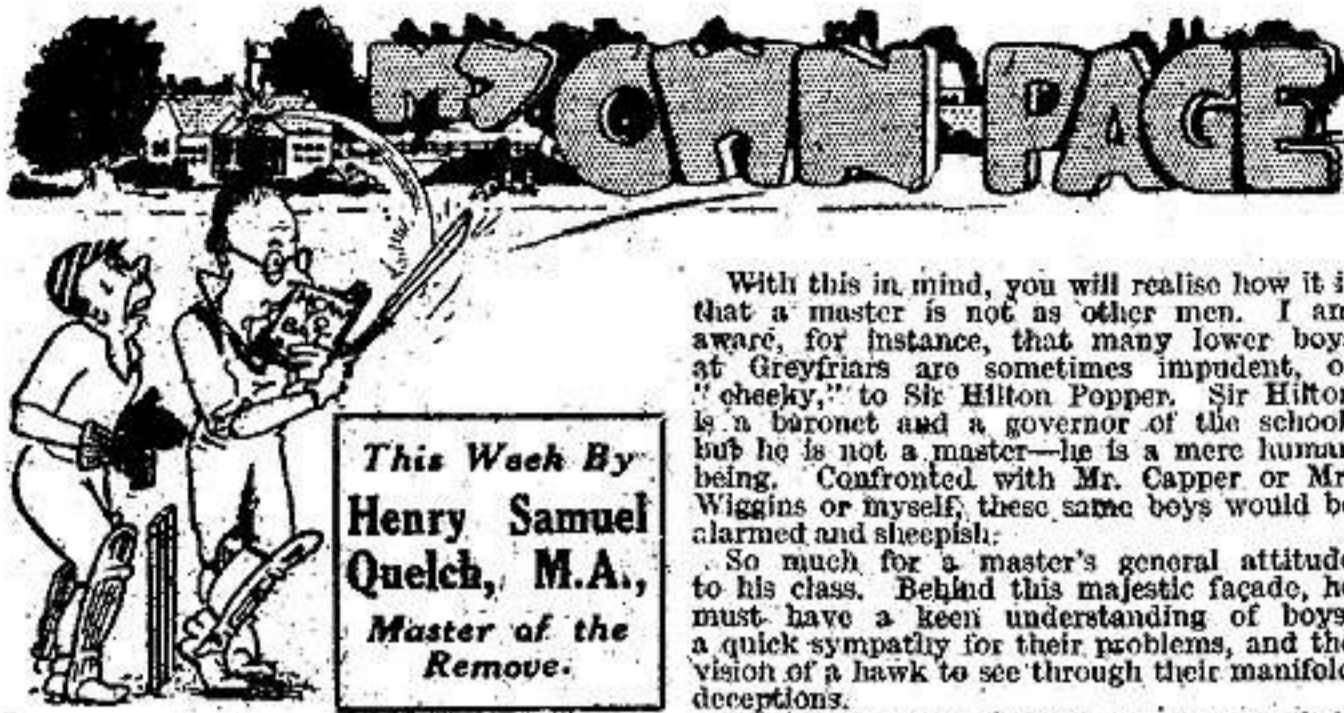


HARRY WHARTON & Co., OF GREYFRIARS, IN—

THE HOUSE OF DARK SECRETS!



The
MAGNET
*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper* 2^d



This Week By
**Henry Samuel
Quelch, M.A.,**
Master of the
Remove.

It is a change and a relaxation for me to be invited to write a page of light literature in a schoolboys' journal. Most of my literary work is of a technical kind, and appears in such journals as "The Public School Review." I am also compiling a history of Greyfriars School, which is a long, but enjoyable, task. Therefore, I regard this opportunity with favour, and shall claim your indulgence for a few remarks on my work here at Greyfriars.

The life of a schoolmaster is not one which I should personally recommend to any young man seeking a career. It has its pleasant moments, no doubt; but it is a hard, and often thankless, fight against ignorance, laziness, and obstinacy, with very little leisure and a monotonous routine which never varies. In addition to this, a schoolmaster must be a combination of detective, family doctor, encyclopedia, judge, and general servant.

The wisdom of Solomon, the ruthlessness of Nero, the literary ability of Shakespeare, the patience of Job, the knowledge of Socrates, the strategy of Napoleon—if you have all these, you should be a success as a schoolmaster. Without them, it is rash to attempt the task at all.

This does not imply that I regard myself as being in the possession of all these qualities; indeed, I do not regard myself as having achieved success. There have been many situations which I should have handled with more ability had I been a better master. But it is fatal to allow a scholar to suspect this fact. A master must keep up appearances. To his boys he must be a superhuman and infallible person.

I once overheard Bunter of my Form remark to another boy: "Well, after all, you know, masters must have feelings, almost like human beings." That is the attitude a master has to create if he wishes to maintain a proper discipline. If he wavers, if he appears uncertain of his own judgment, his prestige is lost for ever. In short, he must never be quite human.

With this in mind, you will realise how it is that a master is not as other men. I am aware, for instance, that many lower boys at Greyfriars are sometimes impudent, or "cheeky," to Sir Hilton Popper. Sir Hilton is a baronet and a governor of the school; but he is not a master—he is a mere human being. Confronted with Mr. Capper or Mr. Wiggins or myself, these same boys would be alarmed and sheepish.

So much for a master's general attitude to his class. Behind this majestic façade, he must have a keen understanding of boys, a quick sympathy for their problems, and the vision of a hawk to see through their manifold deceptions.

All boys try to deceive—or, to use their own word, "spoo"—their masters on occasions. It is quite a natural desire. The great majority of boys do not come to college with the grim resolve to work as hard as possible. On the contrary, they determine to have "as good a time" as their master will let them. If they can dodge work, they will dodge it without the slightest scruple. If, however, their schoolmaster makes them work, they will respect him for it.

A master must be on the alert for the slightest sign of deception. If a boy who always stumbles and stutters in his translation of Virgil suddenly reels off a difficult passage with complete self-assurance, his master does not need telling that there is something to be discovered. Probably the boy has written the translation over the words in his book. It is not a very dreadful crime, and many boys do it during preparation. But it is forbidden. A boy is supposed to memorise the prepared passage.

Similarly, if a normally mischievous boy becomes suddenly attentive, with his eyes fixed on his master's face in earnest thought, it is almost certain that he is "up to something." His mouth may be full of sweetmeats, or he may be attempting to thrust a pin into his neighbour under cover of his desk. In any case, he must be dealt with immediately, and in a way he will remember.

A master must know all that goes on in his Form, and yet he must never ask for information. Telling tales is quite properly forbidden. Nothing so quickly destroys the morale of a school as the practice of tale-bearing. Under its influence, boys become either furtive or bullying. I make it a rule never to listen to information of this kind.

Yet I think I know most of what goes on in my Form. I am quite aware, for instance, that Skinner and Snoop use the top box-room for cigarette smoking. I am not ignorant of the manifold sins of Bunter and Fish. I have a very shrewd suspicion that much of Vernon-Smith's conduct would not bear

investigation. Nevertheless, I intend to investigate it rigidly when the occasion offers.

Here let me make a confession. As a Form-master, it is my duty to punish the reckless and mischievous spirits in my Form, and I hope this duty is done. (The Removites think so, at any rate.—ED.) But I am often secretly entertained by their pranks. It becomes a contest of wits between myself and the offender. The latter endeavours to do mischief and not be discovered, and I am firmly determined to stop him.

Boys like Skinner, Vernon-Smith, Wibley, Desmond, Cherry, and Todd are never averse from attempting to "rag" their Form-master. They enjoy the risk of punishment, and when it occurs, they take it in a sporting manner. These boys have brains and character, and they keep my own wits sharp and keen.



Skinner's idea of the Black Monk.

Studious boys, like Wharton, Linley, and Penfold, are a joy to the Form-master, who feels the pleasure of imparting knowledge. The real thorns in a master's flesh are the confirmed idlers, such as Bunter, Bolsover, Maul-everer, and Snoop. These boys need a Roman task-master to extract any effort from them. While I am busy trying to drill some simple fact into Bunter's concrete skull, Bolsover is throwing inked blotting paper about the Form, Maul-everer has gone to sleep, and Snoop is studying a weekly paper under cover of his desk. Trying to educate these boys is like trying to "pierce th' unyielding rock with wooden staves."

But those rocks shall be thoroughly pierced before they leave my Form, or I shall require to know the reason why!

Now let me turn to a more pleasant subject. My leisure hours are spent among the old black-letter manuscripts in the school library. From this treasury of the past I am compiling a history of the school. It is a work of love, for the book, when finished, will not be a commercial success. Only a few people will desire to read it, for Greyfriars has little interest for the general public. None the less, it is an absorbing story.

I cannot hope to give you even an outline of it here. I may say, however, that I have traced the Monastery back to the days of Amfrith, the so-called Black Monk. Such evidence as I have managed to collect, indicates that the Black Monk himself was the founder of the original Saxon building.

He was a strange character. Beginning his career as a soldier, he afterwards became a hermit in the Romney Marshes. What vows he took, if any at all, are unknown, but he soon acquired a sinister reputation. He wore a black cassock and hood, and professed to be doing penance for the South Country people, who (he said) were threatened with a visitation of evil spirits for their sins.

At first, the frightened people were grateful, and brought him gifts of cattle and fruit and bread. If they brought too little, he helped himself and put it down to a visit by evil spirits. By degrees, he gathered around him a company of rogues and robbers who terrorised the country for miles. It was freely asserted that Amfrith himself was the Evil One, and the peasants were stricken with horror.

Years later, however, Amfrith became a genuine monk, of the Augustinian, or Austin Friars, order, and to him, it seems, we owe the foundation of the original building, later enlarged by the Grey Friars.

I wonder what the Black Monk would think of it now?

Yours sincerely,

H. S. QUELCH.

Our contributor for next week is—

HARRY WHARTON,
Captain of the Remove.



HS Quelch

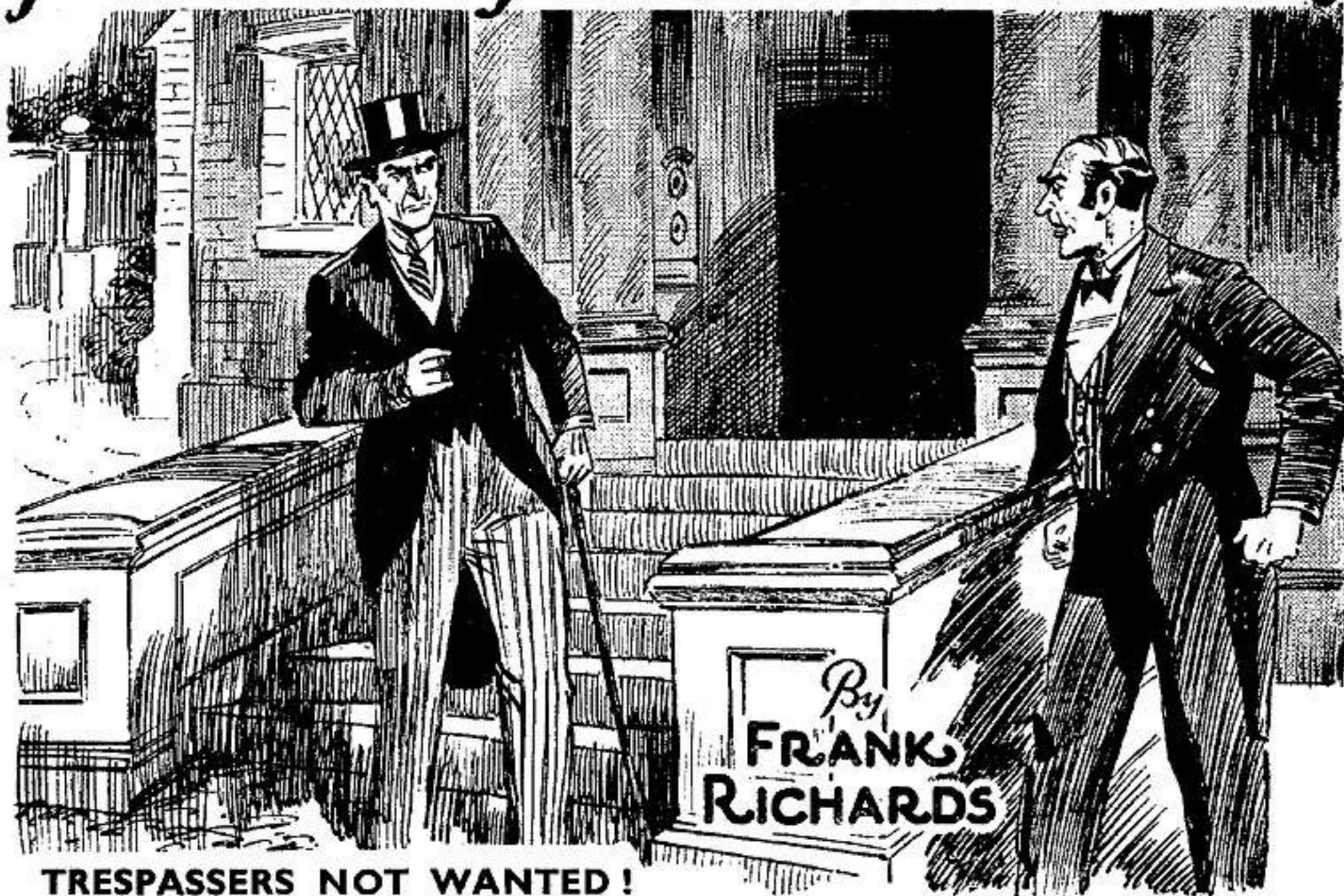
THE
HISTORY OF GREYFRIARS
by
HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH M.A.
VOL. 93.

The master of the Remove is strict, but just. Feared and respected by that unruly Form, he keeps an iron discipline and yet can sympathise with, and understand, a boy's point of view. He is probably the most able master at Greyfriars and a particular friend of Dr. Locke. In his few leisure moments, he is writing a long "History of Greyfriars," which, so Skinner suggests in this cartoon, has now reached Volume 93! But this is exaggerated. Mr. Quelch is always ready to defend his Form against the attacks of other masters, but when one of his scholars is proved guilty, he remembers Solomon's adage about sparing the rod and spoiling the child. The Remove fellows are in no danger whatever of being spoiled!

(Cartoon by HAROLD SKINNER.)

VERNON-SMITH and TOM REDWING of GREYFRIARS, PRISONERS IN

The HOUSE of DARK SECRETS!



TRESPASSERS NOT WANTED!

In the Neck!

FINE!" said Billy Bunter.

"What?"

"Can I have it?"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent gazed at Bunter.

It was tea-time in the Greyfriars Remove. That was how the egg happened to be on the table when Billy Bunter's big spectacles blinked in at the doorway of Study No. 1.

Supplies, as it happened, were rather short in that study. But Wharton and Nugent were not going to use that egg for tea.

It was not a nice egg!

No doubt, once upon a time, it had been a nice, new-laid egg. But that had been in its earlier days. Time had passed since then; and eggs did not, like wine, improve with keeping.

The fact was that that egg had been overlooked in the study cupboard. Somehow it had rolled into a corner and remained out of sight behind other things, quite overlooked and forgotten. Nugent had just found it. His eyes had not fallen on it, but his nose had been his guide. Sorting over the study cupboard, he had been struck by a scent which did not remind him of spring violets or the roses of June.

He had lifted that egg out carefully. He hardly liked touching it. Now the question was, how to get rid of it as rapidly as possible. Out in the open, it was scenting the study.

Then Bunter happened.

Bunter's request to have that egg was welcome, so far as it went. Anybody was welcome to that egg. Anybody who consented to cart it away could have done so, with Wharton and Nugent's best thanks. But, really, it was a sur-

prising request. Bunter could eat anything—or almost anything. No ostrich had anything on Bunter in that line. But that egg was the limit! Even William George Bunter might have been expected to jib at it.

"Can you have it?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Yes, old chap!" Bunter stepped in. His eyes, and his spectacles, fixed on that egg with obvious satisfaction. He seemed delighted. "I was just looking for something of the sort. You fellows don't want it, I suppose?"

"No fear!" said Frank Nugent.

"Just the thing!" said Bunter.

"There was a mouldy tomato in my study, but that ass Toddy has chucked it away. That egg will do fine!"

The two juniors in Study No. 1 could only stare. Bunter was practically omnivorous. But they had never noticed that his tastes were so gaudy before.

"You—you—you want that whiffy egg, because Toddy has chucked away a mouldy tomato?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"That's it! I suppose I can have it?"

Fat fingers picked up the egg.

"You can't eat that, you fat ass!" exclaimed Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh? Who's going to eat it?" he ejaculated. "Catch me eating it! It's for Smithy!"

"Smithy?" exclaimed the two juniors together.

Bunter grinned.

"Mind, not a word!" he said. "Don't you tell Smithy! He will be fearfully wild when he gets this in his neck! I

don't want the brute after me. You know his rotten temper!"

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton.

He realised that Bunter did not want that egg as an article of diet. It was a missile Bunter was looking for!

"You see, I passed the beast on the middle landing, coming up," grinned Bunter. "He was standing at the window, looking down into the quad. I can get him over the banisters, right in the back of the neck, without the cad seeing me. I'd rather he didn't see me!"

"You howling ass——" exclaimed Nugent.

"I'm paying the beast out!" explained Bunter. "He got me lines! I've had two whoppings from Quelch because I haven't done those lines—and I've still got the four hundred to do! It was all Smithy's fault. He's kicked me three times for asking him to do the lines. I've asked him three times. Well, now the cad's got it coming! He, he, he! Think he'll be wild?"

"Just a few!" gasped Wharton. "Better think again, you fat clump! Smithy will skin you!"

That the Bounder of Greyfriars would be wild if he got that over-ripe egg in his neck was hardly to be doubted. The best-tempered fellow at Greyfriars would have been wild in such circumstances; and Herbert Vernon-Smith was probably one of the worst-tempered. Billy Bunter's ultimate fate after landing that egg in Smithy's neck was likely to be tragic—if Smithy spotted the egg-hurler.

But that was all right, Bunter considered. Smithy was not going to spot him.

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That egg was going to whiz down over the banisters and catch Smithy in the back of the neck. Bunter was going to disappear immediately he had hurled the egg, without even waiting to hear it burst!

"That's all right!" said the Owl of the Remove confidently. "Smithy won't know! How could he? Don't you fellows say anything. I'll teach that cad to get me lines, and kick me for asking him to do them! Let him wait!"

"You blithering idiot, leave that egg alone!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Smithy will burst you all over the Remove—"

"He won't know!" grinned Bunter. "You fat chump, put that egg down!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"I'm going to—down Smithy's neck!" chuckled Bunter. "Think that beast can kick me as much as he jolly well likes? I'll teach him! Don't you fellows tell Smithy I had this egg! He might think it was me, if he knew I'd had the egg, you know! You know what a suspicious beast he is!"

"Stop!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as Bunter rolled out of the study, with the scented missile clutched in a fat hand.

He was really alarmed for Bunter. Smithy, if he was so favourably placed for a pot-shot as Bunter described, might get the egg. Even Bunter could hardly miss in such circumstances. But the consequences to the fat Owl would be terrific.

Bunter did not stop. He rolled out of the study doorway, egg in hand. He rolled down the Remove passage to the landing.

"Better stop him!" said Nugent. Harry Wharton nodded, and stepped out of the study. He cut down to the landing after Bunter.

Billy Bunter gave a blink back through his big spectacles. "Beast!" he ejaculated.

He could see that the captain of the Remove was coming after him to stop him. Bunter was not going to be stopped! His grievances against Smithy were deep and of long standing. Several times Bunter had essayed to get back at the Bounder, and every time it had somehow worked out the wrong way. Bunter was not losing this chance.

He accelerated and shot across the landing to the stairs.

"Stop!" shouted Harry. "Yah!" hooted Bunter. He cut down the stairs. At the curve of the banisters, overlooking the middle landing, he stopped and leaned over.

Wharton was hardly two yards behind him. But he had time for a quick shot.

The big landing window glowed with the July sunshine. The figure that stood there looking out had its back to the stairs, and was as good a target as even a cack-handed shot like Billy Bunter could have desired.

Bunter gave it one blink. Had he given it another he might never have whizzed that egg. But with Wharton close behind, he had no time. His fat hand swept over the curving banister. "Stop!" shrieked Wharton.

He could see what the short-sighted Owl could not see.

Whiz!
"You mad ass—"
"He, he, he!"
"That's not Smithy!"
"What?"
"That's Hacker—"
Crash! Squash!
Yell!

"Hacker? Did you say Hacker? Oh crikey!"

"Hook it, you mad chump!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"I—I say, it was Smithy there when I came up—"

"Hook it!" hissed Wharton. Bunter hooked it!

Horrid for Hacker!

MR. HACKER, the master of the Shell, had seldom been so surprised.

Hacker was coming up to the Shell studies.

Lines due from Hobson of the Shell had not been delivered on time, and the Acid Drop was going to look in at Hobby's study and inquire—acidly—about those lines.

He stopped on the middle landing to look from the window.

A Remove junior was standing at that window, looking out. It was the Remove junior whom Bunter had passed coming upstairs.

Hacker gave him an acid look. He did not know, for the moment, whether that junior was Herbert Vernon-Smith or his relative and double, Bertie Vernon. They were so much alike that Hacker did not know one from the other.

If he was Vernon-Smith he was the fellow who had tripped Hacker up one day that term, and Hacker disliked him intensely. If he was Bertie Vernon, Hacker was quite indifferent to him.

Then Hacker remembered that he had heard that Bertie Vernon had left Greyfriars two or three weeks ago.

This, therefore, was Vernon-Smith! So Hacker gave him a glare.

The junior glanced at him, left the window, and went down the lower stairs.

Hacker cast an acid glance after him and looked from the window. His face, generally rather sour, had earned him his nickname of the Acid Drop—and it was sourer than ever as he looked down into the quad. For he spotted Hobson of the Shell there!

He had been going up to Hobson's study about those lines! And there was Hobson, in the quad, talking to Hoskins and Stewart of his Form, happy and careless, as if there were no such things as lines or Acid Drops in existence.

Hacker frowned! Clearly Hobby had forgotten those lines—and forgotten his Form-master!

Hacker sourly determined to remind him of both.

Then it happened! Hacker, looking from the landing window, was thinking of Hobson of his Form, and certainly not of Bunter of the Remove! He did not even remember the fat existence of that ornament of Mr. Quelch's Form. Still less was he thinking of over-ripe eggs.

Naturally, he was taken completely by surprise when something crashed in the back of his long, lean neck!

Squash! Squelch!

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

Something clammy was running down his back!

Hacker whirled round!

A scent struck him as he whirled. It was a strong scent. It was nothing whatever like attar-of-roses! It was, in fact, horrid! It was powerful. It could almost have been cut with a knife.

"Oh!" repeated the amazed Acid Drop.

He clawed dazedly at the clammy back of his neck! Then he discovered what it was. It was egg!

"Oooogh!" gasped Hacker. It was hard to believe that an egg had been hurled at him. Such things did not happen. It was incredible! It was unthinkable! It was unimaginable!

But it had happened—for there it was!

Mr. Hacker almost doubted the evidence of his senses. But he could not doubt the evidence of his nose! It was egg—not a fresh egg—and he had had it in the neck! Right in the neck!

Had Hacker's temper been sweet, it would have soured on the spot! Acid to begin with, it was now sheer vinegar!

He glared round. Nobody else was on the landing, nobody on the lower stairs! That egg had shot down over the upper banisters!

Hacker made a bound for the upper staircase.

Above, he could hear a sound of scampering feet. The rascal—the dastard—the villain—who had hurled that egg was in rapid retreat. He might escape undiscovered if Hacker lost a moment!

Hacker charged round the bend of the staircase at top speed, and up the upper flight. He arrived on the study landing like a thunderbolt, and almost crashed into Coker of the Fifth, coming away from the Fifth Form studies.

Coker jumped back.

"I—I—I say, what—" stuttered the astonished Coker. He stared at Hacker's wildly excited face. Then he clapped a hand to his nose! He had caught the aroma of the egg! He did not like it. "Urrrgh!" went on Coker. "What's that? Oooogh!"

Hacker gave him a fierce glare. But he could not suspect a Fifth Form senior of chucking ancient eggs about.

"Who was on this landing?" he thundered. Save for Coker, the study landing was bare. "Did you see anyone?"

"Groogh!" gasped Coker, backing farther away, with a finger and thumb to his nose, like a pair of pincers. "I say, don't you come nearer, please—urrh! There's something—"

"Did you see anyone on this landing?" shrieked Hacker.

"Only some Remove kids. I say, you keep off!" gasped Coker, and he backed away to the Fifth Form passage.

That egg had been bad enough in the shell! Now that it was let loose it was positively dangerous!

Hacker, in his fury, seemed hardly aware of it. Coker was painfully aware of it, and he did not like it!

"Remove boys!" howled Hacker. "Quelch's boys! I might have guessed it!"

He shot away to the Remove passage—much to Coker's relief.

Potter and Greene came out of the Fifth Form passage—and sniffed!

"What the dickens is that?" asked Potter.

"Somebody been spilling chemicals about?" asked Greene.

"Urrrgh!" gasped Coker. "It's Hacker! The Shell beak! I believe that man never washes! Let's get out of this—I want some fresh air after Hacker!"

Mr. Hacker whipped round the corner into the Remove passage.

Six or seven Remove fellows were visible there. They had been wondering why Harry Wharton and Billy Bunter had shot into the passage, like a couple of bullets and vanished into Study No. 1. At the sight of Hacker they guessed. Something, it was clear, had happened to Hacker.



The "Acid Drop" was taken completely by surprise, when something crashed in the back of his long, lean neck! Squash! Squeleh!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What's that?"

He was struck by the scent that Hacker brought into the passage.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "What a fearful niff!"

"The fearfulness of the niff is terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Hacker glared at the Removites. They all backed away from him. They liked that aromatic egg no more than Coker did.

"Which of you threw that egg at me?" roared Hacker.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Which of you was it?"

"Nobody here, sir," gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"Do not tell falsehoods, Mauleverer!" roared Hacker. "A Remove boy flung an egg at me! It struck me in the neck. Which of you was it?"

Lord Mauleverer shrugged his shoulders. If Hacker did not choose to take his word, Hacker could please himself; but Mauly had no more words to waste on him.

"It wasn't anybody here, really, sir!" said Skinner.

"It was a Remove boy! He ran into this passage! I demand to know which of you it was!" shrieked the Acid Drop.

"Not one of us, sir," said Tom Redwing.

"That is false!" roared the Acid Drop.

"It is nothing of the kind, and you have no right to say so!" exclaimed Redwing.

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"Stay where you are!" roared Hacker. "I forbid you to go away! What are you going away for?"

"Don't like the scent, sir!" answered Johnny Bull.

"Somebody seems to want a wash!" remarked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You dare to laugh!" raved the enraged Acid Drop. "If it was not one of you, you must have seen the boy who ran from the landing! Who was it?"

No answer.

All the juniors had seen Wharton and Bunter shoot from the landing into Study No. 1. But they were not likely to tell Hacker so.

"Cherry! Answer me at once!"

"I haven't anything to tell you, sir!" answered Bob.

"Bull! I command you to say who it was!"

"Who it was," said Johnny Bull.

"What—what? What do you mean, Bull?"

"Didn't you command me to say who it was?" asked Johnny cheerfully.

"Well, I said who it was!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word! Do you dare to bandy words with me?" the Acid Drop fairly bellowed. "I—I—I will—"

He advanced on Johnny Bull.

The whole bunch of juniors scattered up the passage. Hacker, at close quarters, was altogether too unpleasant.

The Acid Drop paused. He had, as a matter of fact, no right or power to conduct inquiries in Remove studies. That was up to Mr. Quelch; and he could see that he was going to learn nothing from the Removites.

He whirled round again, and swept like a thunderstorm out of the passage, leaving a lingering trail of scent behind him.

He swept down the stairs, heading for Quelch's study.

Fellows whom he passed sniffed and gasped, and backed away, some of them turning quite pale.

In Masters' Passage, Prout, the master of the Fifth, was standing in the open doorway of Mr. Quelch's study, speaking to the Remove master within. Prout gave quite a convulsive jump as Hacker arrived.

"What—Oh, what—" gasped Mr. Prout. "What is that dreadful—that awful odour? What—what—Hacker! What is the matter, Hacker? What—"

Prout did not wait for an answer. The scent was enough for him. He backed rapidly up the passage.

Hacker, unheeding, pounced into the Remove master's study.

"Quelch!" he bawled.

Mr. Quelch jumped up.

"Hacker! What— Goodness gracious, what is that dreadful—"

"I will tell you, sir!" shrieked Hacker. "I have come to tell you! I—"

"One moment, sir!" gasped Quelch. He grabbed out his handkerchief, and he kept that handkerchief clamped to his nose while Hacker told him.

Troubles of an Impostor!

"HERE, Vernon-Smith!"

It was Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, who called.

But the Remove fellow who was called Herbert Vernon-Smith at Greyfriars did not, for the moment, heed.

He had been standing at the landing window, looking out into the quad with

a moody and thoughtful brow, when Hacker came up, and he went down the stairs. His brow was still moody and thoughtful as he went into the quad, and he stopped there by one of the old elms to take a letter from his pocket and glance through it for the sixth or seventh time.

That letter was from Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the father of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

It fell, of course, into the hands of the Bounder's double, who was playing Smithy's part in the school, and had been playing it for weeks undetected.

The Remove fellows, to whom he was Smithy, little dreamed that the Smithy they had known was ten miles away at Lantham Chase, and that for long hours every day his eyes looked through a barred window at the tall spire against the blue summer sky, that was all he could see of his school.

It had given Bertie Vernon a pang to open a letter from the Bounder's father when it first happened. But he had got used to that, as he had got used to other disagreeable things that were part and parcel of the deception he was practising.

"In for a penny, in for a pound," was what he had to take as his motto. It was futile to strain at a gnat after swallowing a camel!

But the thought of Mr. Vernon-Smith, father of the fellow he had supplanted, was a weight on his mind.

His likeness to the Bounder—a likeness that extended even to the expression of his face, the tones of his voice—had carried him through without difficulty and without trouble. But he feared the keenness of a father's eye.

The Remove fellows, his Form-master and his headmaster, took him as Herbert Vernon-Smith without dreaming of doubting, though he feared sometimes that Smithy's elum, Redwing, had some sort of suspicion. But the fellow's own father—could he be cheated into the belief that an impostor was his son?

Bertie Vernon had plenty of nerve—as much nerve as his relative and double—but he shrank from seeing the Bounder's father.

It was in vain that Captain Vernon, his uncle at Lantham Chase, repeated that there was no more danger from the millionaire than from anyone else. Perhaps it was Bertie's conscience, more than a sense of danger, that made him shrink.

The Bounder—his double, his rival, and his enemy—he disliked too bitterly to pity or consider. Smithy, the millionaire's son, had sneered and giped at the poor relation. Well, he was going to be the millionaire's heir now, and Smithy was going to be the poor relation. Not till he made up his mind to that was the Bounder going to step outside the locked turret-room at Lantham Chase.

But Bertie, in spite of the part he was playing, had a conscience. In many respects he was a better fellow than Smithy. And his conscience made him dread that meeting with Smithy's father.

The letter in his hand was not very agreeable. It ran:

"Dear Herbert,—I was surprised, and far from pleased, to receive your telegram on Saturday, saying that you were 'playing away,' although I had arranged to visit the school.

"You had ample notice of my visit, and should have let me know earlier. I can hardly suppose that you do not wish to see your father; but your action was, at least, very thoughtless.

"Now, I have some business at Lantham on Wednesday afternoon. As it is a half-holiday at your school, you can ride your bicycle over to Lantham and see me there. Get to the Pagoda about four o'clock, and we will have tea there and a talk. Bring some of your friends with you if you like.

"I hope that on this occasion you will not be suddenly called away to play in a cricket match.

"Your affectionate father,
"S. VERNON-SMITH."

That letter from the millionaire City man was more than enough to make the Bounder's double thoughtful and moody.

The meeting was not to be avoided, so far as he could see.

There was no Remove match fixed for Wednesday, even if he could have thought of playing the same trick over again.

But to go to the Pagoda at Lantham, sit at tea with Smithy's father—playing the part of Smithy all the time! What trick could he play now to escape it?

It was no wonder that the impostor's face had been moody ever since he had received that letter in morning break!

What was he going to do?

He gave a jump as a hand dropped on his shoulder, and thrust the letter quickly into his pocket, turning with a scowl. Then he stared at the smiling, good-natured face of George Wingate, captain of Greyfriars.

"Getting deaf, kid?" asked Wingate.

"Eh? No!" stammered Bertie.

"You didn't seem to hear me call."

Bertie's face crimsoned.

Used as he was by this time to playing the part of Vernon-Smith, he had not been on his guard at that moment, with his attention concentrated on the letter from the millionaire.

The name of Vernon-Smith, to which Smithy, of course, would have answered automatically, had passed him unheeded for once.

"All serene, kid; no need to blush!" said Wingate, laughing, and little dreaming of the cause of the red flush in Vernon's face. "I'm not going to scalp you because you didn't hear me. Awfully deep in that letter, what? Never mind! Come and bowl me a few at the nets."

"Wha-a-t?" stammered Vernon.

There was almost a hunted look in his eyes for the moment.

Bertie Vernon was a bowler—such a bowler as had never been known in the Greyfriars Remove till he came to the school. In his days at Greyfriars, under his own name, it was quite a common thing for senior men to call on him to fag at bowling at the nets. It was good practice even for first-class senior bats like Wingate and Gwynne.

But Bertie Vernon had left—or, at least, was believed to have left. The Bounder was no bowler. No senior man had ever pressed Smithy into service at the nets, except to fag at fielding the ball.

For one terrifying moment the fellow who was under a false name wondered whether Wingate had found him out.

"I'm going down now," went on Wingate. "Get into your flannels and come along, kid. I'm quite curious to see what you can do."

"I'm no bowler, Wingate!" stammered Vernon. "Are you thinking of my cousin? He's left, you know."

Wingate stared at him.

"I'm quite aware that your cousin Vernon has left, Vernon-Smith," he answered. "I was always taking him for you when he was here, like everybody else; but I'm not likely to take you for him weeks after he's gone.

What the dickens do you mean, you young ass?"

"I mean, I—I'm not much good at bowling."

"I've heard about your bowling stunts over at Rookwood last week," said the Greyfriars captain. "From what I hear your batting petered out rottenly, though you were one of the best junior bats at one time, but your bowling saved the game. It's jolly odd. Looks as if that cousin of yours left you his gift as a legacy when he went," Wingate laughed. "Come along and let me see what you can do. That cousin of yours took my wicket once; let's see if you can do the same."

"It—it was just a fluke at Rookwood!" stammered Vernon.

"That's rot!" said the Greyfriars captain. "Nobody ever got away with a double hat-trick by flukes. Don't be so jolly modest! Go and get into your flannels and follow me down."

Wingate walked away with that, without waiting for an answer.

Vernon stared after him.

There was no choice but to obey. Wingate, captain of the school, and head of the games, was absolute in such matters; hardly subject even to Lascelles, the games master. Moreover, it was a tremendous distinction to be asked to bow! to the captain of the school—an honour that fell sometimes to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, but to very few other juniors. It was not a thing to be avoided.

Bertie Vernon bit his lip hard, as he went in to change.

He was a bowler—Smithy was a bat—that was almost the only difficulty he had found in playing his part as the Bounder. He had cut the Gordian knot, as it were, by chucking cricket.

Only to avoid that meeting with Mr. Vernon-Smith on Saturday had he joined up, at the last moment, for that match at Rookwood. And his batting, of course, had let the side down.

He had felt like a worm, and the other fellows had treated him like one, as he deserved. And then his better nature had come uppermost, and he had thrown prudence to the winds, and exerted his powers as a bowler, and pulled the game out of the fire—to the general amazement of the Remove cricketers.

It had been an almost incessant topic since. Evidently it had reached ears outside the Remove, and Wingate, who had a dutiful interest in junior games, was naturally interested.

It spelled danger—he had known that at Rookwood, and disregarded it. It was altogether too surprising for a batsman to turn suddenly into a devastating bowler. It had been the talk of the Remove—now it looked like becoming the talk of the school! There was only one thing to be done—Smithy's amazing new skill as a bowler had to desert him as suddenly as it had come to him! Wingate was not likely to get much benefit from that particular bowler bowling him a few!

Beastly For Bunter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Who egged Hacker?"

"What have you been up to?"

"I say, you fellows, it wasn't me!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

A crowd of fellows looked into Study No. 1, after Hacker had swept away down the stairs.

Dismay reigned in that study.

Harry Wharton had rushed Bunter into it, as the nearest refuge, after the

egging of Hacker. But there was little hope of escape! Hacker, it was certain, would be on the track of the egger like a bloodhound. Consequences would have been serious enough had Bunter got Smithy! They were likely to be fearful, as the fat Owl had got Hacker by mistake.

"That ass——" said Harry.

"That potty porpoise——" said Frank Nugent.

"Bunter egged Hacker!" gasped Bob.

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I didn't! I wasn't there! I don't know who egged Hacker! I jolly well know I didn't! Besides, I thought it was Smithy——"

"You thought it was Smithy!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "Is Hacker like Smithy? We used to take Vernon for Smithy, when he was here? Nobody's ever taken the Acid Drop for Smithy!"

"You'd better tell Quelch a better one than that when he comes up, old fat man!" chuckled Skinner.

"Thinnest yarn I've ever heard!" said Peter Todd. "You can do better than that, Bunter! Try again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It happens to be true!" said Harry Wharton. "Bunter all over! You see, he saw Smithy standing at that window when he came up, and got a mouldy old egg here for Smithy! Hacker must have come up, and Smithy gone down, before the blithering Owl got there with the egg——"

"I wasn't five minutes!" moaned Bunter. "How was I to know that that beast Smithy had gone down, and that brute Hacker come up——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Hacker will make out I did it—Quelch may believe him! Quelch don't take my word! You know that! It's all Wharton's fault——"

"My fault!" howled Harry Wharton.

"Yes, yours!" howled back Bunter. "If you hadn't rushed after me, I shouldn't have been in such a hurry. I might have noticed that it was Hacker, standing just where the other beast had been standing! But with you grabbing at a chap——"

"It's never Bunter's fault!" remarked Toddy. "I've noticed that before! Always some other chap's. But what was he going to egg Smithy for?"

"Didn't the beast get me lines, and haven't I been whopped twice because I haven't done them?" howled Bunter. "Not that I was going to get Smithy with that egg, you know—don't you get telling that bad-tempered beast anything of the sort. I don't know anything about that egg, especially now Hacker's got it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows, did Hacker seem shirty about it?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Just a few!" gasped Bob. "A trifle annoyed, at least!"

"Just a trifle!" gurgled Johnny Bull.

"I suppose he's gone for Quelch now!" groaned Bunter.

"And Quelch will go for you!" remarked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I never did it! It was all Toddy's fault, too——"

"Mine, as well as Wharton's?" howled Peter Todd.

"Yes, yours! I was going to get the beast with that tomato in our study, and if you hadn't chucked it away, I shouldn't have had to look for something else, and wasted time, and then I should have got Smithy before Hacker came up——"

"Anybody else's fault as well as Wharton's and Toddy's?" asked

Skinner. "You'd better have a complete list of the guilty parties ready for Quelch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it wasn't me!" said Bunter. "I shall stick to that! Wharton can bear witness that it wasn't me, as he was there when I did it. If Quelch asks me whether it was me egged Hacker, I shall say—— Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter broke off with a gasp of horror, as a terrifying face looked into the study over the heads of the juniors at the doorway.

Quelch had arrived!

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, in a voice that was not loud but deep. "Am I to understand that it was you who threw an egg at Mr. Hacker?"

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Nothing of the kind! Has—has—has anybody been chucking eggs about, sir? It—it's news to me!"

The juniors at the doorway made room for Quelch, and he stepped into the study. His gimlet eyes fixed on the unhappy Owl.

"I came here," said Mr. Quelch, "to investigate this extraordinary and shocking occurrence. I heard what you said, Bunter."

"I—I wasn't speaking, sir——"

"What?"

"Perhaps you heard Wharton speaking, sir, and—and thought it was me!" suggested Bunter hopefully. "Or—or Nugent!"

"Bunter! Did you throw that egg at Mr. Hacker?"

"No, sir! I was in my study at the time! I—I was going over a Latin exercise, sir, at the very minute it happened, so it couldn't have been me! And I never knew it had happened at all, sir, till you mentioned it! I—I can't imagine who can have thrown an egg at Hacker, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Most likely a Shell fellow, sir!" suggested Bunter. "They loathe him in his Form, sir——"

"Bunter!"

"They don't like the way he creeps about, sir! I fancy it—it must have been a Shell fellow! In—in fact, I—I think I saw some Shell fellows on the stairs when it happened—I can't remember their names, but I—I'm sure they were Shell chaps——"

"Bunter! It is perfectly clear that you have committed this outrageous attack on a Form-master! I have no alternative but to take you to Dr. Locke——"

"Oh crikey! But I never did it, sir!" howled Bunter. "I haven't seen an egg to-day! There wasn't a mouldy old egg on the table in this study when I looked in, and if there was, I never saw it! You can ask Wharton and Nugent, sir—they know, as it was their egg!"

"Follow me at once, Bunter! Such an outrageous attack on a member of Dr. Locke's staff——"

"May I speak, sir?" gasped Harry Wharton. "Bunter never meant it for Mr. Hacker, sir—it was his short sight—he thought it was a Remove fellow on the landing——"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter. "You beast, giving a fellow away——"

"You silly ass!" gasped Harry. "Haven't you sense enough to tell Mr. Quelch you meant it for Smithy, and not for Hacker?"

"I didn't! I never saw Smithy standing at that window when I came up, and never even dreamed of getting him with that old tomato, and never looked for anything else because Toddy had chucked the tomato away. I wasn't

there at all! I—I like Smithy! I don't think he's a cad and a swab for not doing my lines—nothing of the kind! I—I—I hope you don't believe I was chucking an egg at Smithy, sir!" wailed Bunter.

"Fortunately for you, Bunter, I do!" said Mr. Quelch. "As it appears that there was a mistake in the matter, and that you did not intend such an act of disrespect as an attack on a master, I shall deal with you myself, instead of taking you to the Head, Bunter!"

"Oh!" Billy Bunter brightened a little. "The—the fact is, sir, I—I meant it for Smithy! Now I come to think of it, sir, I—I did mean it for Smithy! I—I thought Smithy was still there, and never saw that it was the Acid Drop——"

"Who?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"I—I mean Hacker, sir! I never call him the Acid Drop, as some fellows do—I'm too respectful, I hope! I—I—I say, sir, now—now you know it was all a mistake, perhaps—perhaps you'll explain to Mr. Hacker, sir, and—and he will let it drop!"

"I shall explain to Mr. Hacker, Bunter, and I shall add that I have cased you with the greatest severity!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Follow me to my study at once, Bunter!"

"Oh lor! But—but I never did it at all, sir!" howled Bunter. "If—if I'm going to be licked, sir, I—I certainly never did it! I never got that egg for Smithy, and I never——"

"Follow me, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

He stalked from the study.

Billy Bunter gave a deep groan and limped after him. He left the crowd of Removites chuckling. They compassionated the fat Owl. It was clear that he was going to have a far from happy time in Quelch's study. But, really, Billy Bunter was too much for their gravity, and chuckles and chortles followed the fat Owl as he trailed away after Quelch's whisking gown.

What Tom Redwing Knew!

SQUIFF of the Remove came up the stairs two at a time, and shouted across the landing to the fellows in the Remove passage:

"You men like to see some bowling?"

Harry Wharton looked round.

"Anything special on?" he asked.

"We're going down to the nets after tea——"

"Never mind tea! Smithy's going to bowl to Wingate—I heard him tell him. Come and see him."

"Oh, yes—rather!"

Harry Wharton & Co. dismissed tea. So did a good many others of the Removites. There was a general rush to the stairs.

It was only a couple of days since Smithy had astonished the Remove men by that amazing display of bowling at Rookwood. It was as live a topic as ever in the Remove. For a batsman to go utterly and rottenly off his form and, at the same time, to develop astonishing bowling powers, was not the sort of thing any fellow expected to happen.

Smithy, as a batsman, had been a good man in the Remove eleven, and had had a full share of the limelight. He had made ninety-eight in one innings in the match with St. Jim's. But as a bowler, he had eclipsed himself as a batsman—and the surprise of the display was as great as the display itself.

So the news that Smithy was going

to bowl to the captain of the school did not fail to draw an interested crowd of Removites. His cousin, Bertie Vernon, had taken Wingate's wicket in his days at Greyfriars—and it would be fearfully exciting to see Smithy do the same!

"Come on, old beans!" roared Bob Cherry. "Never mind tea! Come on, Reddy—Aren't you coming to see your pal knock old Wingate sky-high?" "That fellow's not my pal!" grunted Tom Redwing.

Bob made a grimace. "I forgot you'd fallen out with Smithy!" he said. "But come on, all the same—you don't want to miss this! Don't you want to see a Remove man bowl Sixth Form men into a cocked hat!"

Bob grasped Redwing's arm and fairly dragged him along. They followed the other fellows down the stairs.

"Wingate's wicket is in no danger," said Redwing quietly, as they started for the senior nets, where a good many other fellows were gathering.

"Isn't it?" said Bob. "You saw what Smithy did at Rookwood. You were in the team there. Nobody could understand how he did it—but he did. Never dreamed that old Smithy was such a demon with the ball. He's forgotten how to handle the willow, but, by gum, he's a demon with the ball! Bet you two to one in doughnuts that he will get Wingate out."

"You'd lose!" said Redwing.

"Bow-wow!" answered Bob. "Come on and see!"

There was a slightly grim expression on Tom Redwing's face as he joined the crowd at senior nets.

The Bounder's double had arrived there, but he had not yet bowled to Wingate. He did not look as if he was enjoying the distinction that had fallen to him. All the fellows could see that his face was moody, and they rather wondered why.

Tom Redwing did not wonder.

From the first day that the Bounder's double had supplanted Smithy at Greyfriars Tom had been conscious of an uneasiness in his presence—a strange feeling that his old liking for Smithy was turning to repugnance.

He had blamed himself for it, and tried to feel as of old, but that instinctive repulsion had grown stronger instead of weaker.

He knew the reason now.

No other fellow at Greyfriars guessed, or even dreamed, of the deception that had been planned by the unscrupulous and needy adventurer at Lantham Chase. Remove fellows would have laughed had Redwing told them that the fellow they knew as Vernon-Smith was not Herbert Vernon-Smith at all—if, indeed, they had not thought him cracked.

But he knew!

Knowledge had been slow in coming, but it had come. What had happened at Rookwood had been the final proof, to Tom's mind.

It had been sporting of the fellow, in a way, to reveal his powers as a bowler to save the match, after letting it down. Tom granted that. The fellow had his good points, his decent impulses; he was, in his own way, a sportsman. But he was not Herbert Vernon-Smith; he was Herbert Vernon-Smith's double—and Tom's chum had been hidden out of the way to make room for him.

It was not against old Smithy that Tom had instinctively turned; it was against a lying impostor who looked exactly like Smithy, but was not Smithy.

From the very bottom of his heart the Bounder's chum was now sure of it.

And yet he felt helpless.

Smithy or not, the fellow was installed in Smithy's name in Smithy's study, taken by the whole school as Smithy; and if he was, in truth, Bertie Vernon, how was his position to be shaken? It was useless to speak—to utter what could only seem a fantastic suspicion.

And yet, now that he knew, Tom almost wondered why other fellows could not see what he saw. Almost every fellow in the Form had remarked that Smithy seemed, all of a sudden, to have borrowed his cousin's bowling powers—that he had been Bertie Vernon over again that day at Rookwood. Yet that he was really Bertie Vernon occurred to nobody.

Now, Tom was convinced, there was going to be another proof, if fellows could only see it!

For while all the Remove talked of Smithy, the sudden and wonderful bowler, it was certain that the subject must be as gall and wormwood to the fellow who was endangered by such a similarity to Smithy's cousin.

He would not keep it up! He dared not keep it up! The sooner the Remove forgot that display at Rookwood the safer it was for Bertie Vernon.

A crowd of fellows gathered at senior nets, expecting to see something like what they had seen at Rookwood when Jimmy Silver & Co.'s wickets had gone down like corn before the scythe.

Redwing expected to see nothing of the sort. He was assured that Wingate's wicket was in no danger, though he had no doubt that the impostor could have taken it had he liked, as he had taken it before when he was using his own name.

"Now look out for fireworks, old tulips!" said Bob Cherry jubilantly. "Watch first eleven wickets go down to the Remove!"

"The watchfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Bob!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Smithy says it was only a bunch of flukes at Rookwood," remarked Johnny Bull. "That's rot, of course!"

"Utter rot!" said Bob. "Smithy's getting too jolly modest—though I'm bound to say that it's quite a new thing for him! Smithy never was the man to sing small, was he? Precious little of the modest violet about old Smithy!"

"Precious little!" said Harry Wharton. "He never made any bones about letting the world know that he was the best bat in the Remove—which really he wasn't, quite. But I must say that he's fearfully modest about his bowling. He really doesn't seem to like hearing it mentioned."

"Smithy's changed a lot this term," said Frank Nugent. "I thought he was the same old Bounder when he came back—but he's changed. No smokes, no pub-crawling, no gee-gees, no rags on the beaks, and now this—biggest bowler we've ever had—except that chap Vernon when he was here—and quite shy about it! There he goes—watch him!"

Every word, as Redwing listened, was an added proof to his mind that what he suspected was true. And what came next was another. For the ball that was sent down to Wingate was such a ball as any Remove man might have sent, and nothing like what Hurree Singh, or Squiff, or Tom Brown could have sent down.

Wingate had rather a droll look on his face as he knocked it away.

He had expected something hot and

strong from that bowler, after what he had heard of Smithy's exploits at Rookwood on Saturday. But all the fire, all the sting, had gone out of it.

"Try again, kid!" called out the Greyfriars captain.

Tom Brown fielded the ball, and tossed it back to Vernon.

The bowler caught it easily with his left—easily, with a careless look, just as Bertie Vernon had been wont to do. Then it slipped from his fingers and dropped!

"Oh gum!" said Bob, rather blankly.

"Butter-fingers, by gum!"

"Clumsy, and no mistake!" said Johnny Bull. "What's come over Smithy? He wasn't like that on Saturday."

"We shouldn't have beaten Rookwood if he had been!" said Harry Wharton. "I wonder whether it was only some queer sort of flash-in-the-pan, after all? Smithy himself seems to think that it was."

Tom Redwing's lip curled sarcastically.

He knew that Vernon could have held that ball, and had dropped it on quick second thoughts to give an impression of clumsiness. He was playing a part, and rather over-doing it.

He sent the ball down again. It was a fairly good ball—such as the Bounder, who was a good change bowler, could have sent down. But there was nothing in it to bother a Sixth Form batsman, and Wingate knocked it away.

While Bob Cherry cut after it, Wingate turned his head and spoke to the captain of the Remove.

"You told me that man put up the double hat-trick at Rookwood on Saturday, Wharton," he said.

"He did, Wingate," answered Harry, "and a common-or-garden hat-trick to follow, too."

"The batting must have been pretty weak."

"The batting was jolly strong, Wingate! Inky could hardly touch it, and you know how Hurree Singh can bowl."

"Well, I don't make it out, then," said the Greyfriars captain. "He can't bowl now. I'll let him finish an over, but this is wasting a man's time."

Vernon finished the over. It was such an over as Vernon-Smith might have bowled. Wingate laughed when it was finished.

"Thanks, kid!" he said. "I won't bother you any more. You can cut."

"I'm sorry I've been no use, Wingate."

"That's all right; thanks all the same."

Vernon moved away, and the crowd of Remove onlookers moved away also—surprised, puzzled, disappointed, and a good deal disgusted.

"We all have our ups and downs," said Bob Cherry, "but did you men ever see anything like this?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No good trying to make Smithy out this term," he said. "He beats me! I was thinking that he was going to turn out a bowler like that cousin of his who's left, and that we should have another prize-packet like Vernon. Nothing in it."

"But look what he did at Rookwood."

"Yes. I can't make it out."

It was not an easy thing to make out, though Tom Redwing had no doubt that he made it out easily enough. But after that display at senior nets the talk in the Remove on the subject of Smithy's bowling began to die away. It was a tonic that had lost its interest. And the Removites were not likely to guess that that was exactly what Smithy wanted.



“Ow! Wow! Yow!” Hacker twisted Bunter’s ear—and, as the fat Removite roared, he twisted it again!

Bunter In Bad Luck!

BILLY BUNTER grinned. It was the following day. After his visit to Quelch’s study Bunter had not felt like grinning. Not a grin had dawned on his fat face for the remainder of that day. Right up to dorm, Bunter’s podgy countenance had been sad and sorrowful. Quelch had not spared the rod.

But the next day Bunter had recovered, and, seeing Mr. Hacker in the quad in break, he grinned.

The effect of the licking had worn off, so it was an unalloyed pleasure to think of that ancient egg squashing on Hacker’s neck. It was Hacker’s fault, Bunter considered, that he had had that whopping in Quelch’s study. It was all through the fuss Hacker had made about a little mistake. So Bunter was, on the whole, glad that Hacker had got the egg. And he grinned at the happy memory of having got him.

The Acid Drop, glancing at him acidly, spotted that grin, and did not fail to guess the cause.

Hacker did not grin; he frowned. He paused in his walk in the quad and fixed his eyes on Bunter.

The young rascal was grinning—actually grinning! It was insult added to injury. No doubt he was amused to think of Hacker with a clammy egg squashing down his neck.

Mr. Hacker breathed hard through his thin nose. He was not amused. He had not been amused at the time, and he was not amused now.

It was hardly practicable to report Bunter to his Form-master for grinning in the quad. A fellow could grin if he liked—fellows often did. On the other hand, Hacker was not the man to tolerate such impertinence.

So, in passing the grinning fat Owl, Hacker reached out with a bony hand, and caught a fat ear between a finger

and thumb that closed like a steel vice.

Twist! Bunter ceased to grin, on the spot. He roared.

“Ow! Leggo my ear! Yow-ow!” Pulling fellows’ ears was not the sort of thing that was done at Greyfriars. Hacker was the only beak who ever did it. Even Hacker, if he had a fancy for pulling ears, should have reserved his bony fingers for Shell ears. He had no imaginable right to pull Remove ears.

Without having the right, he did it.

Not only did he pull that fat ear—he twisted it; and as Bunter roared he twisted it again. Apparently finding solace therein, he twisted it once more, and yet once more, and the fat Owl felt as if his podgy ear was being twisted off. It wasn’t, but it felt like that, and Bunter fairly bellowed.

Hacker walked on, leaving him bellowing.

He felt better after twisting Bunter’s ear. He was convinced that that Remove boy would not grin again for some time to come.

He was right. All desire to grin had departed from William George Bunter. He clasped a fat ear with a fat hand, in a state of anguish and wrath and indignation to which words could never have done justice. He yelped and yelped and yelped.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” The Famous Five came on him while he was putting up these musical effects. “What’s the row, Bunter?”

“Ow!” answered Bunter. “Wow! That swab—that—that worm—that beast—that rotter—wow!”

“Oh, give Smithy a rest!” said Bob. “We’ve heard all that, lots of times!”

“Ow! Tain’t Smithy!” yapped Bunter. “That beast! Wow—wow! My ear, you know! Twisting a fellow’s ear! I’ve a jolly good mind to go to Quelch and say—Ow! Wow—wow! Oh crikey!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” “Ow! Wow! Yow! My ear! Wow!”

“Not Smithy this time?” asked Harry Wharton. “Then who’s the swab, worm, beast, and rotter?”

“Ow! That cad Hacker! Wow! Pulling a fellow’s ear—for nothing, you know!” said Bunter, his voice thrilling with indignation. “I suppose he thinks Quelch didn’t give me enough yesterday. I’m jolly glad he got that egg! Wow!”

“Perhaps Quelch didn’t?” suggested Johnny Bull.

“Ow! Yah! Wow!” Bunter rubbed a crimson ear tenderly and yelped. He had a distinct pain in that ear. “I did nothing you know. I may have smiled as the brute passed—a pleasant smile. Then he grabbed hold of my ear and lugged at it. Ow!”

“Beaks don’t like eggs in the backs of their necks,” said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. “You shouldn’t make these mistakes, old fat man.”

“I’ll jolly well give him another next time I get a chance!” hissed Bunter. “Think I’m going to have my ear pulled! Who’s Hacker to pull a Remove man’s ears? Bony beast—!”

“Dry up!” said Bob Cherry hastily. Mr. Hacker had walked as far as the gates. At the gates he turned to walk back to the House.

As Bunter was still standing on the path where Hacker had left him, after pulling his ear, he had to pass Bunter again. And Bob, seeing him coming, hastily warned Bunter to dry up.

Hacker, no doubt, was a cheeky tick to pull a Remove man’s ears, but it was not judicious to let the Acid Drop hear what a fellow thought of him.

Bunter did not see Hacker coming back, and did not dry up.

“Bony beast!” he repeated. “He can pull ears in the Shell if he likes. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1640.”

They have to stand him in the Shell. Blessed if I know how they stand Hacker! I know I wouldn't!"

"Quiet, you ass; he'll hear you!" breathed Nugent.

"I don't care if he does!" howled Bunter, unaware that Hacker was coming into the offing. "Think I'm afraid of Hacker? You fellows may be! I don't care a boiled bean for Hacker or any other bony old blighter! I'm jolly glad I got him with that egg! I'm jolly glad it was a mouldy egg! I'm jolly glad it went down his back! I'm jolly— Yooo-hoo-hooooop!"

Hacker pounced. That steel-like finger and thumb fastened on Bunter's other ear.

Twist!
Billy Bunter spun round, yelling. "Ow! Leggo! Oh crikey! It's that beast Hacker again! I say—yaroooh! Leggo my ear! Wow!"

Twist! Twist!
"Oh crikey! Will you leggo?" shrieked Bunter.

Mr. Hacker let go and walked on. Billy Bunter clasped his other fat hand to his other fat ear and yelped.

He had had a severe pain in his left ear. Now he had another to match in his right. Both appendages blazed like peonies.

"Ow! Yow! Wow!" howled Bunter. "Jever see such a swab, creeping up behind a fellow and listening to him? Ow! I'll jolly well pay that beast out somehow. I'll jolly well make him sit up! I'll jolly well— Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter was still rubbing suffering ears when the bell rang for third school. They were still glowing when he rolled into the Remove room.

There Mr. Quelch fixed him with a gimlet eye.

"Bunter!" he rapped.
"Ow! I—I mean, yes, sir!"
"Mr. Hacker has complained to me of impertinence from you, Bunter, in the quadrangle during break!" said the Remove master sternly.

Bunter blinked at him. He had been thinking of laying his woes and wrongs and grievances before his Form-master. But it seemed that the Acid Drop had got in first!

"Oh, really, sir—" gasped Bunter.
"You applied a disrespectful and derogatory epithet to Mr. Hacker!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "He heard you."
"Oh, no, sir! I never called him a bony old blighter, and I didn't know he was listening behind my back!" gasped Bunter.

"That was the disrespectful and ridiculous expression that Mr. Hacker heard!" said Mr. Quelch. "I am unwilling to cane you again, Bunter—"

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

"Neither shall I give you lines, Bunter, as you have four hundred to write which have not yet been handed in to me."

"Oh! Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!"
"I shall therefore give you a detention, Bunter—"

"Oh crikey!"
"You will join Monsieur Charpentier's class for extra French tomorrow afternoon, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"
"And I trust," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "that I shall hear no more complaints from Mr. Hacker, Bunter. You may go to your place."

Billy Bunter went to his place, with deep feelings. He, too, trusted that Quelch would hear no more complaints from Hacker! But he trusted, too, that Hacker would have something to complain of, all the same! Something

lingering, with boiling oil in it, was what Bunter thought the Acid Drop really deserved.

Bunter Has A Brain-Wave!

"I SAY, Coker—" Horace Coker of the Fifth Form stared at Bunter.

Coker, walking in the quad after class, did not expect a Remove fag to roll up to him and say "I say, Coker!"

It was unexampled cheek on the part of any Remove fag to do anything of the kind.

Coker, to his credit, be it said, did not immediately fall upon William George Bunter and slay him.

Having stared at Bunter in surprise and contempt, Coker simply turned his back on him, without answering, and went on talking to Potter and Greene.

"I hardly see," Coker was saying, "what a fellow can do. You know what happened at Lantham Chase that day. You know I looked in to borrow something to mend a puncture, and was perfectly civil—as civil as you please! As a chap who was at Greyfriars a few weeks ago, lives there, why should I not? But you know what happened—"

Potter and Greene did! Not only had they been on hand at the time, but Coker had been talking about it ever since. Coker was not tired of the subject, though Potter and Greene were!

"That man Vernon—Captain Vernon—lost his temper," went on Coker. "Why, I don't know! But I know that he ordered me off and laid into me with a riding-whip! I know that!"

"He don't seem to like callers there," murmured Potter. "Better forget all about it, Coker, old man!"

"Much better!" agreed Greene.
If Potter and Greene hoped that they would make Horace Coker ring off, the hope was unfounded.

"I'm not likely to forget that that rank outsider laid into me with a riding-whip!" said Coker. "I gave him one—a good one—that jolted him a good bit. I don't like leaving it at that. Yet I don't quite see what's to be done. I've thought of going over again and thrashing the fellow—"

"Oh, my hat!"
"But that might mean a row with the Head!" said Coker. "I don't want that. On the other hand—"

"I say, Coker—" came a fat squeak again.

Coker turned round. This was the second time that Bunter had said "I say, Coker!" to a Fifth Form man, right out in open quad, where anybody might see and hear and suppose that Coker was on speaking terms with a Remove fag!

"I say, Coker! Has Prout gone out, do you know?" asked Bunter.

Coker did not speak. He did not know, or care, why a Remove fag was interested in the proceedings of his Form-master. Coker simply smacked Bunter's head, as a straight tip not to come up to Fifth Form men in the quad and say "I say, Coker!"

Billy Bunter yelped, and retreated, without waiting for any information about Prout.

Coker resumed his discussion with Potter and Greene on the subject of his disastrous adventure at Lantham Chase—a matter which, Coker thought, could hardly rest where it was, and yet in which he did not quite see what could be done.

Bunter rolled away in search of information elsewhere.

He spotted the Famous Five coming out of the House, and squeaked:

"I say, you fellows! Seen Prout?"

"Prout!" repeated Harry Wharton. "I saw him go out, after class, with Capper."

"Oh! Good!" said Bunter. "Sure he went out?"

"Yes, ass. What the thump do you want Prout for?"

"I don't want him!" grinned Bunter. "I want his phone—see? If he's gone out it's all right! I say, seen Hacker?"

"Leave the Acid Drop alone, you fat chump!" said Harry. "Are you going to ask Quelch for more?"

"Catch me leaving him alone!" said Bunter. "I'll watch it! I say, I suppose he's in his study. He always frowsts in his study after class."

"Got some more eggs for him?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I've got something for him!" said Bunter, his little round eyes gleaming behind his big round spectacles. "I'll teach the swab to get me a whopping, and then lug at my ears, and then go sneaking to Quelch to get me a detention! I say, you fellows, how would you like to see Hacker thrashed?"

"Eh?"
"What?"
"Which?"

Harry Wharton & Co. had been thinking of a spot of cricket before tea. But they forgot cricket for the moment. They stared at Billy Bunter—quite startled, and, indeed, alarmed.

"You mad ass!" exclaimed Harry. "What have you got in your fat head now? Don't you know yet that Hacker is dangerous?"

Bunter grinned.

"I'm not going to thrash him, of course!" he said. "I couldn't. Besides, it would be the sack! I'd jolly well like to, of course—I'd enjoy it! Wouldn't I like to give him a omer in the eye! Wouldn't you fellows?" Bunter shook his head. Thrashing Hacker was one of those happy things a fellow might dream about, but could never think of doing. "But I fancy somebody else is going to. He, he, he!"

"What has that fat chump got in his potty nut now?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Suppose—" Bunter chuckled a fat chuckle. "Suppose Hacker barged in at Lantham Chase, like Coker did the other day—what? That man there—that coffee-coloured captain—has a fearful temper! Look how he pitched into Coker for butting in—and Coker only wanted something to mend a puncture! That's what put it into my head."

"Why should Hacker do anything of the kind?" asked Harry Wharton. "If he did, that Army man wouldn't be likely to pitch into a schoolmaster. But why should Hacker—"

"Well, he might!" grinned Bunter. "Suppose Captain Vernon asked him to tea? Wouldn't he go? Wouldn't he just jump? Hacker likes butting into places. When old Popper, at Popper Court, asks him over, he gets quite good-tempered. I've heard Hobby say so. He lets the Shell know he's been asked to Popper Court. They snigger over it."

The Famous Five just gazed at Bunter. Something, evidently, was working in his fat brain—something that was, apparently, to lead to trouble for the Acid Drop at Lantham Chase. But they could not begin to guess what it was.

"Well, Hacker gets a phone call from the captain," went on Bunter. "He accepts an invitation to tea—what?"

"I don't suppose Captain Vernon even knows him!" said Harry blankly. "But if he did, and if he asked him to tea, do you think he would pitch into him when he got there?"

"Not done in the best circles!" said Bob Cherry gravely.

"Well, he's an ill-tempered beast!" said Bunter. "Look how he pitched into Coker for nothing! Smithy used to say that he had some game on at Lantham Chase and was afraid of people coming there. Smithy doesn't talk about him now, but he used to say—"

"Rot!"

"Well, if Hacker butts in he will get something strong, even if the captain don't pitch into him!" said Bunter. "I'm jolly sure of that. And Hacker's certain to be unpleasant—you know him! I mean to say, if a man's asked to call and when he gets there they ask him what the dickens he's come for, that would put his back up, wouldn't it?"

"But if the captain did ask him to tea—"

"He, he, he! That's what I want Prout's phone for!" giggled Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped the Famous Five, all together.

They began to understand.

"I don't know whether he's spoken to Hacker, and whether Hacker knows his voice," went on Bunter. "But I know his bark all right; I've heard enough of it. I can turn it on on the phone. With my wonderful ventriloquism—"

"You benighted ass!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Are you thinking of phoning Hacker a spoof invitation to call at Lantham Chase?"

"He, he, he!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!"

"For goodness' sake, Bunter, don't be such an ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If it came out—"

"He, he, he!"

Bunter evidently was keen on that wonderful wheeze!

And, fathead as Bunter was, it was a thing he could do. With his peculiar gift of ventriloquism he could imitate any voice that had anything distinctive about it—as Captain Vernon's certainly had.

It was ten to one—a hundred to one—that if Hacker got such a call, purporting to come from the Army man at Lantham Chase, he would fall for it without the slightest suspicion.

What would happen then?

Hacker, believing that he had been asked to tea, would walk in at Lantham Chase. Captain Vernon, knowing nothing of his belief, would be surprised—and certainly displeased—to see him there. Whatever reason the captain had, it was well known that he disliked callers at Lantham Chase.

Possibly it was because, being a needy man, he could not afford to keep the place up, and lived with a single servant in a corner of it. A proud and supercilious man, in such circumstances, could not like callers—and certainly Captain Vernon did not.

The Bouncer of Greyfriars had suspected—and without concealing his suspicions—that the Army man was up to something in that lonely residence hidden in the heart of deep woods—though certainly the Bouncer had never been able to guess what. If it was so, it was a still more powerful reason why the captain should dislike callers.

Landing Hacker on him, in such extraordinary circumstances, might very likely lead to a row.

Such was the scheme that had germinated in Bunter's fat brain to get back at the Acid Drop—suggested by what had happened to Coker of the Fifth a few days ago.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the chuckling fat Owl almost aghast.

Hacker, annoyed and getting more and more acid—the Army man, angry and getting more and more angry—really it was possible that it might end in that riding-whip, which had been laid round Coker, swishing round the Acid Drop!

That was Bunter's happy hope.

"You unbelievable idiot!" said Johnny Bull at last. "Chuck it! Do you hear? Chuck it! Don't do anything of the sort!"

"The chuckfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!" urged Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Who's going to know?" grinned Bunter. "Safe as houses—absolutely safe! I say, you fellows, think of Hacker walking in, with his best smile on, and that Army man glaring at him like a bulldog—"

The Famous Five laughed. That picture had its comic side.

"Funny—what?" grinned Bunter. "I've got to go in for extra French to-morrow afternoon. Well, Hacker will be getting something worse than extra French about the same time! He, he, he!"

"Don't do it, you ass!"

"Leave Hacker alone!"

"Let's boot him round the quad!" suggested Johnny Bull. "Then he won't feel like playing potty tricks on Hacker!"

"Beast!"

Bunter shot into the House.

And the Famous Five, having given him good advice had to leave it at that.

They went down to cricket, and the fat Owl of the Remove was left to his own devices. And his own devices led him to Mr. Prout's telephone in Mr. Prout's study.

Nice For Hacker!

B UZZZZZZ!

Mr. Hacker, in his study, grunted.

Hacker was sitting at his study table, correcting Latin prose for his Form.

It was rather dull work on a hot July afternoon, and Hacker was not feeling in the best of tempers. The buzz of the telephone-bell irritated him. It was easy to irritate the Acid Drop. He had an irritable disposition.

He grabbed the receiver off the hook and yapped:

"Well?"

If it was a call from some parent anxious for the welfare of a boy in the Shell, Hacker was ready to be as unpleasant as possible.

"Mr. Hacker?" came an inquiring voice.

Had Hacker been thinking of Billy Bunter—which he was not—and had he suspected the fat Owl of planning to jape him—which he did not—still he would never have dreamed that that voice on the telephone came from the fat Owl of Quelch's Form.

It was a deep, hard bark, which Hacker fancied he had heard before, though certainly not from a Lower Fourth junior at Greyfriars.

"Mr. Hacker speaking," he answered. "Who—"

"Captain Vernon speaking from Lantham Chase."

"Oh!" said Mr. Hacker.

Then he understood—or thought he did—where he had heard that voice before. Early in the term Captain Vernon had brought his nephew to Greyfriars, and Hacker had seen him.

Hacker was not interested specially in a boy going into Quelch's Form, but he was rather interested in the Army man.

There was a spot of snobbery in Hacker. He liked to mention in Common-room that he was going to dine with Sir Hilton Popper at Popper Court; he liked to refer carelessly to the fact that he had walked and talked with old Sir Giles Hogben, of Hogben Grange.

Captain Vernon was a rather distinctive sort of man. The Vernons were a good family, though connected with the Vernon-Smiths—who, after all, were extremely wealthy. And Hacker had heard that Captain Vernon had taken Lantham Chase, the immense estate that old Squire Luscombe could not afford to keep up. That looked like money, as well as blue blood and distinction.

So Hacker had hovered around till he had a chance of exchanging a word or two with the captain—though the Army man, being a man of few words, and not apparently much impressed by Hacker, had been rather dry and brief.

Hacker remembered him now, though he had in the intervening weeks rather forgotten him. He could not help wondering why the captain had rung him up. The Army man's nephew had been in Quelch's Form, not Hacker's; moreover, he had now left, and the captain's connection with Greyfriars had ceased.

Nevertheless, surprised as he was, Hacker was pleased. This looked as if he had made a better impression on that supercilious Army man than he had supposed at the time.

"Pray excuse me for interrupting you, Mr. Hacker!" went on the curt bark over the wires.

"Not at all, Captain Vernon!" answered Mr. Hacker graciously. "I am quite at your service." His irritation had vanished now. A man who could afford to take a place like Lantham Chase was much more interesting than Latin proses.

"I think I had the pleasure of seeing you some time ago at Greyfriars, sir," went on the voice.

This was a safe opening for the fat spoofer at the other end. Bunter did not know whether Captain Vernon and Mr. Hacker had ever met, or not. He wanted to know.

"I remember you perfectly, sir!" answered Mr. Hacker. "I met you on the occasion when you brought your nephew—a very fine lad—to the school. I was sorry when the boy left; I should have been glad to see him later in my Form."

"You are very good, Mr. Hacker! I should very much like to have the pleasure of meeting you again!"

Mr. Hacker almost purred into the telephone.

It was not usual for people who met Mr. Hacker to be keen on meeting him again. Once was enough for most people. So this was very flattering—especially from that distinctive Army man.

"I understand that Wednesday is a half-holiday at Greyfriars, Mr. Hacker. No doubt the staff are at liberty, as well as the boys."

"Perfectly so, sir," said Hacker anticipatively.

"If you would care to run across to Lantham Chase in the afternoon—"

"My dear sir, I should be delighted!" said Mr. Hacker. Already he saw himself envied in Common-room as the only member of the staff who had been asked to Lantham Chase.

"In this quiet part of the country, Mr. Hacker, I do not meet many people of first-rate intelligence," said the voice. "If you feel that you can spare the time for a call—"

"I am entirely at liberty to-morrow, Captain Vernon, and I shall be delighted!" said Mr. Hacker.

"Perhaps you could arrive about four, sir, when we generally have tea in the garden?" said the voice. "If agreeable to you, I will send the car to Lantham Station to meet you."

That young rascal Billy Bunter was perfectly aware that Captain Vernon did not keep a car! Hacker, naturally, was not!

"You are very good, sir!" said Mr. Hacker.

"There is a train from Courtfield at three—Lantham 3.30," went on the voice. "Will it suit you for the car to meet that train?"

"Perfectly!" said Mr. Hacker.

"Then I shall look forward to seeing you, Mr. Hacker. It will be a real pleasure. Good-bye, Mr. Hacker!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

Mr. Hacker naturally supposed that Captain Vernon had rung off at Lantham Chase. Certainly he did not dream that a grinning fat Owl had rung off in Mr. Prout's study down the passage.

Hacker smiled cheerily.

He was, as a matter of fact, booked for a walk on Wednesday afternoon with Prout. But it would be quite a pleasure to ask Prout to excuse him, as he was specially desired to call at Lantham Chase. That would be an easy and efficacious way of spreading the news that the exclusive Army man had asked him—alone amongst all the numerous staff of Greyfriars School. He had extended no such invitation to Quelch, though his nephew had been in Quelch's Form. This distinction was reserved for Hacker.

The car at the station, too, was very welcome. Lantham Chase was over a mile from Lantham, and Hacker naturally preferred a car to walking in the blaze of a July day.

Altogether, Hacker was very pleased as he sat in his study and thought over it.

So was Bunter as he sneaked cautiously out of Prout's study.

Both were pleased, though for different reasons. Hacker was pleased at the prospect of a very pleasant afternoon at Lantham Chase. Bunter was pleased at the prospect of a very unpleasant afternoon at Lantham Chase. And there was no doubt that it was Bunter's anticipation, not Hacker's, that was going to be realised.

Put To The Proof!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, Reddy!"

"If you can spare a couple of minutes—"

"Three if you like," said Harry, with a smile, "or even four if it's fearfully important! What's on?"

"I'd like you to come with me to Smithy's study."

"Any old thing," said Harry Wharton. "But why?"

He could not help being surprised. He was coming out of his own study when Redwing spoke to him in the Remove passage. Why Reddy wanted his company in going to Smithy's study was rather a puzzle.

All the Remove knew that the friendship in Study No. 4 was a thing of the past. Redwing and Smithy were no longer even on speaking terms.

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Why was rather perplexing. Often and often had there been rows in that study. Herbert Vernon-Smith was not an easy fellow to pal with. But always, or almost always, those rows had been Smithy's fault, and they had blown over, chiefly because Tom seemed to possess an inexhaustible fund of patience and good nature.

This time, however, the blame, if blame there was, seemed to lie more at Redwing's door than at Smithy's.

Certainly it was Redwing what had shifted out of the study. The evening after the cricket match at Rookwood he had cleared his books and other property out of Study No. 4, and had never entered it since. Neither had he spoken a word to the junior in whose sole possession the study remained.

There seemed to be no actual quarrel between the two; they had simply dropped one another, Redwing carrying it to the length of refusing to share the same study.

Since then Redwing had done his prep in Study No. 1 with Wharton and Nugent, where he was always welcome, though they were sorry to see him on such terms with his old chum.

The reason was hard to guess, for, in the general opinion, Smithy had improved a great deal that term.

His wild and reckless ways had always been a trouble to his more serious and thoughtful chum. Those wild and reckless ways had been completely dropped the last few weeks. Really it seemed that Redwing, who had liked the Bounder when he was the scapegrace of the school, could stand him no longer now that he had reformed—which was very singular in a fellow like Redwing.

Harry Wharton walked up the passage with Tom, puzzled, but willing to oblige.

Redwing knocked on the door of Study No. 4 before opening it. Obviously he no longer regarded Study No. 4 as his study.

The Bounder's double sat at the table, working at Livy. He glanced up at the two juniors in the doorway.

His glance at Redwing was very keen.

It was a relief to the impostor to keep Smithy's chum at armslength. He had intended to break off that friendship, but the break had come more easily than he had expected—so easily that it made him a little uneasy.

He had hardly expected Redwing to meet him half-way, and Redwing had met him more than half-way. And Bertie Vernon was keen enough to realise that this must be due to some instinctive distrust, though he little dreamed of the length to which Redwing's suspicions had gone.

"I'm rather busy," said Vernon, before either of the juniors could speak. "If you've looked in about the cricket, Wharton, wash it out before you start."

"I haven't," answered Harry. "Reddy asked me to come along with him, that's all."

"Oh!" The Bounder's double eyed Redwing far from cordially. "You chucked this study of your own accord, Redwing. If you want to come back I suppose I can't stop you, but a fellow ought to know his own mind."

Harry Wharton stood rather uncomfortably silent.

He was sorry to see a breach between two fellows who had seemed destined for a life-long friendship. But he did not want to be dragged into the trouble between them, whatever it was.

"It's not that," said Tom Redwing quietly. "Nothing of the kind. I'm not coming back to the study."

"What do you want, then?"

"Only a word or two. I'm keeping clear of this study, and I'm keeping clear of you. But I've got to know about old Tregethy."

A wary glint came into Vernon's eyes. He had never heard that name before, and the mention of it placed him in a difficult position.

It was his ignorance of such matters between Redwing and the Bounder, of which Tom might speak at any time if the friendship continued, that made him anxious for that friendship to end.

"Who?" he asked.

"I suppose you haven't forgotten old Tregethy, at Clovelly?" said Tom. "It's not so very long since Easter."

Obviously this was a reference to something of which Vernon knew nothing—some occurrence in the Easter holidays.

Of the Easter holidays, before he came to Greyfriars, Vernon, of course, could know nothing, except that he had heard that Redwing and the Bounder had been together in Devonshire, with the Famous Five and Billy Bunter.

Whatever it was of which Redwing was speaking, he had to affect to be aware of it—not an easy task, unless he could draw the necessary information from Tom.

"Well, what about him?" he asked. "I've no time for talking, as I've told you."

"Well, have you settled with him?" asked Tom.

Vernon breathed hard.

"You haven't mentioned to me whether he's written or not," said Tom. "I suppose you haven't forgotten that he was going to write and let us know how much was to be paid for the damage to the boat."

"Of course not!" said Vernon calmly. "But he hasn't written—or, if he has, the letter hasn't reached me."

"It's over two months since Easter," said Tom. "Isn't it rather odd that he should leave it so long?"

"I can't help that, can I? I suppose he knows his own business best!" snapped Vernon. "You can write to him if you like—I don't mind."

"Are you still willing to pay your share for the damage to the boat?"

"Of course I am! Do you think I want to get out of it?" sneered Vernon. "Look here, if you want to get it settled, write to the man and get his bill. That's the easiest way."

"Very well, perhaps that's best," said Tom. "Give me his address. I never had it."

"I've lost it. I'd forgotten about the whole thing till you reminded me," said Vernon irritably, "and I've heard enough about it now. If you haven't got his address, wait till he writes. Now, I've said I'm busy."

Vernon dipped his pen in the ink.

Tom Redwing gave him a look and went out of the study.

Wharton followed him and shut the door.

The captain of the Remove was more and more puzzled. Why Redwing had wanted him to be present at that interview simply mystified him.

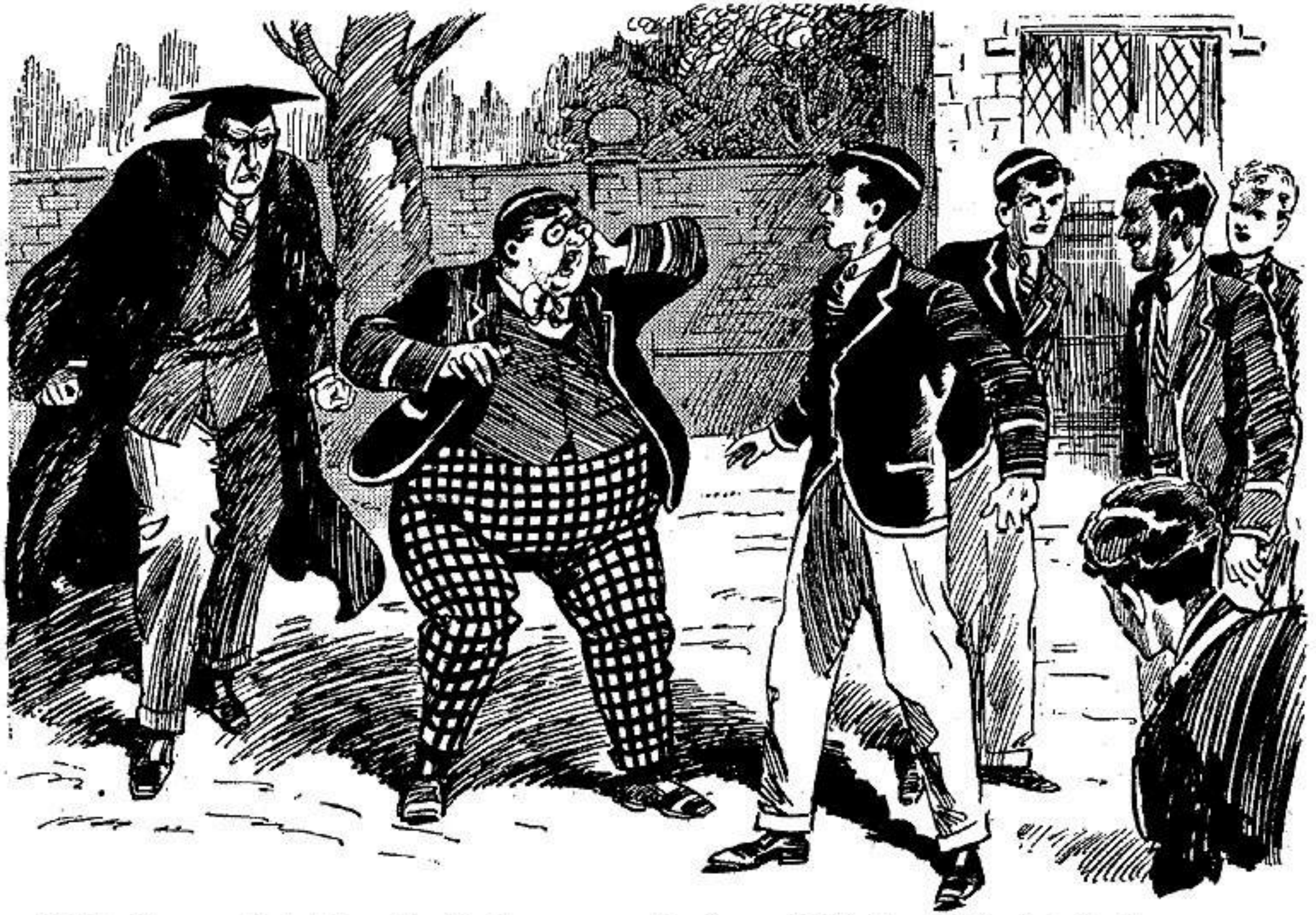
"Blessed if I'd heard of this before, Reddy," he said. "I remember you and Smithy got separated that day at Clovelly, but you never told us at the time that you'd been out in a boat and got it damaged."

"We hadn't!" said Tom quietly.

Wharton jumped.

"Wandering in your mind?" he asked blankly. "You've just been asking Smithy whether he'd heard from the man the boat belonged to—man named Tregethy."

"And he remembered the damage to



"I don't care a boiled bean for Hacker or any other bony old blighter!" howled Bunter, unaware that the master was behind him.

the boat, and remembered Tregethy!" said Tom grimly.

"Yes. And now you say——"

"Now," said Tom Redwing, "I say this, Harry Wharton—Smithy and I never went out in a boat that day at Clovelly, we never damaged a boat, and neither of us ever had anything to do with a man named Tregethy!"

The captain of the Remove stared at him blankly.

"But Smithy remembered it——" he stammered.

"Yes; he remembered it all right!"

"He said he'd lost the man's address, and——"

"The address of a man that neither Smithy nor I ever heard of! Yes, he said he'd lost the address!"

"I don't make you out, Reddy!" Harry Wharton was utterly bewildered. "Did you take me into that study to hear you pulling that chap's leg?"

"Yes."

"Well, why?" demanded Harry warily.

"To see, and let you see, whether he would pretend to remember something that never happened in the Easter hols," said Tom Redwing. "Of course, from my mentioning it, he thought it had happened. So he remembered it, too."

"Are you potty, or is Smithy potty?" asked the astounded captain of the Remove. "What sort of a game is this?"

Tom Redwing did not answer that question. But he looked very curiously at Wharton's bewildered face.

Wharton was amazed, bewildered; but, obviously, nothing like the truth as Redwing knew it had occurred to his mind.

"Blessed if I make you out!" said

Harry. "Looks to me as if one of you has gone cracked!"

And with that he left Redwing and went down the stairs.

Redwing glanced after him, and then fixed his eyes on the shut door of Study No. 4.

In that study was an impostor—a fellow who used the name of Herbert Vernon-Smith, and was not Herbert Vernon-Smith. He had put the matter to the proof now. How could there be further doubt?

And where was his chum? That fellow in the study could tell him if he liked, and Redwing clenched his hands at the thought. But he turned quietly away. There was only one place where Herbert Vernon-Smith could be while that cheat carried on in his name, and that was Lantham Chase. And if he was there, Tom Redwing was going to find him.

Not Bunter!

"YOU fellows care for a spin and a spread?"

Bertie Vernon, alias Vernon-Smith, asked that question on Wednesday after dinner.

It was addressed to Harry Wharton & Co.

The Famous Five were, as a matter of fact, debating an extended spin on the bikes that half-holiday, there being no cricket on. So they were quite ready to give ear to that suggestion from Smithy.

"A spin—and a spread?" repeated Bob Cherry. "Sounds good! We were thinking of a run as far out as Green Hedges, the other side of Lantham Chase——"

"I'd like you to come, if you care

to," said Vernon. "My—my father would like to see you again."

It was not easy for Vernon to refer to Mr. Vernon-Smith as his father. He had no choice while he was playing the Bounder's part. But it gave him a very uneasy twinge to do so.

"Oh!" said Harry Wharton. "Mr. Vernon-Smith—is he in these parts, then? We'd be glad to see him, of course. We haven't forgotten the ripping holiday your pater stood us at Easter, Smithy. But——"

Wharton paused, and coloured a little.

It was known in the Remove—or, at least, believed—that Smithy had joined up for Rookwood the previous Saturday to dodge a meeting with his father, who had been coming down to Greyfriars to see him.

Some sort of family row was on, the Famous Five supposed, though without interesting themselves in a matter that did not concern them.

But if Smithy was going specially to see his father that day it looked as if it must have blown over.

"I've had a letter from the pater." Vernon did not mention that he had had it a couple of days ago. "He's at Lantham this afternoon, and he wants me to run across on my bike and tea with him at the Pagoda. He would like me to bring you fellows, if you'd care to come."

The Famous Five exchanged a glance, and five heads nodded assent.

Lantham was a good distance from Greyfriars, so it would be a good spin, and tea at the Pagoda was undoubtedly attractive; and they were quite pleased at the idea of seeing Mr. Vernon-Smith, of whose lavish hospitality in

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The House of Dark Secrets!



(Continued from page 13.)

the Easter holidays they had an agreeable recollection.

"Well, if you're sure your pater would like to see such a crowd—" said Harry.

"I know he would be glad," answered Vernon. "I'd be jolly glad of your company on the ride, too."

"It's a go, then!"

"The gofulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled up, disdainfully ignoring the Founder's double, and not wasting a single blink from his spectacles on him. "I say, I've got to go in to extra French!"

"Hard lines, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Time you went, isn't it?"

"Well, a chap can be a bit late with Mossoo!" said Bunter. "That's all right! I say, there will be two hours of it! Awful, ain't it?"

"The awfulness is terrific!"

"But there one thing about Mossoo," said Bunter, blinking seriously at the Famous Five—"he never takes any notice if a fellow has a spot of toffee or butterscotch in his class. Not like Quelch, you know, jumping on a fellow! I was thinking of taking in a packet of toffee."

"A packet of toffee makes life worth living, even in a detention class!" said Bob Cherry gravely.

"Only there's a difficulty—" said Bunter.

"That's all right. Mossoo never notices," said Bob.

"I mean, I've been disappointed about a postal order," explained Bunter. "I think I told you fellows I was expecting a postal order. Well, it hasn't come."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not joking; it hasn't, really," said Bunter. "I can't quite make it out. It's from one of my titled relations, you know, and I was expecting it this morning, but there's been some delay in the post. Which of you fellows is going to lend me a bob till my postal order comes?"

Harry Wharton laughed, and groped in his pocket for a shilling.

It was not a large sum to afford comfort and consolation to the fat Owl suffering under the infliction of extra French.

"Thanks, old chap!" said Bunter. "I'll settle this out of my postal order when it comes. If you like to let me have the other four bob now—"

"What other four bob?"

"I mean, the postal order will be for five shillings. If you like to let me have the other four bob now, I'll hand you the postal order as soon as it comes," explained Bunter.

"I'll hand you the other four bob—"

"Good!"

"As soon as the postal order comes, and—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I shall be able to spare it out of my old-age pension!" added the captain of the Remove. "That will be all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Bob. "Time we got the bikes out. It's a good step to Lantham."

"I say, you fellows, what are you going to Lantham for?" asked Bunter. "Anything on at Lantham?"

"Time we started!" grunted Vernon.

"Smithy's pater's there," said Bob. "Ta-ta, old fat bean! Run away to extra French! And mind you don't forget the toffee!"

The Famous Five chuckled. Bunter was more likely to forget the extra French than the toffee.

"I say, you fellows, don't rush off when a fellow's talking to you!" said Bunter peevishly. "I say, are you going with Smithy to see his pater?" Billy Bunter honoured the Bouncer's double with a blink at last. "I say, Smithy, I expect you'll be tea-ing with your pater if you see him at Lantham?"

Vernon did not trouble to answer.

"I say, you fellows, are you tea-ing with Smithy's pater?" asked Bunter. "I suppose it will be at the Pagoda; that's the best place in Lantham."

"We always tea at the best places when we tea with millionaires!" answered Bob. "We make it a rule."

"I say, you get jolly good grub at the Pagoda!" said Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his spectacles. "I say, I'd rather like to see your pater again, Smithy! He treated us jolly well last hols. I say, old chap—"

"Are you fellows coming?" asked Vernon.

"Hold on a minute!" said Bunter. "I say, look here, Smithy, you treated me rottenly over those lines, but I'm not the fellow to remember grudges. I never really meant that egg for you the other day; I meant it for Hacker all the time. Look here, if you like, I'll cut extra French, and chance it with Mossoo. I can borrow Mauly's bike, and one of you fellows can lead me a hand up Redclyffe Hill. And, look here, Smithy, I'll jolly well come, if you like!"

"I don't!" said Vernon briefly.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. He had had a feud on with Smithy for weeks over the unfortunate matter of those lines. But Bunter was not the fellow to keep up a feud—if he could help it—with tea at the Pagoda in the offing. Bunter was prepared to forgive and forget!

"I say, Smithy, I fancy your pater would be glad to see me!" urged Bunter. "He rather took to me in the hols! I don't mind risking it with Mossoo! I'm willing to chance it to tea at the Pagoda—I mean, to see your pater again—"

"Roll away, you fat ass!" snapped Vernon impatiently. "Come on, you fellows, if you're coming!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. There was evidently nothing doing in the way of tea at the Pagoda. "All right; keep your measly tea! You ain't dodging your pater (this time, like you did on Saturday! He, he, he! I say, who was it I heard you speaking to on Prout's phone, when you said you'd go over to Rookwood and play cricket to keep clear of him?"

Vernon's face crimsoned.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I wonder what the old bean would say if he knew? I fancy he would say—Leave off kicking me, you beast! Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter departed in haste, and

Vernon went away to the bike-shed with the Famous Five.

The fat Owl went in dismally to extra French, with other delinquents who were up for detention.

But dismal as extra French was, Billy Bunter had two consolations for the affliction—one, a packet of toffee, to which he gave more attention than to French irregular verbs, the other, the happy prospect of what was going to happen to the Acid Drop at Lantham Chase.

With those two consolations, Bunter was able to endure Monsieur Charpentier and extra French with some equanimity.

Coming A Cropper!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "There's old Reddy!"

Six cyclists were pushing up Redclyffe Hill on the way to Lantham.

Ahead of them, they had a back view of another cyclist, going in the same direction.

It was Tom Redwing.

"Reddy's going our way!" added Bob. "Push on and join up!"

It was difficult for Bob's cheery nature to keep such things as quarrels and disputes in mind, and he had forgotten that the two juniors of Study No. 4 now barred one another.

Bob shot ahead, without waiting for an answer.

Vernon compressed his lips and kept to the same pace, and the other fellows, seeing his look, did the same.

They liked Redwing a good deal more than they liked Smithy, but they were the latter's party at the moment. So Bob Cherry was alone when, with a spurt, he shot alongside Redwing.

Tom glanced at him, and then glanced back and saw the party. He coloured a little. He did not want company on his ride that afternoon—considering what his intentions were—especially Vernon's.

"Going to Lantham?" asked Bob cheerily.

"That way, at any rate," answered Tom. He was going a mile short of Lantham, as a matter of fact. "Not so far."

"Smithy's taken us in tow for a tea party," said Bob. "His pater's at Lantham to-day."

Tom gave a start.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith is at Lantham?" he exclaimed.

"Yes—and Smithy's asked us to go with him to see the jolly old bean! You'd like to see him again, Reddy—you remember how decent he was in the hols. Oh, I forgot!" added Bob, as he remembered. "You don't speak to Smithy now. Ain't you a pair of fat-heads—what?"

Tom laughed.

"I say, it's awful rot, though," said Bob, more seriously. "You've always been such pals. I can't make you two out! Why not wash it all out and begin again—what?"

"I'm afraid that wouldn't work—at present," said Tom. "Is that fellow really going to see Mr. Vernon-Smith at Lantham?"

Bob felt rather a shock at the words. There did not seem much hope of washing it out if Redwing referred to his former chum as "that fellow."

"Yes—we're all going," answered Bob uncomfortably. "I suppose there was some row on, from what we heard last Saturday, but it must have blown over."

"Must have—if he's really going to

see Mr. Vernon-Smith!" answered Tom dryly.

Bob gave him a surprised stare.

"Of course he's going to see him—I've told you we're on our way to see him now!" he answered, rather gruffly. "Well, I'll drop back, as you and Smithy have started the oil-and-water game and don't mix."

And Bob slowed down for his friends to rejoin him.

A little later the party for Lantham passed Redwing. He had dismounted and was wheeling his bike up the hill.

All the party were aware that he was foot-slogging up Redclyffe Hill for no reason except to let the party pass him and get clear.

They passed at a good speed, and Tom soon dropped out of sight behind.

Redclyffe School was passed at the top of the hill, and then a long, inviting slope lay before the cyclists, Lantham Hill being some miles ahead.

"Now for a jolly old whiz!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

And the party went down the slope with a rush.

There was a fair amount of traffic on the Lantham road; cars buzzed by every few minutes, and farmer's carts jogged on their leisurely way. But it was a wide road, with plenty of room for the riders, and they went skimming at an exhilarating pace.

The pace was, perhaps, a little reckless, but when a farm-cart pulled out of a field into the road, Harry Wharton & Co. wound round it without the slightest difficulty. Such was not the case with their companion. They would never have expected Herbert Vernon-Smith to lose his head, but he seemed to do so, and instead of clearing the farm-cart he wobbled, narrowly missed it, skidded, and shot off the road into the hedge with a crash.

The next moment he was sprawling in the grass beside a clanging bike.

The farmer's man driving the cart pulled in with a startled exclamation.

The Famous Five, unaware for the moment of the accident, shot on, then, as they realised that their companion was no longer with them, they jammed on their brakes and looked round.

"Smithy!" exclaimed Bob.

"Oh, my hat! Smithy!"

"Get back—quick!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

They whirled the machines round and pedalled uphill to the spot where the cyclist lay panting beside his cycle, the farmer's man bending over him with a sympathetic, ruddy face.

"Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton, as he jumped down. "Hurt?"

Vernon was making an effort to rise with the help of the countryman. But he sank back in the grass again.

"My leg!" he said faintly.

The juniors gathered round him. He was lifted up, standing on one leg. The other, it seemed, was hurt.

"Well, this is rotten!" said Bob. "You can't get on that jigger again, Smithy."

"No!" muttered Vernon. "Sorry to bother you fellows like this—I shall have to get a lift back somehow."

"But your father?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"You'll have to explain to him. Tell him it's not much—only a sprain. But the sooner I get it seen to the better—it feels pretty bad! Is the jigger damaged?"

"Pedals bent—wheel crooked—mud-guard off?" said Bob, looking at it. "It will have to be carried home, old chap."

Vernon gave a gasp. He could hardly have sustained such a fall with-

out getting hurt, but the extent of the damage was known only to himself. One foot he seemed unable to put to the ground.

"I'd give you a lift, sir," said the farmer's man, "if you be going Court-field way."

"Will you?" gasped Vernon. "Thanks! I've got to get back to the school as quick as I can—Greyfriars!"

Harry Wharton & Co. lifted the injured cyclist into the farm-cart, where he found an easy spot on a load of hay.

The crooked bicycle was lifted in after him.

It was obvious that the junior could not go on to Lantham to keep that appointment with Mr. Vernon-Smith. He could not ride, and apparently could not even walk.

"You fellows get on," he said, in a faint voice. "My—my father will be glad to see you, as I said. Tell him I'm sorry—it can't be helped!" He suppressed a groan. "Don't alarm him, you know—tell him it's just a spill on a bike, and a bit of a sprain. I don't want him alarmed."

"Like one of us to come back with you?" asked Nugent.

"No. What's the good of spoiling your spin? That's all right—this man will drop me at the school. You fellows get on."

"All right, then!" said Harry.

The Famous Five remained in a bunch with their bicycles as the farm-cart rolled away up the road, with the junior lying on the hay.

They were all sympathetic enough; but there was a rather strange expression on Harry Wharton's face—reflected on Bob's ruddy visage.

"I—I suppose—" said Harry slowly, and stopped.

"Hard luck on old Smithy!" said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I know how he came that cropper, though! He's such a good man on a bike."

Wharton compressed his lips a little.

"I suppose—it's straight?" he said slowly.

"Straight?" repeated Nugent.

"What—"

"Well, it's jolly queer for Smithy to get crooked like this on his way to see his father!" said Harry. "We all know why he went over to Rookwood last Saturday—and now—"

"Oh!" gasped Nugent. "You can't imagine—"

"I don't like the idea! But—"

"It's thumping queer!" said Bob Cherry. "Do you know what Reddy said when I spoke to him on the road, a mile or two back? He didn't seem to believe that Smithy really was going to see his father. And now—he isn't!"

"If he's pulling our leg—making use of us to put up an excuse for dodging his pater to-day, as he did last Saturday—"

Harry Wharton breathed hard. It was a very disagreeable idea.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh shook his dusky head.

"It is necessary to give the esteemed Smithy the benefit of the absurd doubt!" he remarked.

Harry Wharton nodded—slowly.

"That's so, Inky. We're bound to take it at face value, I suppose. I—I dare say it's straight enough; he looked as if he was hurt! But— Oh, let's get on! We're booked for it now, at any rate!"

And the Famous Five rode on to Lantham, to meet Mr. Vernon-Smith and explain to him how Herbert had had that accident on the road and could not come on!

They had, as Wharton said, to take

that accident at face value. But they were far from satisfied in their minds as they pedalled on.

In Cover!

TOM REDWING glanced at the farmer's cart, jogging slowly along the Lantham road, and started a little.

Then a bitter smile crossed his face. He pedalled on without another glance. In that cart, resting on the hay, was one of the cycling party that had passed him—with a crooked jigger parked in the back of the cart.

Tom had doubted whether the fellow had really intended to see Mr. Vernon-Smith at Lantham. From what had happened on Saturday he knew that the impostor shrank from the meeting. Either he had made up his mind to the inevitable, or he had some trick up his sleeve.

It was the latter, Tom knew now. A cycling accident on the way to Lantham, the crooked cyclist returning to the school, the other fellows riding on to explain why Herbert could not come!

What had crossed Harry Wharton's mind as an uneasy suspicion was a certainty in Tom Redwing's.

He rode on, with a dark and thoughtful brow.

That fellow was spoofing—he was Bertie Vernon, the Bounder's double, and Smithy was hidden away somewhere by that dark, saturnine Army man, his uncle. This, if he needed it, was one more proof—the fellow's unwillingness to meet the Bounder's father. Sooner or later he had to face it out, if the imposture went on, but he was evading it as long as he could. But that imposture would not go on much longer, if Tom had any luck that afternoon.

He dismounted when he reached Lantham Chase, and wheeled his bicycle into a path up into the thick, shady woods.

For some distance he kept to the public path—the right-of-way across the Chase. Then he turned off into the woods, wheeling his bike into a hawthorn thicket and parking it safely out of sight.

Keeping clear of the avenue that led to the house, he threaded his way through the thick, scented woods.

He was trespassing now, and he was very wary and on his guard.

The new tenant of Lantham Chase was fierce on trespassers; he even made all the difficulties he could in the way of the public using the right-of-way. Tom had no doubt of his reason, any more than he doubted what the captain's reason had been for cutting up so rusty when Coker of the Fifth barged in at the place. A man who had a secret prisoner to guard did not want strangers to stray near the house.

Tom had heard how Hobson of the Shell, who had only just stepped off the path, had had the captain's malacca laid round him. Coker, who had stooped to pick up a book dropped by some unseen person from a window of the old turret, had had that book kicked from his hand by the angry captain—and then the riding-whip came into play. Other fellows, who had merely cycled by the public path on half-holidays, had told how the captain had scowled at them in passing. He would have closed up that right-of-way had it been possible.

Tradesmen's cars or carts never called at Lantham Chase. There was, in fact, no means of a vehicle reaching the

mansion, as the great gates were kept permanently shut and locked. Garage and stables, like most of the mansion itself, were kept locked and unused. The captain's man, Hunt, fetched all that was needed from the town.

Silence and solitude brooded over the great estate. No wood-cutter's axe was heard in the extensive woodlands, no sportsman's gun ever woke the echoes. Save for the trilling of innumerable wild birds, the place seemed lifeless.

The captain's malacca, or even a complaint to his headmaster on the subject of trespassing, had no terrors for Redwing. But he was as wary as an Indian hunter as he threaded through the woods. He was not likely to make any discovery at Lantham Chase if he were seen!

He reached, at last, the border of the wood towards the house. The great many-windowed facade glowed in the July sunshine—deserted, lifeless. Tom had picked a spot from which he could observe the west wing—the part of the mansion which was inhabited.

Keeping carefully in cover, he fixed his eyes on the stone terrace, over which rose an ancient turret, high over the tree-tops.

On the terrace, in a garden chair, a man sat smoking a black Indian cheroot.

It was Captain Vernon.

He was looking towards the woods, across the weedy lawn below the terrace, as he smoked, and Tom saw his face clearly—hard and dark, burnt brown by tropical suns, hard as iron in its outlines.

That was the man Smithy had distrusted, the man who, according to Smithy's vague suspicions, had some game on in taking that immense place in which he lived, as Smithy had said, like a rat in the corner of a barn.

Smithy's distrust had been well founded. He knew now what game the captain had on if he was, as Tom firmly believed, a prisoner in the old turret.

Tom raised his eyes to the turret.

He remembered, only too clearly, what Smithy had told him after his visit there long ago, of the shutters with patent locks, that had been fixed inside the old loophole windows.

Smithy had said, half-suspiciously and half-jestingly, that it looked as if the man meant to park somebody there!

Tom had no doubt who was parked there now! Smithy had walked into the trap. It had closed on him, and his double had gone back to the school in his place! Tom was certain of it!

But his own certainty amounted to nothing. What he needed was something tangible—some proof that would convince others, before he told what must seem like a wild and fantastic tale. If Smithy was there he was going to get in touch with him somehow. If it could not be done in the light, it should be done in the dark. He was not going to leave Lantham Chase till he was sure, one way or the other.

He scanned that old turret with keen eyes. It rose sheer over the buildings below. Smithy had remarked at the time that those shutters could not have been put up to keep out burglars. No one could have climbed the turret from outside.

He saw the man on the stone terrace turn his head.

Old Hunt, leather-faced, grizzled-headed, came out from the doorway.

Redwing could not hear what was said, but he saw him speaking to the captain. After a few words he disappeared into the house again.

Redwing's eyes lifted once more to

the turret, to the high, loophole window that looked out over the woods. The old walls, he knew, were two or three feet thick. No one at the window inside could have been seen from without. His chum, perhaps, was looking from that window at that very moment, never dreaming that a friend was near—never dreaming that his father was only a couple of miles away.

Was it so, or was the whole thing a fantastic suspicion, a figment of the imagination, caused by the change that had taken place in Smithy that term?

Redwing was sure; and yet, when he thought of putting what he knew into words for others to hear, his certainty seemed to be shaken.

Right or wrong, he was going to know, at all events.

Somehow, he was going to penetrate to that turret-room and ascertain, of his own knowledge, whether or not it held a prisoner!

Had a prisoner in that turret-room seen Coker the day he came there, and thrown the book from the window with a message inside—a desperate attempt to get into touch with the outer world? It seemed to Redwing certain that it was so. But how to find out?

His glance dropped again to the terrace below as the captain moved.

The Army man rose from the chair, threw away the stump of a cheroot, and put a thick malacca cane under his arm. Then he came down the steps of the terrace.

Tom's heart beat hard

For the moment, it seemed to him that the keen, hawkish eyes of the dark-faced man had spotted him; that he was coming to deal with the trespasser who was prying out the secrets of Lantham Chase.

But he was reassured the next moment. The captain entered the wood at some distance from the spot where he was in cover, and the sound of rustling twigs, as he went, indicated that he was heading for the public path, at a distance, though he did not go by the open avenue.

Tom thought he could guess what was in his mind. No doubt the captain patrolled the woodland paths often enough, with a keen eye for trespassers. And on a half-holiday at Greyfriars, he might have a specially keen eye open for Greyfriars fellows—it was last Wednesday that Coker had butted in, and it must have been on a half-holiday that he had whopped Hobson of the Shell for straying in the Chase.

Anyhow, he was gone, and Tom's eyes fixed on the stone terrace again.

Only one other person inhabited the great mansion—old Hunt! It was probable that he was occupied.

Tom debated in his mind whether there might be a chance of dodging into the building while the captain was absent. But it was likely that Hunt might see him from a window as he came—and that meant failure.

He was still considering the pros and cons, when a footstep caught his ear, in the silence of the summer's afternoon.

He was glad that he had not emerged from cover as he heard it! If it was the captain returning, he would have been fairly caught!

It could hardly be anyone else, at that place where callers were unknown. But, as a figure came in sight from the avenue, approaching the house, Tom saw that it was not the captain! And he stared blankly, hardly believing his eyes as he saw who it was

Calling On The Captain!

MR. HACKER stepped from the train at Lantham station with an unusually genial expression on his face.

The Acid Drop was not in his accustomed acid state that afternoon.

He was almost good-tempered.

It had been quite agreeable to ask Prout to excuse him from that walk, as Captain Vernon specially desired him to call at Lantham Chase. Prout would tell the whole Common-room, and all Common-room would know that Hacker had had this rather distinguished invitation.

It was a hot day in July, and Hacker was rather warm; and, as a matter of taste and comfort, he would have preferred any hat to the handsome silk hat he wore in honour of the occasion, and a comfortable old jacket to the well-brushed coat that went well with the silk hat. But a man had to be a little particular in calling on the resident at so imposing a place as Lantham Chase, and Hacker had disregarded comfort.

Anyhow, he had no walking to do; he had taken a taxi from the school to Courtfield; the train had landed him at Lantham, and at Lantham the captain's car was to await him—according to the arrangement made over the telephone!

Mr. Hacker proceeded to look for that car—which, no doubt, he would not have done had he been aware that the arrangements over the telephone had been made by a fat and fatuous Owl, now sitting at extra French at Greyfriars.

He did not find the car.

There were taxicabs to be had at Lantham station, as many as he liked, but no car was in waiting.

Hacker, who was easily annoyed, began to get annoyed at once!

The arrangement had been perfectly clear! The car was to await the three-thirty! He had arrived by the three-thirty! Yet there was no car.

He could only wait for the car that was apparently late, and he walked to and fro, in a blaze of July heat, his brow perspiring under his silk hat, waiting for that non-existent car.

His annoyance did not decrease. It intensified.

After a quarter of an hour, in which he was almost cooked by the July sun, he gave up waiting! There had evidently been some blunder—the car had not come, and did not seem to be coming. Some fool of a chauffeur had misunderstood instructions. Hacker concluded—really, he hardly knew what to make of it.

Hacker was almost sufficiently annoyed to throw up the whole thing and take the next train back to Greyfriars.

But that, of course, would never have done! Prout was sure to ask him about it—and he could picture the malicious smiles in Common-room if his colleagues learned that he had been treated with careless neglect and had not visited Lantham Chase after all!

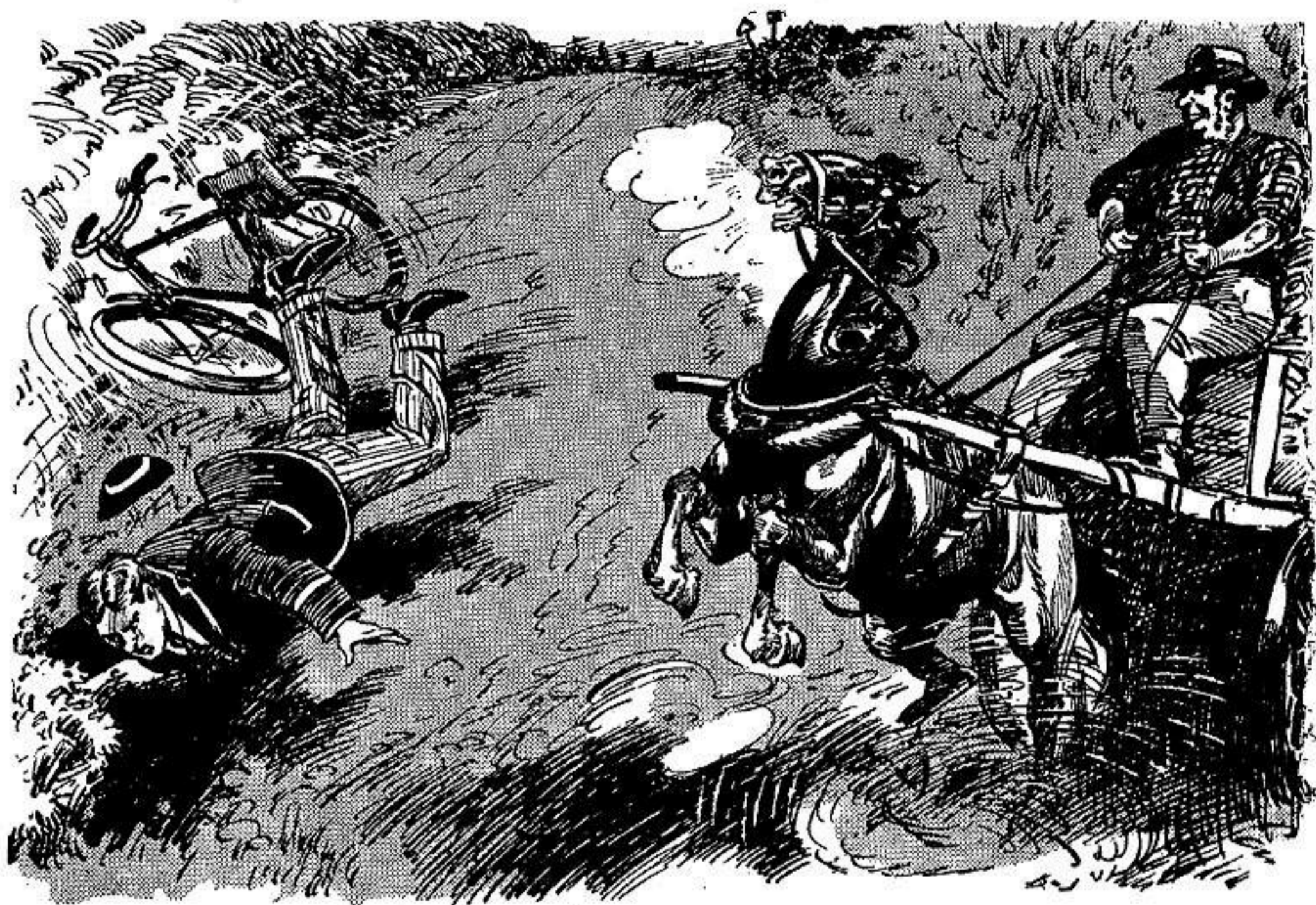
Besides, it could hardly be the captain's fault! Some fool of a chauffeur must be to blame for this!

At all events, he was tired of waiting and cooking in the sun, and he decided on a taxi.

The taxi bore him out of Lantham and along the road to the Chase.

Five cyclists passed it on the road, and Mr. Hacker saw those five cyclists almost jump in their saddles as they saw him. He heard Bob Cherry exclaim:

"Oh, my hat!"



The junior narrowly missed the farm cart, skidded, and shot off the road into the hedge, with a crash!

Hacker frowned.

He saw no reason for Harry Wharton & Co. to be so startled at seeing him in a taxi on the Lantham road that afternoon. But they were startled—so startled that they almost forgot to cap him as his taxi glided past.

Five heads were turned to look after the vehicle.

"Hacker!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"The Acid Drop!" murmured Nugent.

"Going to Lantham Chase!" gasped Harry Wharton. "He can't be going anywhere else—in a taxi from Lantham!"

"That ass Bunter—" breathed Johnny Bull.

"That preposterous chump, Bunter!" Hurree Janset Ram Singh chuckled. "The absurd and idiotic Bunter has pulled the egregious leg of the ridiculous Hacker!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had rather forgotten that deep-laid scheme that the fat Owl had confided to them. They were reminded of it by the sight of Mr. Hacker in that taxi!

Clearly, the fat Owl had carried out that scheme, and Hacker had fallen for it!

They rode on to Lantham, wondering what on earth would happen at Lantham Chase when that unexpected visitor got there!

Little dreaming of what was in the minds of the bunch of cyclists he had passed, Hacker rolled on in the taxi.

It stopped at the great bronze gates of Lantham Chase.

The driver looked round for instructions.

Hacker stared at him.

"Drive in!" he said.

"Yes, sir! How, sir?" asked the taxi-driver. "Gate's shut, sir!"

"There is a bell, I presume," said

Mr. Hacker, "and I suppose there is a lodge-keeper in the lodge."

The taximan blinked at him. He realised that this gentleman, who had come by train, was not informed of what was common knowledge all over Lantham.

"Bless you, sir," said the driver, "there ain't no lodge-keeper since old Squire Luscombe's time. Them gates ain't never opened! I ain't seen them open this year, and I pass this way often enough."

Mr. Hacker looked angrily perplexed. "Is it far up to the house?" he asked.

"Nigh on half a mile by the avenue, sir! It's a shorter cut by the path in the wood."

"Can you drive by that path?"

"Bless you, no, sir! Jest a bridle-path. Cyclists use it. A car couldn't do it, sir—not even a baby car."

"But this is absurd," said Mr. Hacker crossly. "How does Captain Vernon's own car approach the house in that case?"

The driver blinked again.

"Ain't never heard of the gentleman keeping a car, sir!" he answered. "Fur as I know, there ain't been a car at the Chase since the old squire's time."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Hacker. "I happen to be aware that Captain Vernon has a car!"

"Fust I've heard of it, sir! But if he has, as you say, them gates must be opened for it—and I'll see."

The driver descended from his seat and stepped across to the gates, Mr. Hacker watching him with annoyed impatience.

The Lantham man pushed, and pulled, and shoved, and then came back to the taxi.

"Locked and bolted, sir!" he said.

"And if you'll believe me, they ain't been opened for a month of Sundays—grass growed up all over the shop—"

Mr. Hacker compressed thin lips.

"Does this mean that you cannot drive up to the house?" he demanded.

"You've got it, sir! I can take you to the path up to the avenue, and it's maybe a quarter of a mile to walk."

"Obviously there must be some way for a car to approach the house, as my friend, Captain Vernon, keeps a car!" said Mr. Hacker.

"If there is, I don't know nothing about it, sir! Perhaps you do!" suggested the taxi-driver.

"I am a stranger here," snapped Mr. Hacker. "But I am quite certain of what I say! However, if you cannot find the way—"

"Sorry, sir, but I've never heard—"

"Drive me to the path you spoke of, then—I must walk up to the house, I suppose!" said Mr. Hacker, through set lips.

"Right, sir!"

The Lantham man drove on and stopped again at the opening of the bridle-path.

Mr. Hacker looked at it with glinting eyes. Obviously, no car could go that way! He had to walk the rest. It was perplexing, irritating, and annoying.

He stepped from the cab with a far from genial brow.

"You foller this here, sir," said the taxi-driver. "You get to the avenue, and walk up the avenue, and the house is in front of you."

"Very well!" snapped Mr. Hacker.

He paid the driver his exact fare, and started. It was shady on the bridle-path, but it was very warm, and there were too many insects about for comfort.

Mr. Hacker walked on in his creaking shoes, and reached the wide sweeping avenue.

It was well over a quarter of a mile from that point to the mansion. Mr. Hacker's temper deteriorated during every yard of it.

Really, Billy Bunter was getting his money's worth for those pulled ears.

He sighted the mansion at length. Hot, tired, flustered, and thoroughly annoyed, Hacker stared at the mansion once inhabited by the extensive household of old Squire Luscombe—now looking as if nobody lived there!

He walked on to the grand entrance.

Naturally, he was unaware that the grand entrance was never used—he knew nothing of the manners and customs of Captain Vernon at Lantham Chase. Certainly it had not occurred to him that any man in his senses would take that vast barrack of a place, intending to occupy only three or four rooms out of more than a hundred.

Grass-grown flags, weedy lawns almost a sea of dandelions, did not look much like prosperity. Hacker was more and more puzzled, more and more annoyed.

However, he arrived at the great door, found an old-fashioned bell-pull, and pulled thereon.

The sound of a bell was heard echoing from within, with a hollow sound of empty spaces. But no one came!

Hacker breathed hard. He stared round him, in great perplexity.

Nobody was to be seen. He was not aware that a Greyfriars junior, in cover of the trees at a distance, was staring at him in wonder.

Tom Redwing was very careful not to be seen.

The sight of Hacker there was simply astonishing to Redwing! He could not imagine why the master of the Shell had called in those forbidden precincts.

He watched Hacker in wonder.

Having looked or rather glared round him, Hacker tugged at the bell-pull again!

Again a clanging sound echoed and re-echoed through great empty spaces.

This time, however, the clang seemed to have been heard! No one came to the door; but a leathery-faced man emerged from another door; at a distance on to the old stone terrace, and stood staring across at Mr. Hacker.

He shouted:

"Hi!"

At that, the first sound of a human voice that he had heard at Lantham Chase, Mr. Hacker spun round.

Old Hunt waved a hand at him from the stone terrace at the western end of the long front. But it was not a beckoning hand. It was a dismissing hand!

"Hi!" shouted Hunt again. "You there! Get out of it!"

Mr. Hacker almost fell down.

"Wha-a-at?" he stuttered.

"'Ook it, you!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

Leaving the grand entrance—where evidently there was no admission—he walked along to the stone terrace.

Old Hunt eyed him inimically as he came.

Tom Redwing, behind a tree, watched in wonder.

"My good man——" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"I said 'ook it!"

"I have called to see Captain Vernon! My name is Hacker——"

"Did you 'ear me say 'ook it!"

"Are you Captain Vernon's servant?"

If so, kindly tell your master that I am here—Mr. Hacker, from the school——"

"The master's in the wood," answered old Hunt. "Trespassers ain't allowed 'ere! Get out of it!"

"Is not Captain Vernon at home?" gasped Mr. Hacker.

Really, he hardly knew whether he was on his head or heels by this time. Certainly this was a most extraordinary reception for a gentleman invited to call on the captain.

"Ain't I said he's in the wood?" snapped old Hunt. "You'd better 'ook it before he comes back! The master's got a 'cavy 'and with trespassers."

"I am no trespasser!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker indignantly. "Has not Captain Vernon mentioned that he was expecting me this afternoon?"

"No, he ain't—nor he wasn't!" grunted old Hunt, who was quite aware that his master had asked no one to Lantham Chase, and had the best of reasons for never doing so. "Don't you try to stuff me! If you got anything to sell, we don't want it!"

"Anything to sell!" stuttered Mr. Hacker. "Goodness gracious! I am a schoolmaster, my man—I have called here on Captain Vernon's invitation——"

"Pack it up!" said old Hunt, "and get out! We don't want no electric sweepers, and we don't want no patent washers! 'Ook it!"

"I shall certainly not go without seeing Captain Vernon!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker angrily. "And I shall certainly complain to him of the insolence of his servant. Will you show me into the house?"

"Not half!" said old Hunt. "If you don't 'ook it, like I've told you, I'll come down and push you out!"

Mr. Hacker just gazed at him.

Everything in connection with this visit to Lantham Chase seemed odd and exasperating. But this was the climax. The captain, who ought to have been expecting him, had gone out, and this man—apparently the only servant in the place—not only refused him admittance, but was actually threatening him.

Old Hunt came down the steps from the terrace.

"You 'ooking it?" he demanded.

"I refuse to go without seeing Captain Vernon!" roared Mr. Hacker. "I repeat that I was asked to call——"

"Don't you tell me any more lies!" growled old Hunt. "You wasn't, and well you knows you wasn't, jest the same as I do! I know your sort—you want to get a foot inside, and try to sell something——"

"Fool! Impertinent fool!" shrieked Mr. Hacker. "I have told you that I am a schoolmaster——"

"You go back to your school, then." Old Hunt came directly towards the master of the Shell. "Now, out you go!"

"I refuse—I will not take a single step—I—I—I——"

"You will!" said old Hunt.

And Mr. Hacker did—for old Hunt grasped him by his bony shoulders, and propelled him away from the house by sheer muscular force.

Hacker fairly raved, as he went—but there was no denying that hefty shove.

Tom Redwing watching, felt his heart leap!

This was his chance!

Hacker, shoved, and old Hunt, shoving, both had their backs turned.

Tom Redwing cut across behind them, with the swiftness of a deer.

In a moment, almost, he ran up the steps of the terrace, cut across it, and ran in at the open doorway.

The Door Between!

"TOM!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith panted the name, though he knew that his chum could not hear at that distance.

The Bounder of Greyfriars stood in the old turret-room, his face to the bars of the locked shutter.

His face was dark and gloomy; there was hardly a spot of hope in the heart of the prisoner of Lantham Chase that golden afternoon.

A week ago he had seen a Greyfriars face from that high turret window—the rugged face of Coker of the Fifth. He had flung the book between the bars, with a written message in it, in the desperate hope that Coker might see it and that it might mean help and rescue.

Nothing had come of it! And such an attempt could not be repeated, for, the same day, old Hunt had come up to the turret-room and riveted a wire netting over the shutter-bars: and not the smallest article could be flung out now. And from the high turret-room, no call could be heard.

Yet, knowing that it was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, knowing that cyclists might be using the path across the Chase, the Bounder watched from that window, in the faint, faint hope that some Greyfriars fellow might stray that way, as Coker had done, and that something might come of it, if such a fellow did!

And so he had seen Mr. Hacker, in his gleaming silk hat—and was glad to see even the acid face of the Acid Drop!

But Hacker disappeared, coming closer to the building: nothing close at hand could be seen from the turret.

He could not attempt to communicate with Hacker, as he had attempted to communicate with Coker a week ago.

He could only stare from the window, knowing that he would see Hacker's back when he went, but that he could not by any possibility attract the attention of the master of the Shell.

Hacker came into sight again, and the Bounder, heavy as his heart was, grinned as he saw him appear—wriggling, panting, spluttering, with old Hunt's grasp on his bony shoulders propelling him along.

Why Hacker was there Vernon-Smith could not begin to guess, but it was clear that Hacker was not wanted there, and that he was getting much the same kind of welcome as Coker had received.

Then suddenly the Bounder doubted his vision as an active figure darted from the wood behind the two, and cut across to the terrace.

"Tom!" he panted "Tom!"

Redwing was out of sight in a moment. But he had seen him—he had seen his chum, the one person upon whom his faint, lingering hopes were centred. Redwing was there—Tom Redwing!

"Tom!" repeated the Bounder.

His eyes danced.

Redwing had been taken in, like all the others, by that cheat and impostor at Greyfriars School. Smithy knew that that must be the case, or something must have happened before this.

But surely—surely in the long run, like as his double was to him, cunningly as he would play his part—surely, at long last, Redwing, who knew him so well, would know different—surely some instinct would tell him that that fellow was not his pal Smithy!

That was the single hope to which the Bounder clung.

Hope of escape, he had none now. Once, and once only, had he succeeded in getting out of the turret-room;

once, once only, he had got hold of the key. But he had had no chance since. Every day since then the captain himself had unlocked the door when old Hunt came in, and stood by it, key in hand, till the man left. Not the remotest spot of a chance had come his way since.

But if Redwing doubted—if Redwing suspected—

Sometimes it seemed to the Bounder certain that he would. At other times it seemed the faintest and flimsiest of hopes.

And now he had seen him!

Redwing had been in cover in the wood. He had cut in suddenly when old Hunt's back was turned and the captain absent. What did that mean? What could it mean, except that Redwing suspected—that he had come there to find out?

The Bounder of Greyfriars was almost giddy with the thought. Hope at last, rescue at last, after those long, weary weeks!

Redwing was in the building below.

Captain Vernon had gone into the wood; he had seen him go from the turret window. Hunt was pushing Hacker along the avenue. There was no one in the building except the prisoner in the turret-room. No one to see Redwing—no one to stop him! Redwing was there—Redwing was there!

Smithy cut across to the locked door of the turret-room.

He rapped on it with his knuckles. There was no one in the house to hear—except Tom Redwing!

Rap, rap, rap!

He heard a hurried step on the turret stair. Was it Redwing's?

The Bounder shouted hoarsely:

"Redwing! Tom Redwing! Can you hear me, Tom, old chap? It's your pal Smithy!"

The footsteps tramped across the little landing at the top of the stairs. A hand groped over the door; a panting voice came through the thick oak:

"Smithy! Are you there, Smithy?"

"I'm here!"

"Smithy! Oh, Smithy!" He heard a break in the voice outside. "Then I was right—I was right! Oh, Smithy! That rascal is deceiving everybody at the school! I knew it—I knew it!"

"Tom, old man!" The Bounder caught his breath. He was hard as nails, but he was near tears at that moment. "Reddy, old man, you found him out—you came here to save me, Reddy!"

"I came here to find you, Smithy. I guessed—I mean, I knew; I've been sure for some days. And now—now—Oh, Smithy, I've got to get you out of this!"

"The door's locked! That villain Vernon has the key! Get away and get help, if you can, Reddy. For mercy's sake don't let that man spot you! He's capable of anything—anything! I don't think your life would be safe if he knew you'd found him out! It's prison for him—prison, and he's a desperate man—"

Redwing's voice breathed through the keyhole:

"Quiet! I can hear them below!"

The Bounder was silent. His heart beat in great throbs.

To open the door of the turret-room was impossible. He could not join his chum. But Redwing knew now that he was there and now that he knew, help and rescue were only a matter of time if Redwing got safely away.

But if they found him there!

Silent, but with an anguish of anxiety in his heart, the Bounder stood, listening. And Tom Redwing, outside the locked door, was silent and still.

In the hall, at the foot of the turret stair, were footsteps. Silence only could save him, and save his chum—if, indeed, silence could save them.

No Hospitality For Hacker!

"CAPTAIN VERNON!"

Mr. Hacker yelled.

It seemed like some awful nightmare to the Acid Drop as old Hunt propelled him into the avenue by his bony shoulders.

The sight of Captain Vernon, emerging from the trees, probably drawn there by the sound of Hacker's voice, was an immense relief to him.

He yelled to the captain.

The Army man strode rapidly to the spot.

Old Hunt released Hacker as he came.

But if Mr. Hacker expected support from the captain, he was booked for a disappointment. Captain Vernon gave him an angry stare.

"Who are you?" he rapped. "What are you doing here? You can go, Hunt. I will deal with this man!"

"Yessir!" said old Hunt. And, with a last glare at the unhappy Hacker, he tramped back to the terrace.

"Captain Vernon," gasped Mr. Hacker, "what—what—what is the meaning of this? I demand to know! Is that man mad, or drunk, or what? I demand to know the meaning of this!"

"My man has orders to turn out impertinent persons who intrude where they are not wanted!" snapped the captain. He pointed down the avenue. "There lies your way, sir, and the sooner you take it, the better!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "Am I to understand that you do not know me, Captain Vernon—that you do not recognise me? My name is Hacker."

The Army man stared at him.

"I think I have seen you before," he snapped. "I think it was at Greyfriars School. That is no excuse for your intrusion here."

"Intrusion, sir!" gurgled Mr. Hacker.

"That is the word. If you are a Greyfriars master you should know better than to intrude upon a man who does not desire to see you. Now kindly go!"

Hacker stared at him in utter bewilderment.

"Are you mad?" he gasped, at last.

"Will you go?" snapped the captain.

He had no doubt that Herbert Vernon-Smith's eyes, from the turret window, were on this scene. Certainly Smithy could make no such attempt again as he had made when Coker was there. But so long as a Greyfriars master was there, actually within sight of his prisoner, the captain was intensely uneasy.

"I will go, sir, if such is the attitude you adopt!" roared Mr. Hacker. "You are no gentleman, sir!"

"We will not discuss that. Leave my premises!"

"You are a blackguard, sir!" roared Mr. Hacker, fairly beside himself. "You are an insulting blackguard, sir!"

The captain's eyes glinted, and he made a step nearer Mr. Hacker. He was not a man to take much of this kind of talk.

"I have warned you to go," he said. "My man was ejecting you, it appears, as he has orders to do with impertinent intruders. If you are, in fact, a Greyfriars master, I am unwilling to lay

hands on you; but I warn you, sir, that my patience is very nearly exhausted."

"I will go, sir!" roared Mr. Hacker. "Had I known—had I even dreamed—what to expect here. I certainly should not have come! What do you mean, sir? I repeat—what do you mean by asking a man—a man in my position, sir—to call upon you, and then treating him in this manner—this blackguardly and ruffianly manner, sir?"

Hacker fairly foamed with indignation.

The captain stared at him.

"I certainly have no recollection of having asked you to call, Mr. Hacker—if your name is Hacker!" he snapped.

"You have a very short memory, sir!" hooted Mr. Hacker. "I blame myself for having accepted your invitation. I supposed that I was calling on a gentleman, sir, living like a gentleman. I certainly did not dream that I was calling on a man camping like a gipsy in an unhabited house."

"That is no concern of yours, Mr. Hacker. I think it has been made clear that you are not welcome here. Kindly go!"

"I demand an explanation, sir!" roared Mr. Hacker. "I demand to know why you have played this trick—I repeat, this trick, sir—on a man in my position! How dared you ask me here, sir?"

"I did nothing of the kind, Mr. Hacker! So far as I remember, I have seen you only once, and exchanged two or three words with you; and most certainly I never asked you to call here, or had any desire to see you again!"

"You asked me to call, sir, yesterday!" roared Mr. Hacker. "If you are in your right senses, sir, which I am beginning to doubt, you certainly cannot have forgotten ringing me up on my telephone yesterday, sir, and requesting me—"

"I did nothing of the kind!" hooted Captain Vernon. "I did not want you here. I did not ask you here, and I am waiting to see the last of you."

"That is false!" roared Mr. Hacker. "Why you have done this unmannerly, this blackguardly thing, I have no conception—but if you say, sir, that you did not ring me up yesterday, and ask me to call, you are a liar, sir!"

It was not schoolmasterly language! It was not polite language at all. But Horace Hacker was foaming with rage—which, in the circumstances, was not surprising. Hacker was so fearfully enraged that he could have found relief and satisfaction in punching the hard, dark face that glared at him.

"That is enough, sir!" snapped the captain. "Either you are labouring under some strange delusion, or you are making a stupid attempt to excuse your unwarrantable intrusion here! In either case, I have had enough of you—and if you do not immediately take your departure, I shall assist you."

The captain slipped his malacca down into his hand.

"Go!" he rapped.

"I will go!" foamed Mr. Hacker. "Certainly I shall leave your blackguardly presence, sir, without delay. I should disdain, sir, to remain here a moment longer. I regard your presence, sir, as contaminating! I regard you, sir, as an insulting blackguard!"

The captain made a stride at him, and the malacca swished in the air.

Mr. Hacker made a jump, just in time!

It swished within an inch of him!

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"You dare!" shrieked Mr. Hacker. "Ruffian! You dare—"

Swish!

Hacker made another jump!

Swish!

Still another jump made Hacker!

Each time he just escaped the swish!

Evidently it was injudicious to linger. The captain had not actually landed the cane on him, but only Hacker's jumps had eluded it. Clearly he was going to lay it on if Hacker did not depart.

Hacker departed.

He tramped, foaming, down the avenue.

Captain Vernon, with a dark, angry face, made a stride after him, the malacca in the air, as if powerfully tempted to land it across his back as he went.

The gesture was enough for the Acid Drop. He did not mean to run—he disdained to run. But his bony legs ran as if of their own accord. Hacker went down the leafy avenue at quite a spanking pace!

Captain Vernon cast a glare of angry contempt after him, and tramped to the house.

Mr. Hacker did a good hundred yards without a halt. Then he slackened speed, and, after a glance back, walked.

Hot and perspiring, with damp streams trickling down from under his silk hat, the Acid Drop emerged into the Lantham road at last.

It was more than a mile into the town. Mr. Hacker wished that he had ordered the taxi to wait! But he hadn't. He had to walk!

He tottered into Lantham thoroughly cooked. He mopped a damp brow while he waited for a train. And, as he sat in the homeward train, he wished that he hadn't told Prout that he was calling on the captain!

Cornered!

TOM REDWING stood with tense nerves and beating heart on the little landing outside the door of the turret-room.

It was dusky there, even in broad daylight, for the turret stair was lighted only by two or three ancient loopholes, little more than slits in the thick stone. The stair was high, steep, and curving, and the curve hid the landing at the top from view from the hall below.

Sounds of footsteps came clearly up, but Tom, looking down, could see only the bend of the stair, and nothing beyond. But the footsteps, to his relief, did not ascend.

He was unseen, and must remain unseen, till someone ascended the turret-stair. That might, or might not, occur any moment.

What would happen if they found him there?

In penetrating into that house of dark secrets, Tom Redwing had not given a single thought of danger to himself.

Whatever might happen to him, he was ready to risk it, to find out whether his chum was, as he believed, a prisoner in the turret-room.

Until he knew that, beyond the shadow of a doubt, he could do nothing. Now he knew it; knew that there was only an oaken door between himself and Herbert Vernon-Smith; knew, not as a wild suspicion, but as a positive fact that could be stated to the police, that Vernon-Smith was a kidnapped prisoner!

To release him from the turret-room was impossible; but that mattered little

if he got away with the news of what he had discovered.

A few more hours of imprisonment were a trifle if he left his chum with the hope, the certainty, of rescue.

But now that he had found Smithy, he realised the danger in which he stood.

If they found him there, and knew what he had learned—

The Army man had staked everything on this wild and desperate scheme to supplant the millionaire's son and gain the Vernon-Smith millions for his nephew.

The stakes were heavy in that desperate game; for, after what he had already done, it was too late for the plotter to retreat. If Smithy recovered his liberty, Captain Vernon's own was lost!

Prison for conspiracy and kidnapping loomed before him. Ineradicable disgrace for himself, and for the nephew on whose account he had done this! Ruin, disgrace, prison, for the man—ruin and disgrace, at least, for the boy! That was the price of failure.

Redwing, as he recalled the hard, dark, inflexible face of the Army man, knew that it was not a price he would pay, if he could help it—if one crime could be covered up by another.

He had to get away, unseen—if he was to save his chum, now that he had found him.

He listened to the footsteps below—shuffling footsteps on the stone flags of the hall! It was old Hunt, he could easily guess—that shuffle was nothing like the Army man's stride.

Hunt had come in. That must mean that he had got rid of Hacker. But if Mr. Hacker was still within sight, within hearing, that meant help! One shout to Hacker, if he was there, would be enough.

It was impossible to descend the turret stair without walking under the eyes of old Hunt. But a few steps down was one of the narrow loophole slits. It gave a view on the avenue, and from it Tom hoped to ascertain whether Mr. Hacker was yet in sight.

Silently he descended a few steps and looked from the narrow slit in the thick stone wall into the blaze of the July sunshine.

He set his teeth as he looked.

Hacker was in sight—at a distance down the avenue. But he was not alone. He was far beyond the reach of a shout; and between him and the house stood Captain Vernon.

Evidently the captain was no longer in the wood—Tom could guess that he had been drawn to the spot by the loud altercation between old Hunt and the Acid Drop. Another angry altercation seemed to be going on between Captain Vernon and the master of the Shell.

Tom's brain worked rapidly.

Old Hunt was in the hall below. Escape was cut off. He was no match for Hunt in a struggle; but there was a chance of eluding him in the sudden surprise of his unexpected appearance there.

If only he could pass the doorway while Hacker was still there—if only Hacker's eyes fell on him—all was well! It was taking a desperate chance—but it was a better chance than waiting till Hacker was gone, and the captain back in the house. That would be the end of hope.

Tom made up his mind to it.

With beating heart he crept softly down the turret stair—soundless, on tiptoe.

At the last bend of the narrow, steep stair he paused to listen.

The footsteps could no longer be

heard—it was possible that old Hunt had gone back to his own quarters. At all events, he could not be heard to stir.

Setting his teeth, Tom crept round the winding stair; and the next moment he saw old Hunt.

The man was leaning on the wall at the foot of the turret stair.

As he saw him, it flashed into Tom's mind why he was there. He was guarding that stair, at the top of which was the prison-room—so long as there was a stranger at hand—guarding against the remotest chance of the turret-room being approached.

It was too late for Redwing to retreat—even if retreat would have served any purpose.

A split second after he saw Hunt, Hunt saw him.

The man's eyes almost started from his face in his startled amazement at the sight of the schoolboy on the turret stair. Up to that moment he had not had the faintest suspicion of Redwing's presence. He stared at him; he goggled at him in bewildered astonishment.

For a moment Tom paused. Then, with set teeth, he made a spring, clearing the remaining stairs, and landing with a crash on the man at the bottom.

Hunt went spinning back, with a startled howl, under the crash, and Redwing sprawled headlong over him on the stone floor.

Tom struggled to his feet.

Before he gained them, however, Hunt's grasp was on him. He clenched his fist, and crashed it into the leathery face—twice, thrice, with all the strength of his arm.

Hunt grunted, but did not relax his grip. Still grasping the schoolboy tenaciously, heedless of raining blows, he struggled up, and Tom Redwing, in utter desperation, fought like a wildcat for his liberty.

In Ruthless Hands!

CAPTAIN VERNON, with a dark and angry brow, tramped across the stone terrace and in at the hall door.

Mr. Hacker was gone. Why he had come, the captain did not know; but, after his reception at Lantham Chase, he was not likely to call again.

The angry man half-regretted that he had not laid the malacca across the shoulders of that unwelcome and uninvited intruder.

But as he stepped in at the doorway the Army man forgot all about Mr. Hacker. He gave a violent start at what he saw within.

"Hunt!" he gasped.

On the stone flags of the hall floor Tom Redwing lay on his back, with old Hunt's knee on his chest. He was still struggling, but he was down on his back, and Hunt was pinning him down.

Captain Vernon gazed as if transfixed at the unexpected scene. The colour wavered in his dark face.

He knew Redwing at a glance; he had seen him with the Bounder before Vernon-Smith had fallen into his hands. This was Smithy's chum, the boy whom he had warned Bertie Vernon to keep at armslength. How he was there the captain could not imagine; but why he was there he could guess on the instant. What did this boy know?

Old Hunt turned his head as the captain's figure shadowed the sunlight in the open doorway.

"Shut that door, sir!" he panted.

Only for a moment was the captain taken utterly aback. Then swiftly he shut the door and turned the key.



With set teeth, Tom Redwing sprang at the man at the bottom of the stairs !

His startled face set hard as he stepped towards the schoolboy, struggling vainly under the gripping knee.

"Redwing!" he said in a quiet, even voice. "You are Redwing, I think?"

"It's the boy that came with young Vernon-Smith that day weeks ago, sir!" panted Hunt.

"Has he—"

The captain did not finish the question; he did not know yet how much Redwing knew. But Hunt understood.

"Yes. He was on the turret stair."

"How did he get here?"

"He must have dodged in while my back was turned handling that bony old frump!" grunted Hunt. "I found him here—on the turret stair."

Captain Vernon breathed hard.

"You can let him get up, Hunt."

His voice was quite calm and cool. "But keep a hold on him."

Hunt rose, dragging Tom to his feet.

Tom staggered up, breathless, spent with his desperate struggle. Old Hunt's grip fastened like a vice on his shoulder. He stood facing the captain, panting.

There was silence for a long moment while the captain's keen, searching eyes fixed on his flushed face.

"You are Redwing, the friend of young Vernon-Smith?" the captain asked again at last.

"You know I am!" muttered Tom.

"Why did you come here?"

Tom did not answer that.

"You have been up to the turret-room?"

"Your man has told you so."

"And you found—"

"You know what I found!" said Tom bitterly.

Captain Vernon nodded slowly.

"Yes," he said; "I know what you found. You came here secretly. I saw nothing of you; my man saw nothing

of you till he found you here. What did you suspect when you came here?"

"I suspected what I found!" answered Tom. "I suspected that my pal was here, and that a lying, cheating rascal had taken his place at Greyfriars! I know it now! If I had known before what I know now I should not have come alone!"

The captain stood silent, looking at him. There was a hard and desperate glint in his eyes.

If he had had any doubt of the success of his scheme, that doubt had been centred on Redwing, the Bounder's chum. He had wondered whether some instinct might warn him of a difference in the fellow he had known so well. For that reason he had warned Bertie to end that friendship—to keep clear of Redwing. But not for a moment had he dreamed that it would—that it could—come to this.

Redwing knew! He had suspected, and now he had verified his suspicions.

Had he gone with what he knew—the captain drew a long, quivering breath at that thought—he would have returned with the police! And if he left now he would return with the police!

Harder and grimmer grew the dark face.

It was an unexpected danger, but the Army man was used to facing emergencies with a cool and steady head. His resolve was immediately taken. Redwing knew, and he could not be allowed to tell what he knew? Not only the success of his plot, but his liberty, depended on the secret being kept. Tom Redwing, in his quest of his chum, had stepped into the trap. The trap would close on him also!

There was a long silence.

The Army man broke it at last, his voice cool, clear, metallic:

"Let us have this clear. You suspected that the boy called Vernon-Smith at Greyfriars was not Vernon-Smith? You did not suspect this at first?"

"No."

"Then how, and why—"

"A hundred things," answered Tom. "Lies are always found out in the long run!" he added contemptuously.

The dark face flushed at that word.

"Keep a civil tongue, my boy!" said the captain quietly. "You may have your own opinion of my actions, and I have no idea of justifying myself to you. You have been up to the turret-room? You know who is there?"

"You know it."

"Yes, I know it," said Captain Vernon. "And you know, I suppose, that you will not be allowed to tell the world what you have found here?"

"I've no wish to harm you or that fellow at Greyfriars," said Tom. "I came here to find out if Smithy was here, and I've found out. Let him go. Let him come back to the school with me, and you and that fellow can take your chance."

The captain laughed—an unpleasant laugh.

"You are not asking a little," he said.

"It's the best thing you could do if you could see it," said Tom steadily. "You can't keep this up. If you're thinking of keeping me here like Smithy—"

"Some such idea has crossed my mind!" said the captain, with grim irony. "And what then, my young friend?"

"I've not got a double to take my place at the school!" said Tom scornfully. "I shall be missed at calling-over this evening!"

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"No doubt."

"If I don't turn up for dorm the police will be told! Do you fancy you can keep me here with the police searching for me?"

"Your absence may be accounted for," said the captain coolly. "I did not expect this—I did not dream of it—but I am not unprepared to deal with it now that it has happened. I have heard a good deal about you, Master Redwing. I have made it my business to be well informed in all matters connected with that young rascal up in the turret-room."

Tom's eyes blazed.

"You dare to call him that—you, a kidnapper—"

He choked.

"Yes, I call him that," said the captain, unmoved. "If I did not call him that, and believe him that, he would not be where he is now. I have a conscience, Master Redwing, though perhaps you do not give me the credit of possessing one. But never mind that! I think your absence from the school may be satisfactorily accounted for."

He reflected for a moment.

"Did you not, last Easter, leave the school before the usual holiday date to join your father in a cruise in his lugger?" he said.

"What of that?"

"Might not the same thing happen again just before the summer holidays?" smiled the captain. "A letter to your headmaster or Form-master would explain—"

Tom set his lips.

"Do you think I would stir a finger to help you?" he exclaimed.

"Possibly not—unless I used harsh measures with you, which I am ex-

tremely unwilling to use," said the captain calmly. "But probably a telegram would answer the same purpose."

"Oh!" muttered Tom.

"We shall see!" smiled Captain Vernon. "I am sorry, Master Redwing. I know a great deal about you, and you are a boy whom I like and respect. The only good point I have ever found in that young rascal in the turret is his friendship for you. But if you put your head into the lion's jaws you must not complain if those jaws close on you."

Redwing breathed hard.

"I would have risked it a hundred times over to help Smithy!" he said. "You dare to call him names, but he's the best pal a fellow ever had. That fellow at Greyfriars isn't fit to clean his shoes!"

"Opinions may differ very widely on that point," said the captain dryly. "We will not discuss that. I am sorry, as I have said; and if I could trust your promise to keep silent I would gladly open this door wide for you. But—" He shook his head. "That is not to be thought of. Lantham Chase has a reputation for inhospitality, I think, but I shall offer you its hospitality now—such as it is."

"You cannot keep me here," said Tom steadily.

"I shall chance that," said the captain. "If you take a step outside this door I shall be driven to flee the country, a ruined and disgraced man. That, perhaps, I could face; but another would suffer—another, for whose sake I would sacrifice a hundred such as you. You have asked for this, Master Redwing—and you must make the best of what you have asked for."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Hunt, take him up to the turret!"

"This way, you!" grunted Hunt, dragging at Tom's shoulder.

Redwing clenched his hands desperately, but it was futile to attempt resistance.

Hunt led him up the turret-stair; and the captain, taking a key from his pocket, followed.

Where Is Redwing?

"I SAY, you fellows—"

It was near calling-over when the Famous Five came in from Lantham.

Billy Bunter met them as they came to the House with a fat grin irradiating his podgy countenance.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter. "I say, he went all right!"

"Eh?" asked Bob. "Who?"

"Hacker! He, he, he! I say, he hasn't been in long. I saw him come in. Wild? He, he, he! Wild as a tiger! I say, you fellows, think the captain whopped him at Lantham Chase?"

Billy Bunter chortled explosively at the idea of the Acid Drop having got whopped.

"I say, you should have seen him when he came in!" grinned Bunter. "Mad as a hatter! I say, he must have told Prout that he was going, because Prout stopped him and asked him about it when he came in. Half a dozen fellows heard him. I say—"

"You fat ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Hacker must have gone there; we saw him in a taxi on the Lantham road just before we got into the town. And if he spots you you'll want a new skin!"

"How's he going to spot a fellow?" grinned Bunter. "He, he, he! I say, a dozen fellows heard when he came in. Prout asked him if he had had a pleasant afternoon, you know; and Hacker said: 'The man is a black-guard!' Those very words! Lots of fellows heard! He, he, he! I say, if Hacker calls him names like that, think the captain whopped him like he did Coker?"

The Famous Five laughed. They could hardly suppose that the Army man at Lantham Chase had gone so far as to whop the master of the Shell as he had whopped Coker of the Fifth, but they had no doubt that the Acid Drop had had a far from pleasant afternoon.

"I say, Hacker was in a fearful bail!" grinned Bunter. "He didn't care who saw his temper. He came back boiling! Boiling over! He, he, he! I think the captain must have whopped him—kicked him, at least! Teach him to pull a fellow's ear—what? He, he, he! But, I say, you fellows, where's Smithy? Hasn't he come back with you?"

"He came back long ago," answered Harry. "He had a spill on the Lantham road, and had to chuck up the ride."

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter. "Did he? Did he get you to tell that to the old bean at Lantham? He, he, he!"

"You fat ass, Smithy got a sprained leg, and he had to get a lift back in a farmer's cart!" said Harry.

"He, he, he! Deep, ain't he?" grinned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, why don't Smithy want to see his pater this term? He always used to like his pater coming. He don't want him now!"

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Harry Wharton made no reply to that.

He was by no means sure in his own mind that that spill on the Lantham road was straight. Evidently the fat Owl took it for granted, as a matter of course, that it was a spoof, and after what had happened on Saturday there was no doubt that it looked rather suspicious.

"Did the old bean stand you tea without Smithy?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, that was pretty decent of him. Rather rotten to pull his leg if he was standing you tea at the Pagoda!" Bunter shook his fat head. "Not the sort of thing I'd do."

"You piffling porpoise, who was pulling his leg?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Weren't you?" asked Bunter, blinking at him. "You jolly well knew why Smithy had that spill; you knew why he went over to Rookwood on Saturday; so you jolly well knew—"

"Oh, go and eat coke, you fat ass!"

"Well, I wouldn't pull an old bean's leg like that if he was standing me tea at the Pagoda!" declared Bunter. "If Smithy asked me to do it, like he has you fellows, I should look him up and down and say plainly— Leggo, you beast! Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down on the hard, unsympathetic quad, and the Famous Five walked past him and went into the House.

Their faces, which had been bright and cheery when they came in, looked a little grim now—the effect of Bunter's remarks.

Mr. Vernon-Smith, at Lantham, had been kindness itself. He had been disappointed at the non-arrival of his son, but fully satisfied about that, of course, when Harry Wharton explained about the spill. The millionaire had plainly been disturbed about the accident, though they assured him that it was not at all a serious matter, only Smithy had had to go back with a bit of a sprain.

The millionaire had had only a half-hour of his extremely valuable time to spare before he had to catch the London train, but in that half-hour he had provided a magnificent tea at the Pagoda. The juniors had dismissed from their minds the possibility that Smithy had been spoofing—giving him, as Inky had suggested, the benefit of the doubt.

But it was in their minds again now. The idea of having been made use of to deceive a man who had treated them with hospitable kindness was extremely discomfiting.

"If that sweep was pulling our leg, after all—" muttered Johnny Bull, as they went in.

"Not much good thinking about that now," said Harry, biting his lip. "But I can't help thinking—well, it's no good worrying about it now! I've got to see Smithy, as his father gave me a message for him. I suppose he will be in his study."

Wharton went up to the Remove passage and tapped at the door of Study No. 4.

As he opened the door a junior who was pacing to and fro in the study came to a sudden halt and faced him flushing.

Harry Wharton's lips curled.

"Your leg seems a good bit better already, Smithy!" he remarked with sarcasm.

Vernon coloured and dropped into the armchair.

"It's better," he said. "Still rather painful, though. All it needs is a rest.

I've been giving it a rest. You've seen my—my father?"

"Yes, and he's sent you a message," said Harry curtly. "He was rather worried about your accident. He told me to tell you it was a disappointment not to see you, and that he will find time to come down to the school before long."

"Oh!" said Vernon.

Harry Wharton looked at him steadily.

"Is your leg really damaged, Smithy?" he asked.

"You saw the crash I came—"

"You were behind me, and I've no eyes in the back of my head. I know what you told me. It's the first time I've ever known you to be so clumsy on a bike. If you've been making use of unsuspecting fellows to pull the wool over Mr. Vernon-Smith's eyes—"

"Oh, don't talk rot!"

"Well, I hope it's rot!" said Harry. "But this isn't the first time; it's the second. And if anything happens next time your father wants to see you, I shall know what to think, Vernon-Smith. That's all!"

And with that Harry Wharton left the study, shutting the door hard.

He went down the stairs with a frowning brow, with very little doubt in his mind now that that spill on the Lantham road had been a spoof.

A little later the bell rang for calling-over, and when the Remove fellows went into Hall, some of them noticed that Tom Redwing was not there.

"Reddy's late," remarked Bob Cherry. "Know where Redwing is, Smithy?"

Once more Bob was forgetful of the rift in the lute in Study No. 4.

"How should I know?" grunted Vernon.

"I say, you fellows, Redwing went out on his bike before I went in to extra French."

"We saw him on his bike on the Lantham road," said Harry Wharton. "May have bagged a puncture. He's late, anyhow."

Mr. Quelch was calling the roll.

To the surprise of the Removites, he did not call the name of Redwing. That name was passed over as if Quelch did not expect him to appear at calling-over that evening.

"Where the dickens is Reddy?" asked Bob.

But no one was able to answer that question. Nobody knew where Redwing was.

Surprising News!

MR. QUELCH frowned.

The Remove master had arrived at the door of the Rag, where most of the Removites had gathered before prep.

The door was half-open, and Mr. Quelch was about to step in, when a fat voice floated in his ears—the more or less dulcet tones of William George Bunter, the fat ornament of his Form.

"I say, you fellows, did you notice Hacker, at roll? I say, the old goat was still looking awfully shirty. He, he, he! The bony old blighter—"

Mr. Quelch stepped into the Rag.

"Bunter!" he rapped.

"Oh crikey!"

"How dare you, Bunter, allude to a member of Dr. Locke's staff in such terms!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter blinked at his Form-master. He had not expected Quelch to step into the Rag. Quelch was not a frequent visitor to that apartment. He had stepped in at a rather unfortunate moment for Billy Bunter.

"Oh, I—I didn't, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I wasn't speaking of the Acid Drop, sir—I—I mean Hacker, sir! I—I—I was speaking of quite another bony old blighter, sir. I—I mean—"

"Only this afternoon, Bunter, you had a detention, for alluding to Mr. Hacker in such disrespectful terms. This time I shall cane you!"

"I—I didn't, sir. I—I mean, I—I wasn't!" gasped the hapless Owl. "I—I never noticed him at roll, sir, and I—I never thought he looked shirty, sir. I—I thought he looked nice and—and good-tempered, sir. Not that I noticed him, sir. I never looked at him at all. I—"

"Go to my study, Bunter, and wait for me there!"

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

The fat Owl rolled dismally out of the Rag.

Mr. Quelch remained, most of the juniors eyeing him curiously, wondering why he had come there.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir!" said Bertie Vernon.

"I understand that you are the boy on the most intimate terms with Redwing in my Form," said Mr. Quelch. "Have you any knowledge of Redwing's intentions when he left the school this afternoon?"

"No, sir," answered Vernon, in wonder. "He said nothing to me."

"Have you seen him since he left the school?"

"I saw him on his bicycle on the Lantham road, sir, early in the afternoon. I have not seen him since."

Mr. Quelch glanced over the juniors in the Rag. All of them were curious now. It was clear that there was something unusual about Redwing's absence from the school—something that, judging by Mr. Quelch's frowning brow, was displeasing, as well as unusual.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You may possibly know something of the matter."

"I saw him on his bike, sir, when Vernon-Smith did," answered Harry. "Has anything happened to Redwing, sir?"

"Not that I am aware of!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "But his conduct is singular—most singular—and, in view of it, I doubt whether he can be allowed to return to the school after the summer holidays."

"Oh!" gasped a dozen fellows at once.

"It seems very extraordinary to me that Redwing should have acted in this way without mentioning anything of his intentions to any other boy in the Form," said Mr. Quelch. "You are sure he said nothing to you, Vernon-Smith?"

"Nothing at all, sir," answered Vernon.

"Or any other boy here?" asked Mr. Quelch, with another glance round.

There was no answer.

Whatever Tom Redwing had done that afternoon, he had not told any Remove fellows about it—that was clear.

All the juniors were wondering what he could have done. Tom was about the last fellow in the Form to have done anything of a reckless or irresponsible kind.

"Then no one here can tell me anything?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

The general silence indicated that no one could.

"May we know what Redwing has done, sir?" asked Harry.

"Certainly, Wharton! I have re-

ceived a telegram from Redwing from Dover—

"Dover!" exclaimed half a dozen fellows.

Dover was a good many long miles from Greyfriars School.

"From Dover!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "Redwing asks me, in this telegram, to grant him early leave before the holidays, as his father desires him to sail in his coasting lugger, which is leaving Dover to-day."

"Oh!" gasped the Removites.

"Such leave was granted Redwing before the Easter holidays," went on Mr. Quelch. "But that was a matter of a few days, not of weeks. And the request was made to me, considered by me, and granted. In this case, Redwing appears to have taken permission as a matter of course, and considered it only necessary to let me know his intentions."

Mr. Quelch shut his lips hard.

Disregard of his authority was not a matter that the Remove master could tolerate with patience.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bob.

"It is amazing to me," continued Mr. Quelch, "that any boy in my Form—any boy at school at all—should have ventured to assume such liberty of action. It is very improbable that such extensive leave would have been granted, and most certainly not without the fullest consideration. The boy has taken the matter into his own hands."

The gimlet eyes glinted.

"If any boy present knew of this intention of Redwing's, and is aware of any means of communicating with him, let him speak," said the Remove master. "I address you especially, Vernon-Smith, as Redwing's most intimate friend in the school."

"I knew nothing of it, sir."

"You have no address to which to write to him—at any port that may be visited by the vessel on which he has gone?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked very hard at the Bounder's double. Unaware of that recent rift in the lute, he thought it very probable that Herbert Vernon-

Smith was fully acquainted with the matter, and unlikely that Redwing would have acted as he had done without confiding the matter to his chum. Indeed, he had a lurking suspicion that the reckless Bounder might have had a hand in it.

"You are sure of this, Vernon-Smith?"

"Quite, sir!"

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, between compressed lips. "Then I have this to say to all the boys of my Form present. If any boy here is able to communicate with Redwing, let him do so without delay, and warn him that, unless he returns to the school immediately, he will not be allowed to return at all. Only his immediate return will suffice. Otherwise, Greyfriars School will be closed to him. Any friend of Redwing's here—he looked hard at the Bounder's double again—"will be well advised to lose no time in giving him that warning."

With that Mr. Quelch rustled out of the Rag, leaving the juniors in a buzz of surprise and excitement.

"So that's where Reddy is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Gone to sea in the old bean's lugger, like he did before Easter. But, my hat, what a nerve!"

"His father must have thought he had leave," said Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I can understand this, in a chap like Redwing!"

"More like Smithy," grinned Skinner.

"The more likefulness is terrific!"

"He must have been on his way to the station when we passed him on the Lantham road," said Bob, with a whistle. "I spoke to him, but he never let on a word about what he had in mind."

Bertie Vernon sat and listened to the excited discussion with a faint smile on his face.

He was as surprised as the other fellows, but to him it came as a relief that Tom Redwing had gone.

More and more, of late, he had felt uneasy under Redwing's eyes, and ever since Tom had shaken the dust of Study No. 4 from his feet, he had

wondered, with misgiving, what he might suspect. It was a weight from his mind that the Bounder's chum was gone, and if his reckless action led to his leaving Greyfriars for good, that was an added security for the Bounder's double.

The discussion in the Rag was interrupted by sounds of woe and lamentation, heralding the return of Billy Bunter from Quelch's study:

"Ow! Wow! Ow! Yow! Wow! Ow! I say, you fellows— Yow! Ow—ow!"

"Oh, listen to the band!" chirruped Skinner.

"Wow! Yow! Ow!"

"Had it bad?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"Ow! Wow! Six on the bags!" groaned Bunter. "And all for calling Hacker a— Wow—wow—wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wow! All for calling him a goat—wow—wow!—and a bony blighter—wow! And he jolly well is a goat—wow!—and a bony blighter—wow! Yow! But if Quelch thinks I'm going to stand this—wow!—he's jolly well—wow!—mistaken! I'll jolly well pay him out—yow! Ow—ow! And I know how—wow! Yow!"

"And how—wow—wow?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him wait! Yow! Ow! Perhaps somebody else will get a phone call, like Hacker—wow! Perhaps somebody else will get his leg pulled—wow! Perhaps somebody else will— Yow! Ow—ow—ow! Wow! Oh crikey! I shall have to stand up to prep! Ow! Wow!"

It was not Billy Bunter's happy evening!

Once Too Often!

MR. PROUT wondered whether he was dreaming.

He had been dreaming as he slumbered in the roomy armchair in his study. Now his eyes were wide open; but, really, it seemed as if he was dreaming on, with wide-open eyes.

It was very hot that July afternoon.

Prout had intended to go for a walk, after class, with Hacker—that walk postponed from the previous day when Hacker had gone, instead, to call on the captain.

He had discussed the matter with Hacker after class, and he had noticed, with annoyance, that a boy of Quelch's Form hovered near while he was talking to Hacker—actually listening to what was said.

He had suspended the discussion with Hacker to order Bunter of the Remove to go away at once.

Bunter of the Remove had gone away at once.

Then Prout had resumed his talk with Hacker. But the upshot of that talk was that Prout had decided that it was altogether too sultry for a walk. So, instead of rolling forth on a walk, Prout had rolled to his study, where he found a roomy armchair more grateful and comforting than walking in a tropical sun.

He had nodded off to sleep. It was hot, it was drowsy, and he was tired from a day in the Fifth Form Room, and he slept peacefully in that comfortable armchair and dreamed happily of the headmastership he was going to have some day when some perspicacious board of governors discerned his true value.

Being fast asleep, Prout naturally did not hear his study door open and close

TREMBLING CHIMNEY

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again, and remained blissfully unaware that someone else was in the study.

That someone else remained blissfully unaware of Prout!

The high back of the armchair was towards the door, and it hid Prout from view, Prout being tall sideways. His bald spot did not reach to the top of the armchair's back.

Had the unseen intruder kept silent, Prout, probably, would have gone on slumbering peacefully and dreaming of that headmastership.

But the intruder did not remain silent. It was his voice that awakened Prout. It was not a voice that Prout knew. It was a sort of sharp bark of a voice. Not a Greyfriars voice, or it would have been familiar to Prout. But the words were more surprising than the voice.

Really, it was no wonder that Prout fancied that he must still be dreaming as he heard the words:

"Captain Vernon speaking!"

If it was not a dream, what was it? Prout knew who Captain Vernon was—the uncle of a boy who had been in Quelch's Form, and who lived ten miles away at Lantham Chase. He was the man on whom Hacker had called the previous day, and whom Hacker had since described as a blackguard, an unmannerly ruffian, and other such pleasant things.

How Captain Vernon could be in his study, using the telephone, was so deep a mystery that any man might have fancied that he was dreaming.

Prout lent a dazed, astonished ear as the voice went on:

"... from Lantham Chase. My dear Mr. Quelch, I am sure you will excuse me for ringing you up, but the fact is, I should be very glad to make a closer acquaintance with my nephew's Form-master. Perhaps you could make it convenient to call at Lantham Chase—"

Prout lifted an absolutely dizzy head and looked over the back of the armchair.

His eyes almost popped from his plump face as he looked.

How Captain Vernon could possibly be in his study at Greyfriars School and phoning to Mr. Quelch on Prout's phone, was a dumbfounding mystery.

That mystery was explained by the amazing, but obvious, circumstance that Captain Vernon was not there at all. The figure that stood at the telephone, grinning over it, was the fat figure of the same Remove boy who had been listening to Prout's talk with Hacker—W. G. Bunter.

Prout just gazed!

Bunter, happily unaware of that fixed, amazed gaze, barked on into the transmitter in his masterly imitation of the Army's man's voice:

"I should be delighted to see you, Mr. Quelch, if you would do me the honour of calling on me at Lantham Chase—"

Prout rose from the chair.

He stepped across to Bunter from behind. His expression was extraordinary, and his plump hand was outstretched.

"Any time that would suit you, Mr. Quelch, would— Yaroooooop!" roared Billy Bunter, as a plump paw closed on the back of his fat neck.

The startled fat Owl dropped the receiver as he spun round, his eyes popping behind his spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped, as he saw Prout!

Prout's ghost could hardly have startled him more! With his own fat ears he had heard Prout discussing a walk with Hacker! There had been

nobody in the study when he crept in—at least, nobody that he had seen! He had not heard Prout coming. Yet here was Prout!

"Boy!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Oh crumbs! I—I— Oh crikey! Oh lor'! I—I wasn't telephoning to Mr. Quelch, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never—"

"I heard you!" thundered Prout.

"Oh scissors!"

"I heard you speaking in an assumed voice and giving a name not your own!" thundered Prout. "Upon my word! Come!"

"I—I—I—"



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

TOPPING next Saturday's bumper bill of fare is:

"THE PLOTTER!"

the next yarn in our splendid series by Frank Richards. Tom Redwing's sudden departure is a relief to Herbert Vernon, the Bounder's double. But will it prove permanent? There's a surprising twist in this story, chums. That you will enjoy reading it, goes without saying, same as you will our shorter features. Order your copy to-day!

I don't know if Jim Bentley (Portsmouth) is trying to "trip me up." After praising the MAGNET stories, he winds up his letter with the following footnote: "What does the name of England mean?"

Strange to say, the name was made in Germany. Our island has often been invaded in the past, and among the most important of its invaders were a tribe of people from North Germany, called the Angles. They settled mainly in the south part of Britain, which they called after themselves, Angleland, or, as we now say, England. The Angles form only a small fraction of the source of the English people to-day. Our country gained, no doubt, in the long run, from its invaders. In our people to-day there are represented not only English—in the strict sense—but also Saxon, Danish, Norman, and Roman blood.

BY the way, when entering the office this morning, I accidentally tripped over a fire bucket containing sand, which had been moved from its accustomed place on the wall into the middle of one of the corridors. Has it ever occurred to you why some fire buckets are filled with sand and not water? The reason is this. In offices and large buildings where electricity is used there is always a danger of fire through what is known as a "short circuit." Water is a conductor of electricity, and its use in this kind of

"Come!" boomed Prout. "I shall take you to your Form-master, Bunter!"

"Oh crumbs! I—I—I say, sir—I—I—I'd rather not see Mr. Quelch, sir! I—I—I think he's very busy just now, sir—"

"Come!"

Billy Bunter had no choice about coming! The plump paw on his collar led him to the door. It led him up the passage.

With his disengaged hand Prout knocked at Mr. Quelch's door and opened it!

(Continued on next page.)

fire might only serve to spread the electric current, and so increase the danger. Sand, on the other hand, if applied at once, would soon smother and extinguish the flames before serious damage was done.

So much for that. Now for a few

RAPID FIRE REPLIES

to readers' queries.

R. Crowther and G. Holt (Huddersfield): Billy Bunter shares Study No. 7, with Tom Dutton and Peter Todd. The order of Forms at Greyfriars is as follows: Sixth, Fifth, Shell, Upper Fourth, Remove, Third, Second, and the "Babes." You'll hear more of the Greyfriars Scouts later.

Frank James (Newport): As I have mentioned in previous Chats, Hilda Richards is no relation to the popular Frank Richards. Mr. Chapman illustrates the MAGNET yarns, with the exception of the Covers. These are drawn by Mr. Shields.

Philip A. Toler and Peter J. Shaw (Surrey): See "Rapid Fire Reply" No. 1.

Michael Wright (Shenfield): There are about 300 boys at Greyfriars. George Wingate is captain of the school; George Blundell, captain of the Fifth; James Hobson, captain of the Shell; Cecil Reginald Temple, captain of the Upper Fourth, and Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove.

F. Riley (Blackpool): So you like "My Own Page"? Good! You will not be the only one to feel glad when Billy Bunter gets his long-expected postal order. Harry Wharton & Co. are living in hopes that it will arrive some day!

Erio Collis (Aberdeen): Not a bad idea of yours to form a Bunter Fan Club. But there's a lot of detail work attached to clubs, chum, and I can't spare the necessary time myself. I will forward your other request on to Mr. Frank Richards.

More chin-wag next week, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,640.

Billy Bunter's fat knees almost failed him! They knocked together as he tottered to his Form-master's study in Prout's plump grip!

"Mr. Quelch!" gasped Prout.

Mr. Quelch was seated at the telephone with a very perplexed expression on his face. A talk from Captain Vernon at Lantham Chase had been suddenly interrupted by what sounded like a startled yell, and he had spoken several times since without getting any answer.

He glanced round at Prout and Bunter, raising his eyebrows.

"Excuse me, Mr. Prout, I am taking a call—" he began.

"You will hear no more of that call, sir!" boomed Prout. "I have interrupted that call, sir, which you supposed to be from Captain Vernon."

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"I fail to see how you know—" he began.

"This boy, sir," boomed Prout, dragging forward the reluctant Owl, "came into my study in the belief that I had gone out, and used my telephone—"

"I will deal with him later, Mr. Prout! At the moment—"

"This boy, sir, spoke on the telephone in an assumed voice, and gave the name of Captain Vernon!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"It was from this boy, sir—this—this Bunter—that you received the call, and not from Captain Vernon at all, and the interruption, sir, was due to my taking the young rascal by the collar, sir!" boomed Prout. "His imitation of a man's voice, sir, was remarkable—but it was this boy—this Bunter—speaking—and I have brought him here—"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

"He was speaking to you, sir, in an assumed voice, and using the name of Captain Vernon!" said Mr. Prout. "He was unaware, sir, that I was in the study—and I heard every word he uttered! If you supposed, sir, that that call came from Lantham Chase,

you were entirely mistaken—it came, sir, from my telephone, in this building, sir! I leave this boy to you, Mr. Quelch!"

And Prout rolled out, leaving the fat Owl to Quelch!

Bunter would have been very glad to roll out also! He wilted under the glare of Quelch's gimlet eyes like a fat rabbit fascinated by a serpent. The glint in those gimlet eyes was positively deadly.

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep, deep voice.

"Oh crikey!"

"You have dared—"

"Oh! No! I—I never phoned, sir—I—I mean, it—it—it was only a jog-jig-joke, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I—I thought you might be—be amused, sir—"

Mr. Quelch did not look amused! He selected a cane from his table.

"Bunter—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I shall cane you, Bunter, with the greatest severity, for this attempt at deception! You have dared—"

"Oh! No, sir! I—I didn't—I—I mean, I—I wasn't—oh lor'! I never did it at all, sir, and it was only a j-j-joke," moaned Bunter. "I—I never thought you'd go over to Lantham Chase, sir, and—and I certainly never wanted you to get into a row like Hacker, sir—nothing of the kind! Such a thought n-n-never crossed my mind, sir!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, if you were not the stupidest boy in the school, and if I did not make due allowance for your stupidity, I should take you to your headmaster for a flogging—"

"But I—I—I never—" wailed Bunter.

"I shall deal with you myself," said Mr. Quelch. "But I shall deal with you with the greatest severity! Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

"B-b-but, sir, I—I never—"

"Bend over that chair!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter bent his fat person over the chair!

From the bottom of his fat heart he wished that he had never thought of a second performance of that jape on Hacker! But it was rather too late to wish that now! The fat Owl had tried it on once too often.

Whop, whop, whop!

"Yaroooh!"

Whop, whop, whop!

"Yoo-hoop!"

Six was generally the limit. But Quelch apparently considered this a special case, calling for special treatment. He did not stop at six!

Whop, whop, whop!

"Oh crikey! Oh crumbs! Oh scissors!" roared Bunter. "Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

Whop, whop, whop!

"Woooooooooooooooooh!"

It was double-six, and every one a swipe!

Mr. Quelch seemed a little tired when he had finished. He was not so tired as Bunter.

"Now, Bunter—"

"Yow ow-ow!" Bunter wriggled off the chair. "Wow-ow-ow! Oh crikey! Oh jiminy! Ow!"

"Now you may leave my study, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch. "You will not, I think, play such disrespectful tricks again!"

Billy Bunter thought so, too, as he wriggled away from his Form-master's study.

Billy Bunter was fed up—fed up to the back teeth—with telephonic japes! No member of the Greyfriars staff was likely again to be asked—with Bunter's assistance—to call on the captain!

THE END.

(The next yarn in this grand series is better than ever. Note the title: "THE PLOTTER!")

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THE OCEAN TRAIL!

Sensational Story of Doctor Birchmall and Jack Jolly & Co., the laughter-merchants of St. Sam's.

By DICKY NUGENT.

"You boys can help!"

"Eggscuse me, Mr. Fearless—"

"Half the crew are on leave, and we shall need all the help we can get," went on Mr. Ferdinand Fearless, quite unaware that such an important personage as Dr. Birchmall, the Head of St. Sam's, was tugging at his sleeve.

"But even if you all help, we shall still need more hands."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Fearless—"

"Every minnit is preshus if we're to catch that scoundrell, Hymer Kerr, and recover the plans he pinched," said Mr. Fearless, pacing restlessly up and down the deck of his yacht, the Mary Ann, as he spoke.

"But we can't sail with only half a crew."

"If I mite say a word, Mr. Fearless—"

Mr. Fearless started slitley.

"Bless my sole, I'd forgotten all about you! I thought you were back at St. Sam's."

Dr. Birchmall sighed.

"It is quite true that my hart is at St. Sam's. But not the rest of me."

"That proves what I've always suspected," remarked Mr. Fearless, with a wink at Jack Jolly & Co. "Only yesterday I was saying I thought you were not all there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ratts!" snorted the Head, with a frown at the cheery chums of the Fourth. "Look here, Mr. Fearless, what I am trying to tell you is this: so far, I have not given my consent to your son and his friends going with you on this voyage."

"Oh crums!" ejaculated Frank Fearless, while Jolly and Merry and Bright stopped larking and eyed the Head in sheer dismay.

"It is not the end of the term yet, you know, and I am by no means satisfied with their school progress," said Dr. Birchmall, shaking his head seriously.

"Only last week your son displayed his ignorance by asserting that two and six made eight!"

Mr. Fearless blinked.

"Really, Dr. Birchmall! If two and six duzzent make eight, what does it make?"

"Half-a-crown, of course!" answered the Head, with a superior smile.

"I could give you other eggscamples, but these will suffice to show how much these boys need nollidge nocking into their noddles. As their headmaster, I feel that to let them start their hollerdays so carly would be a crying shame."

Mr. Fearless nitted his brows.

"Naturally, I wouldn't dream of interfering with the boys' education," he said. "Yet I feel they may be very useful to me in this momentous trip. Is it not possibul for them to come with me and still carry on with some of their schooling?"

Dr. Birchmall's somewhat shifty eyes gleamed.

"Ah! Now you're talking, Mr. Fearless! By a wonderful stroke of luck, it is! Because it was partly my fault that Hymer Kerr succeeded in pinching the plans, I feel like being really generous with you. Mr. Fearless, I will tell you what I am prepared to do. I will come with you myself and give these youngsters lessons during the voyage. There! What do you think of that?"

The Head beamed like a full moon

as though eggsppecting everybody to be swept off their feet by his generosity.

But if that was what he eggsppected, he got a severe disappointment in the case of the Fourth-Formers. Instead of uttering a corus of delite, Jack Jolly & Co. uttered a howl of protest.

"Don't be a beest, sir!"

"You can't eggsppect us to swot while we're at sea! 'Tain't natural, sir!"

Mr. Fearless silenced the storm with a gesture.

There he stood for a moment with his hands at his lips to make a maggafone and yelled: "Ahoy! Hands wanted!"

There was a prompt rush of feet from all directions. Mr. Fearless and Kaptin Goodfellow were serprized at the response.

They would not have been serprized had they known the reason. They would have been very much alarmed instead! For the fact was that Hymer Kerr, knowing they would probably be in need of hands, had left behind him a number of his own crew with instructions to get jobs on the Mary Ann if they could, with the object of foiling all efforts made to draw level with the Saucy Sal!

But the owner and kaptin of the Mary Ann knew nothing of this raskally skeem, and they felt quite pleased when they saw a crowd of eager applicants swarming round Dr. Birchmall.

They leaned over the side of the yacht and watched the Head set to work. Jack Jolly & Co. watched, too—and a pretty poor opinion they soon had of the way he was doing it!

Unforchunily, Dr. Birchmall had a kind of natural simpertry for men who looked furtive and deceitful and dishonest and unscrupulous. He also had a keen dislike of honest and kindly faces. The result was that he selected all the scoundrells that Hymer Kerr had left behind him and passed over all the others.

"My hat! What an ugly-looking crew!" remarked Mr. Fearless, as he gazed dubiously at the recruits that Dr. Birchmall at last lined up on the key-side. "I only hoap there is method in Dr. Birchmall's madness."

"It's far more likely that there's madness in his method, sir!" remarked Jack Jolly, with a grim larf. "But he seems quite satisfied himself."

There was no mistake about that; he was! As he marched up the gangway at the rear of his villainous crew, his chest was puffed out and his nose was tilted up at quite an eggstraordinary angle!

It was a pity it was, from the Head's point of view, soon after. Through having his nose so high in the air, he failed to see where he was going, as he stepped off the gangway; and

hands, had left behind him a number of his own crew with instructions to get jobs on the Mary Ann if they could, with the object of foiling all efforts made to draw level with the Saucy Sal!

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It was a pity it was, from the Head's point of view, soon after. Through having his nose so high in the air, he failed to see where he was going, as he stepped off the gangway; and

instead of setting his foot on the deck, he plunged it right into a pail of tar!

Plonk! Swoosh!

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody on deck joined in the roar of larfter that echoed across the Mary Ann as the Head struggled to withdraw his foot from that pail. Dr. Birchmall presented a truly commical appearance. Even the ugly raskals the Head had recruited from the key couldn't help guffwing leeringly.

Five minnits later, the Mary Ann, with a horse shaking of her siren, moved away from the quay—on the start of her cheery cross the ocean on the trail of Hymer Kerr!

And when the red shores of Old England were but a dim speck on the horizon, Dr. Birchmall was still struggling desprily to rid himself of the sticky mass of tar that still clung obstinately to his boot!

"The Mystery of the Mary Ann!" is the title of next week's hilariously funny yarn by Dicky Nugent. Don't miss it!



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

July 22nd, 1939.



HARRY WHARTON IN THE CHAIR!

"It is my belief," Alec Rivers, of Leeds, writes, "that the best swimmers are fat people. This being the case, why is it you always make out that Bunter is such a dud in the water? Are you libelling him?" Johnny Bull's prompt answer to this was that it was impossible to libel Bunter—the worst thing you could say about him would not be as bad as the truth! I shan't go all the way with Johnny there; but I can assure my Leeds chum that it's no libel to say that Bunter is a dud at swimming. He is! Only yesterday I had the job of piloting him to safety when he got into difficulties at the swimming pool. He was barely three yards away from the side, but to hear him yelling, you would have thought he was in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. If weight alone makes a good swimmer, Bunter would certainly be the best swimmer at Greyfriars. But a liking for cold water is also necessary, and even Bunter's best friend would hesitate to say he had that! The only reason he joined our swimming party yesterday was that he had an idea we should afterwards adjourn to the Friardale bunshop! The theory that fat people are the best swimmers received a severe jolt last week when a junior short distance race at Courtfield Baths was won by Bunter's study-mate, Peter Todd. Peter Todd, you see, happens to be the thinnest fellow in the Greyfriars Remove! More chin-wag next week, chums! HARRY WHARTON.

GAS MASKS ON AT GREYFRIARS!

Poison fumes Alarm School

Wisps of choking, acrid smoke drifting across the quad, created great alarm at Greyfriars on Wednesday evening and ratted in gas-masks being given their first real try-out. There was quite a panic when Skinner and Storer staggered into the School House with handkerchiefs tied round their mouths.

"Poison-gas—in the quad!" gasped Skinner, as he took off his improvised mask. "Somebody must have dropped a gas bomb!"

Several chaps, who had an idea it might be only Skinner's idea of a leg-pull, put their heads out of the door to find out for themselves. They hopped in again very quickly, choking and coughing.

Get your gas-masks! There was a rush! The sudden appearance, a few minutes later, of fellows in gas-masks drew the attention of the powers that be to the phenomenon. Mr. Quelch came down the stairs at the double to see what was the matter. A dozen fellows, mumbling through their gas-masks, told him. Mr. Quelch stepped out to investigate. He soon stepped in again—looking quite green about the gills.

"It is certainly very unpleasant; but there is no need for alarm. Obviously it is the gardener burning some rubbish," he remarked. "Perhaps one or two of you will go out and find Mimble and tell him to extinguish his bonfire."

They found the source of the trouble without difficulty. Quelch's diagnosis proved very wide of the mark. It was not Mimble burning garden refuse. It was only Mr. Prout taking an evening stroll at the foot of the School House steps. The fumes came from the black cheroot he was smoking.

He seemed quite upset at the sight of our chaps in gas-masks. But the rest of the school will be a lot more upset before the term ends, for it transpires that that black cheroot of Prouty's was only the first of a box of fifty.

It's a jolly lucky thing we've got our gas-masks!

PAGEANT DAY AT GREYFRIARS!

Special Report by BOB CHERRY

First let me say that Pageant Day at Greyfriars made the biggest hit ever. In the course of my career at this school, I have seen spiffing sports, thrilling theatricals, ripping regattas, and many other shows that have made fellows sit up and take notice. But the Pageant went one better than the best of them!

I only wish they would make a habit of teaching us history in this way instead of making us grind away at dates in stuffy Form-rooms. Believe me, chaps, it would be a big improvement. I can tell you for a certainty that I myself learned more history on Pageant Day than I usually learn in a month!

Seeing it all acted before your eyes made it real and at the same time glamorous. For instance, I have always disliked Queen Elizabeth, because there are too many dashed dates to learn in her reign and, anyway, I imagined she must have been a bit of an old frump. I saw her in quite a different light, though, when she came riding through the Close on horseback in the shape of Marjorie Hazeldone!

My opinion about Marjorie is that she is a topping girl at any time. But you can take my word for it that she has never looked so topping as she looked in the ruff and gown of Good Queen Bess!

The most exciting scene was the scrap between the old-time Friars and Hever VIII's soldiers. I must say I never thought much of the Friars before Pageant Day, but when I saw them setting about the troops with

staves and broadswords, my heart went out to them! It was a pleasant surprise, too, to hear the snatches of cross-talk between the opposing forces I quite expected "Gadzooks!" and "By my halidom!" and "Thou scurvy knave!" to be the order of the day. Instead of which, they were yelling: "Take that!" and "Ow! My breadbasket!" and "There's one for your nob, old bean!"—homely phrases that greatly increased my respect for the heroes of olden times. Another very cheery scene was the arrest of Headmaster Leighton after a merry little tussle with seniors in the quad. This scene made me long for the good old days again. Imagine the



battle we would put up nowadays if rebel troops arrived to run in Dr. Locke! But alas, there's not much hope of anything so jolly as that!

Don't, however, run away with the idea that it was all honey in the olden days. My impression of the Greyfriars chaps at the time of the opening of the school proper in 1551 was that they must have had a pretty thin time of it. It seems they spent nearly all their time tottering round the Cloisters two-deep wearing long robes and chanting Latin, while beaks armed with birches stood by watching them.

Not a bit fascinating, from my point of view!

Of course, the "piece de resistance" (I hope I've got that right!) was the old-fashioned game of cricket on Big Side. To see the seniors in toppers and white knee-breeches, bowling under-arm at two stumps crowned with a miniature tree-trunk was a sight for sore eyes!

Parents and friends who turned up for the show all said they enjoyed it a treat. That goes for me, too, and I'm answering for all the fellows who saw it.

Thanks are due to the jolly old Clerk of the Weather, who turned up trumps with a non-stop display of sunshine, to the many good friends of Greyfriars who contributed to the Funds, and to the hard-worked Pageant Committee.

But above all we have to thank our gifted fellow-Removite Wibley for the brainwave that began the thing and carried it through to its brilliant finish.

Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows! The toast is William Wibley—the founder and presiding genius of the latest and greatest success in the school history, the Greyfriars Pageant!

LAST WEEK AT GREYFRIARS.

Clara Trevlyn, of Cliff House, astonished the natives by concluding a sparkling tennis game with a display of rope-whirling. We understand, however, that she disapproves of her proposed new nickname—the Lass Who Lassoes!

The Second Form resolved to start a school rebellion. The rebellion was postponed indefinitely when the bell rang for afternoon classes!

Loder came to the conclusion that he was tired of being a black sheep. He will probably decide to be a giddy goat instead!

Answers to Correspondents

"G. T." (Third). "My Aunt Mary says she considers the Head to be very ill-mannered and ignorant. Can you account for it?"

On inquiry, we find that your aunt overheard Gosling say: "Wot I says is this 'ere: all boys houghter be drowned at birth!" and made the mistake of thinking he was the Head. You should really bring up your relatives better than this, "G. T."!

"S. J. S." (Remove).—"I told Bolsover he had a face like a beetroot, and he didn't like it."

Ah, well! It doesn't always pay to "beetroot"—ful!

"W. S." (Remove).—"Nobody ever laughs when I crack a joke." Is that because the joke always "cracked"?