

BILLY BUNTER, OF GREYFRIARS, LISTENS IN!

The PLOT THAT FAILED!

By
FRANK RICHARDS



The
MAGNET

Billy Bunter's
Own Paper 2^d

MY OWN PAGE



This Week By
**HORACE
COKER,**
The Champion
Champ of the Fifth.

for the golden sands and beetling cliffs. And three cheers for a tripp in the Skilark. And three cheers for the band on the Peer. And three cheers for a flipp round the bay in a nairoplane: And three cheers for a dipp in the briny. Butt befour you dive into the briny, make sure you can swim, I mean swim, make sure you can swim, swim, you can swim. (Give it up!—Ed.) Lotts of fellos who cant swim wont admitt it. That is rong. There is nothing to be ashamed of in not being abel to swim, the every fello who cant swim ort to be ashamed of himself, I think. Butt if you go owt swimming and cant swim, you may be cort by the tied or carried away by danjerus currants, and then a fello like me would have to resqu you.

Nachurally, I am as mutch at home in the water as a beever, butt Potter and Greene cant swim for toffy. Last time we went bathing in the Sark, I had to resqu them both and lugg them to the bank or they would have townd a pare of wattery graves. And what do you think—they made owt afterwards that they had resqued me! Think of that! They toled awl the skool that, butt for them, I shoold never have been seen agane untill the Sark gave up its Coker. Me, mind you! I wopped the pare of them rite there on the bank.

Its the same with handling a bote. Dont go boting if you cant handle a bote. Last time I went boting with Potter, the bote was upsett owing to his clumsiness, so I toled him Id never go owt with him agane, and neckst time I went owt with Greene, and after the bote had gone to the bottom, I had to lugg Greene ashore, owing to his clumsiness, and then I went owt by myself, but owing to the clumsiness of a fello in a canoo, the bote was upsett. There are a lott of clumsy people in botes, and it shooldnt be aloud.

But there are clumsy peeple everyware, espeshully on the roads. Time after time I have been owt on my motor-byke and some clumsy ass has made my byke spilt throo clumsiness on the road in the hedge or sumthing and mite have injured me if it hadd. (I leave it to you. If you can make sense of it, drop me a line and tell me what it means.—Ed.)

SONG OF THE SEA!

Here goes for a poem about the sea, witch is kopyrite in all countries and must not be printedd without my permission.

Roll on, thow deep and dark bloo oshan,
And make a grate deel of commoshan

As thow rollest on the beech,
Hoorah for the good old seaside sunny,
Where you have to have to have a lott of munny
With ices 6d. each.

Spredd yore sales, my trim-bilt wherry,
Because it will be verry merry
To go saling rite over the sea,
Rite over the sea, the sea rite over,
The sea, the sea, as far as Dover,
Rite over, rite over the sea.

Hoorah for the breez that is bloing, bloing,
Hoorah for the jolly old shipp that are going.

Hoorah for the fishing smax,
Hoorah for a dipp in the good old briny,
But mind the sharx witch arent verry tiny
And make awfully savage attax.

I like the Peeroes Concert Party,
Where the songs and the joaks and every-
thing is always jolly harty,
And to lissen to the Band.

So heres to the Vack and the good old
seaside,
What I always want to be beeside
In Englands corral strand!

*From Saturday you dive
wo into the briny make
sure you can swim
I mean SWIM! make
sure you can swim
you can swim Lotts of
fello who cant swim wo
nt admitt to. That is ron*

If you don't believe what I say about Coker's scrawl, here's a small section of it. Try deciphering it yourselves. Coker did send me a drawing of "Weston-sooper-Mare From a Hotell Windo," but I haven't published it, as none of us can decide which way up it is supposed to stand. It doesn't make sense whichever way we put it.—
EDITOR.

HOLIDAY HINTS!

Here are sum hints from an expurt, witch will help yore seaside holiday I mean help you to have a good time.

AT THE HOTELL.—Always go to the best hotell, because the best is usually the best, and you can have a better time there than at sum dinjy little place up a backalley. Tipp the servants awl rownd, and they will be yore devoted slaves. Always remember to find a lott of fawlt with the food, becaws then they will give you the best they've gott.

CLOBBA.—There is no need to take a lott of clobba with you. I usually take two dress soots and ½ a duzzen lounge soots and sum flannels and swimsoots and dressing gowns, and plenty of waterproophs and raincotes for bad wether, witch it usually is, verry.

ON THE SANDS.—If you rekwire to have 40 winx in a deck-chare on the sands, you shoold pin a notiss "DEFF & DUMM" on your jacket, as this will stopp people asking if you kno the rite time the rite time and waking you upp to bye picksher postcards and ice-creem. In order to avoyd any unplezzantness with peeple playing sand-krieket, you shoold wop them awl rownd every time the ball hits you in the i. This will make them kareful kar carephul karephul. (Mercy!—Ed.)

IN THE TRANE.—Always go 1st-class as it is not so crowdedd as 3rd-class. When you have to chanje tranes you will find that yore trane getts in just after the other trane has left so if you want to katch the other trane you must take the trane that goes before yore trane leeves and that will gett in before the other trane goes to miss the trane you would have cort if you hadd not cort the trane that went first. (Boy, run out and get me something for a headache!—Ed.)

PAYING YORE BILL.—Always pay yore hotell bill in spott cash as this avoyds the komplikashions of explaining the matter to the pollice, and besides a fello who diddles the hotell or diddles the railway or diddles or diddles is a rotta and a cadd.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—I have done my best to decipher Coker's smudgy, smeary, blotty scrawl, with its weird-spelling and impossible grammar. The printer has also done his best. So has the office-boy. If we have failed, please remember that it has cost us each several nights' sleep and most of our hair—and pity us!

THEY'VE left me till last. Its a deliberate insult, and Ive a jolly good jolly good mind not to rite anything at all. It would serve them rite if I didnt rite, but its rite, I will rite. I kno you would miss it if I didnt rite.

Sum fellos have used this page to ressite a list of their greevances. Butt not me. I have so many many greevances that I couldnt get them in, anyway, what with Prout and Wingate and cheeky yung cubs in the Remoove. I have given up trying to make such ignorant peeple respect me. I despize them. They are beneath my notiss. In fuchure, I will ignore them utterly and treet them with content.

I am not going to rite a lott of rott. I made a blott just there, butt they won't be abel to print a blott, so it duzznt really matter. I am going to rite a page of Holiday Topicks. I expect a lott of you are beside the sea at the sea the seaside just at prezant. There is nothing like a dipp in the briny to make a fello helthy and fitt.

And if the wether is moldy, who cares? I mean, it always is, isnt it, always? But who cares, because it always is. I wooldnt. What on earth does this mean?—Ed.)

TWENTY-ONE CHEERS!

So three cheers for the Holls. And three cheers for the seaside. And three cheers

LAST, but not LEAST!

Big, blundering Coker of the Fifth is the school's prize fat-head. His grammar and spelling are on a par with his cricket, football, and swimming. Yet Coker fondly believes he is the finest all-round man at Greyfriars. He is determined to stand no "check" from juniors, and often tries to whop the whole Remoove—though time after time he has gone down the Remoove staircase wrong end first. His rich Aunt Judy keeps him well supplied with pocket-money, and though his pals, Potter and Greene, are fond of Aunt Judy's hampers, they find Coker almost too much to bear. Yet Coker is, of course, as honest, upright, and straightforward as anyone, and incapable of being mean or shady. He is simply a prize fathead—and how Greyfriars would hate to lose him!

(Cartoon by H. SKINNER.)



Home James Coker

The PLOT THAT FAILED!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

A FOE TO THE RESCUE!

Billy Bunter's New Booby-Trap!

"WHOSE bags?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Really, it was hardly necessary to ask the question.

The plumpest and tightest trousers at Greyfriars School were recognisable at a glance.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at them.

Those extensive trousers were not, of course, an uncommon sight. They were seen as often as Billy Bunter was.

But it was rather remarkable to behold them, where the Famous Five of the Remove now beheld them.

After third school that morning, Harry Wharton & Co. were walking in the quad, by the path that ran by the masters' study windows.

One of those windows was wide open in the sunny July morning! It was the window of their Form-master's study.

Mr. Quelch, obviously, was not in his study. Had Quelch been there, certainly the fattest member of his Form would not have been clambering in at the study window! Which was exactly what Billy Bunter was doing.

Nobody was about, till the Famous Five happened along. Bunter had chosen his moment carefully, for that surreptitious invasion of his Form-master's study.

Any other fellow in the Remove would have whipped in at that window in the twinkling of an eye! Probably Billy Bunter had intended to do so! But Bunter had more weight to lift than most fellows! He had to take his time about it. He was half-in when the chums of the Remove spotted him—and there was little more to be seen of him than a back view of extensive and conspicuous trousers.

"What on earth is that fat chump up to?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If Quelch came into his study—"

"Quelch has gone over to the Head's house," said Frank Nugent. "I suppose that fat blitherer knows that! But—"

"Urrrgh!" came a grunt from the fat climber at the window. Bunter seemed rather winded by his exertions.

Bob Cherry bestowed a wink on his comrades, and stepped towards the window—silently.

He lifted his hand.

Smack!

"Yaroooh!" came a startled roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That smack rang like a pistol-shot! Billy Bunter roared, wriggled, and rolled! He bumped on the study floor within, with another roar.

"Yooohoooh!"

Billy Bunter's clamber in at the study window had finished quite suddenly. He sat on the study carpet and spluttered.

"Ooh! Oh, crikey! What's that? Ooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five grinning faces looked in at the window. Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"Ow! Beasts!" he gasped. "I say, you fellows—ow! Wharrer you up to, you silly idiots? Ow!"

"Only helping you in!" explained Bob Cherry. "Somebody might have come along and spotted you! Your bags could be seen about a mile off."

"Beast!"

Bunter did not seem grateful for that help. He scrambled to his feet and wriggled.

"What the thump are you up to?" asked Johnny Bull. "If Quelch cops you in his study—"

"He won't!" grunted Bunter. "He's

gone to jaw to the Head! He won't be coming back to this study yet."

"But what have you got in at the window for, you howling ass?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Because that fat old chump Prout was in the passage!" grunted Bunter. "I couldn't walk into the study under his nose."

"But what's the game?" asked the captain of the Remove. "If you're thinking of larking with Quelch, you blithering bloater, the sooner you forget it the better."

"I ain't going to lark with Quelch! It's that cad Smithy—" explained Bunter.

"Smithy!" repeated the Famous Five all together.

"He's coming to this study! Didn't you hear Quelch tell Smithy that he'd left a Latin exercise ready for him, and he was to fetch it after third school? I say, you fellows, don't you mention to Smithy that you saw me getting in here! He might think I did it, if he knew. You know his rotten temper."

Billy Bunter turned from the window and rolled across the study to the door. The Famous Five watched him.

For half that term Billy Bunter had had a feud on with Smithy! Smithy, certainly, did not seem to take much heed of the fat Owl and his feud! But Billy Bunter was quite deadly about it.

Evidently this was another move in his campaign against Smithy!

Smithy had to come to that study to fetch a Latin exercise. Quelch was safe off the scene for half an hour, at least. This was an opportunity that Billy Bunter was not going to lose.

"Bunter, you ass—" breathed Harry Wharton.

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"Bunter, you chump——" exclaimed Bob.

"Bunter, you terrific fathead!" ejaculated Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. The Owl of the Remove did not heed. He had taken the inkstand from the study table. There were two inkpots on it, full of ink, one red and one black. He set the study door a few inches open. Then he stepped on a chair and arranged the inkstand on the top of the thick oak door, balanced against the lintel over the doorway.

The five juniors outside the window watched him in something like horror.

True, Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was due in that study, and he was booked to catch that booby-trap! It was not intended for Quelch—and Smithy would come along and go, long before Quelch came back from the Head's house. But setting a booby-trap in a master's study was really unheard-of! Even reckless fellows like the Bounder would have thought twice! Bunter, it appeared, had not thought even once! It was a case of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread!

Bunter, evidently, was quite satisfied. Having fixed up his booby-trap, he replaced the chair by the wall, and rolled back to the window! He started clambering out.

"You unspeakable chump!" hissed Bob Cherry. "Go and take that inkstand down before you get out."

"Eh? I've fixed that up for Smithy!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter——" exclaimed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, get out of the way! I've got to get out of this!" grunted Bunter. "I don't want to be here when Smithy puts his head into that booby-trap! If he saw me here, he would jolly well think I did it! You know what a suspicious beast he is!"

"Take it down——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You howling ass, suppose a beak put his head in? Prout might look in to speak to Quelch——" hissed the captain of the Remove.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter, apparently, had not thought of that possibility! Now that he thought of it, it only made him eager to get off the spot!

He plunged out of the window, regardless of the Famous Five. A foot caught Bob Cherry under the chin, and another jolted into Harry Wharton's waistcoat as the fat Owl came headlong out.

"Ow!" gasped Bob.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

Bunter plumped down, spluttering for breath.

But he scrambled up at once, as a head was put out of a study window at a little distance.

Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, glanced along towards Quelch's window. Evidently he had heard the bump as Bunter landed on the earth.

Hacker frowned. He had not, fortunately, seen Bunter descend from the window. But he could see that something had been going on.

"What are you Remove boys doing here?" snapped the Acid Drop. "You know perfectly well that you are not allowed to loiter by the masters' windows! Go away at once!"

Billy Bunter gave him one blink and rolled away.

Harry Wharton & Co followed. It was too late to think of undoing Bunter's deadly work—with the Acid Drop's acid eye on the spot.

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They could only hope that Bunter's booby-trap would get to the right address—and that Prout, or Capper, or Wiggins, or Mossoo, or any other member of Dr. Locke's staff, would not look into that study and get it instead of the Bounder!

Not For Smithy!

"I SAY, Smithy——"

"Get out!"

"But I say——"

"Shut that door!"

"But I say," persisted Billy Bunter, blinking in at the doorway of Study No. 4, in the Remove, "have you forgotten Quelch telling you to fetch that exercise from his study?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"And get out, you fat fool!"

"I only came to remind you——"

"Will you get out?" roared the junior in Study No. 4. "Buzz off, and don't bother!"

Billy Bunter did not buzz off. He stood blinking at the angry face, with his knitted brows and jutting nose, in uneasy perplexity.

Bunter was getting worried.

Smithy had gone up to his study after third school. That was all right, as it gave his fat foe time to get by with that booby-trap! But Bunter had expected, naturally, that he would come down again. And he hadn't.

So there was Bunter to remind him!

It was a quarter of an hour since Billy Bunter had fixed up that booby-trap in Quelch's study for Smithy to walk into. Sooner or later, somebody would go to the study and walk into it—so the sooner Smithy went, the better.

It seemed, though, that he wasn't going. So far from thanking Bunter for reminding him and cutting off at once, he glared at the fat Owl across the study and glanced round, apparently for a missile.

It was quite unexpected and dismaying—to Bunter!

A few weeks ago, no fellow in the Greyfriars Remove would have expected Herbert Vernon-Smith to take to swotting, still less to enter for a Latin prize and welcome extra toot from his beak.

That sort of thing was much more like his cousin and double, Bertie Vernon, who had left a few weeks ago. Indeed, many fellows had remarked that the Bounder seemed to have taken a leaf out of his relative's book since that relative had left Greyfriars.

But, surprising as it was to see Vernon-Smith taking to swotting instead of ragging—surprising as it was to see him in Quelch's good graces instead of being regarded as the worst boy in the Form, the Remove fellows had got used to it. Smithy's new manners and customs were taken for granted, and fellows began to forget that half a term ago he had been the scapegrace of the school.

So Billy Bunter was taken quite by surprise now. Smithy was not playing up as usual.

Mr. Quelch, as he had done many times of late, had taken the trouble to prepare a special exercise for him to help him in his work for the prize examination. He had told Smithy to take it from his study table, after third school. And Smithy hadn't—and apparently wasn't going to—which was surprising, dismaying, and disconcerting to the fat Owl, in the peculiar circumstances.

"I—I—I say, Smithy," stammered Bunter, "Quelch will expect you to

work at that paper, you know. He's set it specially!"

"Will you shut that door?"

"Yes, old chap! But I say, what about the exam, you know?" urged Bunter. "Ain't you going in for the Latin prize after all?"

"What does that matter to you, you fat idiot?"

"Well, I'd fetch that paper, if I were you! I say, Smithy, old chap—— Oh crikey!"

Whiz!

A volume of Virgil whizzed across the study.

Billy Bunter banged the door shut just in time!

Virgil crashed on the inner side of the door and dropped to the floor.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He stood blinking at the study door. Evidently, Smithy was not thinking of going down to Quelch's study for that exercise. It looked as if Smithy was chucking swotting—at a very awkward moment for Bunter!

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter blinked round at three or four Remove fellows in the passage who were staring at him. "I say, what's up with that beast in Study No. 4? What's he in a tantrum about this time?"

"Look in again and ask him!" suggested Skinner.

"Jever see such an ill-tempered beast?" said the fat Owl. "He's rowed with Redwing, who was always his pal. I jolly well think that's why Redwing cleared off early for the hols, because he couldn't stand Smithy any longer! Blessed if I know how he stood him so long! I say, you all heard Quelch tell him about that paper in his study? Now the beast won't go and fetch it!"

"Fed up with swotting, perhaps!" grinned Skinner. "It was a bit of a change for Smithy, and no mistake!"

Billy Bunter stooped a fat head to the keyhole. He did not venture to open the door again, with Smithy in that state of tantrums!

"I say, Smithy——" he squeaked through the keyhole.

No reply.

"Smithy, old chap——"

Silence from Study No. 4!

"I say, old fellow, I'd jolly well go and fetch that paper from Quelch's study if I were you!" squeaked Bunter.

"Hadn't you better go now, old fellow?"

There was still no reply from the study. But the door jerked open from within—so suddenly that the stooping fat Owl lost his balance and stumbled over in the doorway.

A red and angry face appeared from the study. A boot shot out!

"Ow!" roared Bunter.

He rolled out of the doorway. Like Iser in the poem, he rolled rapidly. The junior in Study No. 4 followed him, and the boot shot out again and again!

Thud, thud!

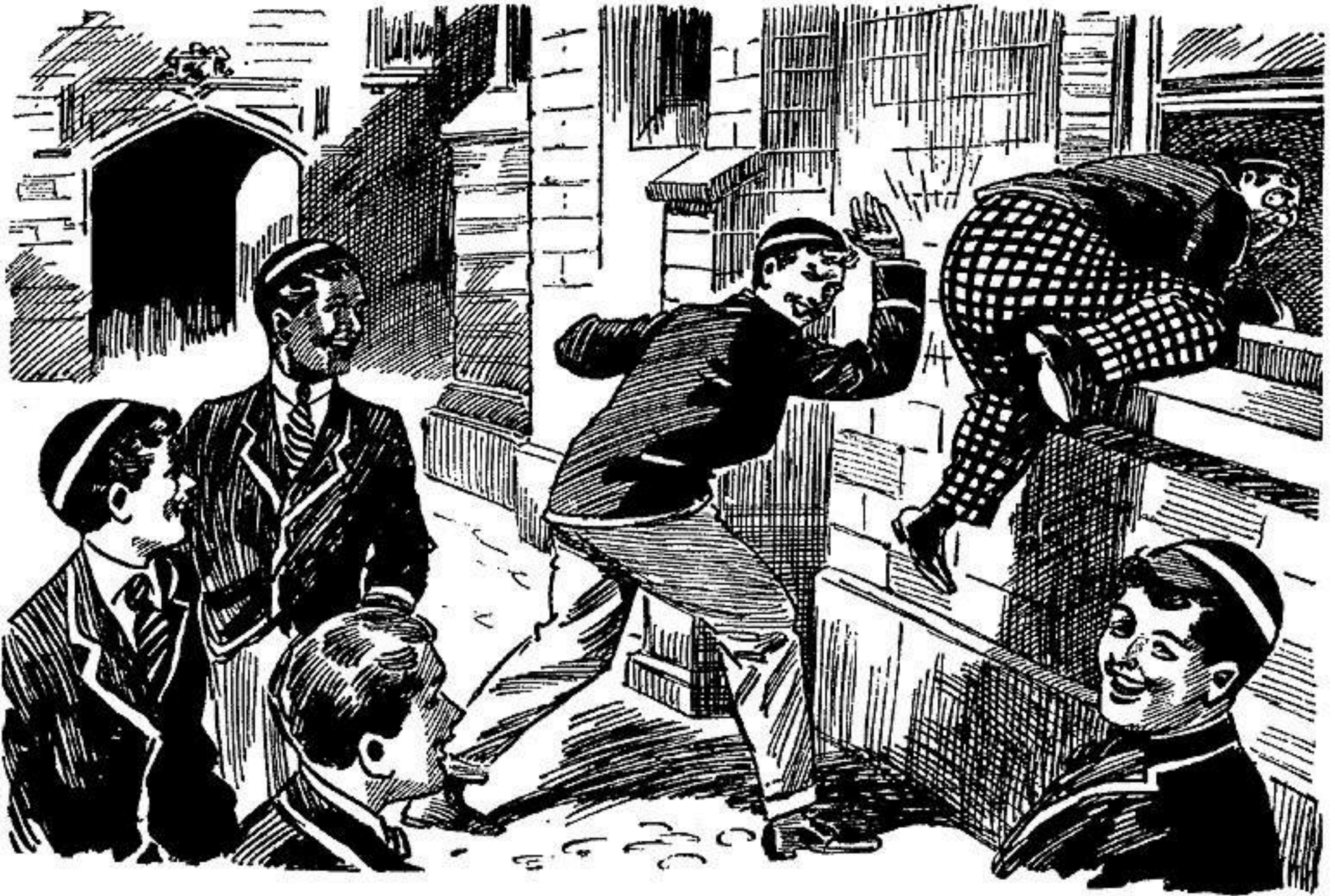
"Ow! Beast! Leave off kicking me!" roared Bunter. "Why, you beast, I was only saying—yaroooh! I only came to say—yoo-hoo-hoop! Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter bolted down the passage for the stairs. The door of Study No. 4 slammed again.

Bunter did not think of approaching that door any more. He was fed up with Smithy. Clearly the beast was not going down to Quelch's study to fetch that beastly paper.

The fat Owl rolled down the Remove staircase, wriggling.

From the bottom of his fat heart, Billy Bunter repented him of that



Billy Bunter roared as Bob Cherry's hand smacked on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars!

booby-trap in Quelch's study. But no fellow could have foreseen this.

Even now, he could not understand why Smithy was not going to fetch that paper—unless, as Skinner suggested, he was fed up with swotting, and was not, after all, going in for the Latin prize—which was very sudden if it was true!

But whatever the reason, Smithy wasn't going to Quelch's study—and Quelch, sooner or later, was! Bunter had to undo his fell work with the booby-trap before Quelch did!

He rolled out into the quad. There was nothing for it but another laborious climb into Quelch's study window.

Bunter rolled along to that window. He blinked cautiously to and fro as he reached it. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and saw no man.

He grabbed the window-sill for another weary climb. Once more the plumpest and tightest trousers at Greyfriars School became a conspicuous object on the landscape.

But though Bunter, like Moses, saw no man—he was, unlike Moses, seen! An acid eye was on him from Hacker's window.

Perhaps Hacker was suspicious. The Acid Drop was often suspicious. Anyhow, Hacker, from his window, fixed a cold, inquiring eye on Bunter as the fat Owl rolled into the offing. And as Bunter clambered on Quelch's window-sill, Hacker put his head out.

"Bunter!" he rapped.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked round in alarm, slipped from the window-sill, and sat on the earth beneath. He sat suddenly and hard with a bump that almost shook the old Greyfriars quad.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crumbs! Wow!"

"Bunter!" rapped the Acid Drop. Bunter tottered up, and blinked at

him. "Were you about to climb into your Form-master's study?"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Then what were you doing?"

"I—I—I—I was—was only going to—to sit on the—the window-sill, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I'm rather tut-tut-tired, and—and—"

"You are quite aware, Bunter, that a junior is not allowed to sit on a master's window-sill?"

"Oh, yes—no!"

"You had better go, I think!" snapped the Acid Drop.

Bunter thought so, too. He went.

He wondered, dismally, who was going to get that booby-trap.

It had to remain where it was now, and somebody would get it. The only certain thing was that Smithy wouldn't, and the probability was that Quelch would. It was a harrowing state of affairs, and for once—perhaps the first time in history—Billy Bunter was not thinking wholly of dinner when the dinner-bell rang!

The End of His Tether!

BERTIE VERNON slammed the door of Study No. 4 and crossed to the window. He leaned there, looking down into the sunny quad. His face was dark and harassed.

The junior who was believed by all at Greyfriars to be Herbert Vernon-Smith, and who was in reality Smithy's cousin and double, was at the end of his tether.

For weeks that imposture had gone on, unsuspected and undiscovered.

But it had to end. Vernon was passionately, almost fiercely, resolved on that.

It had been easy—Captain Vernon, at Lantham Chase, had told him that it would be easy, and so it had been.

Bertie Vernon, the Bounder's double,

had "left" Greyfriars, and who was to guess that the Bounder had been kidnapped the same day, and that his double had coolly walked back into the school, taking his name, his place, his identity?

Even Tom Redwing, the Bounder's chum, had not guessed—had suspected nothing, at first, though, as Vernon well knew, he had suspected later.

But Redwing was gone!

All the Remove believed, as the Remove master and the headmaster believed, that Tom Redwing had taken French leave to get off early for the summer holidays and joined his sailor-man father in a coasting trip, only sending Mr. Quelch a telegram from Dover to apprise him of the fact.

The Bounder's double had believed that, with the rest! He had been puzzled and perplexed, for he was certain that Tom Redwing had doubted him, and yet he had gone off without a word.

His uncle at Lantham Chase had told him that he had seen Redwing, that he had secured his silence, and that there was nothing to be feared.

But now—

What had happened to Redwing?

Herbert Vernon-Smith was a prisoner in the turret-room at Lantham Chase. For him Bertie Vernon had little pity. The Bounder had been his bitter enemy. He had done him all the harm he could. He had taken advantage of the strange resemblance between them to land him in trouble after trouble. He had been unscrupulous, ruthless! Let him take what came to him! As he had done, let him be done by!

Vernon's conscience was not, perhaps, satisfied with that argument. But it was soothed.

And he was deeply under the influence of his uncle at Lantham Chase. Captain Vernon had planned all this.

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for him. Personally, he stood to gain nothing—nothing but the risk of the law's penalty if he failed. Accustomed to respect and obey the man who had done everything for him, Bertie Vernon had given in, he had played the part assigned to him and saved his conscience as best he could!

But now— Since he had heard that Tom Redwing's bicycle had been discovered hidden in the woods at Lantham Chase the scales had fallen from his eyes.

Only too well, now, he could guess how the cool, grim, iron-hearted plotter at Lantham Chase had secured the silence of the Bounder's chum!

The locked and shuttered turret-room had held one prisoner for long weeks. Now it held two! Only too clearly he saw it now. Tom Redwing has suspected the truth, he had gone to Lantham Chase to verify his suspicions—and the captain's iron grasp had closed on him! That was how his silence had been secured!

He had not, as all the Remove believed, gone to sea with old John Redwing. He had sought his imprisoned chum, and was sharing his imprisonment.

It could not go on!

Bertie Vernon had written a brief note to the man at Lantham Chase. He had told him that he would not stand for it and that it must end. But how was it to end?

It was no wonder that Vernon had forgotten that he had been swotting for an examination, that he did not think of fetching the paper that Quelch had so kindly prepared for him. He would not be at Greyfriars when the examination was held. All that was over!

Everything was over—at Greyfriars! Looking down from the window he saw Harry Wharton & Co. strolling in the quadrangle, happy and carefree, thinking, probably, of the coming holidays, and of where they were going and what they were going to do.

He wondered what they would have thought, and said, if they could have guessed what was passing in his tormented mind.

They passed out of his sight and he turned from the window, pacing the study with restless steps.

What was he going to do? What was he going to do? What would his uncle do? What could either of them do, at the pass things had come to? If the kidnapped Bounder was released—and he must be, if Redwing was—what would follow?

He could not tell! His brain seemed to whirl as he tried to think it out.

The captain had gone too far for retreat! Vernon could imagine how that dark, iron face would set at the suggestion that he should release the prisoners of the turret-room—and face the consequences. Yet it had to be done; there was no other way!

The clang of a bell below interrupted his harassed thoughts. There was a tramp of feet in the passage.

Fellows who were up in the studies were going down at the clang of the dinner-bell.

Vernon turned to the door. He pulled himself together as he left the study. The Bounder's double was like the Bounder, not only in looks. Whatever he had to face, whatever was coming to him, he could face it with a stiff upper lip.

Two or three juniors in the passage glanced at him. They had seen him boot Bunter from his study, and supposed that the Bounder was in one

of his tantrums—not an uncommon thing with Herbert Vernon-Smith.

But no eye could read, in his cool, indifferent face, the tormenting thoughts within; no one could have guessed, from his looks, that he was a fellow at the end of his tether, facing the prospect of disaster and disgrace.

On the Remove landing a fat figure was lingering. Billy Bunter, for once, was deaf to the joyous sound of the dinner-bell!

"I say, Smithy—" squeaked Bunter, as the Bounder's double crossed the landing to the stairs.

Vernon passed on, unheeding, and went down the stairs.

But Billy Bunter was not to be passed unheeded. This was his last chance—his very last! He rolled after Vernon and grabbed him by the arm.

"I say, old chap—" he gasped.

"You fat fool, leave me alone!" snapped Vernon, jerking at his sleeve.

He was in no mood to be patient with the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove.

"I—I say, it's a message from Quelch!" gasped Bunter. "As—as you didn't fetch that—that paper from his study, he—he says you're to go at once and—see him in his study!"

"In his study?" repeated Vernon.

Over the banisters he could see Mr. Quelch. The Remove master was standing talking to Prout, the master of the Fifth.

Billy Bunter did not see Quelch! Bunter was short-sighted—and neither was he looking over the banisters! His eyes, and his spectacles, were fixed on Vernon.

"Yes, he's waiting for you there!" urged Bunter eagerly. "He—he called to me and said 'Tell Vernon-Smith to come to my study at once!' His very words! You—you'd better go, old chap! I—I fancy Quelch will be rather shirty if you don't go!"

"You howling ass—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Let go my sleeve, you fat idiot!"

"But, I say, Smithy, old chap, I—I was only going to say— Leggo, you beast! Oh crikey! Yaroop!"

Billy Bunter roared as his fat head was tapped on the banisters.

Bertie Vernon went on down the staircase, leaving him roaring.

"Ow! Beast!" Bunter rubbed his suffering head. "Oh crikey!"

Bunter rolled dismally down the stairs. It was his last chance—and it had failed! Smithy was not going to walk into that booby-trap, and Bunter's only comfort was that if Quelch did, he would never know that Bunter had done it! That, at least, was a comfort for the fat Owl, though it was a comfort that was not destined to last!

He rolled into hall after the Remove. There he found another comfort—there was steak-and-kidney pie for dinner! But even while revelling in the joys of steak-and-kidney pie, Billy Bunter could not help wondering what would happen when Quelch went to his study after dinner! Even steak-and-kidney pie did not wholly fill his thoughts—though it filled his circumference almost to bursting point!

Several times, as helping after helping of steak-and-kidney pie went on the downward path, the fat Owl cast inimical blinks through his big spectacles at Smithy. Bertie Vernon did not observe them. He had forgotten the podgy Owl's fat existence.

The Bounder's double was thinking, as he sat at the Remove table, that that was probably the last meal he would sit at in the old hall of Greyfriars—and wondering, too, what the crowd of fellows about him would say when he was gone! But when dinner was

over and the fellows marched out of hall, he strolled into the quad, his hands in his pockets, feeling, but certainly not looking, at the end of his tether!

Beastly for Bunter!

CRASH!

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch fairly bounded. Seldom, or never, did Henry Samuel Quelch bound. He was a sedate and dignified gentleman; and he was, moreover, past the age of bounding. But he bounded now. He bounded clear of the floor!

What had happened, Quelch did not for the moment know.

His momentary impression was that the ancient, solid pile of Greyfriars School was tumbling down on his head!

But it was not so bad as that.

Greyfriars still stood solidly where it had stood for centuries. Something, however, had landed on Quelch's astonished head.

After dinner the Remove master had gone to his study. He pushed the door open and entered, without a suspicion or a misgiving. Then it happened!

It was an inkstand that crashed on his mortar-board! It was an inkpot of black ink that lodged in his neck! It was an inkpot of red ink that caught him in the ear!

He bounded! The inkstand crashed at his feet. The red inkpot slipped off his ear, shedding its contents as it slipped, and clattered down beside the inkstand. The black inkpot remained lodged in his neck, caught there, and black ink ran down Quelch's majestic back!

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Quelch! "Oh! What—"

He staggered in the doorway. His mortar-board had been knocked sideways, and remained at an intoxicated angle. Red and black ink streaked his features. He dabbed his face—his fingers came away inky. He gazed at the inkstand at his feet with dizzy eyes.

"Oh!" he gasped, for the third time.

Three or four study doors along Masters' Passage opened. That crash had been heard far and wide.

Hacker shot out of one study, Prout rolled out of another; Monsieur Charpentier popped out of a third.

"Quelch!" gasped Hacker.

"My dear Quelch—" boomed Prout.

"Mais, mon cher Quelch—" squeaked Monsieur Charpentier.

They gazed at Quelch in astonishment and horror. Quelch gasped for breath. Through the ink, red and black, that streaked his countenance, his ginlet eyes glinted like steel!

Only for one startled moment did Quelch suppose that the building was tumbling down on his devoted head. Then he knew!

He had walked into a booby-trap! Some audacious young rascal had put up a booby-trap for him in his study! It was amazing—unthinkable—unnerving! But there it was. It was a booby-trap, and Quelch had walked right into it!

"My dear Quelch, what—what—what has happened?" boomed Prout. The master of the Fifth was not quick on the up-take. "Did you drop your inkstand, Quelch? My dear fellow, your face is splashed. You have splashed your face with the ink, Quelch!"

Snort from Quelch!

"I have done nothing of the kind!" he snapped. "This inkstand fell on my head as I opened my door!"

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Prout. "Mon Dieu!" squeaked Monsieur Charpentier. "C'est affreux, cela! Mon cher Quelch—"

"A booby-trap!" said Mr. Hacker grimly. He stepped along the passage, and stood surveying the inkstand and the pool of ink in the study doorway. "If you have any difficulty in tracing the author of this shocking outrage, Quelch, I think I can assist you."

Quelch dabbed at ink, and breathed hard through an inky nose.

"I should be very much obliged, Hacker, if you could!" he gasped. "I have no idea at present! I can scarcely believe that any boy of my Form—"

"Bunter, sir, is a boy of your Form!" said the Acid Drop dryly.

"Bunter?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"I should recommend you to inquire of Bunter, sir, why he was climbing into your study window shortly before the dinner-bell rang."

"You saw him, Mr. Hacker?"

"I saw him, sir, from my own window."

"Thank you, Mr. Hacker!" said Quelch.

He went into his study. His speaking countenance, where it was not obscured by ink, was red with wrath. He rang the bell for Trotter.

The House page gave a jump at the sight of the inky Form-master. He stared at Quelch with wide-open eyes.

"You—you—you rang, sir!" stammered Trotter.

"Find Master Bunter of my Form at once and send him to this study!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yessir!" gasped Trotter.

And he departed to find Master Bunter of Quelch's Form and send him to that study.

Mr. Quelch, while he waited, dabbed ink. He set his mortar-board straight, and dabbed and dabbed and dabbed at ink red and black. While he did so his eye strayed to a cane on his table.

Quelch was really more in need of a wash and a change than anything else. But that could wait—and the author of that booby-trap could not! Quelch was yearning to use that cane. If Bunter was the delinquent, Bunter was booked for the time of his life when he arrived in that study!

Bunter did not seem in a hurry to arrive.

Bunter certainly did not know that he was under suspicion. He saw no reason why Quelch should pick on him if he walked into that booby-trap. But a guilty conscience caused the fat Owl's footsteps to lag as he obeyed the summons to his Form-master's presence.

But a fat face and a large pair of spectacles blinked unsteadily into the study at last.

Billy Bunter gave the inky pool in the doorway a blink. He gave the inky face of his Form-master another blink. He felt a deep, inward quake. He had wondered who would get that booby-trap—and whether Quelch would. He knew now!

"Come in, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

"Ye-es, sir!" mumbled Bunter. He came in—but did not go far from the doorway. He did not like the look on Quelch's face.

"Did you place that inkstand on my door, Bunter?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Bunter, in great alarm.

Even a truthful fellow might have hesitated to reply in the affirmative under the deadly glare of Quelch's glinting eyes. Billy Bunter was not likely to do so. W. G. Bunter had little use for truth at the best of times.

"Have you entered this study since third school, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! I haven't been in this passage at all."

"Have you entered it by the window?"

"The—the window?" gasped Bunter.

"Oh crikey! Certainly not, sir! I—I couldn't climb in at that window, sir! If those fellows say—I—I—I mean nobody saw me, sir! You see, nobody could have, because I wasn't there, sir!"

"Mr. Hacker saw you climbing in at the window, Bunter."

"Oh crikey!" Bunter remembered the Acid Drop. "I—I—I never got in, sir—Hacker called to me before I could get in, sir! Besides, I wasn't getting in! I—I told Mr. Hacker I was only going to sit on the window-sill!"

"Why were you getting in, Bunter?"

"I—I wasn't, sir! I—I never knew the booby-trap was there, so, of course, I wasn't getting in to shift it, sir!"

stammered Bunter. "I hadn't the faintest idea it was there, and I—I was afraid you might walk into it, sir!"

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"You did not know it was there—and you were afraid I might walk into it!" he articulated.

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**Will
READERS PLEASE NOTE
that owing to the August
Bank Holiday, next week's
issue of the "MAGNET"
will be on sale FRIDAY,
AUGUST 4th?**

"Yes, sir! I mean no, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I never knew anything about it at all. I never heard you tell Smithy to come to the study after third school, sir—and I certainly never thought of fixing up a booby-trap for him in your study. I—I hope I'm too respectful, sir!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"I—I can't imagine who did it, sir!" gasped Bunter. "My—my mind's a perfect blank! All I know is that I never did—I—I—I'm quite sure of that, sir! I—I think somebody must have stuck it up for Smithy, sir, but I—I—I can't guess who it was—"

Mr. Quelch picked up his cane.

"Bunter, it is quite clear to me that you have played this outrageous prank and drenched your Form-master with ink—"

"I—I—I—"

"You will bend over that chair, Bunter! I shall give you the severest caning that I have ever given any boy since I have been a schoolmaster!"

"Oh crikey! But—but I never did it, sir!" yelled Bunter. "And—and I meant it for Smithy, sir, only he—he never came to the study—I mean, I didn't mean it for anybody sir, as—as I never did it! I—I hope you can take my word, sir!"

"Bend over that chair!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter blinked at him with a terrified blink. The expression on Quelch's face was absolutely unnerving.

What the severest caning Mr. Quelch had ever given any boy since he had been a schoolmaster might be like, Bunter did not know. And he did not want to learn by experience. Very much indeed he didn't!

Mr. Quelch swished the cane, and pointed to the chair with it.

"Bend over at once, Bunter!" he thundered.

Billy Bunter tottered to the chair! He bent over! Bunter had had six before—many a time and oft: though not so often as he deserved. But the hapless fat Owl could see that this was not going to be an ordinary six! This was going to be awful! It was going to be fearful! He bent over a chair with the most dreadful anticipations!

Swipe!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. He bounded.

"Stay where you are, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

But, for once, the voice of the Remove master was unheeded by that member of his Form!

Bunter did not stay where he was! He made one bound away from the chair—and another bound to the door!

One terrific swipe like that was enough for Bunter! It was more than enough!

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch.

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

He shot through the doorway.

Mr. Quelch gazed after him as if transfixed!

No fellow, of course, liked bending over and taking six! But never before, in Mr. Quelch's experience, had any fellow interrupted the ceremony in this extraordinary manner. It was unprecedented—unheard of! Billy Bunter was making history!

"Bunter!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Yaroooooh!" floated back from the passage.

Mr. Quelch leaped to the doorway! He stared out at a fat figure that was doing the passage at about fifty miles per hour.

"Bunter!" he roared. "Bunter! Come back at once!"

Bunter disappeared round the corner, going strong.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

Bunter was gone!

And Mr. Quelch, with deep feelings, laid down the cane, and went to get that wash and change that he so badly needed! The rest could wait till the Remove were in their Form-room! And, like wine, it was likely to improve with keeping!

Man Missing!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Where is Bunter?"

"I don't know, sir!"

Snort from Mr. Quelch!

That snort seemed to imply that the Head boy of the Remove ought to have known and imparted his knowledge on the spot!

The Remove were in their Form-room, with one exception. Billy Bunter, for reasons best known to his fat and fatuous self, had not arrived for class.

Quelch's gimlet-eye, when he let his Form in, glittered over the Remove, in search of that particular junior. But Bunter was not to be seen! Hence Quelch's inquiry, which he barked at the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton was Head Boy of the Remove, and captain of the Form. Head Boy of a Form at Greyfriars was not merely the fellow in top place—it was more or less an official position, rather like a headmaster's praepostor. But really, even the official Head Boy could hardly be expected to know the whereabouts of every fellow in a Form.

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numbering over thirty. Really and truly, the Head Boy of the Remove could not produce a fat Owl on demand, like a conjurer producing a rabbit out of a hat!

Quelch snorted! He was not, perhaps, in his usual reasonable mood. Red ink in his left ear, and black ink down his back, had probably had an upsetting effect on Quelch.

"Todd!" he barked.

"Yes, sir!" said Peter Todd.

"Bunter is in your study: probably you know where he is now."

"No, sir!"

Another snort from Quelch.

Clearly, he was very anxious to get into touch with the fat ornament of his Form.

Skinner winked at the fellows near him. Some of the fellows were carefully suppressing grins.

Obviously, Bunter was not merely a few minutes late—he was stopping out. Most of the fellows guessed the reason.

And, indeed, serious step as it was to cut a class, the expression on Quelch's face indicated that that serious step was not wholly injudicious on Bunter's part.

The Remove room, at present, was a dreadfully dangerous corner for Bunter, until Quelch had recovered a little from the dire effects of the inkstand and ink.

It was, indeed, rather like a lions' den to walk into—for Bunter!

Daniel, in ancient times, walked cheerily into the lions' den; but William George Bunter did not dare to be a Daniel!

Quelch had taken up his cane! He replaced it on his desk. He stepped to the Form-room door and glanced into the corridor. Evidently he drew the corridor blank, for he stepped back again, with tightly-compressed lips. His gimlet eyes glittered over the class again.

"Vernon-Smith!" he rapped.

Bertie Vernon did not answer. He was sitting with his eyes on his desk: the only fellow in the Form who had not noticed Bunter's absence.

In his first day of playing the part of the fellow he had supplanted, Bertie had not always remembered to answer to the name of Vernon-Smith. But he had very soon got used to it and fallen into the habit of answering automatically. But now, at the moment, his thoughts were wandering—he was thinking of the letter he had written the day before, to his uncle at Lantham Chase, and wondering what step Captain Vernon would take in dealing with it.

He had half-expected to be called to Mr. Quelch's telephone that morning. But there had been no call from Lantham Chase.

But he knew that his letter must have deeply disturbed the captain, and probably alarmed him. The Army man had to take some step! And it could not be long delayed—Vernon was determined that there should be no delay.

Five or six fellows glanced round at him. Johnny Bull gave him a nudge, and Vernon started out of a reverie.

"Vernon-Smith!" repeated Mr. Quelch loudly.

"Oh!" stammered Vernon. "Yes, sir!"

"I shall be obliged, Vernon-Smith, if you will answer at once when I speak to you!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Vernon coloured.

Skinner bestowed another wink on his friends. Smith, for once, was getting the sharp edge of Quelch's tongue!

That, earlier in the term, had been quite a usual thing. But since the Bounder's double had played the

Bounder's part in the Remove, there had been a change in that respect. The worst boy in the Remove was now regarded as one of the best: and Quelch was now always very gracious to him. That graciousness, at the moment, was conspicuous by its absence.

"Yes, sir! I am sorry!" said Vernon.

"Do you know anything of Bunter?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter! No, sir."

"From what that incredibly stupid boy stated in my study, he appears to have laid an absurd trap for you in that study!" snapped the Remove master.

"Why did you not take the Latin paper I left on my table for you, Vernon-Smith?"

"The—the Latin paper, sir!" stammered Vernon.

He had forgotten it! He was not likely to be thinking of Latin papers and prize exams when he was in the position of Damocles of old, with the sword suspended over his head by a single hair!

"You did not go to my study, Vernon-Smith?"

"No, sir."

"And why did you not, Vernon-Smith?"

"I—I forgot, sir!"

"You forgot!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

He gave the junior an expressive look. Quelch, in the kindness of his heart, had taken a great deal of trouble with that Latin paper, to help the excellent pupil who was working for a difficult examination. It was not agreeable to be told that that pupil had forgotten what he had done for him!

"Yes, sir! I—I am sorry!" stammered Vernon. He did not want to get Quelch's rag out; he was quite unlike the Bounder in that respect.

Grunt, from Quelch! Plainly, he was annoyed and offended. The junior certainly ought to have gone to his study for that paper. Had he done so, he would have got the inkstand and the ink instead of Quelch! Really, it was annoying in every way.

Mr. Quelch glanced over the Form again. He had questioned Wharton, his Head Boy, and Toddy, who was Bunter's studymate, and Vernon, who apparently had some row on with Bunter. None of the three had been able to give him any information.

"Can any boy present tell me where Bunter is?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

There was no answer! Apparently no boy present could.

"Wharton! You may give out the papers!" said Mr. Quelch. "I shall be absent from this Form-room for a few minutes! I shall expect the Form to keep order in my absence."

Leaving the Remove occupied with Latin papers, Mr. Quelch left the Form-room. As he put his cane under his arm before he went, the juniors could guess that he was going to look for Bunter.

"Poor old Bunter!" sighed Bob Cherry. "Always asking for it!"

"The askfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But where is the esteemed and idiotic Bunter?"

"Keeping out of sight somewhere!" chuckled Skinner. "Blessed if I blame him—with that look in Quelch's eye! We shall have to be jolly good little boys this afternoon, my beloved 'earers! I don't want to catch the beak's eyes, for one!"

"Henry's in a wax, and no mistake!" remarked Bob.

Generally, when the cat was away the mice would play! But on this occasion the Remove continued to give some attention to their Latin papers,

in spite of the fact that the master's eye was not on them. Nobody wanted to draw Quelch's special attention when the Remove-master returned to the Form-room. In his present mood Henry required treating with tact!

Mr. Quelch's absence was rather prolonged.

If he was hunting Bunter, his hunt seemed to have taken him far afield. No doubt the terrified fat Owl was lying very low.

Where he could be was rather a mystery. It was certain that Quelch would "draw" the studies, the passages, the box-room, the Rag, and any other spot where a scared fat Owl might have taken cover. Every minute the juniors expected Quelch to march him in.

But when Quelch returned after a good half-hour he came alone!

Evidently the fat Owl had dived deep, as it were, in hunting cover! Quelch had not found him.

The gimlet eye shot over the class as Quelch came in. Possibly he hoped that the missing Owl might have turned up in his absence.

"Bunter has not been here?" asked Mr. Quelch in a deep voice.

"No, sir!"

Quelch breathed hard and deep. He shut the door and laid the cane—evidently still unused—on his desk. His expressive countenance was more expressive than ever. But he had to wait. Billy Bunter was missing—and was plainly going to stay missing.

Lessons went on in the Remove-room—minus Bunter. Anyone glancing into the Form-room that afternoon might have fancied that the Greyfriars Remove was a model Form. Undoubtedly the juniors were on their very best behaviour. Skinner was not the only fellow who did not want to catch the beak's eye!

Another half-hour had passed, then there was a tap at the door, and it opened.

It was Trotter, the page, who appeared.

Mr. Quelch gave him a glance, or rather a glare. Quelch did not like interruptions in class!

Trotter came up to the Form-master's desk and handed Mr. Quelch a note.

Quelch glanced at it and frowned.

"Very well!" he snapped. "Vernon-Smith!"

Vernon looked up.

"You may go to the visitors'-room, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch.

Apparently somebody—no doubt a relation—had called to see that member of the Remove.

"Yes, sir!" said Vernon.

He could guess who the visitor was, though nobody else in the Form would have dreamed of guessing.

Envious glances followed him as he followed the page from the Form-room. Every man in the Remove would have welcomed a visit from a relation—any relation—that afternoon. But only one man was lucky, and the rest of the Form carried on under the glittering, gimlet eye from Quelch's desk.

A Strange Interview!

"O H crikey!" groaned Billy Bunter.

While all the Remove fellows were wondering where Bunter was, the fat Owl was blinking from a window that looked on the quad.

Bunter was in an apartment in



"If you have any difficulty in tracing the author of this shocking outrage, Quelch," said Hacker, "I think I can assist you!"

which he was not likely to be found—it being an apartment that juniors never entered unless specially sent for.

It was the visitors' room, where parents and relatives were shown in when they called to see Greyfriars boys.

That room was near the corner of Masters' Passage, and Bunter had shot into it, fleeing from the wrath of Quelch, as the nearest safe refuge.

He had not left it since.

There was an immense settee under the window, and the fat Owl had parked himself behind that settee—and stayed there.

It was about the safest spot he could have picked as a hideout. True, Quelch, in his search for Bunter, had opened the door and glanced in. He had seen nothing of a fat figure huddled behind the settee.

Since then Bunter had ventured to emerge—to the extent of crawling out from behind the settee and sitting on the same.

But he was on his guard. He was ready to pop back into cover at the first sound of a footstep!

He blinked dismally from the window into the quadrangle. The bright July sunlight there brought no comfort to Bunter.

He was still wriggling from the single whop he had received before he fled. It had been, in truth, a terrific swipe. Facing more of the same was a sheer impossibility to Bunter.

On the other hand it was obvious that he could not stay out of sight for ever. Even Bunter's fat brain realised that.

So what he was going to do ultimately was a problem—a riddle to which the fat Owl did not know the answer.

It was possible that, with the lapse of time, Quelch would recover a little from the effect of the inkstand. He might calm down. He might even get into a good temper. It was improbable, but possible!

Anyhow, the longer Bunter put off that whopping, the better. So, at least, it seemed to Bunter. A succession of swipes, up to sample, was more than Bunter could stand—at least, so long as he could dodge the same!

Anyhow, he was safe for the present. Nobody was likely to come to the visitors' room! So the fat Owl thought till, looking from the window, he spotted a figure coming towards the House.

It was rotten luck! Just when Bunter wanted the visitors' room to himself a visitor had to turn up!

"Beast!" grunted Bunter, with a devastating glare through his big spectacles from the window.

He recognised the man. He knew that dark-complexioned face with its hard features that looked as if they were moulded in iron. It was Captain Vernon, from Lantham Chase.

He was the most unexpected of visitors.

While his nephew, Bertie Vernon, was in the Greyfriars Remove, the captain might have been expected to drop in, like any other fellow's relation. But it was weeks since Bertie Vernon had been so suddenly taken away from Greyfriars. So why that particular beast wanted to butt in was quite a mystery to Bunter.

But there he was—and, as a visitor, there was a probability that he would be shown into the visitors' room. Bunter hoped that he had only called to see the Head or a Form-master. But he could not afford to

take chances! As the Army man drew nearer the House the fat Owl rolled off the settee and crawled behind it again.

Five minutes later he was glad that he had been so cautious. For the door of the apartment opened and Trotter's voice was heard:

"Please wait here, sir!"

A steady military stride crossed the room to the settee by the window. Bunter could not see who had come in, but he did not need telling that it was Captain Vernon!

The captain sat down on the big settee to wait—not more than six or seven feet from the hapless fat Owl huddled behind it.

Billy Bunter made no sound. He understudied the mouse with the cat at hand.

Obviously, had the captain known he was there he would have been rooted out. Captain Vernon, of course, was not concerned with him; but if he was rooted out he had to fall into Quelch's clutches. Bunter could only hope that the Army man's stay would not be prolonged.

Two or three minutes elapsed, and then the door opened and shut again.

Someone—obviously the person whom the captain had called to see—had entered the visitors' room.

From behind the settee, looking under it, Bunter could see the captain's boots. Now he could see a pair of feet advancing towards the captain.

He wondered who the dickens it was. Captain Vernon had no relations at Greyfriars, now that his nephew was gone—except, of course, Vernon-Smith, who was some sort of a distant relation. But he was not

likely to call to see Smithy. All the Remove know the bitter grudge between the Bounder and the Vernon branch of the family.

Bunter could only wonder—till he heard a well-known voice. Then he knew.

"I thought perhaps you'd come, uncle."

It was the voice of the Bounder's double whom Bunter, like all Greyfriars, believed to be the Bounder.

So it was Smithy that the captain had called to see, after all.

That was surprising enough.

But it was still more surprising to hear Smithy address him as "uncle." He was Smithy's cousin's uncle, and so, in a sense, a sort of uncle to the Bounder. But the Bounder, who loathed him, had never been known to give that title to the man at Lantham Chase.

The captain's deep, hard voice answered:

"I suppose we are safe from being overheard here?"

"Eh? Yes! Of course!"

"Nevertheless, carelessness at one moment may lead to carelessness at another. I have cautioned you about using names."

The amazed Owl heard an angry laugh.

"What does it matter now? It's the finish. It's bound to come out before long, I suppose."

Billy Bunter blinked behind the settee. This was mysterious and interesting. What on earth could Smithy mean by that?

"I had your letter this morning," went on the cold, hard voice. "It was a foolish letter. It is not judicious, in the circumstances, for me to come here and see you. But your letter left me no choice. I had to see you at once. However, probably little harm is done. I have picked a time when the school is in class; and, after all, we are relations." He laughed slightly. "It seems from your letter that you have the wind up."

"I'm not frightened, if that's what you mean. But you know what I said in my letter. So long as it was only my cousin—that cad, that rotter who has always been my enemy, and an unfair enemy—I didn't care. But I know now what you were keeping from me." The junior's voice rose a little. "I can't—I won't stand for it!"

"You appear to fancy that you have made some discovery?"

"I tell you I know!"

"And what do you know?"

"Where is Redwing?" blurted out Bertie Vernon.

There was a moment's silence. It was very nearly broken by a gasp of amazement from behind the settee. Bunter just managed to suppress that gasp.

"Redwing?" The captain's voice was cool. "All the school knows where Redwing is. Did he not take french leave and go off to sea in his father's coasting vessel more than a week ago?"

"So I believed!" muttered Bertie Vernon bitterly. "I could not understand why he went without speaking, as he knew. You told me you had managed that somehow. He came to Lantham Chase, you saw him, and fixed it. I couldn't imagine how, but I trusted you."

"Well, nothing has been heard from him since, I presume?"

"You know that better than anybody else, I think!" said the junior in the same bitter voice. "What have you done with him?"

"What has transpired?" asked the

captain coldly. "I can see that something has. What is it?"

"His bike has been found."

"His bike?" repeated the captain blankly. "What can you possibly mean? How can that concern you or me?"

"It was found at Lantham Chase."

"Oh!"

"That fool, Coker of the Fifth, found it! Goodness knows why he was rooting into the middle of the thicket! But he was, and he found it hidden there."

"Coker!" repeated the captain. "Do you mean that hobble-de-hoy who had the impudence to come to Lantham Chase on Wednesday? I thrashed him, and he scuttled into the wood."

"That was how it happened, then, I suppose. Anyhow, he found Redwing's bike hidden in a thicket, and brought it back to the school."

"Well?"

"Oh, what's the good of beating about the bush! Redwing came to Lantham Chase on his bike. I thought, from what you told me, that he'd left again. But he never left, leaving his bike hidden in the wood. That's rot! All the fellows are wondering how on earth his bike came to be left there when he's supposed to have taken train for Dover. But I don't wonder; I know now!"

"Well?"

"I won't stand for it!" said Bertie Vernon hoarsely. "I can't! So long as it was only that rotter, that rascal, that blackguard—all right! But Redwing—a harmless, honest chap—I liked him. I'd have been glad to be friends with him if it hadn't been impossible. What's to become of him? How's it to end? You must be mad, I think, to fancy that you can carry on now! I tell you, Redwing can't stay where he is—and shan't!"

The boy's passionate outburst left the Army man quite unmoved. He did not speak, and the passionate voice went on:

"You kept it from me—for my own sake, I know! But I know now, and I can't stand for it! Never!"

"And suppose," said the captain contemptuously—"suppose that you are allowing your nerves to get the better of you? Suppose you are fancying something that never happened and frightening yourself about a shadow?"

"What do you mean?" muttered Vernon.

"The boy may have left his bicycle in the wood when he came up to the house. From what you tell me, it appears that he did so. It is immaterial. Suppose he left in haste? Suppose a car was hired to drive him direct to Dover, to take advantage of his father's vessel being in that port and about to sail? Suppose there was not a moment to lose, and the bicycle was forgotten? Is not that a very simple explanation of what has disturbed you?"

There was a long silence.

Vernon's voice broke it at last in husky tones:

"Is that true?"

"That is true," said the captain composedly.

"Oh! If it's true—if it's true I've been tormented for nothing! But—but will you give me your word it's true?"

"I give you my word!"

"Oh!" repeated Vernon. It came in a gasp of relief, as if a mountain had rolled from his heart and his mind.

The captain's voice went on, unmoved:

"You have let your fancy run riot, my boy. You have worried and alarmed me for nothing. You have

driven me to come here, injudicious as it is for me to come. I advise you to keep a more level head."

"I'm sorry—I'm sorry! I—I—I thought—I—I believed, and I couldn't—I couldn't stand for that if it was as I thought!"

"Put it entirely out of your mind. Do not let other wild and foolish fancies enter your thoughts. Now go back to your Form-room, my boy. The shorter my stay here the better. Keep cool, and keep a stiff upper lip, and give me no more alarms."

The door of the visitors' room opened and shut after the departing junior. Captain Vernon was left alone.

In the silence the fat Owl behind the settee was astonished to hear a deep sigh from the man he could not see.

It was no light matter to Captain Vernon to give his word falsely. It was, perhaps, the hardest thing he had had to face in the strange game he was playing to make his nephew a millionaire instead of a millionaire's poor relation. But he had done it, and done it without hesitation, but it left a bitter taste in his mouth.

Again the door opened and shut.

Billy Bunter allowed some minutes to elapse before he crawled out from behind the settee. Blinking from the window, he saw the military figure of the captain striding away towards the gates. He sat down on the settee in a state of wonder and amazement that almost made his fat head turn round.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Hunting Bunter!

"THAT ass!"

"That howling chump!"
"Where the thump is he?"
"The wherfulness is terrific!"

"Bother him!"

The Famous Five were, of course, alluding to Bunter.

They were looking for Bunter. All the Remove were looking for Bunter. Bunter had to be found, according to Mr. Quelch.

Bunter's Form-fellows did not see any special necessity. Bunter's Form-master, it seemed, did.

Class had ended, without the fat Owl having turned up in the Form-room. He had cut two whole lessons, which was almost unheard of. Mr. Quelch, when he dismissed the Remove, requested them to make a search for Bunter.

It was only a request. But a beak's request were rather like Royal invitations—they could not be declined.

Hardly anybody was keen on looking for Bunter. Remove fellows had plenty of occupations for their spare time without hunting a fat Owl.

Harry Wharton & Co. wanted a spot of cricket after class. Skinner and Snoop wanted a quiet cigarette in their study. Lord Mauleverer wanted a deckchair under a shady elm. Fisher T. Fish wanted to hunt for a fag in the Third who owed him ninepence. Bertie Vernon—now that his mind was relieved, and life at Greyfriars seemed to stretch peacefully before him again—wanted to get going on that Latin exercise which he had failed to fetch from Quelch's study that morning, but was quite ready to fetch since the Army man's visit. Other fellows had their avocations, but not one was frightfully keen on seeing anything more of Billy Bunter.

Skinner declared that Bunter improved the landscape considerably by disappearing from sight. Lots of

fellows agreed that, in Bunter's case, absence made the heart grow fonder.

But a beak was a beak, and after class all the Remove hunted Bunter, many of them with the intention of booting him when found as a reward for giving them so much trouble.

But Bunter was not easily found.

Harry Wharton & Co. rooted up and down and round about the quad, looked into the old Cloisters, scouted behind the elms—all in vain. Other fellows were rooting about indoors.

Some were not very industrious, perhaps. Skinner and Snoop and Stott searched a box-room—by the peculiar method of sitting on Lord Mauleverer's trunk there, and smoking cigarettes. Maudly was not likely to spot Bunter unless Bunter was to be spotted from the sofa in his lordship's study! Several fellows looked in the tuckshop, and stayed there to consume ices and ginger-pop.

Still, a fellow had to be wary. Quelch was assisting in the search, and no fellow wanted that glinting, gimlet eye to fall on him suddenly unless he was putting in some exertion.

"That blithering, bloated, burbling bloater!" said Bob Cherry. He came to a halt, leaning on a window-sill and fanning a warm face with his straw hat. "Blow him! Bless him! Bother him!"

"The blowfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurreo Janset Ram Singh. "The whorfulness of the idiotic Bunter is a preposterous mystery!"

"I don't know about handing him over if we find him," remarked Harry Wharton. "We've got to look for him, but—"

"The sooner Quelch gets him the better!" said Johnny Bull. "That fat chump has played this potty game

before, and I never noticed that it improved Quelch's temper to wait for him to turn up. Last term—"

"That's so," agreed Nugent. "Still, we don't seem likely to find him. May have cleared out of gates."

"I say, you fellows!"

Five fellows jumped.

That unexpected fat squeak came from the window, on the sill of which Bob Cherry was leaning.

They spun round, staring.

The window opened a few inches. From the narrow aperture a fat face looked out, and a large pair of spectacles gleamed in the summer sunshine.

"Bunter!" stuttered the five, all at once.

It was from the window of the visitors' room that Bunter was blinking. They had not thought of looking for him there.

"I say, you fellows, were you looking for me?" asked Bunter. "I say, that's jolly pally! Got any grub?"

"Grub?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"I'm hungry!"

"Oh, my hat! Better turn up to tea! Quelch will be glad to see you!"

"Well, if you were looking for me you might have parked some grub in your pockets!" said Bunter reproachfully. "What's the good of looking for me if you haven't a spot of grub for a fellow?"

"Quelch set us all looking for you, fathead!"

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, is Quelch still shirty?"

"Just a few!"

"He—he—he hasn't got into a good temper yet?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"If he has he's keeping it dark," answered Bob Cherry. "No sign of good temper in his face that I could see."

"Well, you fellows aren't going to give a man away," said Bunter. "I rely on you, of course. Quelch may calm down later. I can't quite understand what he was so stuffy about. I told him I put up that booby-trap for Smithy, and never meant it for him at all; but he got waxy just the same, simply because it fell on his head. It's a bit unreasonable! But there you are! It's no good arguing with a beak!"

"Roll out of that window," said Bob, "and we'll roll you in to Quelch! He's simply longing to see you, Bunter!"

"Yearning!" said Nugent.

"The yearfulness is preposterous!"

"I'm not going to see Quelch unless he's got into a good temper—I mean, a good temper for him! He's always a beast, of course, but I don't want to see him while he's such a savage beast! I say, you fellows, where is he now?"

"Rooting about indoors somewhere! Better make up your mind to it, old fat man! Look here, after you're through with Quelch, I'll stand you an iced at the tuckshop!"

"I wouldn't face the beast for a hundred ices! Not for a lorry-load of jam roll!" said Bunter impressively. "You should have seen the whop he gave me! I can feel it now!" Bunter gave a reminiscent wriggle. "I'm not having any more like that! I don't care what happens! I ain't having any more—see? I say, you fellows, you could get some grub and pass it in at this window, and—"

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

A deep voice resounded through the visitors' room.

Bunter spun round from the window, his eyes popping behind his spectacles.

The angular figure of Henry Samuel
(Continued on next page.)



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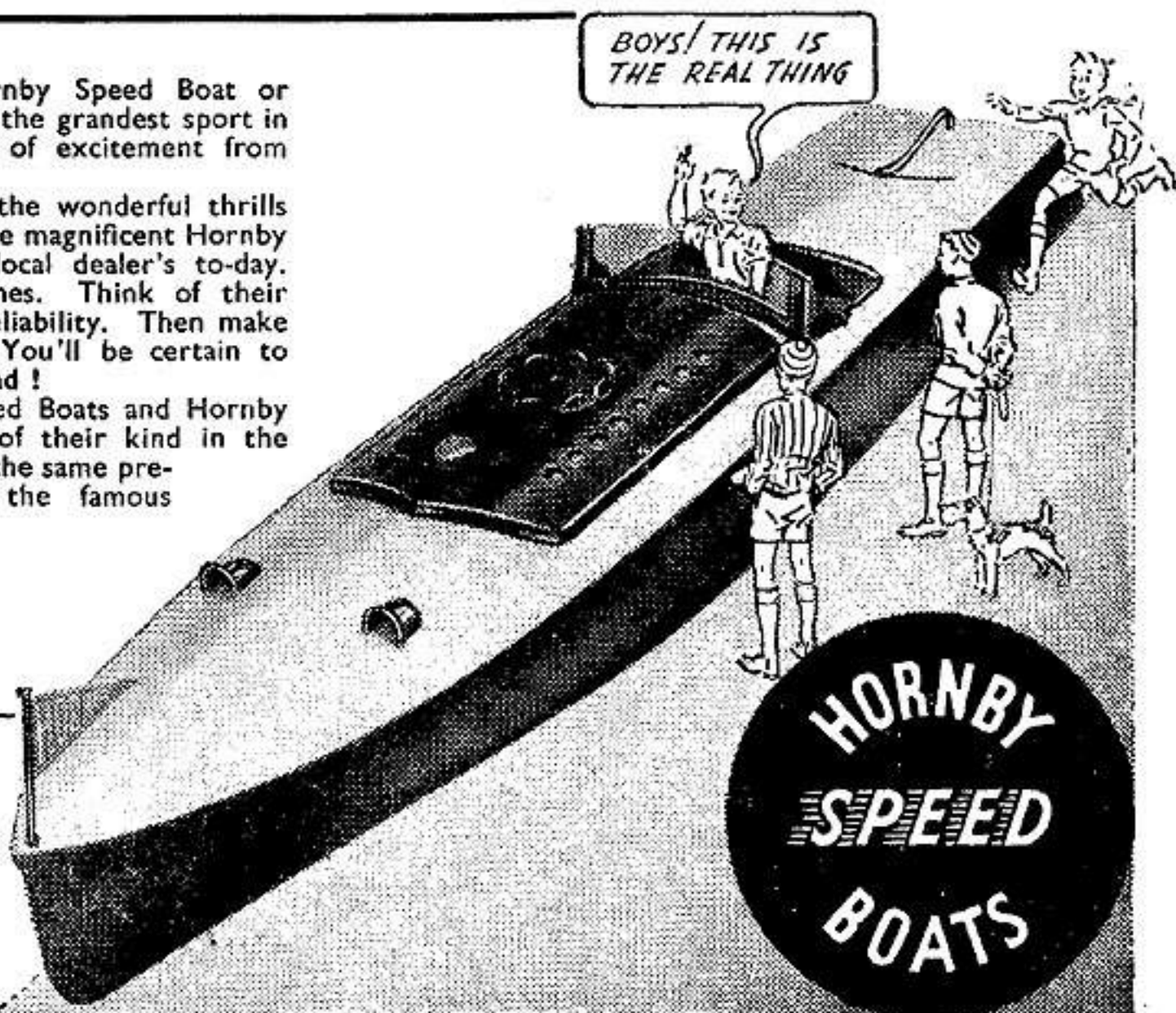
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Quelch was framed in the doorway, came in hand!

Bunter gave him one blink, then he spun round towards the window again and dragged it wide open.

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch, striding across the room.

Bunter did not heed. He fairly flew out of the window.

The Famous Five spun right and left as the fat Owl landed sprawling in their midst.

"What the thump—" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Bunter!" bawled Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, crikey!"

Bunter scrambled up.

A mortar-board popped out of the window, with an intensely exasperated face under it.

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Quelch!"

"Bunter!" roared Quelch from the window.

Bunter flew.

"Wharton! Cherry! Bull! Follow that stupid boy and secure him at once! Go, all of you! Lose no time!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped the five.

They rushed after Bunter.

From the window Quelch watched the chase with gleaming eyes. Hunted and hunters swept away across the quad. They disappeared from Quelch's range of vision.

He left the visitors' room and hurried out into the quad.

He looked round for the Famous Five, and found them. They were rather breathless after their exertions. But the fat Owl was not with them. They had exerted themselves, but perhaps not to the required extent. Anyhow, they hadn't caught Bunter.

"Where is Bunter, Wharton?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"He—he seems to have dodged us, sir."

"You should not have allowed him to do so, Wharton!"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Quelch rustled on, hunting Bunter.

The Famous Five looked at one another.

"This is getting thick!" remarked Harry Wharton. "A hundred lines—Um!"

"I wonder if Quelch guesses that we didn't try very hard to capture him!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Perhaps. Look here, let's go and have a ginger-pop—I mean, let's go and see if Bunter's in the school shop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five, hot and tired with hunting in the July sunshine, repaired to the tuckshop.

Bunter was not there. But ginger-pop was! So that was all right!

Up a Tree!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Peter Todd, Bolsover major, and William Wibley of the Remove all jumped together.

They were seated on the bench that encircled the big tree that stood in front of the school shop. The wide-spreading, leafy branches gave a grateful shade from the summer sun. They were refreshing themselves with lemonade in an interval of hunting Bunter.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Toddy.

"That's Bunter!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "Where—"

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"What the dickens—" ejaculated Wibley.

It was quite startling and mysterious. Bunter was not in sight. He was nowhere to be seen. Only his voice was heard. Really, it seemed for a moment that the ghost of the fat Owl must be haunting the vicinity of the tuckshop.

"I say, you fellows—" came the fat squeak again.

"Oh!" gasped Toddy.

He looked up. The voice came from above.

From the leafy foliage overhead a pair of spectacles gleamed.

Toddy stared up at a perspiring fat face.

That was Bunter's latest refuge. He was up that tree. His fat form was perched on one branch; his fat paw clutched another, and he blinked down with a longing blink at the lemonade.

"You burbling blitherer!" gasped Toddy. "Come out of that!"

"I'll watch it!" answered Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, you might pass up a glass of that lemonade! I'm fearfully thirsty! And, I say, get a few doughnuts, Toddy! Be a pal, you know! It looks as if I shan't get any tea!"

"Come down, you silly Owl!" said Wibley. "Quelch is in the quad somewhere—"

"I'm not coming down while he's in the quad! I say, Toddy, lemme have some of that lemonade, old chap! Don't be a rotter!"

Peter Todd glanced round. Quelch was not to be seen for the moment, and Peter was not proof against that appeal from his fat studymate.

He stepped on the bench and lifted his glass of lemonade to hand up to the fat Owl in the tree.

Billy Bunter reached down for it.

"Oooh!" he gasped, as he nearly slipped off the branch.

His fat hand banged on the glass, and half its contents shot out.

There was a roar from Bolsover major, echoed by a yell from Wibley. Bolsover caught a splash with his neck—Wibley with his ear. On a hot summer's day, lemonade was grateful and comforting, taken internally; taken externally, it was most unpleasant.

"Oh!" roared Bolsover. "You potty owl! Oh!"

"Urrgh!" gasped Wibley.

"You clumsy ass!" howled Peter.

"Oh, crikey! I—I nearly slipped!" gasped Bunter. "I say, hand it up! All right now; I'm waiting!"

A voice called across from the tuckshop doorway. Bob Cherry was looking out.

"Cave! Quelch!"

An angular figure was striding to the spot.

Apparently Quelch, from a distance, had spotted Toddy standing on that bench, and wondered what he was up to, and guessed. A fellow would hardly be handing a glass of lemonade up into the branches of a tree, unless there was somebody in that tree.

Peter Todd jumped down hastily. He sat on the bench, and put the glass to his own mouth, like a fellow innocently drinking lemonade.

But that display of innocence came rather too late.

"Todd!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Who is in that tree?"

"Oh, is—is—is anybody, sir?" stammered Peter.

"Take a hundred lines, Todd!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Bunter, descend at once!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"No, sir—I—I mean, I—I ain't here—I mean— Oh lor'!"

Mr. Quelch stood under the tree looking up. Billy Bunter was fairly well hidden, unless specially looked for. Now he was specially looked for, and Quelch had a view of extensive trousers.

"Will you come down out of that tree immediately, Bunter?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Got him!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Poor old Bunter! Got him!"

"The gotfulness is terrific!"

The Famous Five came out of the tuckshop, followed by a dozen more fellows. Other fellows gathered from various directions. A crowd gathered round the tree, most of them grinning.

Bunter had been run down at last. There was no further escape for him. On the other hand, he was not caught yet.

He seemed reluctant to quit his refuge. Perhaps that was natural, with Quelch waiting below with a cane.

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch. He was by no means pleased by his rapidly increasing audience. Quelch was in no mood to furnish a free entertainment for Greyfriars. "Bunter, I command you to descend!"

"Oh lor'!"

Quelch breathed hard. Bunter was out of his reach, but the Remove master stepped on the bench. Then he swiped.

Whop!

"Yaroooh!" The roar that came from the leafy branches echoed to the farthest corner of the old quad.

A fat figure wriggled on a branch. Two fat hands clutched, but a fat pair of legs shot into view. Bunter hung on the branch, roaring.

Mr. Quelch stepped down.

"Now, Bunter—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Drop from that branch at once, Bunter!"

"Ow! Oh crikey! Oh!"

Bunter did not drop from the branch. He made a frantic effort to pull himself up on it again. He swung and scrambled and spluttered.

Up went the cane.

Bunter, as he hung, was really favourably placed for a whopping. Quelch put his beef into a whop that landed on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars.

Swipe!

"Yoo-hoo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

Swipe!

"Yarooop!"

Swipe!

"Oh scissors!"

Bunter dropped.

He landed like a ripe fat plum at Quelch's feet. A grip of iron clutched his collar instantly. Bunter was hooked to his feet.

"Now, Bunter—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Come with me!"

"Oh, yes! All right! Leggo!" gasped Bunter. "I'm kik-kik-coming! I—I—I w-w-want to come, sir, if—if you'll leggo my neck, sir!"

Mr. Quelch did not let go that fat neck! Probably he doubted whether Bunter really wanted to come. With an iron grip on that fat neck he marched Bunter away to the House. He marched him into his study.

Billy Bunter had hoped that, given time, Quelch might get into a good temper again, and go easy with a fellow. Perhaps Quelch had not been given time enough. His temper seemed still bad, and he certainly did not go easy with a fellow. By the time he



“Bunter!” roared Mr. Quelch, staring at the fat figure speeding down the passage. “Come back at once!”

had finished Billy Bunter wished, from the bottom of his fat heart, that he had got it over in the morning.

Hope!

“ANOTHER day!” Herbert Vernon-Smith uttered the words in almost a groan.

“A glorious morning!” said Tom Redwing.

“Oh, don’t be a fool!” Redwing smiled faintly.

How many mornings had dawned on him in the turret-room at Lantham Chase the Bounder of Greyfriars hardly knew. It was, after all, only a matter of a few weeks, but to Vernon-Smith it seemed that his imprisonment had been endless.

Tom Redwing, his companion in misfortune, was quiet and patient. Smithy was neither quiet nor patient. With every passing day of imprisonment his temper grew more and more bitter and desperate. Again and again he had been tempted to make some wild and desperate effort to break a way out. But it was too utterly hopeless.

When old Hunt came up with meals, the captain stood on guard at the door. But, hopeless as it was, the Bounder could sometimes barely refrain from rushing on his gaolers.

It was, as Redwing said, a glorious morning. From the high windows of the turret a vast stretch of country could be seen with the sea blue in the far distance. But sunshine and green woods and blue sea brought no comfort to the imprisoned Bounder. Hope was almost dead in his heart—if not in Redwing’s.

Of all the fellows at Greyfriars, only one had spotted the imposture; and

he, in seeking to discover his chum, had fallen into the same ruthless hands. Even Redwing had been slow to learn the truth; no one else was likely to learn it. The bright sunshine of the morning seemed to mock the Bounder’s haggard eyes.

Old Hunt had come with breakfast, and gone. They were left alone again, and the Bounder paced the room like a caged tiger. It was to find him, to rescue him if he could, that Tom Redwing had come to Lantham Chase, and fallen into the same captivity. But that did not save him from a full share of the Bounder’s bitter and angry temper.

But Tom bore his angry outbreaks with infinite patience. He was glad to be with his chum, to lighten the burden of his loneliness in the high turret. His companionship meant much to the Bounder, who had passed so many weary hours in solitude before his chum joined him in captivity. And that was enough to console Redwing for what he had to endure.

“That scoundrel!” Vernon-Smith stared from the window, from which a distant glimpse of the grey old spire at Greyfriars could be seen. “That rascal, using my name, taking my place, and every fool in the Form believing him to be me!” He choked with rage.

“It must end, old chap,” said Tom quietly.

“How?” snarled the Bounder. “You tell me that every day. Has it ended yet, you fathead?”

“The term’s just on its end now, Smithy. And that fellow is afraid to face your father. He’s managed to dodge him all through the term; but when the holidays come, he must see him.”

“He’s fooled everybody else; he will fool my father!” groaned the Bounder.

“And if he can’t fool him, he will keep out of his way. I tell you we’re done!”

Redwing shook his head. “I’ve said—” he began.

“Oh, don’t talk rot about that cur!” snarled Smithy. “You’ve said that he would find that he had some sort of a conscience when he heard that you were a prisoner here along with me. Well, it’s all rot. He’s hand in glove with that villain downstairs. They’re birds of a feather.”

Tom shook his head again. “I can’t think so, Smithy,” he said.

“If Bertie Vernon finds out that I am a prisoner here, he will never stand for it. He’s not such a rascal and rotter as that. I feel sure—”

“Rot!” “Well, I believe so, Smithy.”

“Then you’re a fool!” Tom Redwing was silent. The Bounder resumed pacing the turret-room, but he stopped as a sound was heard at the door. His eyes gleamed at Redwing.

“He’s coming!” he breathed. “If he comes without the other rascal there’s a ghost of a chance, at least—”

But the locked door of the turret-room did not open. A little panel in the door slid back, that was all.

The Bounder’s eyes fixed with a deadly glare on the dark, iron-featured face that looked in.

Even had the captain entered alone there was no chance in a struggle, as Redwing knew, if the Bounder did not choose to know. And Hunt was within call.

But the captain did not enter. He had come to speak, and he spoke through the panel.

“You hound!” muttered Vernon-Smith. “You kidnapping villain!”

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"I advise you to keep a civil tongue, Vernon-Smith," said the captain coldly. "You have tried my patience very hard more than once. I am not here to speak to you, but to your companion. Be silent!"

The hard eyes turned on Tom Redwing.

"I am sorry that you are here, Redwing, as I have said before," went on the Army man. "I have no scruples in dealing with a young rascal like Herbert Vernon-Smith. All that has happened to him he has brought on himself by his malice and unscrupulousness. Had he been a boy like you I could never have formed this plan, much less have carried it out. You believe that, if Vernon-Smith does not."

Redwing did not answer.

He did, as a matter of fact, believe it. It was Smithy's bitter and unscrupulous enmity for Bertie Vernon that had given the Army man the justification he wanted. He judged Smithy harshly—much more harshly than he deserved; personal dislike and envy of the millionaire's son for his nephew's sake coloured his judgment. But what he said was true.

"With you," went on the captain quietly, "the matter is different. I respect your character—all the more because you have placed yourself in this position by loyal friendship for a boy who does not deserve it."

"Cut that out!" said Redwing sharply. "That nephew of yours at Greyfriars isn't fit for Smithy to wipe his boots on! Smithy's got his faults, but do you think that he'd ever have done what Vernon is doing now?"

"I am sure that he would, and without the scruples that have troubled my nephew, and which I have had difficulty in soothing," answered the captain calmly. "But that is neither here nor there. Vernon-Smith must remain here till it is safe for me to restore him to liberty. You know—"

"I know!" said Tom scornfully. "You fancy that after a long lapse of time Vernon's position will be too strong to be shaken, and that if Smithy tells the truth he will not be believed."

"That is not a fancy—it is a fact," said the Army man coolly. "When a year has passed—longer, if necessary—whatever tale the boy I shall call my nephew may choose to tell will be regarded as a fantastic invention. I fear nothing in that quarter. Vernon-Smith will not be released until all is safe."

"You scheming scoundrel!" breathed the Bounder; but his heart was heavy as lead.

"But you forget," said Tom Redwing quietly, "that since I have been here there is a witness to the truth. Even if you are right—even if Smithy might be believed to be your nephew, inventing a foolish tale—I shall tell the truth. Do you think that I shall not be believed?"

"You will say nothing," said the captain icily. "That is what I am here to tell you now. I have said that I am

sorry to deal with you like this. I would gladly open the door and tell you that you are free. So long as you are a danger to me you are a prisoner. I have no choice about that. Let us come to terms, my boy."

"What are you going to offer Redwing to let his pal down?" asked the Bounder bitterly. "You are a fool, with all your cunning! You could offer him the whole world and it would make no difference."

Redwing laughed.

"You can bank on that, Smithy," he said. "You may as well save your breath, Captain Vernon. If you unlocked that door now, I would not go without Smithy."

"Listen, all the same!" answered the captain, unmoved. "You cannot help Vernon-Smith—you must realise that by this time. You are believed, at Greyfriars, to have gone to sea. Let that belief become true. I could not trust Vernon-Smith. He must remain in my hands till all is safe. I can trust you. And I tell you that I will rely upon your promise to be silent if you give it. I cannot let you return to Greyfriars—that would be too dangerous—but elsewhere the world is open to you. You are a sailorman's son; the sea has its call for you. Freedom is yours for the asking, so long as it squares with my plans."

"Jump at it, Reddy!" said the Bounder sarcastically.

"Don't be an ass, Smithy!" Redwing fixed his eyes on the dark face at the panel. "I'm glad you came to say this, Captain Vernon!"

"You accept?"

"No; I refuse! But do you think I do not know why you are prepared to take the risk of releasing me, trusting to my promise?"

The captain started a little. The Bounder stared at his chum; he did not understand. Captain Vernon looked intently at Tom Redwing.

"And what do you think you know?" he asked very quietly.

"I know this," answered Tom. "You are afraid that Bertie Vernon may learn that I am here, and you are afraid of what he may do when he does. He will stand for impersonating Smithy and robbing him of his inheritance, but he will not stand for more than that. That does not seem a crime to him, the way he looks at it. But he will not stand for what he knows plainly to be a crime. You dare not let Vernon know that I am a prisoner here, and you would release me, on my promise, to ward off the danger of his knowing."

The Army man did not answer.

"You're a fool, Reddy!" snapped the Bounder. "They're birds of a feather!"

"It's you that's the fool, Smithy!"

The man at the panel laughed—a hard, sardonic laugh.

"I have wasted my breath," he said. "Let it be so. As you make your bed, you must lie on it."

The panel snapped shut. The captain's footsteps died away down the turret-stair.

Tom Redwing drew a deep breath.

"If Vernon knew!" he muttered. "If he only knew!"

And for once the Bounder did not gainsay him. Captain Vernon had left a glimmer of hope in two hearts in the locked turret-room.

Too Steep!

"**O**LD Redwing—" "I say, you fellows—" "Scoot!" "I say, I'm in fearful pain!" said Bunter pathetically. "Suffering awfully!"

"Bow, wow!"

"Well, I think a fellow's pals might be sympathetic when a fellow's had a fearful whopping!" said Bunter reproachfully. "It was only yesterday, you know; the pain hasn't worn off yet. It—it's awful!"

The Famous Five were at tea in Study No. 1 in the Remove. They were discussing tea and Tom Redwing at the same time.

No word had been received from Redwing since he left so suddenly and unexpectedly, and Mr. Quelch supposed, as the juniors did, that he had not written, because he did not want to receive an order from his headmaster to return to the school immediately.

The discovery of the bicycle in the thickets at Lantham Chase was a puzzle and a problem to his friends. It was simply inexplicable how his bicycle had been left there, and it caused a good deal of perplexed discussion.

Indeed, but for the fact that Redwing had wired to Mr. Quelch from Dover that he was going to sea in his father's coasting vessel, the Co. would have suspected that some accident had happened to him.

Smithy—once Redwing's best pal—took no interest at all in the matter. And the Famous Five, who believed that Smithy could, if he chose, put them in touch with Redwing, felt rather sore about it. In point of fact, the Bounder's double knew nothing of Redwing's affairs, though, as Smithy, he was supposed to know more than any other fellow in the Form.

Harry Wharton & Co. were interested in Redwing, and not, apparently, in that much more important person, W. G. Bunter.

Perhaps they did not believe that Bunter was still feeling so fearfully the effects of his whopping, severe as it had been. Twenty-four hours made a lot of difference.

Bunter certainly had had the whopping of his fat life on Friday afternoon. Fellows had been sympathetic. He had tea'd in Study No. 1, and they had fed him on the fat of the land. He had supped in Mauleverer's study, and Mauly had filled him up to the neck. Practical sympathy of this kind was the sort that Bunter could appreciate.

No doubt he would have liked it to continue. It was worth the whopping. But sympathy seemed to have petered out by Saturday afternoon. Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway of Study No. 1, and detected no sign of sympathy. It seemed a stony-hearted study.

"I say, you fellows, I've been disappointed about a postal order!" said the fat Owl. "And—and I'm in—in awful pain! I say—"

"Roll away, barrel!"

Even a disappointment about a postal order, added to awful pain, did not seem to melt those stony hearts!

"I jolly well hope we shall hear something from Reddy before we break up here," said Bob Cherry. "I'm blessed if I understand a chap like Reddy taking the bit between his teeth in this way! Can't blame Quelch for being waxy about it."

"I'm afraid Redwing's number is up here, if he doesn't blow in before the end of the term!" said Harry Wharton. "A fellow can't take french leave like this!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Blow away!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I say, what I really came here for was to tell you about Redwing!" said Billy Bunter. "I thought you might like to know!"

The Famous Five gave Bunter their best attention, at that statement.

Billy Bunter, as a matter of fact, had forgotten Tom Redwing's existence, till he was reminded of it by the mention of his name in the study. Bunter was not thinking of Redwing; he was thinking of the cake on the table in Study No. 1. But he realised that the name of Redwing was an "open sesame"—a means of getting at the cake!

"What the thump do you know about Redwing, you fat ass?" asked Bob. "Nobody's had a word from him since he left!"

"I jolly well know more than you fellows do, and chance it!" said Bunter. "I know as much about it as Smithy, anyhow!"

"Smithy says he knows nothing about it!" said Frank Nugent.

"He, he, he! He didn't say he knew nothing about it when he was talking to Captain Vernon yesterday!" grinned Bunter.

"Captain Vernon!" repeated Harry Wharton. "What are you burbling about? Smithy hasn't been to Lantham Chase!"

"I know that!"

"He wouldn't be likely to talk to Captain Vernon about Reddy, or anything else," said Bob. "He loathes the man!"

"I fancy he's made it up with him!" said Bunter. "He used to slang him right and left—but he's chucked all that lately! Nobody's heard him say a word against that Army man for weeks! Anyhow, he was talking to him yesterday in the visitors'-room—"

"What utter rot!"

"I tell you I heard him!" hooted Bunter. "Wasn't I there? I got out of sight, of course, when old Vernon came in—I didn't want him to hand me over to Quelch. They never knew I was behind the settee. But I jolly well was."

"Do you mean to say that it was Captain Vernon who came to see Smithy yesterday, when he was called out of the Form-room?" asked Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"Yes, it jolly well was!"

"Rubbish!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Smithy loathes that man as much as he loathed his nephew, when the chap was here! As if the captain would come here to see Smithy!"

"Not likely!" said Nugent.

"He jolly well did, and they talked about Redwing, too!" declared Bunter. "They know all about him, I can tell you. If you fellows would like to know about Redwing, I can tell you over tea, if you like."

Bunter had rolled in by this time. Now he shut the door. He pulled a chair to the table and sat down.

The Famous Five did not say him nay. If Bunter really knew anything about the junior who had taken french leave, they were very keen to hear it.

He had succeeded in astonishing them, at any rate. They knew that "Smithy" had been called out of the Form-room on Friday afternoon, to see some visitor in the visitors'-room. But certainly they had never dreamed that the visitor was the Army man at Lantham Chase. Still less would they have supposed that the visit had anything to do with Redwing—and they did not believe it now.

"It's all gammon, of course!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter's making this up as he goes along."

"You can ask Trotter, if you like!" said Bunter. "He showed the man in! He can tell you that it was Captain Vernon!"

"Well, if it was, I'm blessed if I know why he should come here to see

Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "Anyhow, he can't know anything about Redwing. How could he?"

"The howfulness is terrific!"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull. "Let that cake alone, you fat frog!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. "If you don't want to know how that bike came to be where Coker found it last Wednesday—"

"We don't want to hear what you heard from behind a settee—if you heard anything, you fat fraud!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"How could I help hearing?" demanded Bunter indignantly. "Think I was going to show up and let Quelch get me? I'm not the fellow to listen, I suppose? Have you fellows ever known me do anything of the kind?"

"Oh crikey!"

"I couldn't help it, of course!" said Bunter. He helped himself to a slice of cake. "I say, you fellows, it's jolly queer Smithy getting so friendly with that man, after the things he used to say about him. I've heard him say that Captain Vernon was up to something at Lantham Chase—though he never knew what it was—something shady, Smithy used to make out. You all heard him! But you've noticed he's chucked it, for weeks past! Well, now he's quite friendly with him. He called him 'uncle' when he came into the room."

"Smithy called Captain Vernon 'uncle'!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes! Made me jump, I can tell you!"

"I suppose the man is some sort of an uncle twice removed, to Smithy, as he's his cousin's uncle," said Bob Cherry. "But Smithy calling him uncle—that wants some getting down!"

"Well, he did," said Bunter, "and the captain told him not to mention names."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Blessed if I know why!" said Bunter. "But that's what he said."

"Pile it on!" said Bob.

"And the captain said he'd had Smithy's letter, and that was why he came," went on Bunter, through a barrage of cake. "And Smithy asked him where Redwing was."

"Smithy asked Captain Vernon where Redwing was!" repeated Harry Wharton, staring blankly at the Owl of the Remove. "Smithy doesn't care anything about Redwing, since they rowed, and Captain Vernon couldn't know anything about him, even if Smithy wanted to know. What are you spinning this idiotic yarn for, you howling ass?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I suppose I know what I heard! I say, this isn't a bad cake!"

"And did the jolly old captain tell Smithy where Redwing was?" asked Johnny Bull, with withering sarcasm.

"Yes!"

"What?" yelled the Famous Five.

"Urrgh! Gurrgh! Don't make a chap jump when he's got his mouth full of cake! Wurrgh!" Bunter gurgled. "Grooogh! Wharrer you shouting at a fellow for? Yurrgh!"

"Is Bunter making this up, or has he gone batby, or what?" asked Bob.

"Gurrgh!"

"Well, if the captain told Smithy where Redwing was, you can tell us!" said Harry Wharton. "We all want to know—as much as Smithy—more, I fancy." He laughed. "When you've finished gurgling, make up the next one."

"Jevver hear such a fibber?" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter ought to go into politics when he grows up. He's got the gift for it."

"The giftfulness is truly terrific."

"If you fellows don't believe me—"

"Believe you! Oh my hat! Carry on with the cake!" chuckled Bob. "This is worth the cake!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'll finish the cake if you fellows don't want any. You see, Smithy told the captain about Redwing's bike being found at his place—that seemed to surprise him. He said Captain Vernon knew better than anyone else about Redwing! I don't know why, but that's what he said. He said he jolly well knew how the bike came to be there, and he wouldn't stand for it."

"For what?"

"I don't know—something or other—he didn't say what! That was what he said, though—he wouldn't stand for it! And Captain Vernon said— Got any more cake?"

"Captain Vernon asked Smithy if he'd got any more cake?" gasped Bob.

"Eh? No! I'm asking you that! Captain Vernon said that Redwing must have left the bike in the wood when he came up to the house."

"So Redwing called at Lantham Chase, did he, on his way to join his father's lugger at Dover?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"That's what the captain said! And he said—I'll have some of these biscuits if you haven't got any more cake! I mean, he said that Redwing must have forgotten the bike and left it there, because he hired a car to drive him to Dover, to get on the old bean's ship. He said there wasn't a minute to lose, to catch old tarry breaks at Dover, so that's how the bike came to be forgotten. And Smithy said— Look here, I like the biscuits with sugar on."

"What?"

"And Smithy said, would he give his word that that was true, and the captain gave it!" said Bunter, when he had secured the biscuits with sugar on. "So now you fellows know as much about it as I do."

"Just as much," chuckled Bob, "and that's just as much as we knew before."

"The just-as-muchfulness is preposterous!" grinned Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "Is there any morefulness, my esteemed fibbing Bunter?"

"No, that's the lot!"

"Oh, make up a few more!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Well, this takes the cake!" said the captain of the Remove. "Bunter can't help telling whoppers, of course; but what put a yarn like this into his head, beats me! How did you come to think of it, Bunter?"

"Oh really, Wharton—"

"What about booting him up the passage, and down again?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"If there was a word of truth in it, it would mean that Smithy suspected the captain of giving Redwing some sort of foul play at Lantham Chase," said Harry. "Of course, there isn't! By gum, if Smithy heard this—"

"I say, you fellows, don't you mention it to Smithy!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in alarm. "I don't want that beast after me again. But I say, it's true—you can ask Trotter whether it wasn't Captain Vernon who came yesterday—"

"It wasn't, of course!" said Bob.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "I'll ask Trotter—and if he says yes, all right—and if he says no, I'll boot you all over the Remove for making up such a yarn."

"All right!" said Bunter cheerfully.

"Mind, I mean it!"

"Well, go and ask Trotter! If you fellows have done tea, I can finish the jam."

The Famous Five stared at the fat Owl. They did not believe a word of his extraordinary story. They did not believe that Captain Vernon had come from Lantham Chase to see Smithy.

It needed only a question to Trotter, who had shown the visitor in the previous day, to settle the matter. After which, Billy Bunter was to receive the booting he deserved for allowing his fat imagination so loose a rein.

But Bunter did not seem alarmed. As the Famous Five rose from the table, the fat Owl annexed the jam-pot! He was interested wholly and solely in jam!

"I'm going to ask Trotter now," said Harry, "and if he says no, I'm coming back to boot you, Bunter."

"Well, cut off!" said Bunter cheerfully.

The Famous Five went out of the study.

As they started down the passage, a fat squeak followed them:

"I say, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton looked back in the doorway.

"Well, you fat fraud, are you going to own up?" he asked.

"Eh! What? No!"

"Then what did you call me for, fathead?"

"Have you got a tablespoon in the study?"

"What?"

"A tablespoon! I suppose you don't mind if I finish the jam?" asked Bunter, blinking at him.

"You blithering owl!"

Harry Wharton rejoined his friends in the passage.

"I say, you might lend a fellow a tablespoon, if you've got one!" howled Bunter. "I can't get all the jam out with a teaspoon. I say, you fellows, have you got a tablespoon?"

But answer there came none. The Famous Five walked away to the stairs, heedless of Bunter's difficulties with the jam.

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter.

He set to work with a teaspoon—aided by his fat fingers. Difficulties, in such a matter, were not likely to deter Bunter.

The jam was extracted to the last spot. A jammy, sticky, and happy Owl was left in Study No. 1, while the Famous Five went to look for Trotter. Not for a moment did they suppose that Trotter would verify Bunter's statement.

They found the House page downstairs, and Harry Wharton put the question.

"You showed in a man yesterday to see Vernon-Smith, Trotter?"

"Yessir!"

"Who was it?"

"Captain Vernon, sir!"

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter did not get that booting!

The Letter for Redwing!

EXTRAORDINARY!" Harry Wharton & Co. glanced round in surprise.

It was after brekker at Greyfriars, and the Famous Five were sauntering in the quad till the school bell rang, on Monday morning.

That sudden, startled exclamation reached their ears from the open window of Mr. Quelch's study.

They were at quite a little distance from the Remove master's window. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,642.

But Quelch's voice had considerable carrying power, when he was emphatic. And that exclamation was uttered in quite loud tones.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What's up with Quelch?"

"Sounds as if something is!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The upfulness appears to be terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"There he goes again!" said Frank Nugent.

Quelch's voice was heard:

"Amazing!"

Evidently, the Remove master was in a very startled state!

The juniors looked towards the open window. They could see the top of Quelch's head, crowned by a mortar-board!

Mr. Quelch was seated at his study table. He was gazing at something that he held in his hand, though the juniors could not, from the quad, see what it was. Whatever it was, it seemed to have made Quelch jump.

"Most extraordinary!" came Quelch's voice again. "Inexplicable!"

The surprised juniors saw Quelch rise to his feet. Then they saw what he held in his hand. It was an unopened letter.

Why a letter, still unopened, should have startled Quelch like that, was quite mysterious. It was one of Quelch's duties, as master of the Remove, to glance over letters addressed to members of his Form, before they were placed in the rack, to be taken out in break. The juniors guessed that he had been thus occupied, when that particular letter made him jump.

"Something for a Remove man!" murmured Bob. "Oh, my hat! Can't be a letter from one of Smithy's bookie pals, what?"

Mr. Quelch stepped to the window, the letter in his hand, and glanced out.

"Wharton!" he called.

"Yes, sir!"

"Please come to my study at once!"

"Yes, sir!"

Harry Wharton left his friends, and went along to the doorway of the House. He made his way to his Form-master's study in a state of considerable surprise. If that letter was for him, he could not see any reason why it should make Quelch jump!

He tapped at Mr. Quelch's study door and entered.

Mr. Quelch was standing by the table, the letter in his hand, gazing at it! Whatever it was, it was clear that it had caused the Remove master great astonishment and perturbation.

There was a pile of other letters on the study table, which Quelch had been looking over when that particular letter had caught his eye and caused him to utter that series of startled ejaculations. Obviously, it was a letter for a Remove boy.

"This is a very extraordinary thing, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "A letter has been delivered here for Redwing!"

"Redwing!" repeated Harry blankly.

"It is now more than a week," said Mr. Quelch, "since Redwing of my Form left the school without leave. Except for the telegram he sent me from Dover on the day he left, I have had no word from him. He stated in the telegram that he was joining his father on a coasting trip and asked me to excuse him for leaving before the holidays as his father was sailing that day."

"I remember, sir!" answered Harry.

"So far as I have been able to ascertain, no boy in the Remove was aware

of his intention or has heard a word from him since!" said Mr. Quelch. "I did not, however, doubt his statement that he had sailed with Mr. Redwing on his coasting vessel. It appears now that that statement was untrue."

"Oh, no, sir!" exclaimed Harry Wharton at once. "I can't understand Redwing going off as he did, sir—but I'm absolutely certain that he wouldn't tell any untruths about it! Any fellow in the Remove would tell you the same, sir!"

"I should certainly have supposed so!" said Mr. Quelch. "That was my opinion of the boy, Wharton. I have been very much surprised and very much annoyed by his action in taking leave for granted—and I doubt whether his headmaster would allow him to return to the school after such wilful and irresponsible conduct. But certainly I never dreamed that he was deceiving me!"

"He wouldn't, sir!" said Harry Wharton earnestly.

"He has done so, Wharton—at all events, it would appear so. You are acquainted with his father's handwriting?"

"Mr. Redwing's? Certainly, sir! Redwing has shown me letters from him, from foreign ports, lots of times."

"Then you can identify the hand?" said the Remove master.

"Oh, yes, sir! Redwing showed some of us a letter from him early in the term, from Marseilles. His father went on a deep-sea voyage after Easter, though he must have come back since, as Redwing joined him at Dover."

"Redwing cannot have joined him at Dover, Wharton!"

"But he said so in his telegram, sir!"

"Look at this letter, Wharton, and tell me whether it is, as I believe, in the handwriting of Mr. Redwing."

The Remove master handed the letter to Wharton. It was addressed to Tom Redwing at Greyfriars School, Kent, England, and bore the postmark of Aden.

Harry Wharton stared at that superscription blankly.

It was John Redwing's hand. He knew it at a glance—he had seen letters from Tom's sailorman father often enough.

But he could hardly believe his eyes as he looked at it.

John Redwing had written to his son at Greyfriars evidently in the belief that Tom was at the school. The letter had been posted at Aden, far away in the Eastern seas.

"Oh!" gasped Harry

"I am fairly certain," said Mr. Quelch, "that that letter is addressed to Redwing in his father's hand. But you can tell me as a positive fact, Wharton. It is hardly likely that Redwing would receive a letter from a distant foreign port from anyone but his father. Is that John Redwing's hand?"

"Yes, sir!" answered Harry.

"That letter," said Mr. Quelch, "was posted from an Eastern port about the same date that Redwing left this school, Wharton."

Wharton looked at the postmark again.

"Yes, sir," he answered.

"Redwing stated in his telegram that he was joining his father at Dover for a coasting trip, as he did in the Easter holidays," said Mr. Quelch. "On that occasion he was given early leave. On this occasion I concluded that he had most unjustifiably taken leave for granted. It now appears that he cannot have done what he stated, as his father is still far away on a long

voyage and certainly cannot have been at Dover the week before last."

"I can't understand it, sir!" stammered Harry. "If Redwing has been telling lies, it's the first time he's ever done so—I know that!"

"This letter speaks for itself!" said Mr. Quelch, laying it on the table. "John Redwing was some thousands of miles from England at the time Redwing informed me that he was joining him at Dover!"

"It—it looks like it, sir. I can't understand it!"

"It seems, then, that Redwing has deceived me, and that he has most unscrupulously made use of his father's name to do so while he went away on some irresponsible excursion!" said the Remove master. "Certainly he is not with his father, and cannot be. That is all, Wharton. I only desired your confirmation that this letter is addressed in John Redwing's hand."

Harry Wharton left the study with his brain in a whirl.

Light at Last :

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's up?"

"Anything wrong, old bean?"

"Seen a ghost?"

The Co. stared at Harry Wharton as he rejoined them in the quadrangle.

Really, he looked rather as if he had seen a ghost. He was feeling quite dizzy with astonishment, and he looked it.

"What on earth's happened, Harry?" asked Frank Nugent.

Harry Wharton gasped.

"It beats me!" he said. "Beats me hollow! It was a letter for Redwing!"

"Well, what about that?" asked Bob Cherry, in surprise. "Somebody might write to Redwing here, not knowing he was gone."

"It's from his father."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Posted in a port thousands of miles away!" gasped the captain of the Remove. "You fellows knew that Reddy's father was gone on a deep-sea voyage. We supposed he must have come back, as Reddy joined him at Dover. But—he hasn't come back. He was thousands of miles away the day Reddy left the school!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Impossible!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, I should have thought so. But that letter's a proof of it. Quelch thinks now that Reddy was taking him in—and going off on some stunt of his own—like the Bounder did last Easter, you know, only they never spotted him. It's the sack for Reddy—that's a cert now!"

"He jolly well deserves it, if that's true!" said Johnny. "But it isn't! Reddy would no more tell lies than he would steal!"

"You know what he said in his telegram. That telegram was a lie from beginning to end!"

Johnny Bull was silent.

"I can't make it out," said Harry. "It's utterly unlike old Reddy—I can't make it out! But—he never saw his father at Dover—he never went to sea with him—he's not with him now. Goodness knows where he is, or what he's up to—but that telegram from Dover was a lie from start to finish! There's no doubt about that now!"

The school bell rang, and the Famous Five joined the crowd of Removites heading for the Form-room.

Billy Bunter met them as they came into the House.



"I say, you fellows," came a fat squeak from above, "you might pass up a glass of that lemonade!"

"I say, you fellows, can you lend me one-and-six?" he asked.

"No!" answered five voices in unison.

"I say, it's rather urgent!" said Bunter. "Fishy's got a packet of electric snuff to sell. He got it off a chap in the Fourth who couldn't square for something Fishy had lent him, and he's letting it go cheap! One-and-six ain't much among five chaps—only five-pence each!"

"Can you do sums like that in your head?" asked Bob.

"I'm pretty good at arithmetic, you know. Well, look here, I want to bag that electric snuff off Fishy!"

"You can't eat electric snuff!"

"Eh? Who wants to eat it, you ass?"

"Don't tell us you want anything you can't eat!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! It's for that cad Smithy, you know!" explained Bunter. "Don't tell him, of course! I never got him in that booby-trap last week because the beast wouldn't go to

Quelch's study for that paper—and you know what I got when Quelch got it! I'm going to get him with that packet of electric snuff. Look here, you fellows, you can all stand round and laugh when he sneezes it off!"

Evidently, Billy Bunter's feud was still going strong. But the Famous Five were not likely to provide the sinews of war for his next offensive against the enemy. Even the prospect of standing round and laughing while Smithy sneezed it off did not tempt them.

"Tain't much!" urged the fat Owl. "I've been disappointed about a postal order, you know—and I'm stony—for once!"

"For once!" gasped Bob.

"Yes. It doesn't often happen, as you know, and I'm expecting a postal order from a titled relation to-morrow. But, you see, I want to get that electric snuff off Fishy to-day! Dash it all, it's only one and a kick!" said Bunter

warmly. "You can dub up one and a kick!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I don't know about the one," he said, "but I'll dub up the kick!"

And he did—on the spot! It was not the kick that Bunter expected or wanted, and the fat Owl, having received it, departed with a loud yell.

"By gum!" said Johnny Bull. The sight of Billy Bunter had reminded him of something. "By gum!"

"What—"

"That yarn Bunter was spinning us on Saturday—" breathed Johnny.

"What about it?" asked Bob. "It was all gammon!"

"We asked Trotter, and he told us it really was Captain Vernon who called to see Smithy that day," said Johnny Bull. "And—and— Look here, was it all gammon? It was a queer yarn for Bunter to make up, anyhow—and part of it was proved by what Trotter said; and we know Bunter was hiding in the visitors'-room. You remember he bolted out of the window of that room when Quelch got after him? Look here—"

"What the thump have you got in your head now?" asked Bob.

"I've got this in my head!" said Johnny Bull deliberately. "We know now that old Redwing never went off at Dover with his pater, as the telegram said. I know, whether you fellows do or not, that old Reddy would as soon pinch Quelch's watch as tell him a string of lies. His bike was found at Lantham Chase. Well, he went there. He never went on to Dover to join his father. And he never sent that telegram!"

"Eh?"

"It wasn't a letter, or a phone call—fists and voices can be recognised," said Johnny. "It was a telegram. Anybody could send a telegram!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"But Reddy sent it—" said Bob.

"He didn't! It was all lies—and that means that Redwing never did send it. Something's happened to Reddy—and it happened after he parked his bike in that thicket at Lantham Chase."

"Johnny, old man—"

"And Smithy knows it!" said Johnny Bull. "At least, he suspects it! That's why he made Captain Vernon come here that day—to ask him! Smithy jolly well suspected that something had happened to Reddy at Lantham Chase, and now we know he never sent that telegram it jolly well looks like it! Bunter wasn't making up that yarn, as we thought—"

"But—" gasped Bob.

"Something's happened to Reddy, and somebody else sent that telegram to cover it up!" said Johnny Bull. "If we'd known that his father was still in foreign parts I should have guessed that, first go off. Now we do know."

"Oh crumbs!"

The school bell had ceased to ring. Harry Wharton & Co. went into the Remove Form-room.

Mr. Quelch had five very inattentive pupils that morning. The Famous Five really couldn't put a lot of attention into Latin "con," after what Johnny Bull had said!

A Knock-out Blow!

BERTIE VERNON came out of the House after dinner that day with a cheerful face. The Bounder's double was in good spirits.

Since that interview with Captain

Vernon in the visitors'-room, a few days ago, a weight had been off his mind.

He had been resolved—passionately resolved—that he would not stand for it if Tom Redwing had had foul play. Somehow or other he contrived to square the Bounder's fate with his conscience—there even seemed to him, the way he looked at it, a sort of justice in supplanting the fellow who had taunted him with being a poor relation. Now he was heir to millions, and his enemy was going to be a poor relation! And serve him right!

His conscience, on that point, was soothed, if not satisfied. But the matter of Redwing was utterly different.

He was nobody's enemy. He had never done Vernon, or anyone else, an ill turn. He had done his best to restrain the Bounder's bitter enmity towards his relative while the two were in the Remove.

The bare thought of the unhappy lad being consigned to a hopeless captivity to further the schemes of a plotter at Lantham Chase was more—much more—than Vernon could bear. There was no sophistry that could soothe his conscience if he allowed it to go on. It was a crime, and he knew that it was a crime, and he was ready to throw everything to the winds to stop it.

But what he had to face, if he threw up the game of impersonation at this stage, was overwhelming. So it was no wonder that he had received the captain's assurance eagerly—that he was glad to dismiss the matter from his mind, and carry on as before.

Not for a moment did he think of doubting the captain's word. He did not understand how the matter could have been arranged, but it did not occur to him that that word had been falsely given. He was quite content to dismiss the matter from his mind without fully understanding it.

It was like the lifting of an intolerable burden.

Redwing was all right. That cad and rotter, Smith, could shift for himself and take what was coming to him; what he deserved for his unscrupulousness, his ungenerousness, and his malice. That was how Vernon looked at it—and he let it go at that.

As he came out of the House he had a volume of Livy under his arm and was thinking chiefly of sitting under shady trees and mugging up that difficult author, his keenness on the Latin prize being now quite revived. If he had a shadow on his mind it was the prospect of meeting Mr. Vernon-Smith in the holidays, now near at hand, but already he was laying plans to go off for the holidays with some Remove fellow and thus elude—or, at least, postpone—the meeting he dreaded.

"Smithy!"

Harry Wharton overtook him in the quad, and joined him.

"Well?"

Vernon's answer was curt.

"I want to ask you something, Smithy, about Redwing—"

"Chuck it at that!" said Vernon. "You've asked me that before, and I've told you I know nothing about him. If you can't take my word, do the other thing; but chuck it, and give a fellow a rest!"

With that he walked on and sat down on a bench under one of the old elms and opened his Livy.

Harry Wharton had no intention of "chucking it." He followed the Bounder's double and sat down on the bench beside him.

"I've got to speak, Smithy," he said. "Something's come out that you may

not have heard. There was a letter for Redwing this morning—from his father."

Vernon stared at him.

"From his father? He's with his father! What do you mean?"

"I mean that he isn't with his father, and can't be, because that letter was posted from Aden, at the other end of the Red Sea, at the time that Redwing left the school."

Livy slipped from Vernon's knee and fell to the ground, unheeded. His eyes were fixed on the captain of the Remove with a startled stare.

"Are you mad?" he asked at last, in a husky voice. "Or are you trying to pull my leg? What you say is impossible!"

"Quelch showed me the letter this morning, to identify the hand and make sure that it was from Redwing's father."

"And you think it was?"

"I know it was! Quelch thinks that his telegram from Dover was a spoof. He can't think anything else, of course! It was a spoof, all right. But—"

"But what?" breathed Vernon.

"I've talked it over with my friends," said Harry quietly, "and we all feel sure that Redwing never would have wired a string of lies to Quelch. That's rot! He never sent that wire!"

"He must have."

"He never did! Something's happened to him—"

"Oh, you're mad—mad! Nothing's happened to him!" muttered Vernon.

But his face was growing white.

"We're sure of that," said Harry. "Somebody else sent that wire, Smithy, somebody who knows what's happened to Redwing."

"Oh!" panted Vernon.

"His bike was found hidden at Lantham Chase," went on the captain of the Remove. "That's been puzzling us all ever since it was found, but we supposed he was all right, as he had got to Dover. Now we know that he never got to Dover at all. What became of him, Smithy?"

Vernon looked at him in silence.

"I don't feel that I can go to Quelch and suggest that Redwing has had foul play somewhere," went on Harry Wharton. "It sounds steep; and Quelch has no doubt that he has cleared off, as you did last hols—"

"I—I did?"

"I suppose you haven't forgotten spoofing the Head last Easter and getting off early for the hols—"

"Oh! Yes—no! Never mind that! Get on!"

"That's what Quelch thinks, and, of course, it looks like it, though it doesn't account for Reddy's bike being left at Lantham Chase. But we don't think—and we want to know! Do you know anything about it, Smithy?"

"What should I know?" muttered Vernon.

Harry Wharton looked at him.

He was puzzled by the set pallor in the junior's face and the strange look that had come into his eyes. He could not fail to see that the fellow had received a shock from what he had told him, and more and more he felt assured that what Bunter had related was true. If Smithy knew nothing about it why was he looking like that?

"I'll speak out plainly," said Harry. "From something we've been told—never mind by whom—it looks as if you suspected that something had happened to Redwing, and that it had happened at Lantham Chase."

Vernon's lips moved, but he did not speak.

"If you've got any suspicion in that quarter you can tell us," said Harry.

"You needn't stand on ceremony with Captain Vernon, you always loathed the man—"

"You fool!"

"Well, you always said so, at least, and you used to say that he had some shady game on at that place. Look here, Smithy, we're anxious about Redwing, and if you know anything, or suspect anything, cough it up!" exclaimed Wharton. "You can see the look of the thing—Reddy parked his bike in the wood at Lantham Chase and nothing's known of what happened to him afterwards. I can't imagine why Captain Vernon should do him any harm, it doesn't seem sense! But he was at Lantham Chase that day, and nobody knows what happened to him. Do you know, or suspect, any reason why Captain Vernon should have done him harm, for that's what it boils down to?"

Bertie Vernon burst into a discordant laugh.

He knew now.

That day in the visitors'-room the captain had passed his word, and he had trusted to it blindly. He had been deluded—and now he realised that he had been deluded with his eyes open; deceived like a baby. The captain had lied, because he feared to let him learn what had become of Redwing. His first suspicion, when he had learned of the discovery of Redwing's bike, had been right—he knew that now. The scales had fallen from his eyes.

He rose unsteadily from the bench.

"Look here, Smithy, if you know anything—and I can jolly well see in your face that you do—" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, hold your fool tongue!" broke out Vernon. "Leave me alone! I know what I'm going to do—leave me alone!"

"That's not good enough, Smithy!" Wharton rose from the bench also. "It's perfectly plain to me that you know something—what is it?"

"Will you leave me alone?" panted Vernon. His voice came cracked, his face was white as chalk. "You fool, leave me alone, can't you?"

He turned and walked unsteadily away.

Harry Wharton made a step after him—but he stopped. What was the matter with Smithy he could not imagine; but he could see that something was very much the matter. The fellow looked as if he had had a knock-out blow—a blow that had almost stunned him. Harry Wharton stood in puzzled silence as he went.

When the bell rang for afternoon school, one member of the Remove did not join the Form as they went in!

Mr. Quelch noted the fact at once; but Vernon-Smith was in his good graces these days, and he did not frown. He supposed that that junior was, for once, coming in late.

But that junior did not come in late. He did not come in at all!

The Last Resource!

THE Boulder's double dismounted from his bike in the woodland path at Lantham Chase.

He threw the machine carelessly against a trunk among the trees and stood breathing hard, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his handkerchief.

While the Remove fellows in the Form-room were wondering what Smithy was up to that afternoon, Bertie Vernon had been racing up the

Lantham road as fast as he could drive his bicycle.

Now he was at Lantham Chase, hot, breathless, fatigued, and at a loss.

After what Harry Wharton had told him, only one thought had been in his mind—to get to Lantham Chase. He knew the truth now; he knew where Tom Redwing was, and his resolve had revived in full force. Without an hour's delay—without a minute's delay—the kidnapped schoolboy should be freed. To what would follow he had as yet given no thought.

But he gave it thought now that he was at the Chase and time for action had come. He leaned on a tree in the cool shade of the wood and tried to think. To see his uncle; to tell him that he knew now that he had lied; to demand that the whole rascally game should be thrown up and done with—that was what was before him.

The captain would refuse.

He realised that now!

The power was in his hands to compel him to do what was right—but it was a power that he could not use. One word at the police station would be sufficient; but he could not utter that word.

It was for his sake that the man had done this. The captain had been a father to him since his own father had been killed in fighting on the Indian Frontier. He had done everything for him; pinched and scraped for his sake, made endless sacrifices for him—even the sacrifice of his honour. For his sake, and his sake alone, had the man plotted and planned all this—to make him rich, to give him a place in the sun—taking for his own share only the risk, the penalty of the law if he failed.

That one fixed idea had been the man's guide: he was ready to sacrifice others, as he was ready to sacrifice himself, for the boy's sake. It was a crime, but he deliberately blinded himself to that aspect of the matter. His determination was inflexible. How inflexible Vernon knew from the falsehood the Army man had told him that day at Greyfriars. Well he knew what that must have cost him—a man who had disdained falsehood, as he had disdained everything that was small and mean.

He would refuse to let go his grip! Vernon, now that he gave the matter thought, knew it.

He had tried to keep this from the boy's knowledge—even at the cost of giving his word falsely. But now that the boy knew it would not change his iron determination.

What could the boy do?

Not to save Redwing's liberty, not to save Redwing's life, would he, or could he, utter a word to bring danger to the man to whom he owed so much. That was unthinkable.

What was he to do?

He looked out of the thick, leafy trees into the sweeping avenue that led up to the distant mansion. The captain was there; his man Hunt was there. He was powerless to dispute the captain's will. When he met with a grim refusal, what was he to do?

He panted.

He moved back a little into the trees as he suddenly sighted a figure on the avenue.

It was Captain Vernon, pacing slowly down the avenue, with his hands clasped behind his back, a moody, thoughtful frown on his face, his eyes on the ground.

From the trees Bertie watched him in silence. He did not want his uncle to see him.

He had thrown himself on his bicycle and raced over the miles from the

school to see him—but now he shrank from a meeting.

What was the use? He could hear the captain's answer as plainly as if the man were speaking to him—a curt refusal to alter one jot or tittle of his plans.

The captain paced by within a dozen yards of him, never dreaming that he was there.

As a winding turn of the avenue hid him from sight, Bertie Vernon emerged from the trees and ran in the direction of the house.

The captain, for a time at least, would be away from the building, though within sound of a signal from old Hunt if he was wanted. Old Hunt would be there. He would have to manage Hunt somehow.

There was only one way—he knew that. The captain would never consent, and he could not use the power in his hands to force him. But if the turret-room was opened for the prisoners—what then?

Captain Vernon would be faced by an accomplished fact. What had been done he could not undo. It was the boy's only resource—unless he was to stand for this and to live his days with the knowledge of crime for his constant companion.

He reached the house and ran up the steps to the stone terrace.

The door was shut and locked, as it was always when the captain was absent from the house.

When Vernon knocked he saw old Hunt's leathery face at a window, looking out before he came to the door.

But as soon as he saw the schoolboy, Hunt came to the door at once and opened it. His grizzled face took on its kindest expression as he let Vernon in.

"You, Master Bertie!" he said. "Your uncle's gone into the wood, sir. He keeps an eye open for trespassers!"

"I'll wait for him, Hunt."

"I don't know that the master'll be glad to see you here, sir," said old Hunt doubtfully. "It ain't a safe thing for you to come here, Master Bertie, considering."

"I had to come. That's all right!"

"I'll call the master, sir, if you like. He'll hear my whistle—"

"No, no! I'm in no hurry—lots of time, Hunt! I'll wait in my uncle's room. Look here, you can get me something to drink—I've had a ride in a jolly hot sun."

"Yes, sir!"

Old Hunt went back down the passage that led to his kitchen.

Bertie Vernon crossed the hall and entered the room looking on to the stone terrace which his uncle used as a study.

There was a desk in the corner by the window. He waited till old Hunt's footsteps had died away, and then stepped quickly to the desk. In one of the pigeon-holes was a bunch of keys. From the key-ring he swiftly detached a small, bright steel key and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

He closed the desk again, and was seated by the window, looking out, when old Hunt brought him a jug of lemonade on a tray.

"The master won't be long, I think, sir," said Hunt, as he left him.

Vernon nodded, and picked up a book.

When Hunt was gone he laid down the book. He did not touch the lemonade.

He stepped quietly into the hall.

From that hall the turret-stair ascended. His heart beat fast as he

stepped towards it. Old Hunt, it he saw him, would wonder why he was going up—he did not want Hunt to hear him or see him. But the man was back in his kitchen, and Vernon stepped swiftly to the stairway. Once there, he was out of sight from the passage at the back.

On tiptoe he ascended the winding stone stair. When he had passed the curve of the stairway he was hidden, even if old Hunt had come back into the hall. But he made no sound as he tiptoed up to the little landing at the top of the stair and reached the door of the turret-room.

Foes—or Friends?

THAT villain!" breathed Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"What?"

"That cur!"

"Who?" asked Redwing. He joined his chum at the window in the turret-room that overlooked the avenue.

The Bounder's face was black with rage. He had been standing at the window, looking wearily out into the July sunshine, when he sighted a running figure—and his eyes blazed at the sight of his double.

"That rotter!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth.

"Vernon!" muttered Redwing.

They both glimpsed the junior, as he ran towards the stone terrace below. Then Vernon disappeared from their sight.

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"You fool!" he said bitterly. "You fancy that that cur would stir a finger if he knew you were here along with me! You can see that he has the run of the place—do you think he doesn't know?"

"I am sure of it, Smithy!" answered Tom quietly. "If he knew—"

Herbert Vernon-Smith gave a scoffing laugh.

He leaned wearily against the window-shutter. All the bitterness in his heart had been roused by that glimpse of his enemy and rival—the double who had supplanted him at Greyfriars, who was planning to supplant him as heir to millions.

On the day the captain had spoken through the panel, he had shared, for a moment, Redwing's hope! But that hope was gone again now. Day after day of weary imprisonment banished hope.

Click!

He gave a sudden start, and his eyes shot to the door.

Redwing turned.

It was the click of a key in the lock. Only at meal-times were the prisoners visited, and no meal-time was near.

The door opened.

Redwing gave a violent start, and the Bounder's eyes blazed, as Bertie Vernon stepped into the turret-room. Both of them stared at him in astonishment.

He closed the door swiftly.

Then he turned to them, with his finger to his lips, in sign of silence. Redwing's eyes fixed on him questioningly—hopefully! The Bounder's burned at him with fierce animosity.

"You! You cur!" breathed Herbert Vernon-Smith. "You! You've come here—by gad, I'll make you sorry you've come!"

He made a rapid step towards his double, his fists clenched.

Tom Redwing pushed him back, so

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roughly that he staggered and almost fell.

"Stop that, you fool!" breathed Redwing. "Quiet!"

"Oh, let him rip!" said Vernon, in a low, bitter voice. "If we're heard, I've come here for nothing—let him rip! I'm letting down the man who's done everything for me, in coming here—not for that rotter's sake! He could stick here for his life-time, for all I care—it's what he deserves and what he's asked for. Let him kick up one of his shindies—that's all he thinks about."

"Keep your paws to yourself, Redwing!" snapped the Bounder. But he made no further move to advance on his enemy.

They looked at one another—bitter dislike in both the faces that were so strangely similar; scorn, as well as dislike, in Vernon's. But the Bounder, when he spoke again, spoke quietly.

"Why have you come here?"

"You can't guess!" sneered Vernon. "No—you wouldn't! Redwing can guess—he knows!"

"Yes, I think I know!" said Tom Redwing quietly.

"I'll speak to you—not to that hooligan and blackguard! I've found out that you were here! Did you think I knew before?"

"I was sure that you did not!" answered Tom.

"You're a decent chap, Redwing! You knew that!" muttered Vernon. "If Smith had been as decent as you, he would never have been here. I wouldn't have stood for it—neither would my uncle! I—I suppose you think pretty badly of my uncle—but believe me, he would never have lifted a finger to this rotten business if Vernon-Smith had not been what he is."

"Thanks!" sneered the Bounder.

Vernon's eyes gleamed at him.

"You know it's true!" he said. "If you'd been a fellow like Redwing—like Wharton—like Bob Cherry—you know you'd never have been here! You've got your own rotten rascality to thank for what you've been through! How did you get into this place at all—you came here to play a rotten trick—and were caught for your pains! I've used your name at Greyfriars—haven't you used mine, for your rotten trickeries—and weren't you the first to begin that game? You've got back what you handed out—and serve you right!"

The Bounder looked at him—in silence.

There was truth in what Vernon said—more truth than was palatable to the Bounder of Greyfriars.

But, bitter as Vernon's words were, it was dawning on Smithy why he had come there—that this meant freedom. His rival, his enemy, his supplanter, had come to set him free—not for his own sake, certainly, but because Redwing could not be set free without him.

And Smithy could understand, very clearly, what the fellow was facing in taking such a step.

Redwing had judged him more kindly than the Bounder—and Redwing had been right.

"I've been in your place at the school!" Vernon's voice went on, low and tense. "I've improved your reputation for you—if you've any use for a decent name in the school you've disgraced a dozen times over. You know what Greyfriars thought of you at the beginning of the term—ask Redwing what is thought now of Vernon-Smith—he can tell you! I've made a name

for you at Greyfriars that it will take you a whole term to disgrace again."

Vernon-Smith winced.

But he did not speak, and the hatred and rage had died out of his face. He stood silent, his eyes fixed intently and curiously on the face that might have been his own reflected in the glass.

"I'm not here for your sake! You know that! You've asked for all you've had—and more! You've deserved it all—and more! Even your father—even Mr. Vernon-Smith—wouldn't have been sorry, in the long run, that his son at Greyfriars was not in constant danger of being kicked out of the school for rotten blackguardism. He will get a good report of you this term—I've earned it for you—the first good school report you've ever had! But I'm wasting breath on you."

Vernon turned to Redwing.

"I've come here on your account! As soon as I knew, I made up my mind to that. And you knew I would."

"I was sure of it!" said Tom.

"Yes—you're decent—you can understand another fellow being decent, too. I don't care what Vernon-Smith thinks—no decent fellow would care for his opinion. But—but I'd like you to think as well as you can of my uncle. I can't expect you to understand—but if you knew how kind he has been, how generous he has been, to his brother's son who was left without a bean in the world, you might find some excuse even for what he has done in this affair—"

Vernon's voice faltered.

"There's some excuse for taking a fortune away from a blackguard who would throw it to the winds on cards and horses, and giving it to a fellow who'd make a good and decent use of it. I tell you, so long as it was only Vernon-Smith, I'd stand by my uncle. But—but—try to understand, Redwing, that nothing more than that was ever meant—you left him no choice, when you found that fellow here—his back was against the wall—that's why—"

He broke off again.

"But it's no good talking! I'm here to let you loose—and when you go, Vernon-Smith must go! The whole game's up! But—I've got to see my uncle safe! He's done everything for me—now I'm letting him down, and bringing danger on him. I'm asking nothing for myself—not from you, and least of all from Vernon-Smith! But my uncle's got to be seen clear—you owe me that, if I let you out of this!"

Redwing nodded.

There was a deep pity in his heart for the fellow who stood with pale, tormented face, speaking in husky, faltering tones.

"I don't know how it can turn out!" went on Vernon. "Goodness knows what you can say at Greyfriars! It's easy enough for Vernon-Smith—he's only got to step back into his place, and hold his tongue—nobody knew that I had taken his place, and nobody need know that he takes it back. But you—you're believed to have gone off—I believed, like the rest, that you'd joined your father at sea—till the letter came—"

"The letter—"

"Wharton told me this afternoon—a letter from your father at some foreign port. Quelch knows now that you never joined him at Dover; he thinks you've cleared off on some stunt of your own; making a lying excuse, as I hear that Vernon-Smith did last holidays. You'll have to explain that somehow; I can't ask you to stand for that. But—"

Tom waited.



"Tell the police what you know," said Captain Vernon, "and I shall be taken away with handcuffs on my wrists!"

"But you've got to give me your promise to say nothing to endanger my uncle. You owe me that for what I'm doing. If you think he ought to face punishment for this you can be satisfied—his whole plan knocked on the head, ruin all round. He's spent all he had on the place to carry out this game, and now it's ending in a crash. That's penalty enough—if you want a penalty—"

"I don't," said Tom quietly. "If I get back I've got to put myself right with Quelch somehow, but that's all. I've no wish to harm anyone. It's not for me to judge or punish."

"Yes, I knew you'd say so," said Vernon. "You're decent! I needn't make terms with you; I can trust you! But, Vernon-Smith—he turned to the Bounder again—"you've got to make the same promise, and I've got to trust to it. And what's your word worth?"

"Smuthy's word is as good as mine, Vernon, if he gives it," said Tom Redwing quietly. "You fellows would have been better friends if you'd judged one another better."

Vernon gave a hopeless shrug. He had to trust the Bounder's word, and he could place little faith in it.

"Keep him up to it if you can!" he muttered.

Vernon-Smith spoke quietly:

"You're a fool, Vernon, and I've been a fool, too! I'd act differently if it had to come over again. Do you think I can't see in your face what it costs you to come here and do this? I wish we'd been better friends; it's too late for that now. But I'm not your enemy, at any rate. Once I'm out of this, nobody has anything to fear from me. Give me back what's my own, and we'll part without enmity."

Vernon looked at him doubtfully.

"I must trust you!" he muttered.

"You can trust me," said the Bounder, without a sign of anger. "You're a better fellow than I believed—a better fellow than I am, I dare say. I tell you, I will never speak a word to harm you or your uncle! I must tell my father what's happened; you wouldn't ask me not to do that. But I'll get his word to say nothing, and once it's over, he won't be anxious to tell the world about an affair like this. You're doing the right thing now; you shan't be sorry for it!"

Vernon looked at him hard.

His tense face relaxed.

"Keep to that!" he said. "Perhaps I've misjudged you; I know you've misjudged me. So long as my uncle is clear, I don't care for anything else. I've got to see him clear, and—and, in the long run, I believe he'll be as glad as I am that this miserable business came to nothing. Leave it at that."

He turned to the door, and unlocked it again.

Tom Redwing drew a deep, deep breath; the Bounder's heart beat almost to suffocation. Freedom at last after so many weary weeks! Freedom—the most priceless of all blessings—and from the hand of his enemy! But in that moment of relief the last trace of enmity was gone from the Bounder's heart.

The End of a Family Feud!

Vernon put his finger to his lips again.

But the prisoners of the turret-room did not need warning. The door was open. Freedom was before them. But they were not out

of the wood yet. They knew, as Vernon knew, that escape hung upon a thread.

Hunt was below; the captain was not far away. If the alarm was given all was over.

Vernon led the way down the turret stair.

Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing followed him on tiptoe.

At the foot of the stair Vernon signed to them to remain in the cover of the stairway while he stepped out into the hall.

He looked from the window. The captain was not to be seen on the avenue. There was safety so far. He turned from the window and stepped into the passage at the back of the hall.

At the end of that passage a door was wide open, and he could see old Hunt smoking a pipe by the window.

Vernon walked down the passage and stepped into Hunt's room.

Vernon-Smith and Redwing remained silent on the stairway. They heard Vernon's voice speaking to the captain's man.

"My uncle hasn't come in yet, Hunt. I'm going down the avenue. If he comes in tell him I'm here."

"Yes, Master Bertie."

Vernon came out of the room, closing the door after him.

A moment later he was at the foot of the stair.

"Quick!" he breathed.

Vernon-Smith and Redwing followed him, with beating hearts, across the hall.

Hunt's door was closed now; he could not see into the hall. If he opened it—if the captain came in by the front door—it seemed to the escaping prisoners that their hearts were beat-

ing like hammers. Vernon was doing all he could; but if they were seen escape was cut off, and it was little likely that the Army man would ever give his nephew a chance of repeating this attempt. All depended on the next few minutes.

Vernon opened the door on the terrace.

He looked out with almost haggard eyes.

In the distance a figure came in sight.

Captain Vernon was crossing the avenue at a distance. It seemed to the boy that his heart was ceasing to beat.

But the Army man did not turn towards the house. He crossed the avenue and disappeared into the wood on the other side.

Vernon glanced over his shoulder.

"Now!" he whispered.

He stepped out on the stone terrace. The two juniors followed him, and the three of them ran across the terrace and down the steps.

To Redwing and the Bounder, it seemed like a dream to feel the sunlight on their faces, the free wind from the sea blowing on them.

There was a sound in the building—the sound of an opening door. It was old Hunt's door; he was coming out of his room.

"Duck!" breathed Vernon.

The terrace was high enough to hide them. They ducked their heads as they hurried along it. If old Hunt looked from a window he did not see them.

A minute later, and they had cut across a weedy lawn and were in the shelter of the trees.

They did not stop. Vernon led the way swiftly, and they followed him, winding into the depths of the wood

without a pause towards the path that led to the Lantham road.

Suddenly he halted and made them an agonised sign to be silent.

An exclamation was heard; it was the captain's voice. Through interstices of the foliage they glimpsed him.

He was standing by a bicycle that leaned on a tree, staring at it. Probably he knew that it was his nephew's bicycle. Finding it there by chance as he went through the wood evidently amazed him.

"Good gad! What——"

His exclamation came clearly.

The Bounder clenched his hands desperately. But Vernon caught his arm and drew him away.

Keeping their heads low, creeping softly in the underbrush, they circled round the spot where the captain stood, and in a few minutes they were out of sight and sound of him.

Vernon passed his hand over his forehead, thick with perspiration. But they were safe now.

A few minutes more of winding through the wood and they came out into the path close by where it turned off the high road. Another minute, and they were out of Lantham Chase, standing in the open road, with cars passing, free and safe at last—free and safe, even if the steely eyes of the Army man had now fallen on them.

Vernon stopped.

"You're all right now!" he muttered.

"Get away—the sooner the better!"

"And you?" asked Redwing in a low voice.

Vernon gave a bitter laugh.

"Greyfriars will never see me again; you'll never see me again! I've got to face my uncle now! Get going!"

Redwing held out his hand.

"You've done right, Vernon," he said quietly. "You're glad of it now; your uncle will be glad of it later. I'm sure of that. Good-bye, old fellow—and good luck!"

Vernon gripped his hand.

Then he looked at the Bounder.

Herbert Vernon-Smith smiled faintly, and held out his hand.

"Give us your fist," he said. "We've been foes—and fools! Let's part friends!"

And Vernon gripped his hand in turn.

Then they parted—Vernon-Smith and Redwing hurrying up the road towards Lantham, Vernon watching them till they were out of sight. And then, with a clouded face, turning back into the wood—to face his uncle and tell him what he had done.

The Blow Falls.

CAPTAIN VERNON stood on the stone terrace, his eyes fixed on a schoolboy who came up the avenue.

There was a grim frown on his face as he watched Bertie Vernon.

He did not speak as the junior came up the steps of the terrace. His eyes fixed grimly and questioningly on the boy.

Vernon faced him quietly.

"You know I was here, uncle," he said.

"Hunt has told me, and I came on your bicycle," said the captain curtly. "What does this mean? To-day is not a holiday at the school!"

"No."

"You have leave from class?"

"No."

"Why are you here?"

"I've done with class and done with Greyfriars, uncle." Vernon's voice was low and clear. "I found out that what you told me the other day—I'm not blaming you, but I've found out."

"How?"

"A letter for Redwing, from his father abroad."

"One cannot guard against every chance," said the captain composedly. "What I told you, Bertie, was for your peace of mind. It was not easy for me to tell you what I did. But you exacted it; it was for your peace of mind. And now you know—what?"

"Redwing——"

The captain stared at him in silence for a moment or two.

He did not know yet what had happened. He did not begin to suspect. His look showed what he was thinking, and his next words showed that he realised that the boy must now know the truth.

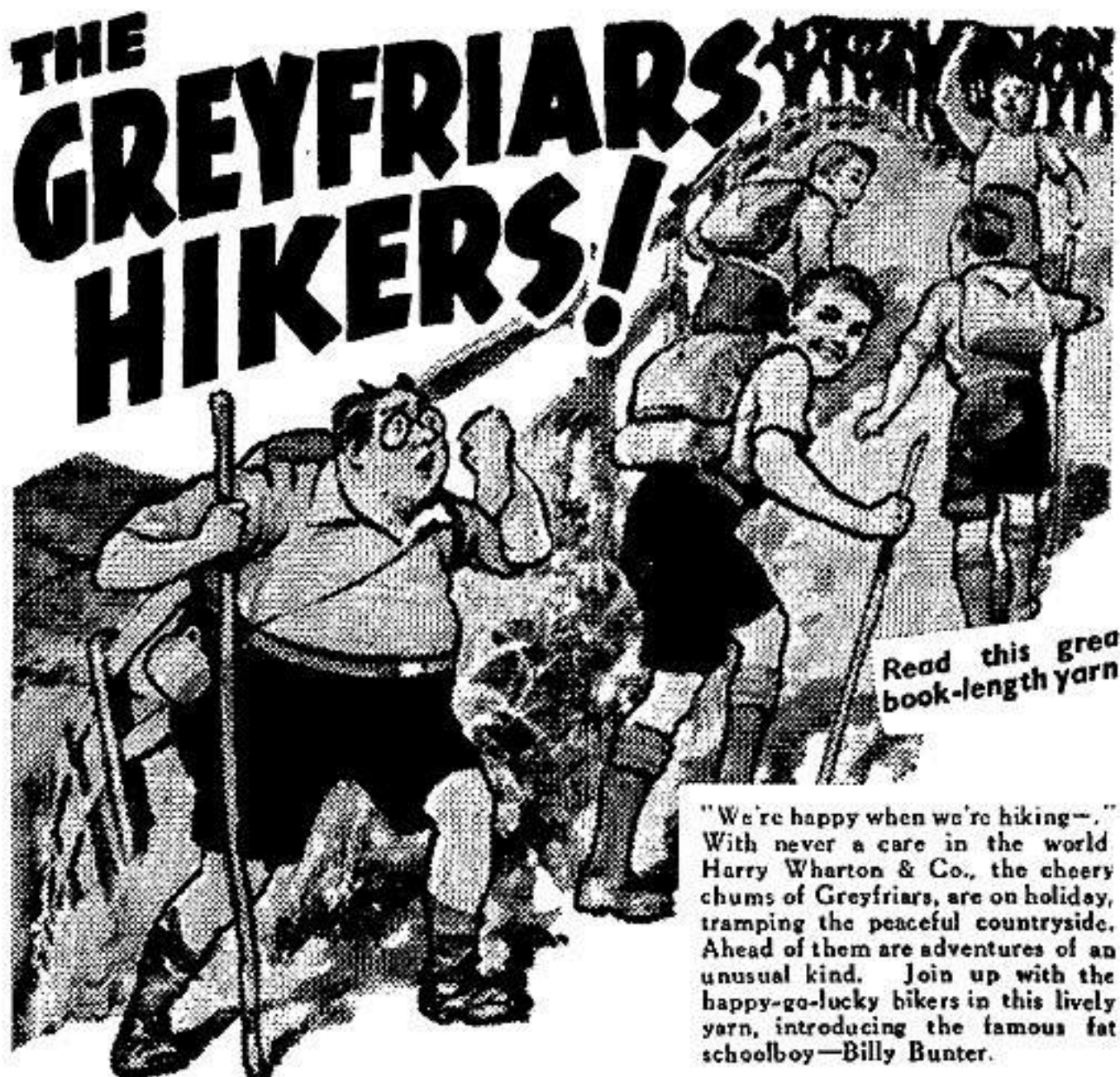
"Very well," he said. "You know. I did not wish you to know. It was better not. What you know, you had better forget as soon as possible."

He made a gesture towards the high turret.

"That turret keeps its own secrets," he said. "We are too deep in this for retreat, Bertie. You need not concern yourself for Redwing—he is merely a pawn in the game. I am sorry. I like the boy and respect him, but he brought his fate upon himself. And not for him, or a thousand such, would I retrace a single step of the path I am following."

"I knew it!" muttered Vernon.

"Neither, I hope, will he remain long a prisoner," went on the captain. "When he realises that he cannot help his friend, that it is useless to remain obstinate, he will come to my terms."



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and I will gladly let him go his own way."

"He would never let Vernon-Smith down."

"Never is a long word!" said the captain. "But if you are right, he must take his chance; he must lie upon the bed he has made for himself. I tell you, a thousand such should not stand in my way."

"And this," said the schoolboy, "is for my sake! For my sake you do this! Guilt and shame for you, guilt and shame for me!"

"Words are only words," said Captain Vernon. "I am sorry that you have learned how the matter stands. But now you know, you must stand for it as I must stand for it. There is no alternative."

Vernon smiled faintly.

"There is, and I have found it," he said. "As soon as I knew, I left the school—for good!"

"You will return to Greyfriars within the hour. You will carry on there as Herbert Vernon-Smith. You have come, as you came before, to talk nonsense. You may save your breath. There is one way, and one way only, of releasing the boy Redwing," said the captain, with grim irony. "Go to the police station at Lantham, and tell them what you have found out. Redwing will be released then, and I shall be taken away, like Eugene Aram, with gyves upon my wrists. If that is what you want, I will not raise a finger to stop you."

Vernon shuddered.

"Anything but that," he said.

"Either that, or you return to the school and carry on," said Captain Vernon. "There is no middle course."

"There is, and I have found it."

"Let me have the benefit of your wisdom, my boy," said the captain, with sarcastic contempt.

"I cannot return to Greyfriars now."

"You can, and must, and will!"

"Because—"

"Well?"

"Because I should meet Herbert Vernon-Smith there," said Vernon quietly. "Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing are both at Lantham now, taking the train for Greyfriars."

The captain stood quite still.

For a long moment he seemed stunned by what the boy had said. He stood as if turned to stone.

Then, without speaking, he turned and strode into the house. Vernon heard his hurried tread ring on the turret stair. Then there came an exclamation, or rather a roar, of rage.

Captain Vernon emerged on the terrace again. His face was white, his eyes burning.

"You have done this?" he panted.

"I have done it!"

The captain stood looking at him. His hand rose, clenched, but dropped to his side again. He threw himself on a bench on the terrace, and sat, still staring at the boy's face. A bitter laugh fell from his lips.

"This is the end," he said.

"It is the end!" said Vernon. "It was the only way—to save you, and to save myself. It was madness from the beginning. You thought of making me rich. If I had touched the fellow's money, I should have felt like a guilty thief, as I should have been. I've tried to think that he deserved it—that he would have done the same—that anything was good enough for such a rotter! I was fooling myself—just as you were. We judged him so harshly, because it was an excuse—a sop to conscience. He was not so bad as we thought—as we chose to think."

"You have ruined us both."

"I think I have saved us both," said Vernon. "I tell you he was not so bad as we chose to believe, and, even if he was, that was no excuse for robbing him. But he was not. He has given his promise to say nothing of what has happened here. I claimed that—"

"His promise! You think that is worth the breath to utter it?"

"Yes, I believe him. And Redwing has given his word. I tell you, now it is over, all is over, and we can go. And," added Vernon, with a deep breath, "we can go holding up our heads with no guilty secrets to keep. What do I care for Mr. Vernon-Smith's millions? I never gave them a thought. Even while I used the fellow's name at the school, I shuddered to think of touching his money. Oh, I am thankful that it is over!"

The captain sat looking at him.

"And this," he said, "is the end. The end of planning, the end of everything. All I have worked for, all I have hoped for—and the blow comes from your hand! I go back to India a penniless adventurer, and you—you, for whose sake I have done this—you will be left to the bounty of that boy's father, to hear his jeers as a poor relation. That is what you have done!"

"Better that than what we were doing!" said Vernon stubbornly. "Even if it could have gone on; but it could not. You were blinded by your own plans. I saw more clearly than you did. I tell you, it could not have gone on, even if I had been willing; and by ending as it has, it has saved us both from public disgrace."

"Enough!" muttered the captain. "You have done this. It is done, and cannot be recalled. You have acted on your own judgment. You fancy that it is better than mine."

"In this matter, it is better," said Vernon. "I believe they will keep their word, as I gave them their freedom. But if they had been found here, what would have happened then?"

"Enough!" muttered the captain. "Leave me—leave me, I tell you!"

Bertie Vernon went quietly in at the door. The captain remained on the bench, staring from the terrace over the leafy avenue and the green woods of Lantham Chase. He sat silent, overwhelmed, a desperate man looking on the ruin of all his hopes, the utter disaster of all his plans.

Only in Time.

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Five fellows passed Billy Bunter like the idle wind which they regarded not.

After class Harry Wharton & Co. headed for the bike-shed.

Billy Bunter, still in need of an loan of one-and-six, squeaked unregarded.

They went into the shed for their machines.

Billy Bunter rolled after them and blocked the doorway with his ample figure.

"I say, you fellows, I wish you'd listen to a chap!" he exclaimed. "I say, Smithy's not back yet! Look here, look what a chance it is to fix up that electric snuff in his study for him when he blows in! Fishy will let me have it for one-and-six—"

"You fat chump!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Smithy will have enough coming to him for cutting class without your fatheaded tricks in his study!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Bunter. "Look what I got the other day because he never went to Quelch's study when I expected him to! Dirty trick, I call it! Besides, Quelch won't come down heavy—he likes Smithy, now he's taken to swotting! Bet you he'll let him off with a jaw. But I jolly well ain't letting the beast off, I can jolly well tell you! I say—"

"Get out of that doorway, fat-head!"

"I'm waiting for you to lend me eighteenpence!" said Bunter. "I've asked Toddy, and he says ask him again at Christmas—"

"Well, ask us again on New Year's Day!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'd ask Mauly, only I can't get hold of him! I believe he thinks I want to speak to him about the holidays, the way he keeps on dodging a fellow! Look here, you lend me one-and-six, and I'll fix up that electric snuff in Smithy's study all ready for him when he comes in! Think of him sneezing his head off—He, he he!"

"Are you hopping out of the way, fathead?"

"No. I say— Whooo-hoop! Keep that bike away, you silly chump!" yelled Bunter.

A front wheel banged on a fat leg, and Bunter decided, after all, to get out of the way! He got!

Harry Wharton & Co. wheeled their machines out.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter as they went.

And having hurled that valediction after the five, he rolled away in search of somebody else to lend him the one-and-six that was so urgently required.

The Famous Five rode off at a good speed. Lantham was not within bounds except on half-holidays. It was a good distance, and it was necessary to put on speed to get back before lock-up. Their destination was Lantham Chase.

After that interview with the Bouncer's double, Harry Wharton had discussed the matter with his friends—and they had decided, unanimously, what they were going to do.

What "Smithy" knew Wharton could not guess, but that he knew something he had read easily enough in his face. He wondered, too, whether it was in connection with the affair of Redwing that "Smithy" had cut class that afternoon.

The chums of the Remove did not doubt now that Bunter's strange tale of the interview in the visitors'-room was more or less true. Everything pointed to one conclusion—that Tom Redwing, the day he had left Greyfriars, had gone to Lantham Chase—and that what was known of him ended there!

"Smithy," if he knew anything, had refused to speak. Harry Wharton & Co. were going to find out the facts for themselves.

They rode in a silent bunch, putting all their energy into rapid pedalling. And they reached at last the spot where the path through the Chase turned off the Lantham road—and little dreamed, as they turned their machines into it, who had stood there hardly an hour ago.

The juniors rode by the path in single file till they reached the avenue, when they rode in a bunch again, heading for the house. They rather expected every moment to hear a sharp voice bark to them an order to stop—and they had not forgotten how Captain Vernon had handled Coker

of the Fifth when that obstreperous youth had butted in there. But they were going to see Captain Vernon whether he liked it or not—and that was that!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry, as they came in sight of the many-windowed front of the mansion. "There's the jolly old captain!"

Captain Vernon was seated on a bench on the stone terrace under the turret.

His eyes fell on the five juniors, and he stared at them; but he did not stir. His look was indifferent—which was rather a surprise to them, knowing as they did how unpleasantly he was wont to receive callers at the Chase.

They dismounted from their machines, leaving them on the avenue, and walked across to the terrace.

The Army man watched them in silence, still with the same indifferent look and without stirring. He did not stir, and did not speak, when they mounted the steps to the terrace.

His hard, cold, dark-complexioned face seemed the same as usual, except that it was a little pale. But his indifference was hard to understand.

The juniors capped him civilly. Their visit could hardly be called a friendly one; but they certainly did not want any trouble that could be helped.

"Please excuse us for butting in like this, sir!" said Harry Wharton, as the captain did not speak. "We had to come—there's something that we're bound to ask you. I hope you will listen patiently."

"What do you want?"

The captain broke his silence at last. He spoke in a low voice, like a man weary.

"Can you tell us where Tom Redwing is?"

Captain Vernon started for a moment out of his indifference. Then he smiled—a strange smile that the juniors could not understand.

"No!" he said. "I cannot!"

"Is he here?" asked Harry bluntly.

"No; he is not here."

"I must speak plainly, sir," said

Harry Wharton. "The week before last Redwing left the school—and what we now believe to be a false telegram was sent, in his name, from Dover. His bicycle was found hidden in the woods here—proof that he came here that day. We believe that something has happened to him—and he was last here, so far as anybody knows. We've heard other things that I needn't go into—"

"Well?"

"We've got to know!" said Harry. "You haven't forgotten, sir, that we were here once—not by our own wish—and we went up the turret. It was no business of ours—at that time—but we saw, and we can't help remembering now, that shutters had been fixed over the windows—and Smithy said, at the time, that they looked as if they were meant to keep somebody in, not to keep anybody out. And I must tell you, sir, that Redwing suspected that somebody was shut up in that turret—he gave me a hint of that long before he left, and I laughed at the idea at the time. But now—"

Wharton paused.

All the juniors expected an outbreak of furious anger from the Army man. It would not have deterred them if it had come. But it did not come. Only a sardonic smile came over the dark face as he listened.

"But now," went on Harry, "I can't help thinking of it. I want to ask you this, sir—will you permit us to go up to the turret-room while we are here now and see for ourselves? I'm not making any accusation—goodness knows I hate speaking to you like this—but we've got to know whether anything happened to Tom Redwing while he was here."

The captain laughed slightly.

"What if I refuse?" he asked. "Suppose I order you off my premises for the impertinent young rascals you are—what then?"

"If you order us to go, we shall go," answered Harry. "But I'm bound to tell you that, in any case, we shall go direct to the police station at Lantham and inform the inspector there that we believe that a Greyfriars boy,

now missing from the school, is kept a prisoner at Lantham Chase."

The captain laughed again.

"You think the inspector would listen to such a wild tale from a set of fanciful schoolboys?" he asked.

"I think so!" said Harry quietly. "We shall give him all the reasons we have for our belief, and I am quite certain that he would inquire into the matter. It would be his duty to do so. If you refuse to let us look into the turret-room—an unoccupied room, unless it holds a prisoner—what are we to think?"

The captain gave him a very curious look.

He waved his hand to the open door.

"Please yourselves!" he said.

The juniors looked at him.

"We have your permission?" asked Harry.

"Why not?"

With rather mixed feelings the Famous Five went in at the doorway.

Old Hunt was in the hall. He stared at them, but no doubt he had heard the captain's voice on the terrace—he only stared. They ascended the turret-stair one after another.

The door of the turret-room at the top was wide open. Bars of sunlight fell into the room through the shutters. The room was empty.

They looked round it. That it had recently been occupied was plain—there were two beds, a book lay open on the table, a newspaper of recent date on the floor—signs of recent occupation were plentiful. But no one was there. In silence the juniors looked round the room and looked at one another.

"Nobody here!" said Bob at last.

"No!" said Harry, with a deep breath. "But—"

He said no more. The juniors descended the turret-stair in silence and went out on the terrace. They were perplexed and doubtful, and they could not understand the strange smile on the dark face of the Army man as they saw him again.

"Are you satisfied?" asked the captain ironically.

"Yes," said Harry slowly; "but—"

He paused. He hardly knew what to say. He was not satisfied that his suspicions were unfounded. Yet the captain had given free permission for the turret-room to be searched, and they had found it unlocked and empty. All the juniors were feeling puzzled and perplexed and at a loss.

Captain Vernon shrugged his shoulders and pointed to the avenue.

"There lies your way!" he said curtly.

And the Famous Five in silence descended from the terrace and went back to their bicycles.

The captain stood watching them as they rode away down the avenue till they were gone from his sight. Then, at a footstep, he turned.

Bertie Vernon came out on the terrace.

"Did they see you?" asked the captain.

"No. I saw them. What—"

The captain laughed—a hard laugh.

"You chose your own judgment, my boy, in preference to mine. You thought you were right, and that I was wrong."

"Only in this one thing, uncle—only this once—"

"And you were right," went on the captain, unheeding. "I throw in my hand. Bertie, I laid my plans as well as plans could be laid. I saw security on all sides. And all the time—he laughed again, a laugh of self-mockery

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STIRRING ARTICLES - MAGNIFICENT PHOTOGRAPHS

—“all the time, boy, I was building a house of cards, to fall at a breath. Had Vernon-Smith and Redwing still been in the turret-room when those school-boys came, this night I should have spent in a cell at Lantham Police Station. That was my security—that!”

“Oh!” breathed Vernon.

“There is an old proverb,” drawled the captain, “that honesty is the best policy. If I have forgotten it, that is all the more reason why you should remember it, my boy. We are through here, Bertie, and you”—his hard voice faltered—“you have saved me. What you did has saved us both.” He laughed again. “I have had some narrow escapes in my time—never one narrower than this. What you did, you did only in time.”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“Pack your bag, my boy! This night we leave Lantham Chase. I shall be glad to see the last of it.”

Harry Wharton & Co. rode back to Greyfriars in a sorely troubled and perplexed frame of mind, little guessing what news awaited them at the school.

Billy Bunter met them as they came into the House with a fat, excited face.

“I say, you fellows—” he yelled.

“Oh, buzz off, bluebottle!” grunted Bob Cherry.

“But I say—” howled Bunter.

“Pack it up!”

“But I say, Redwing’s back!” shrieked Bunter. “Redwing, you know—”

“What?”

“Redwing—he’s in the Rag now. Yaroooh!”

Bunter spun as five juniors rushed to the Rag.

Back at Greyfriars.

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH grinned.

The situation appealed to the Bounder’s peculiar sense of humour.

He strolled into the Rag with his hands in his pockets, after an interview with Mr. Quelch, as if he had not been a day away from Greyfriars—as no fellow there supposed that he had.

His face was bright; he was deeply elated. At a step he had left weary imprisonment behind, and stepped back into his old life. It had been joy to him to see even Quelch’s severe face again. It was like wine to him to stroll into the Rag, to see the old familiar faces, to hear the buzz of schoolboy voices. And the strange situation amused him. Not a fellow there knew that he had not been seen at Greyfriars for long weeks.

The Bounder’s double was gone, the Bounder had come back, and no one knew or dreamed of the change.

“Oh, here you are!” said Skinner. “What did you cut class for, Smithy?”

The Bounder laughed. Vernon had cut class. Vernon-Smith had had to see Quelch about it. The Remove master did not know; the Remove were not going to know. Smithy was saying no word of the fellow who had been his enemy, and whose enemy he had been. The hatchet was buried now, and the secret of the impersonation was buried with it.

“Oh, just cheek!” he answered.

“Whopped?” asked Peter Todd.

“No,” answered the Bounder gravely.

“I’ve been such a good boy lately that Quelch has gone quite easy with me. I’ve got a detention for the last half-holiday of the term—to make up for lost time, you know. Merely that, and nothing more, my beloved ‘carers!’”

“You’re in Quelch’s good graces now,” said Skinner.



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.

I NTERESTED in records, chums?

Here’s an interesting piece of news if you are. It concerns a young fellow who has established a long-distance stowaway record. Generally, stowaways on board ship are discovered before the ship has travelled very far, and in these cases they are sent back to land by means of the first inward-bound vessel or fishing-boat. Not so long ago a British steamer arrived at Osaka, in Japan, and, upon arrival, a stowaway was discovered. During the whole of the journey—eleven thousand miles—he had escaped discovery. He had joined the ship at Antwerp, and remained in hiding all that time, which is by no means an easy thing to do.

Don’t try to beat his record, chums! Stowaways are very severely punished in some countries, and a long term of imprisonment is generally the “reward” which competitors for the long-distance stowaway record earn for themselves.

Talking of stowaways reminds me of next Saturday’s grand long yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.—the first in our super new holiday series—entitled:

“THE GREYFRIARS STOWAWAY!”

Frank Richards can always be depended upon to produce the finest of all boys’ yarns, but even our author

“I’m afraid it won’t last!” sighed the Bounder. “I’ve got a sort of misgiving that next term I shall be the same bad old hat again. I’m goin’ to try to keep it up for the rest of this term—only a few days, thank goodness! But next term—” He chuckled.

“But I say, have you heard?” asked Toddy. “Redwing’s come back!”

“Has he?”

“Yes, a dozen fellows saw him come in.”

“Where has he been all this time?” asked Vernon-Smith carelessly.

“Coasting in that jolly old lugger, I suppose. That’s all anybody knows. Jolly lucky he had sense enough to turn up before the end of the term. They mayn’t sack him now, though, by gum, he’s asked for it!”

The Bounder nodded and walked to the window, and stood staring into the sunset in the quad. No one took special heed of him, never dreaming that he was not the same fellow they had seen in Form that morning.

His face was grave and thoughtful now. Tom Redwing, he knew, was with his Form-master, and Quelch had to be satisfied. The story of the kidnapping and the impersonation was not to be told. A promise was a promise.

Neither had the Bounder any desire to harm the fellow who had been his supplanter, or even the man who had planned that strange and desperate game. He was free. He was back in

surpasses himself with next week’s long complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars. Fun, excitement, and adventure you’ll find in plenty here, chums. I did not intend to divulge the identity of the stowaway in this chat—that’s a surprise in store for you next week.

This is one of the finest adventure yarns it has been my lot to read, and I think you fellows will say the same when you’ve read it. As usual, there will be plenty of “news in a nutshell” in the “Greyfriars Herald”

And now to thank the following readers who have written me, and whose letters need no reply: R. Miller (Bow), Bernard Prime (Sanderstead), “Friend” Olsen (Bexleyheath), J. Whitfield (East Ham), Gordon Waterman (Kent), Audrey Cove (Liverpool), Mrs. V. Brierley (Birmingham), and Laurel Chan (Penang).

Well, that’s about all for now, chums, except to remind you that another great story of Frank Richards’ schooldays appears in this week’s number of our popular companion paper, the “Gem.” Don’t miss it!

I shall be “in the office” again next week to answer more readers’ queries.

Until then, cheerio!

YOUR EDITOR.

his old place, and he owed it to the fellow whose bitter enemy he had been. He was ready to forgive and forget. But he wondered uneasily how Redwing would get through with his Form-master.

Redwing was not finding it easy.

Mr. Quelch met him with a grim frown when he entered his study. For a couple of weeks that junior had been absent from school without leave. The telegram from Dover was a fabrication. What had he to say?

Redwing stood before his Form-master—quiet, respectful, as he always was. But he had little to say.

“I could not return, sir,” he said. “I never sent that telegram. That was done unknown to me. I was prevented from coming back. I hope, sir, that you will remember that you have always trusted me, and will trust me now.”

“Is that all the explanation you can give me, Redwing?” asked Mr. Quelch, staring at him blankly. “Do you suppose for one moment that that will satisfy me, or your headmaster, if I place the matter before him?”

“I am afraid not, sir,” said Tom, in a low voice. “But if I tell you, sir, that—that the matter concerns Mr. Vernon-Smith—”

“Do you mean Vernon-Smith’s father?”

“Yes, sir. The matter concerns him, and when I have explained to him I am

sure that he will answer for me, and give you every assurance that I have not been to blame in the matter."

"You seem to be speaking in riddles, Redwing. I fail to see how any concern of Mr. Vernon-Smith's can have kept you away from school. I accept your word that you did not send the telegram from Dover, though I quite fail to see why anyone should have played so stupid a trick. But do you seriously state that Mr. Vernon-Smith will answer for your absence?"

"Yes, sir, I am sure of that."

"Mr. Vernon-Smith has informed me that he is coming down to the school to-morrow," said Mr. Quelch. "He has been disappointed several times this term when he desired to see his son, and he has asked me to take measures to see that Vernon-Smith is present to-morrow when he comes. If you are making this statement seriously, Redwing, I will leave the matter over till I see Mr. Vernon-Smith to-morrow."

Tom's face brightened.

"Thank you, sir!"

"For the present you may go."

And Tom went.

The whole story had to be told to Mr. Vernon-Smith. But that he would desire to keep a family scandal from becoming public, and that he would fully approve of the promise to Bertie Vernon being kept, Tom had no more doubt than Smithy had. It was all clear at last. The millionaire undoubtedly would give Mr. Quelch the assurance he required, and that would be the end.

Redwing's heart was light as he went into the Rag, where a roar of voices greeted him.

Every fellow in the Remove was glad to see him back again, and glad to hear that he was not going to be sacked for having taken french leave. Even Billy Bunter was glad to see him again. And when Harry Wharton & Co. were sighted from the window, the fat Owl rolled out to be the first with the surprising news.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, as the Famous Five came rushing into the Rag. "Is Reddy here?"

"Here!" answered Tom, with a smile.

"So you're back!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"The backfulness is terrific!"

"Jolly glad to see you again, Reddy!" said Frank Nugent.

"Yes, we're jolly glad!" said Harry Wharton. He looked very curiously at Redwing's face. "We thought—well, never mind what we thought! Jolly glad to see you back at Greyfriars, old man!"

"Thanks!" said Tom, smiling. "I'm glad to be here again!"

"The gladfulness of our esteemed selves is truly preposterous!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "As the English proverb remarks, absence makes the heart grow fonder of a bird in the bush."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bell rang for calling-over.

"Come on, Smithy!" said Tom.

"Coming, old bean!" The Bounder joined his chum.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You fellows made it up again?" asked Bob Cherry, staring at them.

"Sort of!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Well, I'm glad—in fact, the gladfulness is terrific!" said Bob. "Now you've done rowing with Redwing, who are you going to row with next, Smithy? Don't select me!"

"Fathead!"

Redwing's return had been a surprise for the Remove. To see him on the old friendly terms with the Bounder, was another surprise. The trouble in Study No. 4 had evidently blown over—the Remove fellows little guessed how and why.

After roll-call, when the fellows went up to prep, Harry Wharton drew Tom Redwing aside, on the Remove landing.

"Have you squared it with Quelch?" he asked.

"Yes—I think that will be all right!"

"I'm glad of that! I'm not going to ask you any questions!" said the captain of the Remove quietly. "I dare say you've got your reasons for keeping mum—and I'm not inquisitive. We went over to Lantham Chase this afternoon, thinking you might be there—and couldn't get away."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom, and he started.

"Captain Vernon let us look into the turret-room!" said Wharton dryly. "Nobody was there! Somebody had been! I repeat that I'm asking you no questions—if you think it best to say nothing."

"I think it's best, old chap—and it's a promise!" said Tom quietly. "I'd like you to forget all about it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I thought I'd speak!" he said. "All right—I'll forget it!"

Redwing nodded and joined Vernon-Smith, and they went up the Remove passage together.

A good many fellows glanced at them as they went—and Billy Bunter grinned a wide grin, from one fat ear to the other.

"I say, Redwing!" he squeaked.

Tom glanced round.

"Hold on a minute!" said the fat Owl. "Let Smithy go in first!"

Vernon-Smith glanced round, at that. "Eh? Why?" asked Tom in surprise.

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter. "Only let him go in first! That's all! I say, Smithy, what are you hanging about for—why don't you go into your study?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five. They guessed that Billy Bunter had raised the sum of eighteenpence from somewhere, and that the packet of electric snuff had changed ownership.

Billy Bunter blinked at them.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" he exclaimed. "I say, you fellows, what are you cackling at? You'll make Smithy think somebody's been up to something in his study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And nobody has?" asked the Bounder.

"Oh, no! Nobody! I certainly haven't been in the study—I never came up here before call-over! It's all right, old fellow, you go into your study! You wait here a minute, Redwing—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Removites.

"Oh, really, you fellows—I say, leggo, Smithy! Wharrer you grabbing my neck for?" yelled Billy Bunter.

There was no need for Smithy to answer that question! The next moment Bunter knew! The Bounder spun him against the door of Study No. 4! That door was ajar—and something was lodged on top of it!

The door flew open! The fat Owl sprawled in the doorway! And on him crashed a paper packet that burst as it crashed!

"Oooogh! Oh crikey! I say—atchoo! Aytishoo! Oh crumbs! I say, you fellows—aytishoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bang goes eighteenpence—and Bunter gets the benefit!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aytishoo! Groogh! Oh crikey! Beast! Wurrroogh! Atchooh-atchoo-atchoo-aytishoooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sneezed. He sneezed and sneezed, and sneezed! He sneezed all through prep—he was still sneezing after prep. He sneezed in the dormitory—till, at last, he sneezed himself to sleep!

(Look out for the opening yarn of a great holiday-adventure series featuring Harry Wharton & Co. Make sure you don't miss "THE GREYFRIARS STOWAWAY!")

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AT THE MERCY OF THE MUTINEERS!

A Hair-Raising Story of School and Sea Adventure, starring Dr. Birchmell and his boys—Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's.

By DICKY NUGENT

"Ready, you fellows?"
"Ready, I, ready!"
"Then follow me!" said Jack Jolly, of St. Sam's, in a tense, thrilling whisper. "Don't forget, chaps—a crack on the napper from your belaying-pins for every mutineer we meet!"
"Yes, rather!" grinned Merry and Bright and Fearless.
They followed their leader across the deck of the Mary Ann.

Nito had descended on the ocean—nite as black as pitch, save for the brilliant light of the tropic moon. The hour for which the St. Sam's fellows were waiting had struck. Now, Jack Jolly & Co. were going to strike, themselves!
One after another, the loyal members of the crew of Mr. Fearless' yacht had disappeared. The kaptin, the first and second mates, the chief engineer, and all the regular hands had vanished without trace. Even Mr. Fearless himself had gone, and the Mary Ann was in the hands of a gang of brootal and despit mutineers—hirlings of Hymer Kerr, who had joined the Mary Ann for the sole purpos of foiling Mr. Fearless' attempt to catch that shady scoundrell!

The one redeeming featcher about it all was small—Jack Jolly & Co. were still at large!

Delying all the efforts of the mutineers, the heroes of the Fourth had so far evaded capture. Now, with dauntless curridge, they were making a bold bid to hit back at the mutinous scoundrells who had scezed the Mary Ann!

The gallant quartette pawsed in the shadows, as they saw someone peep over the poop. For a brief moment, a bearded profile was silhouetted against the moon—a profile that the St. Sam's fellows reckernised in a flash as that of Dr. Alfred Birchmell!

"The Head!" gasped Fearless. "Then he hasn't vanished like the rest! By the look of him, he's dodging the mutineers."

"Hist!" breathed Jolly. "I hear footprints!"

Two burly figgers loomed up before the juniors, who raised their belaying-pins in readiness.

"The starboard watch!" muttered Fearless.

The next moment, the Co. made a spring! Four belaying-pins landed on the heads of the mutineers with four dull, metallic thuds, and two vikims collapsed on the deck without a mermer!

"I fancy we've put that preshus pair to sleep for an hour or so!" remarked Jolly, with a grin larf. "Keep up the good work, chaps, and it won't be long before we're masters of the yacht! This way!"

They went off in search of further vikims!

In the course of the next five minmits, the Fourth Formers did grato execution. The decks began to present quite an untidy appearance, with unconshus mutineers lying about all over the place!

But alas! All good things must come to an end, and our heroes' luck was no eggseption.

Suddenly, as they took cover under the shadow of one of the lifeboats, they saw a grate, hulking figger rolling across the deck towards them.

"Pete Leary—the leader of the mutineers!" muttered Jolly. "Let him have it, you fellows!"

"What-ho!"
The St. Sam's fellows made to lift their belaying-pins once again. And then something went wrong with the works!

By a stroke of bad luck, Dr. Birchmell had also taken cover under the lifeboat.



Blissfully ignerant of the Co.'s presence, he was retreating into the shadows and backing right into them.

The consekquence was that when they raised their belaying-pins for Pete Leary, it was the Head that stopped them!

Klonk! Klonk! Klonk! Klonk!
Four fearful collisions took place between belaying-pins and Dr. Birchmell's nut; and a scendish yell awoke the echoes of the Mary Ann!

"Yow-ow-ow! My branebox! Yarooooo!"

Pete Leary jumped at the sound of the Head's wild howl. Then a fierce skowl settled on his ugly face.

"Gotcher, my bewties!" he bellowed. "Bill! Sam! Pincher! Give a 'and 'ere quick!"

There was a rush of heavy feet on the deck.

"Back up, St. Sam's!" panted Jolly. "No surrender!"

He flung himself into the fray, and a wringing cheer from Merry and Bright and Fearless showed that his choms were with him.

It was otherwise, however, with Dr. Birchmell. That craven-hearted old fogey dedged out of harm's way in a proper panniek when he saw the advancing mob of tuffs.

But Jack Jolly & Co. were far too busy to bother about Dr. Birchmell. They were in the thick of battle now—fighting against despit odds!

It was not half a fight—and they asked for no quarter! Aggerised yells rang out across the deck, as their belaying-pins cracked the skulls of several of their adversaries, and for a time our heroes' hoaps ran high.

But the mutineers were quick to sceze belaying-pins themselves; and once they were on the same footing, they

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YOUR EDITOR CALLING ALL CHUMS!

Cheers for the good old Summer vac! It seems a long time coming, but it's well worth waiting for! Who cares a fig for deponent verbs or the problems of Euclid or the latest fashions in European frontiers? We can forget them all for weeks on end, without the slightest risk of incurring a swishing or a detention or even an impot!

I suppose there is not a fellow at Greyfriars who doesn't wear a smile on breaking-up day. Swots like Linley as well as open-air enthusiasts like Bob Cherry welcome the change of scene and routine, however keen they may feel on school work during the term.

All this being so, it seems strange to reflect that many of the fellows who are now looking forward to the hols will be equally glad when the time comes to return to Greyfriars again! Yet that always happens in a number of cases. Why?

My own idea about it is that the chap who feels relieved to get back to school has failed to organise his holiday properly.

When you get a long vacation, it is not sufficient to wait for exciting things to turn up of their own accord and just happen to you. You have to go out and find them for yourself! If you don't, then boredom is bound to set in, and you'll find yourself looking forward to term time again as a relief from the monotony of the vacation to which you looked forward so keenly!

I can promise you one thing—that, whatever we do and wherever we go, Bob and Frank and Johnny and Iky and I will make things hum. We shall extract the maximum amount of fun out of our hols, and boredom is the last thing in the world we shall experience!

Take my tip and do likewise: and here's wishing you all as good a vac, as we are going to have!

All the best, chums!

HARRY WHARTON.

WHEN COKER HIRED A DECK-CHAIR!

By PETER HAZELDENE

Remove man in the ordinary way are beneath the notice of an important chap like Coker; and the only reason he deigned to acknowledge my existence when he spotted me lazing in a deck-chair at Margate one hot afternoon was that he had lost Potter and Greene.

"Seen them, kid?" he asked me, when he had explained this.

"Sorry, old sport. I haven't."

Coker grant d.

"Not so much of the 'old sport'! If I wasn't so dashed tired, looking for those chumps, I'd boot you for being a cheeky young cub! As it is, I'll get a deck-chair and rest for a

while. You can keep your eyes open for Potter and Greene while I have a nap. And no fag tricks, or I'll whop you!"

"You're welcome," I grinned. "It's always a pleasure to do things for you, Coker. You have such a polite way of asking."

Coker stalked across to a pile of folded deck-chairs, hired one from the attendant—a posh affair, with a canopy attached—and dragged it across to the pitch adjoining mine. And then the fun began!

How Coker has lived for seventeen summers without learning the right way to set up a deck-chair is a mystery. But he has.

First he tried to stand it on the supporting frame

and the canopy. Then he turned it upside-down to see if the same idea would work backwards. He had another go with the edge of the seat and the canopy as ground supports and another with the head and the under-frame.

"Want a hand, Coker?" I asked.

I should have known better than to have asked such a question. Coker wouldn't admit that he was unable to open a deck-chair for worlds! He gave me a frozen stare and had another go at it—and several more after that! He made valiant efforts the while to preserve an air of elaborate unconcern.

There was a fearsome fascination in watching him. I should never have credited that a single deck-chair could be twisted into so many weird forms without the right one coming up,

unless I had seen it with my own eyes!

Quite a crowd collected after a minute or so. Coker carried on regardless. Once he actually did get it right; but he was holding it upside-down at the time and failed to notice it!

It was with a gasp of relief that he eventually got it fixed in such a way that it stood upright. The canopy had become the seat and the seat was underneath; but it looked as if it would support him. Coker risked it and sat down; and the chair promptly collapsed, and Coker landed on the asphalt with a bump, while the crowd cheered delightedly!

Coker gave it best then and moved off at the double. He has not been seen in Margate since. Probably he is staying at a much quieter spot—learning how to open deck-chairs!

HOW THEY SPEND BANK HOLIDAY!

By TOM BROWN

If you think that most Greyfriars' fellows spend their Bank Holidays on swings and roundabouts, have another think! I have just asked a few chaps at a dom what they are doing this Bank Holiday—and swings and roundabouts are conspicuous by their absence!

Peter Todd, for instance, proposes to spend the entire day visiting museums with his cousin Alonzo. No spoof, either—he says he really likes museums!

Bolsover major, on his uncle's farm in Essex, will do a hard day's work, while his uncle inspects the Territorials in a neighbouring camp. Hobson and Stewart hope to take their first lesson in gliding.

Penfold's plan is to sleep all day—after spend at the previous night in the 'woo'—collecting beetles for the Counties Entomological Society.

Russell has been put in charge of a darts' stall at a charity fete in his native village.

Wibley has an engagement to play an important part in an amateur film production.

Wingate will pilot his pater's yacht in two races at a South Coast regatta.

Blundell will ride a motor-bike in some severe hill-climbing tests.

Fisher T. Fish intends to spend Bank Holiday watching other people's fun. He doesn't intend to spend more than this if he can help it!

HAROLD SKINNER on CAMPING FOR CONTENTMENT!

You're bored by bathing beaches, you say? Yachting makes you yawn? Pleasure-piers seem piffing, and sun-fair's fooling?

Ah, my young friend, you are suffering from over-indulgence in artificial jollity! What you need is a dose of simple camp life to restore the healthy contentment of the natural man!

Tom Brown told me this last Whitsun, and as Brown, like George Washington, can never tell a lie, he must be right.

I took him at his word and spent a week-end camping with Snoop and Stout. What an eye-opener to the three of us was that brief escape to simple, natural joys!

Where camping-out scores, we found, is that it's not out and dried like your typical seaside holiday. Every hour of the day (not to mention nearly every hour of the night) brings something fresh and unexpected.

The first night, for instance, we had a terrific thunderstorm and a flood of rainwater, that washed us away.

"Ha, ha!" I chorled, as we waded knee-deep in water to salvage our tent and clobber. "This is something we should have missed if we'd been

snoring away in a stuffy boarding-house, eh, what?"

"Oh, rather!" laughed Stout. "Ha, ha!"

I leave you to imagine the fun we had finding a new site for our camp at three in the morning and the cheery wisecracks we uttered as we dried ourselves and changed into fresh pyjamas. I pass instead to the sunny morning, when we were awakened by a stray cow pushing its head under the tent-flap and mooing at us.

"Ha, ha, ha!" I roared. "Fancy a cow inviting itself to brekker with us, you fellows! Now you wouldn't get that at a seaside boarding-house, would you?"

"No fear!" howled Snoop. "Ha, ha, ha!"

When the cow got tangled up with the tent-ropes and pulled down the whole thing on top of us, we simply hooted with mirth.

"Imagine fellows paying to root about in stuffy hotels when you can get all this free!" almost sobbed Snoop, as we sorted ourselves out. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Stout and I. After we had driven off the cow and put up our tent again, we set about getting brekker. Here again, we found the joy of the unexpected. No sitting down at nine o'clock prompt to the monotony of perfectly prepared



porridge and beautifully browned bacon and eggs. Instead of that, we had the fun of rescuing bacon from the deep puddle into which it had fallen the night before, and cooking eggs that had smashed in the move—one sticky mass, they were, shells and all; fearfully funny!

The taste of that meal, too, was something altogether new to us. Cooking by gas and electricity is all very well, but it doesn't give you that peat-smoked flavour of a meal fried over a camp-fire. It was so rich and fragrant that our puny, over-civilised tummies could not stand up to it, and we had the delightfully quaint experience of being ill for the rest of the morning! Ha, ha, ha!

I could fill up an entire "Greyfriars Herald" with similar laughable episodes from that camping week-end of ours. But I expect I have said enough already to drive you from the wearying refinements of posh hotels and smart beaches to the simple joys of camping out!

(Readers who know their Harold Skinner will hardly need to be told to take him this week with a particularly large grain of salt!—Ed.)

Curious!

Bulstrode, on a postcard from Cornwall, states "Hotel service awful—mustard-pots unchanged for days—but having great time with local fishermen."

He can't stand stale mustard, yet he dotes on all sals!