blankly. He was one of the few not in the secret. He was as surprised as Vernon.

"Smithy!" he gasped.

"Who did this?" yelled Vernon furiously. Vernon's temper was as hot and hasty as his relative's; and the Bounder himself could not have been more furiously enraged by that jape. "I'll smash him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, look at Smithy—he, he, he! He's all inky! I say, I wonder who did it? He, he, he!" gurgled Billy Bunter.

"I'll smash the idiot who did this!" roared Vernon.

"That will do, Vernon-Smith!" rapped Wingate. "I'm taking this in hand. Bunter, do you know anything about this?"

Bunter jumped.

"Me!" he gasped. "No fear! I never did it!"

"Where did you get that ink on your fingers?"

"Oh crikey! I was going to wash it off, only—I mean, I got my fingers inky doing my lines for Quelch, Wingate! I got two hundred lines from Quelch for doing that cad Smithy a good turn—"

"What were you waiting for Vernon-Smith to get in for?"

"I—I wasn't! I never knew there was any ink in his bed, and I wasn't waiting to see him squelch into it, Wingate! I never did this because he chucked me out of his study! I told Wharton I wouldn't! Didn't I, Wharton?"

"You fat ass!" gasped Harry.

"Look here, you speak up for a chap when Wingate thinks it was me!" yelled Bunter in alarm. "You tell the truth, Wharton! Didn't I tell you that I wasn't going to shove the ink in Smithy's bed?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cherry heard me, too, so did Nugent!" exclaimed Bunter. "You ask them, Wingate—they're bound to tell you. Bull knows—so does Inky! They were all there when I was getting the ink—"

"What?"

"I mean, when I wasn't getting the ink! I never got any ink, because I never even thought of sticking it in Smithy's bed! I told those fellows so, plainly, when I was coming up—"

"You came up to the dorm?"

"No! I mean, when I was going down! I went down to the Rag after prep—I never went into Wharton's study at all, especially for ink! Or gum, either! How could I have carried all that ink up here? I hadn't a jug or anything."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You carried a jug of ink up here to the dormitory?" gasped Wingate.

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I didn't! Nothing of the kind! I never touched a jug after prep, and it isn't hidden under my bed now."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate grinned—he could not help it. At the same time, he slipped his official ashplant down from under his arm. A jape of that kind called for six—six of the very best!

"Bend over that bed, Bunter!" he said.

"Oh lor'! I—I say, Wingate, you ain't going to whop me, are you?" squeaked the dismayed fat Owl. "Wharrer you going to whop me for, when I never did it?"

"I'll chance that!" said the prefect. "Bend over, sharp!"

"Oh crikey! I—I—I say, wait till I get my trousers on!" wailed Bunter.

"I—I won't keep you a minute, Wingate!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind your trousers!" said Wingate. "Bend over!"

"But I—I—I say— Yaroo!" roared Bunter as the ash established contact with his fat person. "Wow! Stop it! I say, Wingate, I never did it, and it was only because that beast chucked me out of his study and— yow-ow-ow! I'm bending over, ain't I?"

Billy Bunter bent over the bed in the lowest of spirits.

Six times the ash rose and fell, and pyjamas were a very poor defence against an ashplant! Six ear-splitting yells woke the echoes of the Remove dormitory.

"Now turn in!" said Wingate, tucking the ash under his arm again. "You'll have to wait, Vernon-Smith, till your bedclothes are changed. I'll speak to the House-dame."

The Remove had to wait for lights out that night. While they waited they were entertained—more or less—by a series of groans and moans from Billy Bunter, wriggling from the effects of the ash, which ran on like the unending melody in Wagnerian music, though perhaps not so melodiously.

And after lights out at last, no snore proceeded as usual from Bunter's bed. Instead of that came groans and moans, mumbles and squeaks—till Bolsover major, at last, hurled a boot; whereupon, after a final yelp, Billy Bunter was silent.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter's Burglar!

**H**ARRY WHARTON & Co. were fast asleep in the Remove dormitory when the hour of ten boomed out from the clock-tower. But there was one member of the Remove who was not asleep. Bertie Vernon had not ventured to close his eyes; lest he should not awaken when the time came. And when the last stroke died away the Bounder's double sat up in bed, peered about him, and listened.

For the first time since he had been at Greyfriars School he was going to break bounds at night. There was no choice about the matter; he had to deal with the peculiar legacy the vanished Bounder had left him.

He had thought the matter out, during prep and after prep. To get out of the school and tread the way that Herbert Vernon-Smith had often trod—by silent, shadowy lanes, to the back door of the Cross Keys—that was what was before him now.

He made no sound as he crept from his bed, and drew on a few clothes.

The Removites were fast asleep—only from one bed came an uneasy mumble.

The occupant of that bed, generally the soundest sleeper in the Lower Fourth, was uneasy. "Six" on the pyjamas at bedtime were not conducive to tranquil slumber!

Bunter had awakened a dozen times and wriggled, and grunted, and gone to sleep again. But he was not sleeping soundly.

Bertie Vernon moved quietly away towards the door.

As he did so there came a prolonged "Ooooooh!" from Billy Bunter's bed! The fat Owl stirred and turned over, and blinked wearily into the moonlight that streamed in at the high windows of the dormitory.

"Ooooooh!" repeated Bunter. "Beast! Ooooooh!"

Vernon stood quite still! He did not want any fellow in the Remove to know that he was up, least of all the fat Owl.

"Ooooooh!" mumbled Billy Bunter.

"Wooh! Whopping a fellow for nothing! Ooooh! Oh!"

Billy Bunter forgot the twinges of the ash as his eyes, blinking in the moonlight, fell on a dark figure in the dormitory.

Vernon made no sound; but he was visible, in the clear July moonlight, if eyes fell on him—and Billy Bunter's did!

Bunter gave a gasping howl and a bound! He half-rose in bed, his terrified eyes fixed on that dark figure.

"Ooooooh! Who's that? I say, you fellows—burglars!" yelled the alarmed fat Owl. "Help! Burglars!"

Vernon gritted his teeth.

"Quiet, you fool!" he hissed, stepping towards Bunter's bed. "It's only I—quiet, you idiot!"

"Keep off!" howled Bunter, scared out of his fat wits as the dark figure approached him. "I say, you fellows, help!" And the fat Owl rolled out on the other side of his bed, in a tangle of bedclothes, yelling.

"Hallo hallo, hallo!" came a sleepy voice from Bob Cherry's bed. "What's the row?"

"Burglars!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"What the thump's the matter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Half the Remove were awake now.

"Somebody's up!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Smithy!" hooted Bob, as he sighted the half-dressed junior. "Smithy, you silly ass, what's this game?"

"I say, you fellows, burglars—"

"Shut up, you potty Owl!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Do you want to bring Quelch up here? It's only Smithy!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Is—is—is it that beast? I say, are you sure? I—I think it's a burglar! He was springing on me."

"You howling ass, shut up!"

Frank Nugent struck a match, and lighted a candle-end.

In the glimmer of the candle, even the fat Owl could see that it was a Remove junior who was up, and not a visiting Bill Sikes!

Vernon's face was white with rage. He had hoped to get through without a sound, and without any fellow knowing that he had gone out of the dormitory. A dozen fellows were staring at him now—some of them grinning, some with contemptuous looks.

"Smithy on the tiles again!" said Peter Todd. "Mind Quelch doesn't catch you out, you pub-crawling ass! He's got his eye on you!"

"Smithy!" exclaimed Redwing. He sat up in bed. "For goodness' sake don't play the goat to-night! After what happened to-day—"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Vernon. "Who asked you to butt in?"

"You terrific toad!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If I were the esteemed Reddy, I would get up and punch your cheeky face through the back of your cheeky head!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"You utter fool, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Have you gone cracked? After what happened to-day, ten to one Quelch will be keeping an eye on this dormitory!"

Vernon gave a start. He had not thought of that: but as soon as Wharton spoke he realised how likely it was. Quelch had always had a doubtful eye

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on the Bounder, and that eye was likely to be extremely suspicious now.

"Chuck it, Smithy!" said Skinner. "You're just asking for it."

"Oh, let him rip, and get sacked!" growled Johnny Bull. "It's time he got the boot—he's asked for it often enough."

Vernon, with set lips, moved across to the door. Risk or no risk, he had to see that man, and keep him away from Greyfriars.

But as he reached the door, his quick ears caught a sound in the passage outside.

He stopped, his heart jumping, then turning, he shot back to bed and plunged in.

The next moment all the fellows who were awake heard a footstep—and Nugent swiftly blew out the candle. Only the moonlight glimmered in the dormitory as the door opened.

"Oh crikey!" came a startled gasp. Bunter was wriggling out of tangled bedclothes, beside his bed. "I say—Oh lor'!"

The light flashed on.

The angular figure of Mr. Quelch was framed in the doorway.

Billy Bunter sat up in tangled blankets and sheets and stared at him.

The Remove master stared at him for a moment: and then his gimlet eyes shot to Vernon-Smith's bed!

A head was on the pillow there, the eyes closed! The occupant of that bed was to all appearances fast asleep. But Mr. Quelch was well aware that some, at least, were wakeful, as well as the blinking fat Owl.

"Bunter!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "What are you doing out of bed?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Wharton! Are you awake, Wharton?"

The captain of the Remove sat up.

"Yes, sir!"

"What has been happening here, Wharton? I heard some disturbance," said Mr. Quelch.

Bertie Vernon's heart beat unpleasantly. There had been a bump when Bunter rolled out of bed, and a buzz of voices, but Mr. Quelch certainly would have heard nothing of it from his study. Obviously, the Remove master had not been very far away. Quelch was on the prowl that night.

"Bunter thought he saw a burglar, sir!" answered Harry.

"What utter nonsense!" snapped Mr. Quelch testily. "Bunter, how can you be so absurd?"

"I—I—I thought—" stuttered the fat Owl.

"You should not be so ridiculous, Bunter! Go back to bed at once! If there should be any more of this, I shall cane you!"

Billy Bunter rolled back into bed.

The Remove master gave a last sharp glance at the face on the pillow in Vernon-Smith's bed, and switched off the light, and closed the door.

"By gum!" breathed Bob Cherry, when he had gone. "That was a narrow shave for you, Smithy, you goat! Quelch must have been on the landing!"

"And that goat would have walked right into him, if Bunter hadn't kicked up that row!" said Squiff. "Better chuck it, Smithy!"

Vernon did not speak. He realised how narrow his escape had been.

The Removites settled down to slumber again; but Vernon did not close his eyes. And neither did William George Bunter.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Billy Bunter On The Warpath!

**T**HE last stroke of eleven boomed through the summer night.

There was a faint creak of a bed in the Remove dormitory.

Billy Bunter grinned.

Somebody was awake! Somebody was getting up!

Bunter was awake, too—and he knew who was getting up.

Bunter, as a rule, did not find it easy to keep awake. But on this particular night he did not find it easy to sleep! So, for once, it was easy for the fat Owl to keep his eyes open!

Some of the fellows had wondered, before they went to sleep again, whether the Bounder would chuck it up, or wait till Quelch had gone to bed before he carried on.

The latter seemed probable. Billy Bunter had no doubt about it: and if he had, doubt would have vanished, when he heard a Remove fellow getting quietly out of bed.

Blinking from his pillow in the moonlight the fat Owl spotted a dark figure casting a shadow: but this time he did not take it for a burglar—and he made no sound. He grinned in the dark, as Bertie Vernon crossed to the door and opened it softly.

Vernon stood there for several minutes, listening! Then the fat Owl heard the soft closing of the door!

The breaker of bounds was gone!

Bunter chuckled softly.

Bunter, in his turn, crept quietly out of bed.

Billy Bunter was on the trail of vengeance!

That unspeakable beast, Smithy, had chucked him out of his study—for having done him a good turn! That masterly retaliation of a jugful of ink in his bed had earned Bunter six from a prefect's ashplant, from which the fat Owl was still wriggling! But it was Bunter's turn now!

Smithy was going out of bounds. At that hour, masters as well as boys were in bed and asleep. Smithy had left it till it was safe—and gone!

Bunter knew the Bounder's way out on such occasions—all the Remove knew! He would creep down to the Remove passage, drop from the window of the box-room at the end of that passage, and from the leads outside to the ground. The window would be left unfastened for his return.

But suppose some fellow went after him, and locked the box-room door on the outside!

Bunter grinned gleefully at that happy idea.

When the breaker of bounds clambered in, he would get into the box-room—but he would get no farther.

He would have to stick in the box-room all night!

That, in Bunter's opinion, would serve him exactly right! He could sit on a trunk, and wait for rising-bell! Bunter was not getting a comfortable night—owing to that six. Smithy would get a much less comfortable one!

Bunter plunged into his trousers and crept cautiously. He was very cautious. In fact, he was fearfully cautious. He was so cautious that, groping as he went, he knocked over a chair, and it banged on the floor.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Three or four fellows awakened.

"Oh, my hat! Is that that goat Smithy again?" mumbled Bob Cherry.

"That howling ass—"

"Who's that—is that Bunter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, peering at a figure in the moonlight.

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. "'Tain't me, old chap!"

"What on earth are you up for, you fat goat?"

"I—I ain't up! I—I mean, I—I got up because I couldn't sleep! I—I ain't going out of the dorm," stammered Bunter. "Smithy ain't gone, and I ain't going after him."

"Oh crikey!"

"You benighted bandersnatch!"

"I say, you fellows, keep quiet!" said Bunter anxiously. "Don't bring old Quelch here again! I say, go to sleep! You'll be awfully sleepy in the morning, you know, losing your sleep like this! It—it's rather bad for your health, you know."

"Smithy's gone!" said Bob Cherry, sitting up and peering at the Bounder's bed. "Gone to beg for it!"

"But what is that piffing porpoise up to?" asked Frank Nugent. "Do you want to be sacked along with Smithy, Bunter?"

"I ain't going out, old chap! Do be quiet! I—I'm just getting back into bed—"

"Get back, then, idiot!"

"I mean, I'm going to walk about a bit till I get sleepy! You fellows go to sleep! You needn't keep awake!"

"What are you up to, you fat fozzler?" hissed Peter Todd.

"Nothing, old chap!"

"Get back to bed, then, before I get up and take my pillow to you!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

There was a sound of a bed creaking.

Billy Bunter did not wait for Peter to get up and handle his pillow. He rolled to the door—and, like the river in the poem, he rolled rapidly!

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Come back—"

"You fat ass—"

"You potty porpoise—"

The door closed! Bunter was gone!

"What on earth," said Bob Cherry, "is that fozzling fathead up to?"

"Goodness knows!"

It was quite a puzzle to the Removites. Smithy, they had no doubt, had gone out of bounds, dropping from the box-room window, as his bed was empty. But Billy Bunter was not a reckless rebel and mutineer like the Bounder—far from it! It was hardly imaginable that the fat Owl was going out on the tiles, like the Bounder. He was up to something, but what he was up to was a mystery.

Anyhow, he was gone now. Nobody was disposed to chase him outside the dormitory, at the risk of bringing masters and prefects on the scene. Bunter had to be given his head—fat as it was!

Quite satisfied with himself, Billy Bunter groped down the passage to the landing.

He groped down the stairs to the study landing, and rolled into the Remove passage.

Along that familiar passage he rolled to the box-room stair at the end. He was more than ten minutes after the breaker of bounds, so there was no doubt that the coast was clear by this time!

Griming, the fat Owl groped for the key of the box-room door, and locked it on the outside!

Smithy was booked now!

Still grinning, the hilarious fat Owl crept back down the Remove passage to the study landing. He rolled, grinning, across to the dormitory staircase.

He was about to ascend, when he stopped and jumped at the sudden sound of running, pattering feet on the lower staircase!

The startled fat Owl blinked round in alarm!



Vernon flew up the dormitory staircase. As he flew, he heard a stumble and a crash behind him. Mr. Quelch had sprawled over Billy Bunter, and the fat junior was roaring and yelling in frantic terror!

As he did so, a dark figure shot across the landing, heading for the very spot where he stood.

Bunter hardly glimpsed it before it crashed. And Billy Bunter, with a roar that rang through the House, went over on his podgy back, with his fat little legs in the air.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### A Narrow Escape!

**B**ERTIE VERNON had crept away from the Remove dormitory little dreaming that a fat and vengeful Owl had watched him go, and prepared to follow on his track.

But the Bounder's double had not, as Bunter took for granted, headed for the accustomed way of a breaker of bounds.

Vernon was heading for the masters' study passage on the ground floor.

His first intention, when Bunter had so fortunately interrupted him, had been to get out of the House and skulk through the dark lanes to the Cross Keys, as Smithy had done so often.

But Quelch's visit to the dormitory had changed his intentions.

He dared not venture on so prolonged an absence from the House! Quelch, in all probability, had gone to bed. On the other hand, it was certain now that he was suspicious; and quite within the bounds of possibility that he might pay another and later visit to the Remove dormitory.

That meant the sack, short and sharp, if the suspected junior was discovered to be out of the House!

But during the hour that had elapsed since Quelch's visit, the Bounder's double had thought it over, and another plan had come into his mind.

There was another way—risky enough but not fraught with such overwhelming consequences in the event of discovery.

To creep down from the dormitory at that late hour, enter a master's study, and ring up such a place as the Cross Keys on a master's telephone, required some nerve. But the Bounder's double had plenty of nerve.

It was an absence of little more than ten minutes from the dormitory; instead of the long time it would have taken to reach the Cross Keys and return. And, if there was discovery, he would still be in the House—he would not be out of bounds! And now that the masters had gone to bed, there was a good chance of getting through safely.

On tiptoe, in the shadows, the Bounder's double crept into Masters' Passage. Unless one or two of the staff might be sitting up late, that passage would be deserted. Prout, he knew, never locked his study door—it was easy to get at Prout's telephone.

He stopped, his heart beating with a sudden throb, as a faint glimmer of light caught his eyes under a study door.

It was Mr. Quelch's study!

The Remove master was still up!

Bertie Vernon stood staring at that faint glimmer.

Quelch was up! Did that mean that another visit to the Remove dormitory impended?

It was very probable that it did.

But he set his lips and crept on, on tiptoe, without a sound. He was desperate now—he had to take the chance! Anyhow, if Quelch spotted him, he was not out of the House—they could hardly sack a man for breaking dormitory bounds.

Noiseless, though his heart was beating like a hammer, the Bounder's double crept past that glimmer of light under Quelch's door.

He reached Mr. Prout's study, opened the door silently, stepped in, and shut the door after him.

He stood for a long moment motionless, breathing hard, with clots of perspiration on his brow.

Then silently he groped his way in the dark to the telephone. He grasped the receiver with a firm hand.

"Number, please!" came along the wires; and Vernon gave the number of the Cross Keys, in a low voice.

There was no sound from without. Quelch had not heard him—and Prout's study was far enough from Quelch's to make it safe.

But as he stood waiting for a reply, his heart beat. It seemed an age, though it was only a few moments, before a voice came through. The Cross Keys was closed at that hour; but it was not a place where they were early to bed—he had no doubt of getting through to Lodgey.

"Vernon-Smith speaking," he said, in a low, steady voice. "Ask Bill Lodgey to come to the phone!"

"Oh, my eye!" came from the other end. "Yessir! O.K.!"

Vernon waited.

Again it seemed an age; but it was hardly a minute before a sullen, surly voice came.

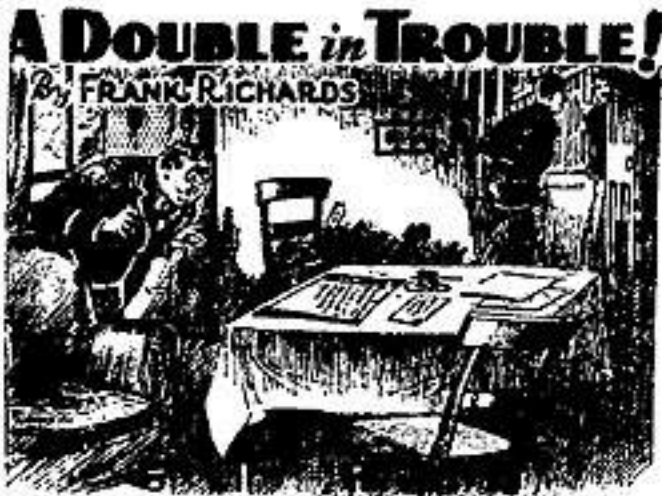
"That young Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, Lodgey!" breathed Vernon.

"What you want, you young 'ound?" Mr. Lodgey did not seem in a good temper. "I'd 'ave seen you to-day at your school if a bloke hadn't pitched into me! You wait till the morning—I'll see you all right!"

Vernon shivered. The rascal was in a sullen, vindictive temper—probably not improved by a "bloke" having pitched into him. Obviously, Lodgey's visit had only been postponed—the Bounder's hapless double was acting only in time.

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(Continued from page 13.)

"It's all right, Lodgey," muttered Vernon into the transmitter.

"Is it alright?" jeered Lodgey, from the other end. "You wait till to-morrow, Mister Vernon-Smith, and you'll see whether it's alright! Letting a man down and swindling of him!"

Mr. Lodgey's voice vibrated with indignation.

Often and often had Mr. Lodgey been a swindler, but he had never been swindled! There was a great difference between the two—Bill Lodgey preferred to conjugate the verb "to swindle" in the active voice, not in the passive.

"Let me explain!" breathed the wretched Vernon.

"Did you lose a tenner on Blue Barney, or did you not?" hooted Mr. Lodgey. "Did you promise to see a man the same evening, or did you not?"

Vernon certainly hadn't! But there was no doubt that Vernon-Smith had!

"I waits for you at the old place," went on Mr. Lodgey, "and did you turn up? No! Next evening I waits agin, and did you turn up? No! I 'angs about to see you—did I see you? No! Letting a man down!"

"Look here——"

"If a young cove was 'ard pushed, I'd go easy with a young cove," went on the indignant Bill. "Ain't I done it afore, when you 'ad bad luck? But chucking a man like this 'ere, and diddling of him——"

"I—I never meant——"

"'Ave you called to see a bloke? 'Ave you 'anded over that tenner? 'Ave you let me 'ave a word? I'm a-asking of yer?"

Vernon cudgelled his brains for an explanation that would satisfy the angry and indignant racing man.

"I've been in a scrape!" he breathed into the transmitter. "I'm taking a lot of risk in calling you now! I'm under suspicion! But I'm going to square all right, Lodgey! I'll see you Wednesday afternoon——"

"You'd better!" growled Lodgey.

"You don't understand how I'm fixed. I couldn't get a word to you before. But it's all right—I can get clear on a half-holiday, and I'll see you and bring the tenner with me."

"Oh!" said Mr. Lodgey, at the other end, in a mollified tone. "If it's like that, Mister Vernon-Smith——"

"Rely on me! I've got to be careful, that's all."

"Yes, I can understand that, of course," admitted Mr. Lodgey. "But what was a man to think—never a word, and ten quid owing——"

"Wednesday afternoon——"

"Leave it at that, Mister Vernon-Smith." Lodgey was evidently pacified now. "I ain't the man to give trouble if I'm treated straight! I'll be at the old place Wednesday afternoon, sir."

Vernon gritted his teeth. He did not know where the old place was. But it would hardly have done to admit his ignorance to the man who thought that

he was talking to Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Make it a bit farther from the school, Lodgey," he said. "I've told you I've got to be careful."

"What about Friardale Bridge, then, sir?"

"Yes, that's all right—six o'clock on Wednesday, at Friardale Bridge. I must ring off now! Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!" said Bill Lodgey, quite cordially.

Vernon put up the receiver.

He wiped a damp brow. He had barred the man off. It meant a bike ride over to Lantham Chase on Wednesday afternoon to get the money, and a meeting with that disreputable rascal afterwards to hand it over. But he had saved his skin!

He crept to the study door, opened it, peered into the passage, and listened.

All he had to do now was to get back to the Remove dormitory and all was well—unless, by some miserable chance, Quelch had gone there in those very minutes.

On tiptoe he crept down the passage. The light glimmered under the shut door of Mr. Quelch's study.

Was Quelch still there? A sound of a movement in the study told that Quelch was!

It was a sound of a footstep crossing from the table to the door.

Vernon's heart almost ceased to beat for a second.

Quelch was still there, and he was about to come out of the study!

Whether to go to bed or to visit the Remove dormitory he was coming out!

There was no time for silent stealth now! Vernon ran desperately to get out of the passage.

The study door flew open. Quelch had heard him! But he was round the corner and running for the stairs with desperate haste. He heard the Remove master's sharp, startled voice behind him.

"Who is that? Stop!"

Vernon raced on.

He heard a sound of rapid footsteps. But he had a good start. He fairly flew up the staircase.

Pattering feet and a rustling gown, a sound of panting breath, told him that the Form-master was in pursuit.

He shot across the study landing like an arrow for the dormitory staircase.

Pattering feet were close behind—he could almost feel an outstretched hand. If he was grasped before he reached his dormitory——

Crash!

Roar!

That a figure was there, at the foot of the dormitory staircase, in the gloom, Vernon never knew or dreamed till he crashed into it and sent it sprawling.

He reeled dizzily from the shock.

But he recovered instantly and dashed on! He flew up the dormitory staircase. And as he flew he heard a stumble and a crash behind him. He cut into the Remove dormitory and flung off his clothes and plunged into bed—while on the landing below Mr. Quelch sprawled over Billy Bunter and spluttered, and Billy Bunter uttered roar after roar, yell after yell!

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Only Bunter!

"Ow! Ow! Oh! Ow!" roared Bunter.

The fat Owl of the Remove had only the dizziest idea of what was happening.

Something—it seemed like a runaway lorry—had crashed into him and spun

him over—something was sprawling headlong over him, a bony elbow was jamming into fat ribs, nearly puncturing the same. Bunter roared and howled and yelled in frantic affright.

"You young rascal!" Mr. Quelch panted breathlessly. "I have caught you——"

"Yaroo!"

A clutching hand clutched Bunter. Quelch had caught him—there was no doubt about that. Neither was there any doubt in Quelch's mind that this was the unseen but plainly heard fugitive who had fled before him in the dark.

He knew that he had been close behind that fugitive! He had no doubt that the young rascal had stumbled in the dark, and that he had stumbled over him! And now he had him!

Quelch scrambled up.

He was winded, breathless, bumped, upset, but he did not let go the shoulder he had grasped. His fingers almost penetrated that fat shoulder, so tenacious was his grasp. It gave Bunter one more cause for yelling. That podgy shoulder felt as if it were in the jaws of a steel vice.

"Ow! Leggo! Oh! Yow! Wow!" roared Bunter.

"Who is it?" hissed Quelch.

"Yaroo!"

"Is it Vernon-Smith?"

"Yooo-hoop!"

Quelch had little or, rather, no doubt that it was Vernon-Smith.

He had sat up that night specially on account of Vernon-Smith! His earlier visit to the Remove dormitory had far from satisfied him—he had a strong suspicion that Bunter's "burglar" was not wholly imaginary, and that somebody had been up—most likely Vernon-Smith.

He had been going to look in at that dormitory again, when, as he was leaving his study to do so, he heard, and pursued, an unseen fugitive in the dark. Vernon-Smith, beyond the shadow of a doubt! And now he had got him!

Whomsoever it was, he had got him. On that point, at all events, there was no shadow of doubt. He had got him—in a grip of steel!

Keeping him in that grip, Quelch navigated the landing towards the electric-light switch.

Bunter had to go with him. He wriggled and howled and spluttered as he went, but that steely grip did not relax.

Who had got him, the frightened fat Owl did not know; he had been too confused and terrified to recognise his Form-master's voice. He was clutched in the dark by an unknown hand, which was more—much more—than enough to scare the fat Owl out of his fat wits.

Quelch groped to the switch.

Gripping Bunter with one hand, he clicked on the light with the other.

Sudden illumination streamed over the landing.

"Now, Vernon-Smith——"

Quelch broke off suddenly as his eyes turned on his captive in the light. He stared at him; he blinked at him; he goggled at him.

"Bunter!" he gasped.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he recognised Quelch.

"Bunter! It is you?"

"Oh, no!"

"What?"

"I—I mean—— Oh lor'!"

Mr. Quelch compressed his grip on the fat shoulder. He glared at Bunter. His gimlet eyes almost bored into Bunter.

"What are you doing out of your dormitory?" he thundered. "You

young rascal! Is this some ridiculous raid on the pantry?"

Now that he recognised his prisoner, Quelch had little doubt about that. He did not suspect Bunter of wild and whirling exploits out of bounds at night. But more than once the fat Owl had been guilty of penetrating to forbidden regions in quest of foodstuffs.

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter.

"Then what—"

"I—I—I—I—I— I j-j-just kik-kik-came out, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never came after anybody or—or anything of that kind! I—I just—"

Mr. Quelch started.

"Is another boy out of the dormitory, Bunter?"

"Oh, no! So—so—so far as I know, Smithy's fast asleep in bed!" gasped Bunter.

"Vernon-Smith!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, his eyes glittering.

"Yes—I mean, no!" stammered Bunter.

"I—I never knew he had gone out of the dorm—I mean, I knew he hadn't; and I haven't been to the box-room at—"

"The box-room!"

"No, sir! Not at all! If the box-room door is locked on the outside I don't know anything about it!"

"Wha-at?"

"Nothing at all, sir! I haven't been near the box-room! I never had the faintest idea of giving Smithy a night in the box-room! Never even thought of such a thing! Why should I?"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"The—the fact is, sir, I—I couldn't sleep owing to Wingate giving me six, and I—I just came out to—to walk about a bit—"

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

He gave the fat Owl a searching look.

If Bunter had followed Vernon-Smith to the box-room and locked the door there, Vernon-Smith was out of bounds, and his detection was now a certainty.

But, in that case, who had been the unseen fugitive on the ground floor? Smithy would not have gone down the lower staircase if he was bound for the box-room in the Remove passage.

Someone, certainly, had been downstairs.

Downstairs was not the way to the box-room, but it was the way to the pantry!

Quelch eyed the fat Owl with deep suspicion.

"Come!" he rapped.

He marched Bunter up the dormitory staircase. He marched him into the Remove dormitory, and switched on the light there.

A dozen Remove fellows were awake. Some of them had heard the hurried return of the breaker of bounds a good five minutes before the arrival of Mr. Quelch.

Bunter's howls and yells had reached a good many ears, so they were not surprised to see Quelch march him in.

Mr. Quelch shot a swift glance at Vernon-Smith's bed. That bed was occupied; as before, he saw a head on the pillow, with eyes closed. Obviously, Bunter was in error in stating that he had locked that junior out.

The Owl of the Remove did not see the face on Vernon-Smith's pillow. He did not even blink in that direction. Not for a moment did it occur to Bunter that the breaker of bounds was not outside the House, his ingress barred by the locked door of the box-room. Not for a moment did he dream that the junior whom he believed he had locked out was in bed in the Remove dormitory.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep. The suspected junior was there—in bed. Naturally, Quelch had no idea that, but for Bunter, his clutch would have closed on that very junior on the landing below.

"Bunter, you were going down to the pantry!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"I—I wasn't, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I wouldn't, sir—"

"You have done so before, Bunter!"

"I—I didn't—I mean, I wasn't—that is, I—I never—"

"I—I went after Smithy—I—I mean, I—"

"Vernon-Smith is here, Bunter!"

"He ain't—I—I mean— Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter turned his eyes and his spectacles on the Bounder's bed. He jumped almost clear of the floor when he saw the face on the pillow. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles at that face. "Oh crikey! Oh crumbs!"

He had locked the box-room door after the Bounder. Bunter knew that. How Smithy had got back through a locked door was a deep mystery to Bunter. He goggled at the face on the pillow in blank, dumbfounded amazement.

"Go back to bed, Bunter! I shall cane you in the morning!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter. "But I—I never—"

"Go back to bed at once!"

The fat Owl crawled into bed.

Mr. Quelch, frowning, shut off the light and went.

Then a fat squeak was heard in the dormitory.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You benighted bloater!"

"I—I say, is—is that really Smithy in bed?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes, fathead!"

"Well, how did he get there?" stammered Bunter. "Didn't he go out of bounds, after all? I thought he was gone out of the House! I say, you fellows, Quelch thinks I went down after grub in the pantry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, he's going to whop me in the morning!"

"Good!"

"Beast! I say—"

"You won't have to wait till morning for a whopping if you don't shut up!" said Bob Cherry. "Let a fellow go to sleep!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up!" growled Bolsover major

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

Bolsover major's other boot sailed through the air and dropped on Bunter's bed. There was a loud howl, after which there was, at last, silence and peace in the Remove dormitory.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Mysterious!

**B**ILLY BUNTER'S fat face in Form the next morning expressed deep feelings.

Every now and then his eyes and his spectacles turned on the junior who sat in Vernon-Smith's place with ininical blinks.

Bunter was peeved.

That morning he had received, in Quelch's study, six of the very best. Hardly recovered from Wingate's six, he had had six more from Quelch.

Lightning does not strike twice in the same place, but a cane does, and Bunter felt the cumulative effect of a double six deeply.

It was all that swab Smithy's fault from beginning to end.

Billy Bunter was not, as a rule, vengeful. Generally his fat thoughts ran upon food. But Bunter just now was simply longing and yearning to pay that swab out.

Twice he had attempted to make Smithy sit up for his sins. Each attempt had earned him six. Now, instead of listening with attention to the valuable instruction Quelch was handing out to his Form, Bunter was thinking of a third attempt, no doubt hoping that it would be third time lucky.

Every now and then a gasp came from Bunter. All the time he wriggled uncomfortably on his form. Every twinge made him long more deeply for vengeance on that unspeakable beast Smithy.

So far Bunter's trail of vengeance had had the unexpected effect of saving the beast from severe trouble. That was not what Bunter wanted at all.

During first and second school the disgruntled fat Owl thought it out and decided what he was going to do.

When a fellow was fearfully shirty with a fellow a fellow shipped a fellow's study. Bunter was going to ship Smithy's study!

True, it was Tom Redwing's study also, and if Study No. 4 in the Remove were shipped, Redwing would get his share of the shipping! But that could not be helped. Serve him right for chumming with such a beast! Anyhow, Bunter had no time to bother about Redwing's troubles.

In break the fat Owl rolled up to Harry Wharton in the quad.

Bunter had to be careful about this. It was, of course, important for Smithy not to know who had shipped his study—above all, very urgent for him not to butt in while Bunter was shipping it!

"I say, you fellows, I expect you'll go down to the nets after class," he said, blinking at the Co. "You want to keep in form with the Redclyffe match coming off to-morrow."

"Frightfully kind of you to take an interest in our little games, old fat man," answered Harry Wharton.

"Well, look here, are you going down to the nets after third school?"

"We is—we are!" said Bob Cherry.

"Smithy, too?" asked Bunter.

"I suppose so!" answered Harry, staring at him. "What the dickens does it matter to you, you fat ass, whether he does or not?"

"Well, Smithy will be in the team at Redclyffe to-morrow; you ought to make him stick to practice!" said Bunter. "I don't believe in a fellow slacking."

"You don't! Oh crumbs!"

"I've heard fellows say that his batting has gone off," said Bunter. "You ought to keep him up to it, you know, with him in the team for Redclyffe."

"I'm going to keep him up to it!" said Harry. "But what the dickens are—"

This interest in cricket on Bunter's part was quite surprising.

"Oh, I'm only thinking about the Redclyffe match, of course," said Bunter. "I think a fellow oughtn't to slack when he's playing for the school. I just wanted to know whether Smithy would be at the nets after third school—only because I'm keen about the match at Redclyffe, you know! I'm not going up to his study or anything."

"Eh?"

"Nothing of the kind," assured Bunter. "I'm going for a walk after third school; I shall be out of gates."

I'm not thinking of shipping a fellow's study, or anything of that sort. I say, you'll be sure to make Smithy come down to the nets, won't you?"

And Bunter rolled away, wondering, as he went, why the Famous Five yelled with laughter.

In third school that morning Billy Bunter looked less disgruntled. Revenge is said to be sweet, and the hour of vengeance was at hand. When Mr. Quelch dismissed his Form that morning Billy Bunter lost no time—hardly more than a minute after he was out of the Form-room he was up in the Remove passage.

He whipped into Study No. 4 and shut the door.

He grinned round the study.

The Bounder had a lot of handsome and expensive things in that study. Except Lord Mauleverer's, it was the most expensively furnished study in the Remove. If Smithy wanted anything, his millionaire father was only too pleased to let Smithy have it, and as the Bounder had expensive tastes he spread himself considerably. The poor relation who had taken his name had come in for all Smithy's magnificence—but to Bunter, as to all the rest of Greyfriars, the fellow who was called Vernon-Smith was Vernon-Smith!

The carpet alone had cost the Bounder's father a good many guineas. The window curtains—the handsomest in the Remove—had cost a good many more. Bunter, grinning, considered the effect of an inkpot splashed over those handsome curtains, and a shovelful of soot from the chimney tramped into the Persian carpet—with an allowance of jam added from the study cupboard!

If that did not make the beast sit up, nothing would!

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter, greatly entertained at the prospect. And he stretched out a fat hand to the inkpot.

But he did not touch that inkpot, for at the same moment a calling voice in the Remove passage reached his ears—that of Tom Redwing.

"Smithy, aren't you coming down to the nets?"

Bunter jumped.

"No!" came a curt answer.

"It's the Redclyffe match to-morrow, old man—"

"I've got a letter to write!"

Billy Bunter's fat heart almost died in his podgy breast. So far from having gone down to the nets, as the fat Owl had calculated, the unspeakable beast was coming up to his study to write a letter. He was not going down to the cricket, and he couldn't write a letter in the Rag as other fellows did, he had to come up to his study, the beast—and if he caught Bunter there—

Billy Bunter did not hurl the contents of the inkpot at the window curtains. He backed rapidly behind them.

On one side of the window where the curtain was bunched an armchair stood. The curtain hid the top half of Bunter, the armchair hid the lower half! In that hide-out he palpitated.

A few moments later the door opened.

Bunter heard the unseen junior shut the door, pull a chair to the table, and sit down.

He hardly breathed behind the curtain.

He could not see Smithy, but his fat ears told him that the junior had sat down on the near side of the table. He was hardly two yards from Bunter. The hapless fat Owl could only hope that he would get through his beastly letter and go down to the box to post it without making any discovery. After all, it was

not likely to take the brute long to write a letter.

But the junior did not seem to get on very quickly with that letter.

Bunter heard an angry and discontented grunt. Then a muttering voice reached his fat ears.

"What the dickens had I better say? I can't put too much in a letter. But I've got to let him know before I see him to-morrow. Goodness knows whether he'd be able to manage it without notice."

Bunter could only wonder what that meant.

As it did not concern him, he would have liked very much to know. But he could form no guess at what was worrying Smithy. It was clear, at all events, that the beast was worried.

Bunter heard the scratch of a pen at last. The junior in Study No. 4 was writing. Bunter's fat ears had told him exactly where the junior was seated at the table, and so he knew that Smithy's back would be towards him. He ventured to peer round the curtain, now that the beast was occupied with writing and not likely to look round. The inquisitive Owl of the Remove would have liked to get a glimpse at that letter that seemed to worry the Bounder so much!

But he popped back again as a roar rang along the Remove passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Smithy!"

The junior at the table uttered an impatient exclamation, rose to his feet, and stepped to the door.

He opened the door and put his head out of the study.

Bunter, as he heard him, grinned. Bob, evidently, was coming to round Smithy up for cricket, and Smithy did not want him to come into the study!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are!" came Bob's cheery roar, as the Bounder's double looked out. "Come on, Smithy!"

"I'm writing a letter—"

"Oh, rot! You can write letters any time. Cricket—have you forgotten that it's Redclyffe to-morrow?"

Billy Bunter peered out from behind the curtain. He gave one blink at a junior's back in the doorway, and another at the letter on the table. He read at a glance what Vernon had written so far:

"Dear Uncle,—I must see you to-morrow, and I shall run across on my bike in the afternoon—"

"I tell you I'm writing a letter and I can't come down now," Vernon was saying at the doorway, little dreaming that a hidden fat Owl in the study was devouring his partly written letter with eager eyes and spectacles.

"Well, I tell you, blow your old letter!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "You haven't been up to your usual form the past week, Smithy, and you know it. You jolly well ought to come. Look here, Inky's ready to give you some bowling."

Billy Bunter's eyes were popping.

On the table beside the partly written letter lay an envelope that Vernon had already addressed. The address on it was:

"Captain Vernon,  
Lantham Chase,  
Lantham."

Bunter blinked at that address in such astonishment that he almost forgot danger!

Smithy was writing to that Army man at Lantham Chase—the uncle of Bertie Vernon, the fellow with whom he had been at daggers drawn till he left. And

he was addressing him in the letter as "Dear Uncle," and saying that he would run across on his bike! It was quite bewildering to the astonished fat Owl.

"I tell you I'm not coming down!" snapped Vernon. "That's that!"

"If you're going to play at Redclyffe to-morrow, Smithy—" hooted Bob.

"I'm not!"

"Wha-a-t?" Bob Cherry gasped. "You're not! Have you told Wharton so?"

"You can tell him, if you like."

Bunter popped back.

Vernon stepped back into the study and shut the door with a slam!

Bob's heavy tread was heard going along to the stairs.

Billy Bunter heard the junior in the study give an angry grunt and sit down to the table again.

The pen scratched once more. The junior was finishing that letter—such a letter as Bertie Vernon, had he still been at Greyfriars, might have written to his uncle at Lantham Chase! What it meant was a bewildering puzzle to Bunter!

The letter was finished at last! Bunter heard the scrape of a chair as the junior pushed it back, and a moment or two later heard him leave the study.

He blinked out again! The junior was gone—the letter was gone. Obviously, he had gone down to the school letter-box to post it!

"Oh crikey!" gasped the astonished Owl.

He rolled across to the door.

This was his chance to escape! As the beast was not going down to cricket practice, very likely he would come back to the study! Bunter's big idea of shipping that study had to be postponed.

The fat Owl lost no time in getting out of that dangerous quarter.

Five minutes later Vernon came up to the study again. He did not even notice a fat junior in the doorway of Study No. 7, blinking at him with an extremely curious and inquisitive blink.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter. "You wait!"

Unconscious of the fat Owl and his vengeful thoughts, Vernon went into Study No. 4.

Bunter rolled away, his fat mind occupied with what he had seen in the Bounder's study! It was mysterious, and it was puzzling, and it occupied Bunter's fat thoughts till the dinner-bell rang! Then, of course, it was dismissed, with all else—except dinner!

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Sees It All!

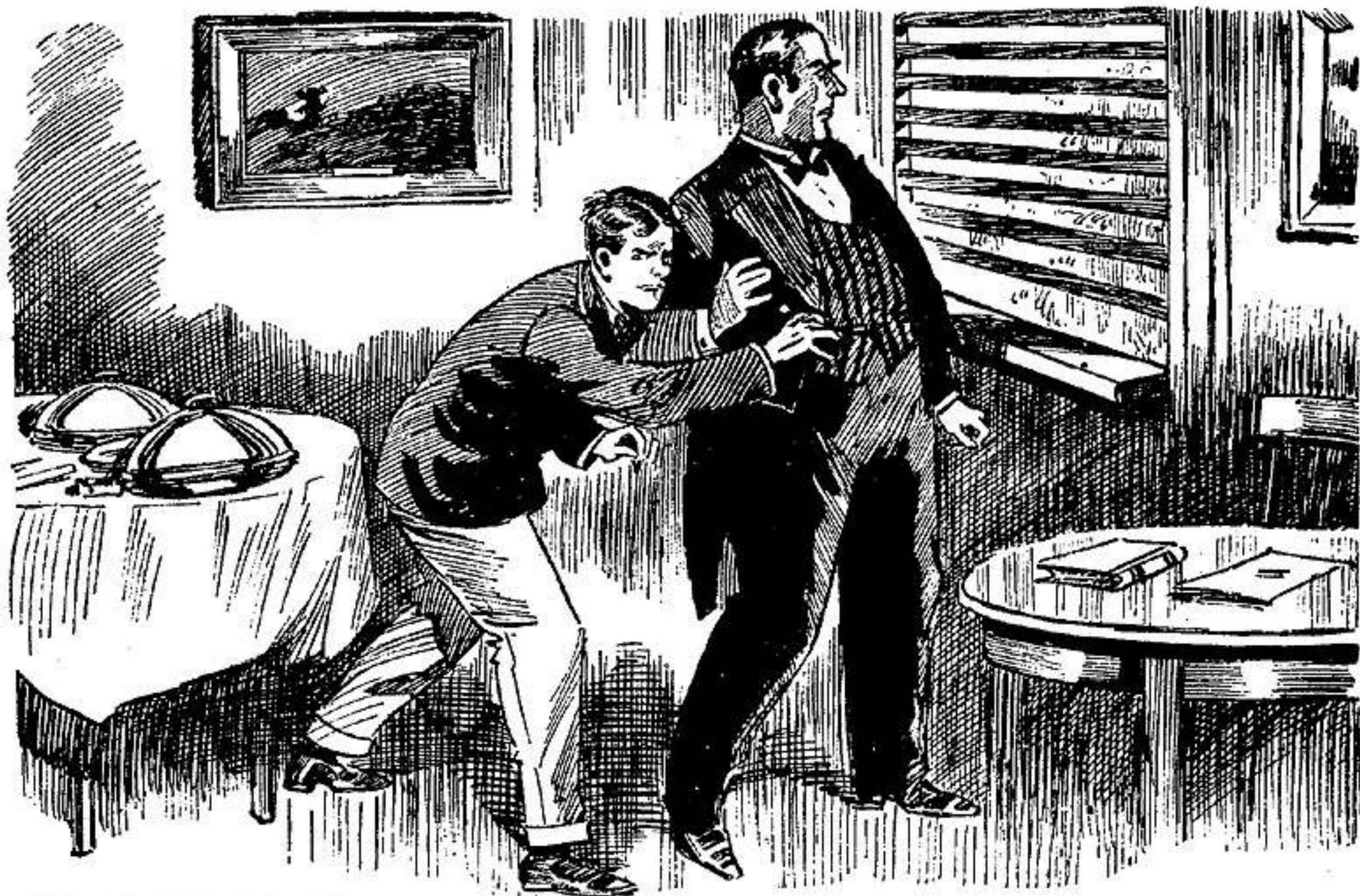
"He, he, he!" In break on Wednesday morning several fellows watched Harry Wharton speaking to Vernon, among them Billy Bunter.

Bunter was the only one that seemed amused.

Harry Wharton's face was dark and angry. Vernon's was sullen. More than ever he looked like his double with that expression on his face.

"You're acting just rottenly, Vernon-Smith!" the captain of the Remove rapped out. "A week ago you kicked up no end of a fuss because you were left out of a Form match—because we wanted that relation of yours to bowl! Now he's gone, and we want your





"Who's that?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, suddenly staring between the shutter-bars. "Is that old Redwing?" "Who's that—where?" exclaimed Hunt, turning round sharply. As he did so, Vernon-Smith's finger and thumb fastened on the end of the key protruding from the man's waistcoat pocket.

batting. You know that. What's your game in letting us down like this?"

It was difficult for Bertie Vernon to answer.

Certainly he could not explain that he was no batsman, when all the Remove knew what a mighty man the Bounder was with the willow. Neither could he mention that he had to get over to Lantham Chase that afternoon to raise the necessary sum to keep Bill Lodgey quiet. He was, in fact, experiencing "what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive!"

"I'm off colour," he said lamely. "You've noticed it yourself."

"Yes; and I've noticed that you cut practice, too!" said Harry Wharton hotly. "Is that the way to keep your form?"

"Well, I shouldn't be any good. Let it go at that," muttered Vernon.

But the captain of the Remove was not prepared to let it go at that. It was too utterly unlike the Bounder to own up that he was no good for Wharton to take that seriously. He knew perfectly well that there was something behind all this, though he little dreamed what.

"You're wanted!" he said curtly. "There's still time for me to give your name in to Quelch. Are you coming?"

"No!"

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"That means that you've got something else on!" he said. "I know you, Vernon-Smith! What is it? Some putrid game out of bounds, with Pon & Co., of Highcliffe? Is that what you're letting us down for?"

Vernon crimsoned.

"Oh, chuck it!" he said. "I can't play. You'd be sorry if I did! I'm not in batting form. Leave it at that."

And to end the discussion Vernon walked away, leaving the captain of the Remove in a state of intense ex-

asperation. Which was not alleviated by an unmusical cackle from Billy Bunter!

"He, he, he! I jolly well know!" grinned Bunter. "Smithy's at his games again this afternoon. He, he, he! Pulling that Army man's leg at Lantham Chase! He, he, he!"

"What?" growled Wharton angrily.

"Don't I jolly well know?" chuckled the fat Owl. "I couldn't make it out, writing to Captain Vernon—"

"Who's written to Captain Vernon, you fat ass?" said Harry, staring at him. "Do you mean Vernon's uncle?"

"Yes; and Smithy has!" grinned Bunter. "I saw the letter—he, he, he! He began it 'Dear Uncle,' Bunter chortled. "I couldn't make it out till I thought it over, you know. I jolly well know now! He, he, he! You remember he went over to Lantham Chase one day and made out that he was Bertie Vernon and took the captain in—pulled the old bean's leg and made a fool of him, the old bean taking him for his dear Bertie, you know. He, he, he! That's what he's up to this afternoon."

"What utter rot!"

"Is it?" grinned Bunter. "Then what did he write to Lantham Chase for, beginning the letter 'Dear Uncle'?"

"He couldn't have, you fat ass!"

"He, he, he! I saw the letter."

"You want some new specs, if you saw that, you blithering Owl!" said Bob Cherry. "How could Smithy play a game like that again, you fat chump, when Bertie Vernon is at Lantham Chase? Think he could make that Army man believe that he had two nephews?"

"Likely!" said Frank Nugent, laughing.

"I know what I saw!" declared Bunter positively. "That chap Vernon can't be there, or Smithy couldn't play that trick again, of course! We heard that he was going to another school. I suppose he's gone, and Smithy knows it!"

"Oh!" said Harry Wharton.

The Remove fellows—so far as they knew, at all events—had heard nothing of Captain Vernon's nephew since he had left. It was quite possible that he had gone to another school by that time. In that case, it was possible for the Bounder of Greyfriars to think of carrying out over again the extraordinary jape he had played on the Army man—calling on him under his nephew's name!

"If that wasn't his game, what did he write to Captain Vernon for yesterday, calling him dear uncle?" demanded Bunter. "He's going to make out that he's Bertie coming from his new school—that's it! If Vernon was at home there wouldn't be much use Smithy writing that letter."

"But did he?" said Bob, very doubtfully.

"I tell you I saw it!"

"You tell us such a lot of things, old fat man!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Gammon, of course!" said Johnny Bull.

"Look here, Bull, if you're making out that I'm fibbing—"

"It doesn't want much making out," grunted Johnny. "You're fibbing—as per usual! Do you ever do anything else?"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton shut his lips hard. "It would be like Smithy," he said savagely. "He loathes Vernon's uncle as much as he loathes Vernon—it would be like him."

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

## The Prisoner!

"He wouldn't let us down for a jape on Vernon's uncle!" said Bob, shaking his head.

"What's he letting us down for, then?" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "He knows he's wanted to bat. We shan't beat Redclyffe on our bowling, now Vernon's gone, that's a cert! If we don't pull it off at the wickets, we shan't pull it off at all! He knows he's wanted! By Jove!"

The captain of the Remove looked round, and strode across to the Bounder's double.

Bertie Vernon was loafing rather disconsolately near the door of the House. As he was not in the eleven he had to go in for third school, and there was no doubt that he would have preferred to play cricket. But the game to which he was devoted was barred to him by his own trickery. He was no batsman, and he dared not show up as a bowler.

He made a movement to avoid the captain of the Remove.

But Wharton was not to be avoided. "Look here, Smithy, are you going over to Lantham Chase this afternoon?" he demanded sharply.

Vernon fairly bounded.

As Herbert Vernon-Smith he had, of course, no business at Lantham Chase, the home of Smithy's rival and enemy. His uncle had cautioned him to avoid visits home in the new circumstances, and he had written only once and had been extremely careful that no one saw the letter that he had dropped into the box. Wharton's question utterly amazed him. He was taken completely off his guard and the colour wavered in his face.

"What—Lantham Chase? What do you mean?" he stammered.

"So that's it, is it?" snapped the captain of the Remove.

Bertie tried to recover himself.

"What's put that into your head?" he stammered. "What—"

"You're going to play over again that rotten trick you've played once," said Wharton scornfully, "and you're going to let down the eleven to play a rotten game like that!"

"Oh!" Bertie Vernon remembered the Bounder's trick on his uncle, and understood what was in Wharton's mind. "Oh, no! I'm not going to play any trick on Captain Vernon, if that's what you mean."

"You're going to Lantham Chase!" said Harry contemptuously. "I could see that in your face when I asked you. Well, go; but don't expect to get a show in Remove cricket after this! Keep out to-day, and you can keep out for good, Herbert Vernon-Smith!"

He turned on his heel and left Vernon without another word.

A few minutes later the bell rang for third school, and Vernon went in with the Remove, while the cricketers prepared to start for Redclyffe.

In third school Billy Bunter's spectacles turned on him a good many times.

Vernon gave no heed to the fat Owl—but Bunter was giving Vernon most of his fat thoughts! The Bounder—as Bunter saw it—was going over to Lantham Chase that afternoon to pull the Army man's leg again—his letter, written as if by Bertie, was to pave the way for that visit.

It was all clear—to Bunter! Bunter saw it all! And the vengeful fat Owl was going to take a hand in the proceedings!

Smithy, at long, long last, was going to be made properly sorry for himself—and Billy Bunter knew how!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,638.

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH stood in the turret-room at Lantham Chase, staring between the bars of the locked shutters.

It was a golden July day—sunshine streaming down on the green woodlands of Lantham Chase.

The turret-room was a prison; but it was as pleasant and comfortable a prison-room as it was possible to make it.

Captain Vernon, who had little money to spend, had spent money on it. It was pleasantly furnished. There was a plentiful supply of books; and Bertie Vernon's school-books were there if the Bounder had been disposed to continue his studies.

Even a bath-room had been built into the thickness of the ancient wall. A handsome carpet covered the old oak floor. There were some good prints on the walls. And the shutters, though they shut in the prisoner effectively, had been carefully designed with spaces between the high wooden bars to give a view of the surrounding country—and from the high turret the view was extensive.

That, probably, Smithy had found his greatest comfort during his week of incarceration in the old turret.

From one of the two windows he could see, faint and far in the distance, the grey old tower at Greyfriars rising against the blue summer sky.

Often and often his eyes turned upon it.

Now as he looked he was thinking of the school—remembering that it was Redclyffe day, and that he would have been playing cricket for the Remove had he been at liberty.

With every day that passed in the turret-room the Bounder's bitter anger had grown deeper and more bitter.

Yet he was more puzzled and perplexed than angry.

Of Bertie's impersonation of him at Greyfriars he knew nothing. He did not know for what motive he was kept a prisoner.

At first he had not been able to believe that the Army man really intended to keep him captive in the turret-room. It had seemed too incredible and fantastic for belief.

But there he was—day after day—and he had to believe it at last, though he could not understand it.

Neither could he understand why he had not been discovered and rescued.

He must—as he believed—have been missed from the school. His father must have been informed; and Mr. Vernon-Smith, had he known, would have moved heaven and earth to find him and save him. And Tom Redwing knew that he had cycled over to Lantham Chase that fatal day, so it should be known where the search for him should begin.

Yet nothing had happened.

What were they all doing? Why did they not seek him and find him? He could not understand.

It must come—they must find him sooner or later! He banked on that! But the days were long and weary and his thoughts ran incessantly on escape.

But escape seemed impossible.

He would have risked clambering down sheer high walls had it been possible to climb out of the windows. But it was not possible.

The narrow door was kept locked on the outside.

Even with the shutters locked, it was light and airy in the turret-room. He

had ample space for movement, and a punch-ball had been fitted up to give him exercise if he wanted it. Hard and utterly ruthless as the Army man was in carrying out his scheme, he made every concession he could to the comfort and health of the prisoner. Nothing was denied him—but liberty!

But liberty was ruthlessly denied. He saw no one but old Hunt, the captain's servant, who brought him his meals, swept and dusted the room—and every time that old Hunt came the Bounder heard Captain Vernon on the turret stair—keeping watch and ward there, so long as the room was un-locked.

If the Bounder thought—as he sometimes did—of making some desperate attempt to knock old Hunt out and bolt, it was futile—never once did the captain neglect his watch on the turret stair.

The door fastened with a spring lock. Old Hunt had to unlock it with a key when he came; but when he went it snapped shut and locked. And never by any chance did he leave the key sticking in the lock. Every time he took it out after unlocking the door and put it in his pocket.

Once or twice Smithy had thought of getting hold of that key, if old Hunt had left it sticking in the lock of the open door. But old Hunt never did.

That would have been a chance. When Hunt went he was accustomed to pull the door shut after him by the knob in the middle, and it locked automatically. Had he once forgotten to remove the key before entering the room it would have been a chance for the Bounder. But never once did he forget.

Only the captain and his old Army servant lived at Lantham Chase. Almost the whole of the great mansion was unoccupied.

Smithy had wondered many times why a man of very limited means had taken a vast place that he did not want and could not keep up. He knew now! The far-stretching woods of Lantham Chase barred him off from the world—and in the great unoccupied mansion there was no one to learn that a prisoner was kept in the high turret-room.

Wednesday again—and the Redclyffe match going on!

Smithy clenched his hands as he thought of it. The cricketers got away from third school; they were at Redclyffe now; the match was going on. He would have been playing—or would he? They wanted Bertie for his bowling—not Smithy for his batting. And since the family feud had been carried into the cricket field, the captain of the Remove had refused to play both of them in a match together. Very likely he would have been left out—for Bertie!

So far as he knew, Bertie was still in his old place in the Remove. He never dreamed that Bertie was supposed to have left, and was carrying on under his name.

The fellow must know that he was here—a prisoner! He would have to go when the Bounder regained his freedom—when Captain Vernon had to answer to the law on a charge of kidnapping!

It was a consolation to Smithy to think of that—and surely that time must come! It was amazing that it had not come already!

Looking from the window he could glimpse that familiar old spire that told him where Greyfriars lay. How long was it going to be before he trod the old quadrangle again?

But he turned from the window as he heard the new familiar sound of the click of a key in the door.

The narrow door opened and old Hunt's leathery face and grizzled head appeared.

Below, on the narrow stair, the Bounder heard a sound, as usual, that warned him that Captain Vernon was there, though he could not see him.

Old Hunt balanced a tray on one hand with the Bounder's dinner on it. With the other he jerked the key from the lock and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

Smithy's eyes followed it as it went. All his hopes of escape were centred on that key.

"Dinner, sir!" said old Hunt.

His manner was civil and not unkindly. But he was as hard as iron in carrying out the duties assigned him by the captain. Smithy had civil attention to expect from him—nothing more.

Smithy sat down at the table.

Old Hunt sat on the settee by the doorway to wait for him, with unmoved patience. From below, the scent of an Indian cheroot floated up. The unseen captain was smoking on the turret stair.

Again—as often before—the thought came into Vernon-Smith's mind of flinging a dish at his gaoler's head and making a bolt for it—taking his chance with the man on the turret stair.

But again, as before, he abandoned it. Sturdy as he was, he was little more than an infant in the captain's grasp, and he knew that there was no chance.

He ate his dinner in silence.

Old Hunt sat like a stone image till he had finished. A gleam of sunshine shone on metal where the end of the key peeped from his waistcoat pocket.

The Bounder's eye turned on it once—and after that he carefully refrained from glancing in that direction.

It was the first time that old Hunt had been, in the minutest degree, careless with that key. Now half of an inch of it protruded from the waistcoat pocket. If a finger and thumb could have closed on it—unnoticed!

The Bounder's heart beat almost suffocatingly at the thought!

There was no chance—or only the faintest ghost of a chance! He could not even step near the man without putting him on his guard. And yet—

While he ate his dinner the Bounder's thoughts were working. If there was the slimmest chance he was not losing it. Somehow, to trick the man into standing beside him, unwatchful—Was there a chance?

He rose from the table and lounged to the window that overlooked the avenue from the distant gate.

Old Hunt rose at the same time and began collecting plates on the tray.

"By gum! Who's that?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, suddenly staring between the shutter-bars. "Is that old Redwing? Oh, good luck!"

No one was in sight! But at his sudden exclamation there was a sound of a dish hastily dropped, and the next moment old Hunt was at his side, peering between the bars into the sunlight.

The sight of the Bounder's chum from Greyfriars would have been alarming enough to the conspirators of Lantham Chase.

"Who's that—where?" exclaimed Hunt, his leathery face pressed to the bars.

In the same instant a finger and thumb fastened on the protruding end of the key.

"There!" said Vernon-Smith. "Down on the avenue—by gad, you won't keep me here much longer now."

The key was in his trousers pocket as he spoke.

Old Hunt was staring sharply down on the avenue. If a schoolboy had been there, he had disappeared again.

Would he miss the key? Not if the Bounder could help it. There was no one on the avenue; but the Bounder shouted between the bars, as if Tom Redwing was there, hidden by the trees.

"Reddy! This way! Help, Reddy—it's Smithy calling! Help, old chap! Redwing!"

Old Hunt was not thinking of the key! He grasped the Bounder by the shoulders and whirled him away from the window.

"Pack that up!" he snapped.

There was a swift step; the dark, sun-bronzed face of Captain Vernon looked into the turret-room.

"What is it, Hunt?" he rapped.

"It's my pal from Greyfriars!" shouted the Bounder. "You won't keep me here long now, you scoundrel!" He made a movement towards the window again, and old Hunt barred his way with a threatening look.

"Let him be, Hunt!" said the captain. "No call can be heard from here! Come at once!"

Hunt grabbed up the tray and hurried from the room; Captain Vernon snapping the door shut after he was out.

The Bounder heard tramping feet on the turret stair. He cut across to the door and heard the captain's voice.

"Remain here, Hunt! See that no one enters! I will go out at once and see if anyone—"

The Bounder heard no more.

He crossed to the window again, and a minute later he saw the captain on the avenue.

The Army man disappeared among the trees.

The Bounder's hand, in his pocket, closed on the key—the key that meant freedom for him! His trick had succeeded perfectly—unsuspected by either the captain or his man, he had the key to the lock of the turret-room, and freedom was before him at last!

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter on a Bike!

"LEND me your bike, Mauly!"

"Usin' it, old fat bean!"

"Lend me yours, Redwing!"

"Using it!" said Tom, with a smile at the fat Owl.

"I say, Toddy—"

"Bow-wow!" said Peter Todd, without even waiting for the request to lend his bike.

Billy Bunter grunted.

It was selfishness all round, as usual.

After dinner there was quite a crowd of Removo fellows at the bike-shed getting out machines. Most of them wanted to get over to Redclyffe and see how the cricketers were getting on. Even Lord Mauleverer was exerting himself to the extent of bestriding his handsome jigger and rolling over to Redclyffe. And not a fellow who was going to bike it that afternoon seemed disposed to let Bunter have his bike!

"I say, Oggy—"

"Want it?" answered Robert Donald Ogilvy briefly.

"I'm not going to ask you to lend me your bike, Oggy!" said Billy Bunter with dignity. "But I say, you're awfully clever at mending punctures. Will you do mine before you start? There's only three or four—"

"Will it?" gasped Ogilvy. "No—I think not! I rather think not, old fat ass! Find somebody softer!"

And Ogilvy wheeled out his machine—apparently keener on seeing the cricket at Redclyffe than on repairing Billy Bunter's dilapidated jigger.

"Beast!" grunted Bunter.

Fellow after fellow wheeled out his machine, Billy Bunter watching them with a morose eye.

Bunter was not interested in the cricket at Redclyffe. What Bunter wanted was a lift to Lantham. Bunter was interested in what was going to happen at Lantham Chase that afternoon—when he was going to put a spoke in the wheel of that beast Smithy and make him sit up!

The supposed Bounder was going there that afternoon. Bunter knew that, if no one else did. He had not started yet, but Bunter knew that he was going—what he had seen in the Bounder's study left no doubt on that point in his fat mind! It was rather a long ride to Lantham, and Bunter wanted to start early—he was aware that progress would be slow.

"I say, Toddy, what about doing those punctures for me?" asked Bunter.

"I'm doing one of my own!" answered Peter, who had his bike up-ended.

"I can see that, Toddy. I'll wait while you mend mine, too—or you could let me have your jigger and come on mine after you've done the punctures! What are you sniggering at, Toddy?"

"Your little joke!" answered Peter.

"I'm not joking!" hooted Bunter.

"You are!" assured Toddy.

"Beast! I mean, look here, old chap, you're left out of the cricket because you've crocked your wrist. Do you think you ought to bike with a crocked wrist, Peter? I shouldn't like anything to happen to you!"

"I don't bike with my wrists!" explained Peter. "I generally use my feet on the pedals! Never biked upside-down in my life."

"Oh, really, Toddy! I mean, do you think you can hold on to that bike all right?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"You'll see that I can hold on to it!" grinned Peter. "No chance whatever for a fat bounder to get it off me."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter turned his eyes and his spectacles on the machines that remained on the stands. Even Bunter preferred to be given leave by the owner when he borrowed a bike. Still, he was prepared to borrow a bike without leave if there was no other resource.

"Smithy hasn't started yet," he remarked. "I can ride Smithy's bike all right! He can borrow one—"

"Better make your will first if you borrow Smithy's bike without asking him!" advised Peter. "You'll be found slaughtered soon afterwards!"

Grunt from Bunter!

He realised that if he borrowed a fellow's bike without leave he had better select a better-tempered fellow than Smithy!

Mauly's would have been his first choice! But Mauleverer had already gone on his jigger. Mauly could be depended on not to boot a fellow.

Frank Nugent was the next man least likely to boot a bike-borrower; but Nugent's bike, as it happened, had a puncture—and Bunter who never found either time or energy to mend his own punctures, certainly never even dreamed of mending another fellow's.

Bob Cherry's bike was there, and Bob could be reasonably relied on, if he booted a chap, to let him off with one jolt. But Bob's machine was a big one. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,658.

designed for Bob's long legs, not for Bunter's short ones. On that machine Bunter would have a rather like the rider of the ancient penny-farthing.

Wharton's machine was available, but Bunter shook his fat head as he regarded it. The last time he had borrowed the machine he had twisted a pedal and left it out of gear as it was too much trouble to wheel it home. The captain of the Remove had, for some reason, been annoyed at having to fetch it in himself, and he had promised Bunter to burst him all over Greyfriars if he touched it again.

Bunter decided, finally, on Johnny Bull's bike!

Johnny, it was true, was frightfully likely to boot him. On the other hand, the bike suited Bunter, and Johnny, probably, would never know that his bike had been borrowed—and, if he did, how would he know that Bunter was the borrower?

Johnny was playing cricket that afternoon, so that was all right!

The fat Owl lifted Johnny's machine from the stand. He blinked at Peter Todd, who was ready, at last, to start; the other fellows being all off by this time.

"I say, Peter, I suppose you'll give me a hand up Redclyffe Hill?" said Bunter.

"Oh, blow!" said Peter. "Look here, you fat chump, what do you want to see the cricket for specially to-day? You don't care a boiled bean about the matches!"

Billy Bunter winked at Johnny Bull's bike.

As far as Redclyffe, his way was the same as Peter's; Redclyffe School lay on the main road, and had to be passed going to Lantham. It was more than half-way to Lantham Chase. A helping hand for such a distance was extremely desirable to the lazy fat Owl.

Peter certainly, would not have lent him a helping hand to get to Lantham Chase! For which excellent reason the astute Owl made no mention of his real destination.

"Chuck it!" added Peter. "Frowst in an armchair as usual, and don't bother!"

"Well, I like that!" said Bunter warmly. "You've jawed me often enough in the study about not being keen on the game! Now I want to get to—Redclyffe, and you don't want to lend me a hand! Call that pally?"

Peter gave a grunt.

He was not keen—not in the least—on lugging Bunter's extensive weight up Redclyffe Hill! On the other hand, if the fat Owl was, for once, displaying a keen interest in the exploits of the Remove cricketers, he felt that it was up to him to lend a hand. Certainly he had, as Bunter said, "jawed" the fat Owl often enough on the subject in Study No. 7.

"Oh, all right!" he grunted. "Did Bull say you could have his bike?"

"Eh? Oh, yes! He asked me specially if I'd like it! That's all right! I'm ready if you are, Peter."

Peter grunted again, and resigned himself to his fate.

The other fellows were already well on their way; and Peter had intended to put on speed and overtake them. He was not likely to put on a lot of speed with Bunter to convoy. Still, if Bunter really was keen to get over to Redclyffe for the match, Peter was the man to encourage him!

So they started!

As far as Redclyffe Hill they made fairly good speed—Peter's incessant urgings, and an occasional swipe, causing the fat Owl to exert his little

fat legs. But the hill was long and steep; and Peter had to take Bunter's handlebars with one hand, to help him up the ascent. As his wrist was rather damaged, and he had to hold his own bike with that hand, it was neither an easy nor an agreeable task.

Peter ground manfully at his pedals! Bunter did not!

Pulled along by a helping hand, Billy Bunter saw no reason for exerting himself further; and Peter, after a time, made the discovery that the fat Owl was free-wheeling up hill!

That discovery seemed to exasperate Peter Todd!

"You fat villain!" he roared.

"Eh?"

"Pedal, you bloated bloater—pedal!" roared Peter.

"I'm pedalling like anything, old chap!" Bunter's fat little legs began to revolve again. "I'm going all out! Grinding like anything!"

Peter suppressed his feelings. For about a hundred yards Bunter pedalled industriously. That was enough for Bunter—he free-wheeled again. He hoped that Peter would not notice it.

That hope proved unfounded.

"That does it!" hooted Peter.

He released Bunter's bike and shot ahead.

Bunter wobbled.

"I say, Peter!" he yelled.

"Good-bye!" called back Peter.

"I say, I was pedalling like anything!" howled Bunter.

"Go on pedalling like anything, then!" called back Peter, over his shoulder, as he shot away.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

There was a sudden yapping behind Bunter, and the fat junior glanced round to see a dog yapping and snapping behind him, as though it intended to take a lump out of his pants.

It was then, and only then, that the fat junior pedalled like anything. Perspiring at every pore with the exertion, Bunter eventually succeeded in shaking off the dog's unwelcome attention.

But Bunter did not go on "pedalling like anything" for long. He did not go on pedalling.

Uphill work was unwelcome to Bunter.

He rolled off the machine, and wearily wheeled it up the remainder of that long, long hill!

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Off a Bike!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"The old bloater!"

"By gum! This is a distinction!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Fancy Bunter plugging all this way to see us play cricket!"

It was quite a surprise to the Famous Five.

They were standing in a group in a gateway on the main road, when they had a view of a fat figure toiling and perspiring in the hot July sunshine, and pushing a jigger.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in cheery spirits. Matters were going well with the Greyfriars cricketers at Redclyffe. They had not, after all, missed the Bunter's batting so much as might have been expected.

Harry Wharton & Co. had taken the first knock, before lunch, and put up a level hundred. Smithy in the ranks, no doubt, would have made it more; but a hundred was a good round figure.

Redclyffe, batting after lunch, had

seen their last wicket fall for seventy. The Redclyffe knock was just over, and in the interval before play was resumed, the Famous Five had strolled down to the gate, where they greeted Greyfriars fellows arriving to see the match, and imparted to them the glad news that Greyfriars stood, so far, thirty ahead of Redclyffe. Thus it was that they beheld Billy Bunter, toiling up Redclyffe Hill, and looking as if he would melt in the July sunshine.

It was quite surprising to see Bunter there! Naturally they supposed that he had, like the other fellows, come over to see the remainder of the game—as he was there! But it was the first time in history that the fat Owl had thus exerted himself to display an interest in Remove cricket.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Roll in, Bunter!"

Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

He blinked at the cheery five.

He had, as a matter of fact, forgotten their existence, and that a cricket match was going on at Redclyffe. It was merely owing to the circumstance that the cricket ground bordered the road, and that Bunter's way lay past that gate, that they had the pleasure of seeing the fat face bedewed with perspiration.

"Oh! I say, you fellows, it's hot!" gasped Bunter. He came to a halt, and leaned the bike on the fence. "I say, if there's any ginger-pop or anything going, I'll come in for a minute."

"For a minute!" repeated Harry Wharton. "There's two more innings to come, old fat man—they'll last more than a minute."

"Eh? Think I've come over here for that?" granted Bunter.

"Haven't you?"

"Not such a fool!"

"Oh!"

Bunter mopped his streaming brow with a handkerchief much in need of a wash! He was hot, he was tired, he was disgruntled, and he was peeved! Wheeling a bike uphill did not agree with Bunter! And the bare suggestion that he had taken all that trouble for the sake of seeing a cricket match made Bunter snort. He was willing to roll in if there was any lemonade or ginger-beer going! Otherwise he was not willing to roll in.

"We made a hundred in our first knock, old porpoise!" said Bob.

"Did you? I expect I should have made a century if I'd been playing!" said Bunter. "Not much to write home about, is it?"

"You fat ass—"

"Yah!"

"Redclyffe made only seventy!" said Frank Nugent.

"Must be rotten cricketers if they only made seventy off your bowling!" said Bunter. "I could knock it all over the shop!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

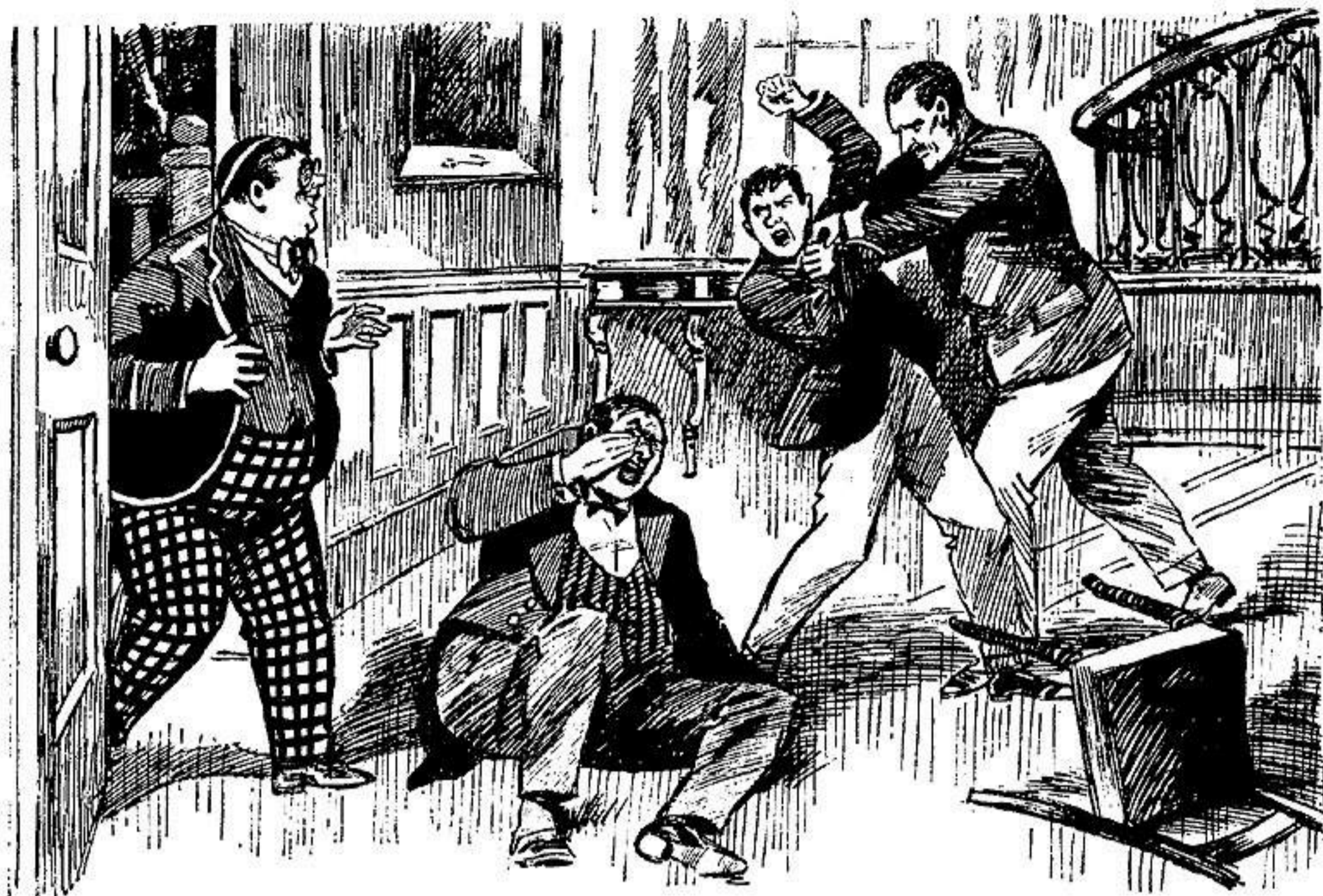
"Ain't he nice?" he remarked.

"Isn't it a pleasure to see him and to hear his dulcet voice? But if you haven't rolled over to see the cricket, Bunter, what have you rolled over for? Trying to get slim by getting melted in the sun?"

Johnny Bull did not speak. Johnny's eyes were fixed on the bike that Bunter leaned on the fence.

Johnny knew that bike!

Bunter, who was thinking chiefly of the heat and of the flies that persisted in settling on his fat little nose, did not notice Johnny's fixed stare at the jigger. He had almost forgotten the trifling circumstance that it was a borrowed bike, and he did not think of



"Hallo, Smithy!" chortled Bunter, appearing suddenly in the doorway. The fat junior's grin widened as he blinked at the scene within—the Bounder, breathless, struggling in the grasp of Captain Vernon, and old Hunt on the floor, his hand to his nose. "Have they spotted you already, Smithy?" asked the fat junior.

it at the moment. He was busy wiping streams of perspiration from a fat face.

"I'm going to Lantham!" grunted Bunter. "Catch me coming all this way to see your cricket—what you call cricket! I say, Smithy hasn't passed while you've been standing here, has he?"

"Smithy?" repeated Harry. "We haven't seen him."

"He hadn't started when I left," grunted Bunter. "I dare say he'll get in there to tea—and spoof that coffee-coloured captain into tea-ing him! I'll jolly well put a spoke in his wheel!"

And Bunter grinned.

The prospect of putting a spoke in Smithy's wheel, at Lantham Chase, consoled him for exertion, dust, heat, and flies.

"What on earth," said Bob, "is that fat chump up to?"

"He, he, he! I fancy Smithy is going to be sorry for chucking a fellow out of his study, and getting him double six!" chuckled Bunter. "Let him wait! I say, you fellows, what do you think Smithy will feel like when he gets to Lantham Chase and a fellow walks in and says: 'Hallo, Smithy!'"

And Bunter chortled.

"You see, he's going to pull that Army man's leg again, making out that he's Bertie Vernon," grinned Bunter. "While he's at it I'm going to walk in and say: 'Hallo, Smithy!' He, he, he!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"How will Smithy like that?" chortled Bunter. "Make him sit up a bit—what?"

"You fathead!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If Smithy's really playing that silly game you'd better steer clear of him. Captain Vernon would jolly well wallop him!"

"Think so?" grinned Bunter.

"Pretty certain, I think," said Bob. "He, he, he! Think that isn't what I want? He, he, he!"

"Better leave him alone," said Nugent.

"I'll watch it!" said Bunter.

Johnny Bull spoke for the first time. "So you're going to Lantham Chase to give that fathead Smithy away," he said. "If you'd come over here to see the cricket I wouldn't have booted you for bagging my jigger. Now I will."

"Oh!" Bunter remembered the jigger. "Oh, I—I say, that—that ain't your jigger, Bull! That's—that's mine!"

"Looks like it!" grunted Johnny.

"I—I mean, it's Temple's. Temple of the Fourth lent it to me. I say, sorry I can't stop! I've got to push on," said Bunter hastily.

Bunter grabbed the bike from the fence.

Johnny Bull grabbed the bike from Bunter. Holding the bike with one hand, he grabbed Bunter's collar with the other, and twirled the fat junior round.

"Ow!" roared Bunter, in anticipation. "I tell you it ain't your bike! And if you kick me, I'll jolly well—Yarooooooop!"

Thud!

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Johnny Bull wheeled the bike in at the gate. Johnny had not the slightest inclination to trust his jigger into such hands as Bunter's, especially without leave asked or given. Had Bunter come over to see the cricket, he might have stretched a point. But Bunter hadn't.

"I say, you fellows," roared the fat Owl, as the Co., grinning, followed Johnny in. "I—I say, I—I want that bike—"

"Go on wanting!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"How am I going to get to Lantham Chase?" howled Bunter.

"The howfulness is terrific!" chuckled Horree Janset Ram Singh. "Come in and watch the esteemed cricket instead."

"You black idiot!" hooted Bunter.

The fat Owl stood in the gateway, blinking after the Famous Five.

That bike was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. A long, expressive look Bunter gave, and then he turned wearily away.

It was two or three miles more to Lantham Chase. Billy Bunter had to negotiate those miles on Shanks' pony, and his only comfort was the circumstance that the way now lay downhill.

But that circumstance did not seem to afford him very much comfort. He gasped and puffed, and wearily mopped a streaming face as his fat little legs crawled onward towards Lantham Chase.

## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Smithy Plays a Part!

**H**ERBERT VERNON-SMITH drew a deep, throbbing breath. The door of the turret-room was an inch ajar.

At the aperture the Bounder was listening with intent ears.

Since the key had fallen into his hands he had waited—more than two long hours that seemed like centuries to him. But there was no help for that. He had to wait till the coast was clear.

Old Hunt had remained at the foot of the turret stair till the captain returned, after ascertaining that no one

was to be seen on the avenue. And since then the captain had been seated in one of the lounge chairs in the little flagged hall below.

The Bounder, listening above, had heard a movement from time to time that told that the Army man was still there. Once he had heard him at the telephone; then there had been the rustling of a newspaper, then the scratch of a match, as a cheroot was lighted.

So long as he was there it was futile to attempt to stir. If he lost this chance he could not hope for another. In an anguish of impatience the Bounder listened, long minute after minute, longing for his gaoler to go—for the way of escape to open.

And now, at last, the captain's cold, hard voice floated up to the listening ears.

"Hunt!"

"Sir!" There was a shuffle of feet from the passage at the back.

"Master Bertie may be here any time now. I am going to walk till he comes. Have some tea ready for him. He will not remain long."

"Yes, sir."

The Bounder's eyes glinted at the mention of "Master Bertie." His double, he supposed, was still at Greyfriars, and he was expected home that afternoon, from the captain's words.

He heard the Army man's stride in the flagged hall. Captain Vernon went out by the door on the stone terrace, and old Hunt shuffled back to his quarters.

The Bounder's heart leaped.

The way was open at last!

Evidently old Hunt had not yet missed the key. He did not require it till he paid his next visit to the turret-room, and that was not due for a considerable time. Until he came up he

was not likely to feel in that pocket and miss it. At all events, he had not done so yet.

And now was Vernon-Smith's chance.

For the moment, at least, the hall at the foot of the turret stair was empty. Silently Vernon-Smith pulled the door of the turret-room farther open, and stepped out on the little landing, shutting the door after him.

Cool-headed, though his heart beat fast and hard, he crept down the turret stair without a sound.

In a minute more he stood in the hall.

His eyes turned on the open doorway, beyond which lay the terrace, the steps, the green woods, the sunlight, and freedom. Then he barely suppressed a groan.

Past the terrace he saw a bowler hat. That was all he could see of the captain on the lower level.

But it was enough! The Army man was not gone. He was standing there, at a short distance, his back to the terrace, looking in the direction of the avenue—from which he expected his nephew to arrive.

The Bounder crept to the doorway.

But he realised that he dared not make the venture. Once outside, he would be seen, and his escape cut off.

He turned his back to the door and looked the other way. Was there a chance of eluding old Hunt if he tried his luck down the passage at the back? He knew that there was little or none.

He gritted his teeth with rage.

After a week of imprisonment that chance had come his way—almost un hoped for. Was it to lead to nothing, after all?

Then, as his eyes fell on the telephone, on a small table by the window

near the door, they flashed with a new idea.

The telephone! If, by happy luck, he was left alone long enough to ring up—to ring Greyfriars, or the police station at Courtfield, or even to speak to the exchange, one word to the outer world would be enough, and it would not matter if they got him again; they would not keep him long.

He moved towards the telephone. At the same moment footsteps shuffled up the passage, and with rage and despair in his heart the Bounder saw old Hunt coming back into the hall.

They were face to face.

A wild thought of grasping up a chair, knocking him down, and rushing out of the doorway was in the Bounder's mind. But even as that wild thought shot through his brain he realised that old Hunt's aspect was not hostile. He was touching his forehead with a grin that melted the harshness of his leathery face.

"Master Bertie! Your uncle's gone to meet you, I think," said old Hunt.

The Bounder hardly breathed.

But he was quick on the uptake.

Of course, they were expecting his double, and old Hunt had not the faintest, remotest suspicion that the prisoner was out of the turret-room. He supposed, as a matter of course, that Bertie Vernon had just stepped in from the terrace.

The Bounder's heart beat so hard that he felt as if he would choke. Yet his head remained cool. For one second he was dumbfounded; the next, he found himself answering old Hunt calmly.

"Oh! Then I missed him. I cut through the park," he said.

"He ain't been gone much more than five minutes, sir," said Hunt. "I wonder you missed him. I dessay I can see him and give him a call, sir."

"Oh, don't trouble," said Vernon-Smith, as calmly as he could. "I can wait. I'm in no hurry."

"I dessay he's in sight, sir!" answered old Hunt.

He stepped to the open doorway.

Vernon-Smith's eyes followed him, almost in agony. But the bowler hat was no longer where he had seen it. The captain had moved farther off towards the avenue that ran from the distant gates to the unused great entrance of the mansion.

Hunt stepped out on the terrace.

Then, evidently, he sighted the captain in the distance, for he waved his hand and called:

"Master Bertie's here, sir!"

The Bounder stood with beating heart. He had no time to think before old Hunt turned round again.

"Your uncle's coming, sir," he said.

"I thought he wasn't far off."

The Bounder threw himself into a lounge chair in the duskiest corner of the hall, his back to the window.

If the captain came in, he had to face him. He could only hope that the Army man would fall into the same error as Hunt. That was his only chance now.

A sharp voice called from below the terrace.

"What did you say, Hunt? Did you say Master Bertie was here?"

"Yes, sir. Just come in!" called back Hunt.

"I did not see him."

"He came through the park, sir."

"I thought he was coming on his bicycle. He said so in his letter. Well, never mind, if he is here."

Old Hunt shuffled away down the passage. A moment more, and the dark-complexioned face of the Army man appeared in the doorway from the

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terrace. He glanced across at the schoolboy in the lounge chair.

"You're here, Bertie. You told me in your letter you were coming on your bike, and I looked for you on the avenue. Surely you did not walk all the distance from the school?"

"I had the motor-bus most of the way." The Bounder was astonished at the calmness of his own voice. There was not a tremor in it. It was clear that the Army man did not, any more than his man, dream for a moment that this was the schoolboy they both believed to be locked in the turret-room above. "But I'm rather tired."

"Well, well, my boy, rest if you are tired," said the captain, with a kind, affectionate note in his voice. "Hunt will get you some tea. I have what you want Bertie. I quite see how the matter stands, and I have the ten-pound note ready. Pay the man Lodgey at once, and get rid of him. And I hope this is the last you will hear of that young rascal Smith's disreputable friends."

This was so much Greek to the Bounder. He had almost forgotten Lodgey. And now that he was reminded of him, could imagine no reason why Bertie Vernon should trouble about his debt to that unsavoury gentleman.

"It is unfortunate that you had to come over here, Bertie," the captain went on. "As I told you, it is only prudent to avoid Lantham Chase in the circumstances. At the same time, I am glad to have a chance of speaking to you. I have had no word from you since you have been playing your new role at the school."

He paused, looking at the schoolboy in the dusky corner.

"No news is good news, of course," he said. "If anything had transpired, I should have heard fast enough." He gave a curt laugh. "But it was, as I told you, perfectly easy—success was inevitable. You have had no difficulty?"

"No," muttered the Bounder, hardly knowing what to reply to a question he could not understand.

"No," said the captain, with grim satisfaction. "What difficulty could there be in stepping into the place of the young rascal who disappeared to make room for you? No. From the day that young rascal fell into my hands, you have been Herbert Vernon-Smith, and Herbert Vernon-Smith you will remain—at Greyfriars, and after."

The Bounder did not speak.

He could not.

He sat almost stunned by the sudden revelation.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Boot for Bunter!

**B**ERTIE VERNON stared.

He stared at a podgy back. Coming down the Lantham road on his bicycle, he was thinking of anything and anybody but William George Bunter.

But there was no mistaking that rotund figure.

Ahead of him on the road, just turning off into the footpath through the woods of Lantham Chase, was the fat Owl of the Remove, and Vernon stared blankly at the podgy back as it disappeared.

The Bounder's double rode on, his brows knitted, his lips set.

In a few minutes more he reached the footpath, and jumped down from his machine.

Bunter was rolling on ahead.

That footpath led through the wood to the avenue. It was the way Bertie was accustomed to use, for the great gates at the end of the avenue were kept permanently closed.

Wheeling his bike, his brow growing blacker and blacker, he followed the fat Owl up the path.

There was a right-of-way across Lantham Chase. The public had a right to use that path. It led on the other side of the estate, to the village of Green Hedges. But Vernon did not suppose for a moment that Billy Bunter was going on a walk to that extent. It was fairly clear that he was heading for Lantham Chase, though why, the Bounder's double did not know. But he knew that the Owl of the Remove was not wanted there—especially on this particular afternoon, when he was going there himself.

Bunter did not look back, or think of looking back. He rolled on, grunting and perspiring.

He had had a good many rests by the wayside since the disastrous loss of Johnny Bull's jigger. But walking never did agree with Bunter. There were altogether too many furlongs in a mile for Bunter to like miles. He rolled on slowly, and he gasped and grunted as he rolled.

Bertie followed him with a grim brow. If, by chance, Bunter rolled on by the farther footpath towards Green Hedges, he would be done with him, and glad to see the last of him. But if he turned up the avenue towards the mansion, he was far from done with him.

The fat Owl emerged into the wide, sweeping avenue at length. The mansion was not in sight—the curving sweep of the avenue, lined with tall trees, hid it from view.

Vernon's eyes glittered as the fat Owl turned up the avenue. It was clear now that he was heading for the house.

Leaning his bike against a tree, he cut after Bunter at a run.

Billy Bunter was suddenly, unexpectedly, and painfully apprised of his arrival.

Crash!

Billy Bunter uttered a startled howl as a boot crashed on his tight trousers. He plunged forward, and dropped on his fat hands and knees.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter. "Oh! Ow! Beast!"

He blinked round in astonishment and anguish. His eyes popped behind his spectacles at the sight of Vernon.

"Oh, Smithy, you beast!" he gasped.

He scrambled up, backing away in alarm.

Bunter had not planned for Smithy to spot him en route. He had started first, and, had all gone well, he would have reached Lantham Chase well ahead of him. Then he was going to wait, under the trees by the avenue, and watch for the beast going to the house. If, on the other hand, Smithy passed him on the road, all he had to do was to follow on. It was rather unfortunate that Smithy had spotted him on the spot.

Smithy, according to Bunter's plan, was to see nothing of him till he was with the captain, spoofing the Army man as he had done before, and was suddenly covered with confusion by Bunter rolling in with the greeting:

"Hallo, Smithy!"

That was Bunter's masterly plan, which, like most of Bunter's plans, had not worked out as planned.

"You fat freak!" breathed Vernon.

"What are you doing here?"

"Beast!" Bunter backed farther off.

"What are you doing here, you beast, if you come to that? I suppose I can come here if I like, without asking you, Vernon-Smith?"

Vernon eyed him in angry perplexity. He could not guess why Bunter was there. But Bunter was not wanted there. He made a stride at the fat Owl, and Billy Bunter jumped back in haste.

"Look here, you keep off, you beast!" he roared. "You jolly well touch me, you beast, and I'll jolly well go straight to old Vernon and say—Ow! Yow! Wow!"

A grasp on his collar spun Bunter round. Then a boot landed again with what a novelist would call a dull, sickening thud.

Billy Bunter's yell woke the echoes of the park.

"Now hook it, you fat freak!" snapped Vernon. He spun Bunter back into the footpath, and landed his boot again, and yet again. "Now—"

Bunter flew.

He went down the footpath at about fifty miles per hour. Bunter was not, at the moment, thinking of rolling in at the house, and saying: "Hallo, Smithy!" He was thinking of a thudding boot, and the necessity of getting to a safe distance from the same. He fairly flew along the footpath, back to the Lantham road. His spluttering yells floated back as he flew.

Bertie Vernon, having disposed of the fat Owl in that rather high-handed manner, remounted his bike and rode on up the avenue. He had no doubt that he was done with Bunter. He dismissed the fat Owl from his mind as he rode on up to the house.

But he was not done with Bunter.

For about fifty yards Billy Bunter covered the ground like a runaway locomotive. Then he spluttered to a halt.

The fat junior leaned on a tree, and pumped in breath.

"Ow! Beast! Wow! Beast! Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter.

For several minutes he leaned, and gasped, and gurgled. He mopped his fat brow with a handkerchief. Then, with a gleam in his little round eyes behind his big round spectacles, he started up the path again towards the avenue.

He blinked cautiously up the avenue when he reached it! The beast was not in sight! Evidently, he had gone on to the house! Breathing hard, and breathing deep, Billy Bunter rolled on up the avenue!

By that time the beast would be at the house! He would be with the captain! He would be palming himself off as Bertie Vernon, as he had done before! And that booting had only made the vengeful fat Owl more vengeful and more determined! He was going to put paid to the beast at the finish! Grimly determined, the fat Owl rolled on to the house—to roll in, at the psychological moment, with "Hallo, Smithy!"

## THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

### 'Twixt Cup and Lip!

**C**APTAIN VERNON snipped the end from one of the black Indian cheroots that he incessantly smoked, and lighted it.

He stood in the doorway, leaning on a door-post: his eyes on the schoolboy in the lounge chair—thoughtfully, not in the least suspiciously.

The Bounder sat with his brain in a whirl.

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He understood now.

That mystery of his imprisonment, the still more puzzling mystery why he had not been sought for and found, was explained now—and he knew! While he remained in the turret-room at Lantham Chase, his rival was in his place at Greyfriars—under his name, carrying out a stupendous plot of impersonation—that was what it all meant! That was why he had not been searched for and saved—he was not even missed!

No one knew that he was not in his accustomed place at the school! For his accustomed place was filled by an impostor—undiscovered, evidently even unsuspected!

The captain was speaking—but Smithy hardly heard him. But he pulled himself together.

That startling, amazing, utterly unlooked-for discovery made him realise that his danger was greater than he had known—for there was no chance, as he had hoped, of rescue—all depended on himself!

He had to get away!

But to pass the man in the doorway, without exciting suspicion—how was he to do that? A closer glance in the clear July sunlight would put the plotter on his guard—he would guess! Yet if he waited, the arrival of Bertie Vernon, any minute, might betray him. The minutes were full of bitter anxiety to the Bounder.

He had to get rid of the man—somehow! How could he get rid of him?

"Not even the boy Redwing?" He tried to give attention to what the Army man was saying. "Not even Redwing—he suspects nothing, Bertie?"

"Oh, nothing!" stammered the Bounder. He had to answer.

"You remember you feared it! But I was sure that your fear was groundless, Bertie! At the same time, it would be advisable to keep that particular boy at a distance, as he was the close friend of Vernon-Smith."

"Yes—I understand that!" muttered the Bounder. He steadied his voice. "What about some tea, uncle? Will you speak to Hunt?"

"Yes, yes, certainly!" said the captain.

He moved from the door-post, to cross the hall to the passage at the back.

The Bounder's heart beat to suffocation. Was this going to be his chance? He half-rose from the chair, as the Army man crossed the hall.

As he did so, there was a step on the stone terrace outside.

A shadow fell in at the wide-open sunny doorway.

Captain Vernon glanced round.

The next moment he stood thunder-struck.

Bertie Vernon stepped in from the terrace. He did not notice the schoolboy in the corner—his eyes were on the captain. He stared at the dumbfounded face of the Army man, startled by its expression.

"Uncle!" he exclaimed. "What—"

The captain uttered an inarticulate sound.

Herbert Vernon-Smith bounded up.

In another minute he would have had his chance: and the cup had been dashed from his lips by his rival's sudden appearance.

But the Bounder was utterly desperate now.

While the captain stood thunder-struck, Vernon-Smith bounded to the door.

Then Bertie Vernon saw him, and uttered a gasping cry. The next moment he was reeling under a fierce

blow, and the Bounder was springing out of the doorway to the terrace.

But in that moment, Captain Vernon broke from the trance of amazement into which his nephew's appearance had thrown him. He made a fierce and rapid rush across the hall.

Even as Bertie reeled, and the Bounder leaped past him, the captain was upon the desperate junior with the leap of a tiger, grasping him by the collar and dragging him back.

Vernon-Smith struggled frantically.

But the grasp on him was of iron! He was torn from his footing, and whirled bodily in at the door.

"You hound!" panted the Bounder, fighting hard to get loose. "You kidnapping villain, let me go!"

"Hunt!" roared the captain.

"Sir!" came the wheezy voice, from the dusky passage.

"Fool! Quick!"

Bertie Vernon had staggered out on the terrace. He recovered himself, and came back into the doorway, with starting eyes! He gazed like a fellow in an evil dream at the kidnapped schoolboy struggling madly and desperately in the iron grasp of the Army man.

"Uncle!" he panted.

"Hunt!" roared the captain.

Old Hunt came hurrying into the hall! He gave a splutter at the sight of the Bounder in the captain's grasp, and Bertie in the doorway! His eyes seemed to start from his face, as he stared from one to the other.

"Fool! Have you left the door unlocked or what?" The captain's voice shook with rage. "See what you have done."

"I—I—you shut the turret-room yourself, sir—" stammered Hunt.

"He must have got the key—did you drop the key there, fool?"

"I ain't—" Old Hunt groped in his waistcoat pocket. "Oh! It's gone—the key's gone—"

"He has it, then! He can be searched for it in the turret-room—I have another! Hold him!"

The Bounder was hard for even the iron-limbed captain to hold! He was fighting with the strength of desperation.

Old Hunt grasped him, pinning his arms.

Captain Vernon jerked a key ring from his pocket. A key to the turret-room was on it.

"Bertie—here!" he panted.

"Uncle!" Bertie Vernon's face was white, and his voice came hoarsely. "Uncle! I can't stand this—I won't! Let him go—I tell you, let him go! I can't—I won't—"

"Hold your tongue! Take this key, and open the door of the turret-room—" roared the captain savagely.

"But I—I—I tell you—"

"Silence! Go up the stair, fool! Do you want me to be taken from here with the handcuffs on my wrists?" hissed the captain.

Vernon gazed at him in horror for a moment: then, white as a chalk, he took the key-ring and almost staggered up the steep stair to the turret.

Vernon-Smith, with a wild and desperate effort, dragged his arms loose from Hunt's grip! He struck with savage force, and old Hunt went reeling under the blow, falling on the flags. But the captain's grasp was on the Bounder again.

"You villain! Let me go!" shrieked Vernon-Smith.

The captain's teeth were gritted: his dark face darker with rage.

The schoolboy still struggled, but he had no chance in that iron grasp.

Old Hunt sat up, panting and blink-

ing, his nose running red. He sat spluttering.

But the Bounder had no chance. The iron grasp on him dragged him along the hall towards the spiral stair.

It was at that moment that another shadow—this time a very wide one—fell in at the open doorway! There was a step on the stone terrace. A fat figure, and a fat grinning face, appeared in the doorway: and there was a fat squeak!

"Hallo, Smithy!"

Billy Bunter had arrived.

## THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

### Beastly for Bunter!

**B**ILLY BUNTER grinned in. "Hallo, Smithy!" he chortled. Bunter was grinning as he blinked in.

His grin widened, as he saw the scene within—the Bounder, breathless, struggling in the grasp of the captain: old Hunt on the floor, his hand to his nose.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Have they spotted you already, Smithy? He, he, he!"

Bertie Vernon was out of sight at the top of the turret stair. To the Owl of the Remove the schoolboy struggling in the captain's grasp was the beast he had come there to show up; the fellow who had booted him on the avenue; the fellow on whom his fatuous scheme of vengeance was concentrated!

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

The captain's face turned towards him with a glare of rage that startled the fat Owl.

Old Hunt staggered to his feet.

Nothing could have been more utterly disconcerting to the plotters than the sudden and unexpected appearance of another person on the scene.

But to the Bounder the fat, familiar voice of the Owl of the Remove came like a message of hope.

He twisted in the captain's grasp to stare round.

The sight of Billy Bunter was utterly unexpected—unexpected and amazing—to the Bounder of Greyfriars! But he was there! There he was, grinning in at the open doorway into the little flagged hall!

"Bunter!" the Bounder yelled. "Bunter—help! Tell Redwing—tell him I'm kidnapped!"

A fierce grasp over his mouth shut off Vernon-Smith's voice.

The captain made a furious sign to Hunt.

Billy Bunter blinked in amazement.

He had supposed, from what he saw, that Captain Vernon had tumbled to the trickster's trickery before he arrived with his "Hallo, Smithy!" to give the game away! The Bounder's desperate yell made him jump.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I say, Smithy—"

He had no time for more.

Old Hunt pounced on him, grasped him, and whipped him out on the terrace, spluttering. The next moment the captain, still grasping Vernon-Smith, had kicked the door shut.

The scene within was shut off from view.

But Bunter was not thinking of the scene within now. He was thinking of a large and heavy hand that was smacking his fat head!

Smack, smack, smack!

Bunter roared.

Old Hunt jerked him across the terrace to the steps. There, grasping him with his left hand, he smacked with his right. He smacked and smacked



and smacked till Bunter's head rang. "Ow! Wow! Leggo! Stoppit!" shrieked the fat Owl in indignation and anguish. "I say, wharrer you up to? Yaroooh! I haven't done anything, have I? Ow! Wow! Oh crumbs!"

Smack, smack!  
"Will you stoppit?" shrieked Bunter. "I tell you I haven't done anything! I only came here to— Whooop! Yooop!"

Smack, smack!  
"Oh crikey!"  
In sheer desperation Bunter kicked. Fortunately—for Bunter; not for Hunt—his frantic hack landed on a shin!

Hunt gave a yell and relaxed his grasp on the fat junior. That was enough for Bunter. He wrenched loose and jumped, doing the steps down from the terrace in one!

At the bottom of the steps he stumbled. But he picked himself up again and flew!

There was a sound of a gasping voice behind him.

It spurred Bunter on. Seldom had the fat Owl of the Remove carried his weight at such a rate! He fairly whizzed!

Whether old Hunt pursued him or not Bunter never knew. He whizzed into the park and careered on among trees and thickets till he reached the foot-path. But there he did not halt!

Gasping for breath, streaming with perspiration, he careered on till he was out on the Lantham road, and he was a quarter of a mile from Lantham Chase before his fat little legs ceased to twinkle.

It was a warm, damp, fatigued Owl that tottered at last into Lantham Station to take the train home.

The trail of vengeance did not seem to have prospered. But as he rolled homeward the Owl of the Remove was not thinking wholly and solely of the aches and pains he had collected at Lantham Chase.

The Bounder's wild words rang in his ears! They were still in Billy Bunter's fat ears and in his fat thoughts when he rolled into Greyfriars School.

**THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.**

**"Bunter's Latest!"**

"I SAY, you fellows!"  
Harry Wharton & Co. were in the Rag when Billy Bunter rolled in.

The cricketers had returned from Redclyffe in a cheery crowd. They had returned victorious, and some of them were rather keen to see Smithy and mention that they had beaten Redclyffe by forty runs—just to put him wise that he had not been fearfully missed, after all!

But Smithy did not seem to have come in.

It was not yet calling-over, and a crowd of Remove fellows in the Rag were fighting the Redclyffe match over again when the fat and perspiring Owl rolled in and squeaked—a disregarded squeak!

Everybody at the moment was interested in cricket—nobody was interested in Billy Bunter.

But Bunter was not to be disregarded. Bunter had news—startling news—calculated to make those disregarding fellows jump and forget all about even cricket!

"I say, you fellows," roared Bunter, "has Smithy come in yet?"

"Haven't seen him!" answered Harry Wharton over his shoulder.

"I say, is Redwing here?"

"Here!" called out Tom Redwing. "I say, Redwing, Smithy hasn't come in?"

"Not yet!"  
"Then they've got him!" gasped Bunter.

Tom Redwing stared at the fat Owl. Several other fellows glanced round at him.

"Who's got Smithy?" asked Skinner. "Prefects copped him at a pub?"

"Quelch spotted him calling on Lodgey?" grinned Hazeldene.

"Oh! No! He's been kidnapped!"  
"What!"

Cricket, as a topic, dropped on the spot. Bunter had the house. Every man in the Rag turned to stare at him. Even Lord Mauleverer sat up in his armchair and blinked.

"Kidnapped!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Johnny Bull. "What next?"

"You fat ass!" roared Harry Wharton. "What rot are you talking now?"

"Bunter's latest!" grinned Skinner. "I can tell you fellows, Bunter is improving! This is the biggest so far."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"The bigfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, it's true!" gasped Bunter. "That man at Lantham Chase

—Vernon's uncle—has kidnapped him! Fancy that, you fellows!"

But the Removites could not quite "fancy that"! They stared at the excited fat Owl, most of them grinning. Only Tom Redwing had a startled face.

"What do you mean, Bunter?" he exclaimed. "Has anything happened to Smithy? Talk sense!"

"Oh, really, Redwing—"

"What has happened, if anything has, you fat ass?" exclaimed Redwing.

"He told me to tell you!" explained Bunter. "'Tell Redwing I'm kidnapped'—they were his very words! So I'm telling you—see? You'd better go and tell Quelch! Or the Head! Or the police—see?"

"Better make sure first, Reddy," grinned Bob Cherry. "Quelch might be shirty if a fellow tried to pull his leg like that."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Did you trail Smithy to Lantham Chase, after all, you fat ass?" asked Bob.

"Yes, I jolly well did, only the beast turned up where I didn't expect him, and kicked me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

*(Continued on next page.)*



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BOYS - AND GIRLS!**

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**B**Y way of commencing my Chat this week, I must thank C. R. Thorpe, a reader chum of Adelaide, for forwarding me a copy of the "Adelaide Mail," one page of which is given wholly up to the Companion Papers—MAGNET and "Gem," with cover reproductions, size 6 in. by 4 in., prominently displayed. It is, indeed, a fine example of the high esteem in which Frank Richards and Martin Clifford are held in Australia.

Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, and Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, the heroes of the MAGNET and "Gem," have been

**AT SCHOOL FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS!**

Peter Pan, the boy who wouldn't grow up, is a beloved character, but generations of boys and girls have revelled in reading the stories of Harry Wharton and Tom Merry, and all the other characters who "live" in the MAGNET and "Gem." They are the same lovable bunch of schoolboys as they were back in 1908, when they were first introduced. No other paper can boast of such a splendid reputation.

Another Australian reader who raises three hearty cheers for the MAGNET is Allan Teague. Allan says: "I wish you could bring the Old Paper out four times a week!" Gee! If only I could, I would!

Thanks for your photograph, chum. I will add it to my collection.

**W**ELL, you can't get a quart into a pint pot, and I shan't have room for a word or two about next week's bill o' fare if I'm not careful.

**"THE GREYFRIARS IMPOSTOR!"**

By Frank Richards,

is the title of the next yarn in our present series featuring Herbert Vernon, who is at Greyfriars playing the part of his cousin and double—Vernon-Smith. Vernon is on very stony ground, and it means only one slip up and the fat will be in the fire! If he can succeed in deceiving Tom Redwing, who knows the Bounder's character better than any other junior at Greyfriars, his uncle's scheming will bring forth fruit. But will he? Time will tell. Percival Spencer Paget, of the Third, dabbles in a spot of journalism, so look out for his literary effort in our opening feature: "My Own Page." Last, but by no means least, comes the "Greyfriars Herald," in which will be found another "eggsciting" St. Sam's yarn, and more newsy items written around the week's events at Greyfriars, and contributed by the juniors themselves. Order this bumper issue to-day, chums.

All the best until we meet again.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,638.

"But I jolly well followed him to the house!" said Bunter. "I knew I should catch him there, spoofing that Army man, I was going to walk in to say 'Hallo, Smithy!'"

"You fat sweep!" exclaimed Redwing. "Has Smithy been to Lantham Chase?"

"He jolly well has!" said Bunter. "And I jolly well saw him! You see, the door was open where he went in, and he was with Captain Vernon, as I expected, and I said 'Hallo, Smithy!' Only the old bean must have spotted him before I got there, because he had Smithy by the neck."

"Smithy's the man to ask for it!" said Nugent.

"And the captain's man was on the floor, with the claret tapper: so I suppose Smithy had knocked him down."

"Stout lad, Smithy!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"But that Army man had him by the neck, and I can tell you he looked fierce," continued Bunter. "And Smithy yelled out 'Tell Redwing I'm kidnapped!' So I'm telling him."

Tom Redwing caught his breath. Estrangement had grown up between him and his chum. That afternoon he had seen nothing of him—and hardly given him a thought. Had something happened—could anything have happened—to old Smithy?

"Don't you worry, Reddy," said Bob. "It's all gammon, of course! Smithy may walk in any minute."

"But—" muttered Redwing.

"Bunter's been to the pictures," said Peter Todd. "What else did you see on the films, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I haven't!" roared Bunter. "I've been to Lantham Chase! As you fellows say Smithy hasn't come in, they've got him! Of course, I expected that Army man to wallop him, and serve him jolly well right; but kidnapping him, you know—"

"Why didn't you rescue him?" inquired Skinner. "Did you leave poor old Smithy wriggling in the hands of the bold, bad kidnapper?"

"Well, I—I would have, only—only that man Hunt rushed at me and banged me right and left—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at?" hooted Bunter. "The cheeky beast smacked my head—"

"Nothing in it to damage," said Bob Cherry soothingly.

"And I tell you Smithy yelled out: 'Tell Redwing I'm kidnapped!—I heard that quite plain!' declared Bunter. "I suppose Smithy knew whether he was kidnapped or not. Anyhow, that's what he said. I say, Wharton, think you'd better go and tell Quelch?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I think I'll wait and see whether Smithy comes in for call-over first," he answered.

"But I say, you fellows, it's true," declared Bunter. "That's what Smithy yelled out—his very words! You'll jolly well know soon—you'll jolly well see that Smithy won't come in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled half the Rag, as the door of that apartment opened, while Bunter was speaking, and a well-known face and figure appeared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy!" roared Bob Cherry. "Have you been kidnapped while we were playing cricket at Redclyffe? Better have joined up, after all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter spun round. His eyes bulged through his spectacles at the junior who had just entered the Rag. To Bunter's eyes, as to all others, that junior was the Bounder.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Bertie Vernon glanced at him, and glanced round. If there was a throb of uneasiness in his heart, nothing showed in his face. His manner was perfectly cool and unconcerned.

"What's the joke?" he asked. "You fellows seem to be enjoying life."

"Bunter's latest!" yelled Bob Cherry. "He's just been telling us that he saw you kidnapped at Lantham Chase this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That roar of merriment reassured Vernon if he was uneasy. He joined in the laugh.

"I—I—I say, is—is—is that you, Smithy?" spluttered the amazed fat Owl. "Why, you beast, what did you yell out that you were kidnapped for if you weren't kidnapped at all?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bell rang for calling-over, and the juniors trooped out of the Rag, still chuckling.

But there was one face that was not smiling.

In Hall, Tom Redwing's eyes turned on the Bounder's double, again and again, with a strange, perplexed intentness.

"Bunter's latest" was forgotten in a very short time by all the Remove—with one exception. Somehow or other—he hardly knew why—Tom Redwing could not dismiss it from his mind.

At prep that evening in Study No. 4, Bertie Vernon, without looking up, knew that Tom Redwing, neglecting his books, was looking at him across the table. He could feel the eyes on him—intent, searching, perplexed.

What was in Redwing's mind?

He could know nothing—suspect nothing! Bunter's tale had been laughed at by all the Remove—and here was "Smithy," present, to prove that he had not been kidnapped. What was in the fellow's mind?

He glanced up at last, and Redwing dropped his eyes to his books. After that, Tom worked in silence, and when prep was over he left the study without a word.

The Bounder's double breathed hard as the door closed on him.

For the first time, there was a feeling of foreboding in the heart of the fellow who was living a lie, under another fellow's name.

THE END.

(The next yarn in this great series; "THE GREYFRIARS IMPOSTOR!" will appear in next Saturday's MAGNET. You cannot afford to miss it, chums!)

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