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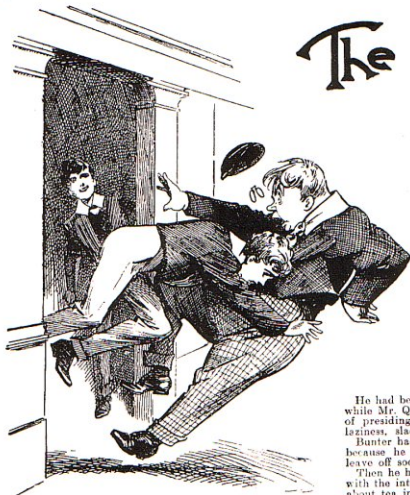


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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Strange Disappearance of the Remove.

BILLY BUNTER came out of the Remove Form-room, and blinked up and down the wide-flagged passage.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

Then he left off.

There wasn't a single fellow in the passage.

As it was a fine afternoon in early summer, there was nothing surprising in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form—getting out of the School House as soon as afternoon lessons were over. But it was curious that there should not be a single fellow left in the passage.

Bunter was surprised.

He had been detained in the Form-room only five minutes, while Mr. Quelch, who had the somewhat doubtful pleasure of presiding over the Remove, gave him a lecture upon laziness, slackness, and general backwardness.

Bunter had endured the lecture with exemplary patience, because he knew by experience that Mr. Quelch would leave off sooner if he were not answered.

Then he had come out to look for Harry Wharton & Co., with the intention of making some important investigations about tea in the study.

Harry Wharton & Co. were not to be seen, neither was a single other fellow belonging to the Lower Fourth in sight.

Bunter blinked up and down the passage in surprise. Wharton and Nugent and Cherry and the rest had doubtless gone down to the cricket, though they had really been very quiet about it. But some of the Form ought really to have been chatting there, in the passage or at the window, or on the stairs.

But they weren't.

"Oh, really," murmured Bunter. "I wonder where they've got to! It's jolly curious that everybody's gone."

And the fat junior rolled down the passage in search of the Remove. It wasn't tea-time yet, certainly; but an

important matter like that had to be settled quickly. If any delay arose, and too was late, it would be very serious—to William George Bunter, at least.

He looked round the hall; but the hall was deserted, as far as the Remove were concerned.

Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth, were chatting there, and Wingate, of the Sixth, was pinning a cricket notice up on the board.

But there was not a Remove to be seen.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, venturing to address the Fifth-Formers, "have you seen Wharton since classes?"

Blundell looked at him.

"I'm not in the habit of noticing Remove kids," he replied loftily.

"But have you seen him?"

"No, I haven't."

"Oh, really?"

Billy Bunter ambled out into the quadrangle.

He stopped there, and blinked through his big spectacles towards the cricket ground.

There was a sound of shouting, and he could see running figures in flannels.

He rolled off towards the cricket ground.

But as soon as he came near it, he observed, in spite of his short sight, that the Remove pitch was vacant.

The Upper Fourth fellows were at practice, and Temple was batting to Dabney's bowling; and on the Sixth Form pitch Courtney and some more of the top Form were playing.

But there was not a Remove on the ground.

Bunter blinked at the Upper Fourth players, and called out to them.

"I say, you fellows, have you seen Wharton?"

"Go and eat coke!" called back Temple politely.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Buzz off, ass!"

And Billy Bunter buzzed off. He was getting lost in wonder. Where on earth were Harry Wharton & Co.? Where were the rest of the Remove?

They seemed to have disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up.

If a few of them had been in the House, or a few on the cricket-field, and the rest gone, Bunter could have understood it.

But they were all gone.

The whole Form had vanished.

Billy Bunter rolled off towards the gym. He had a faint hope that Harry Wharton & Co. might be there, though they were really not likely to be indoors at all on that glorious afternoon, if they could help it.

He blinked into the gym.

"Look out, fathead!"

Biff!

Bunter reeled back with a gasp as a heavy body shot through the air, and came violently in contact with his chest.

A long row of Second Form fags were stooping, and a cheerful youth was leaping over their backs in turn, and he leaped over the last back, and came down in the doorway, as Bunter blinked into the gym.

It was Nugent minor, younger brother of Frank Nugent, of the Remove.

The moment was unlucky for both of them.

Billy Bunter staggered back, and fell in a gasping and puffing heap, and Nugent minor crashed back upon the last stooping junior, Gatty. Gatty was just rising upright, and he went rolling over as Dicky Nugent fell upon him.

There was a roar at once.

"Oh, you ass!"

"Ow!"

"Groat!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Ow! You beasts!"

He scrambled to his feet.

A single blink showed him that there were only fags in the gym. The Second Form had chosen it for a game of leap frog because they could have it to themselves just then.

"Collar him!" roared Dicky Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, have you seen—"

Billy Bunter did not finish the inquiry.

Nugent minor and Gatty and Todd were running at him, and the fat junior turned and fled.

He pelted away across the Close at the fastest speed his little fat legs were capable of.

He did not pause till he was pounding up the steps of the House, and then he stopped from sheer want of wind.

He blinked round, and discovered that he had not been pursued, and grunted discontentedly.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I'm exhausted! Where are those beasts! I suppose they're in the common-room. I'm getting fearfully hungry."

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And he panted on to the junior common-room to look for Harry Wharton and the Remove.

He could scarcely believe his eyes when he entered the room.

It was vacant!

There was not a single fellow in it.

Bunter blinked round dazedly, with quite an uncanny feeling growing upon him. Where were the Removes? What was the explanation of that sudden and mysterious disappearance of an entire Form?

What had happened?

"They must have gone up to their studies!" gasped Bunter. "Though why they should go up to the studies—all of them—I'm blessed if I know."

He made his way to the stairs, and climbed up slowly and pantingly. Stairs never did agree with the fastest junior at Greyfriars, and he had already been exerting himself in a very unaccustomed manner.

He reached the Remove passage, and stalked into No. 1 Study with an indignant expression upon his face.

"Look here, you fellows—" he began.

Then he stopped.

There was no one in the study.

Billy Bunter blinked round him in blank amazement. He had depended upon finding Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in their study. Where else could they possibly be?

He had searched everywhere else.

"My only hat!" muttered Billy Bunter. "I—I can't understand it!"

He stepped out of the study, and rolled along the passage, and looked into Study No. 2. That was Bulstrode's study, which he shared with Hazeldene and Tom Brown. But the room was as empty as Study No. 1.

He looked into the next study, and the next. They were all empty.

Bunter halted in the passage, his eyes blinking wrathfully behind his spectacles. He thought he had divined the mystery.

"The rotters!" he muttered aloud. "It's a Form feed! That's what it is. They've sneaked off somewhere for a big feed, and left me out of it. It's mean! If there's anything I hate in a chap, it's meanness. I wonder where they are? I'm jolly well going to find out! I won't be left out of a feed in this disgusting manner."

And Bunter blinked wrathfully.

He had no slightest doubt that it was a feed, and that he was being left out of it, for a jape, by the humorous Removes, or perhaps because he had not contributed to the feed. Bunter never did contribute to a feed, but he expected to get the lion's share, all the same.

But where were the Remove? How was he to find them? Who could tell him where they were?

"My hat!" exclaimed Bunter suddenly. "The Bounder!"

And he ran along the passage to Study No. 9.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Bounder is Bad Tempered.

"THE Bounder, of course!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the new junior at Greyfriars, known through the length and breadth of the school as the "Bounder," sat in his study alone.

He shared that study with Snoop and Skinner, but they were not there just then. Even Skinner, who was generally unscrupulous, and Snoop, who was the worst cad in the Remove, barred the Bounder.

The Greyfriars boys, of other Forms as well as the Remove, agreed in calling Vernon-Smith the Bounder; and, as Bob Cherry put it, he really was the worst bounder that ever boundred.

It was not that he was bad-tempered; there were other fellows who were bad-tempered—Bulstrode, for instance. It was not that he had been known to sneak; there was at least one other sneak in the Remove—Snoop. It was not that he was rolling in money—Hurree Singh and Wun Lung were both rich. It was not that he made a vulgar display of his money—Ionides, of the Sixth, did that without incurring a tenth part of the Bounder's unpopularity. It was not that he had an exaggerated sense of his own importance; there were other swelled heads at Greyfriars. It was not that he disliked sports; there were other slackers and wasters in all the Forms. It was not that he smoked in secret; other would-be smart fellows did that. It was not even that he had been seen under the influence of intoxicating liquor—though that was bad enough—it was whispered that there were fellows in the Sixth, too, who kept whisky in their studies. It was not any one of these things. It was the lot taken together that made Vernon-Smith so much detested by all the Form he belonged to.



Billy Bunter pounded away at the door of the wood-shed. It was locked, and there was a murmur of voices from within. "I say, you fellows, open this door!" he roared.

And there was one thing more, which outweighed all of them, even taken together; it was the fact that he had been disrespectful to the Head and the Form-master, and that they did not seem to be able to punish him for it.

Whether through some connection with the governors of the school, as the juniors suspected, or through some other reason, Vernon-Smith seemed to be able to do pretty much as he liked at Greyfriars.

He had certainly done a good many things that any other fellow would have been expelled for; and he was not even caned for them.

He bragged in common-room that the Head could not expel him; and certainly the fact that he remained at Greyfriars seemed to bear out his words.

And that made the Remove loathe him.

The Remove were not a model Form. They were often

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unruly; they were often careless. They were frequently unpunctual, sometimes lazy; in fact, they had quite as many faults as are generally to be found in boys, wherever you meet them; and perhaps they had a few extra.

But they were up against the particular sort of meanness they encountered in Vernon-Smith.

Disrespect to a Form-master was voted "bad form" by the most reckless; disrespect to the head-master they had never even dreamed of.

A fellow who "cheeked" the Head was far from being a hero in their eyes.

They looked upon him as simply caddish. And if family influence on the Governing Board prevented the Head from dealing with him as he deserved, then it was cowardly as well as caddish.

Hence Vernon-Smith was barred.

NEXT WEEK: "THE FIRST ELEVEN."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

Billy Bunter was quite right in concluding that, whatever business the Remove were engaged upon at that moment, a feed or not, the Bounder would be out of it.

He blinked into No. 9, and there, sure enough, was the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith was sitting in the armchair, looking out of the open window at the cricketers in the distance.

His face was not happy.

For the dislike of his Form-fellows he did not care two-pence; but what he did care for, was the fact that there seemed to be no other society to be had.

And Vernon-Smith was not fond of solitude; though what he called his pleasures were too blackguardly for many of the Remove to want to share them.

There were several fellows in the Form he would have liked to chum with—Bulstrode, or Skinner, or even Snoop.

But they did not take to him any more than the rest did. Bulstrode, indeed, he had fallen foul of at the very start.

Vernon-Smith realised that he had made a bad start. He did not want to learn, and he did not want to excel at sports. He did not want to be on good terms with the Form. But he wanted a few congenial spirits to bear him company; and by his own meanness, caddishness, and evil temper he had lost the chance of getting them.

He was thinking the matter out now, with the idea of rectifying his mistake, when Billy Bunter came in.

Vernon-Smith looked round at him with a scowl.

Bunter was by no means a fellow whose acquaintance he desired. The owl of the Remove was a confirmed borrower, a confirmed tale-bearer, and a bore and a nuisance to everybody, and Vernon-Smith was the last fellow in the world to put up with him.

Bunter blinked at him affably.

"I say, Smith—"

"What do you want?"

"The Form seem to have disappeared," said Bunter.

"Blessed if I know where they are. I think they've gone for a feed, you know. I—"

"I don't care."

"No, I don't suppose you do, as they never speak to you," agreed Bunter. "I don't suppose you could join in the feed, of course. I only wanted to know if you knew where they are."

"Get out of my study!"

"But do you know—"

"Get out!"

"—where the Remove are—"

Vernon-Smith rose from his chair.

"Will you get out of my study?" he exclaimed savagely.

Billy Bunter backed warily to the door.

"Certainly," he replied. "I'm only sorry to have to speak to such a rank outsider as you, anyway. It wouldn't do me any good if the fellows saw me."

"You—"

"I'm a good-natured chap, but I bar you, as the others do," said Bunter. "But you're the only chap left indoors, you see, and so I want to know if you know—"

Vernon-Smith ran at him.

Billy Bunter dodged out into the passage.

He had certainly not put it very tactfully to the Bounder, and he was likely to get more kicks than information from Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder's face was flushed with rage.

Bunter turned in the passage.

"I say, Smithy—"

Vernon-Smith came out of the study with a bound. If there was anything that exasperated him, it was to be addressed as Smithy.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, and he turned to flee.

He fled; but hardly quick enough.

Vernon-Smith ran after him, kicking out as he ran. Vernon-Smith could not kick a footer for toffee, as the Romovites said; but he might have been a budding Bloomer by the way he planted his boot on Bunter.

The fat Romovite ran and howled, and howled and ran, and Vernon-Smith followed him down the passage, kicking with alternate feet as he ran.

He fairly dribbled Bunter to the head of the stairs, and there the fat junior rolled down and escaped.

Vernon-Smith stopped, gasping, and Bunter rolled down the stairs, catching at the banisters at the bend of the staircase to save himself.

He sat on the stairs, very red and dusty and flustered, and gasped for breath.

"Ow! Yow! Yah! Beast!"

He cast a nervous glance at the stairs, and remained there, gasping, as he saw that Vernon-Smith was coming no further than the end of the passage.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "The beast! And I only asked him a civil question, too! The fellows are right—he's

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an unspeakable bounder, and he ought to be barred by the lot of us. Why, that factory chap is a prince to him. Ow!"

Bunter slowly picked himself up.

He was fagged, and he was breathless, and he was dusty, but it was necessary to find the Remove, unless the supposed feed was to be all consumed without his assistance—which was not to be thought of.

The fat junior had failed signally to elicit any information from the Bounder. Where were the Romovites?

Billy Bunter drifted out into the Close again.

He caught sight of Gosling—the school porter—at the gates, and ambled over to him. It was possible that Gosling had seen something of the juniors. At all events, he would be able to say if they had gone out.

"Good-afternoon, Gossy!" said Bunter, in his most affable tone.

Gosling looked at him suspiciously. When Bunter was polite, Bunter was generally in want of something from the person he was expending politeness upon.

"Have you seen anything of the Remove, Gosling?" asked Bunter.

The school porter grinned.

"Perhaps I 'ave," he remarked.

"Have they gone out?"

"Praps," said Gosling.

"Do you know where they are?"

"Praps. It's a dry day, Master Bunter."

Bunter groaned inwardly. He knew what Gosling meant. He groped in his pocket, where his fat fingers came in contact with the only coin he possessed—a sixpence.

"I—I should like to offer you a tanner, Gosling, to get a drink—"

"Thank you kindly, sir."

"And I shall certainly do so to-morrow morning. I am expecting a postal order by the first post to-morrow morning," Bunter explained. "I shall make it a point of handing you sixpence as soon as I have cashed it."

"Ho!" grunted Gosling.

"Will you tell me where the Remove are, Gosling?"

"I didn't say I knew, did I?" said Gosling, with a look of surprise.

"But you do, you know."

"Ho! I think that was the bell!" said Gosling, turning away.

"I say, Gossy, if a tanner—"

"Not at all, Master Bunter. I wouldn't rob you of any of your postal order for anything," said Gosling, with heavy sarcasm.

"Here you are," said Bunter, desperately.

He produced the sixpence. Gosling's horny hand closed upon it, and a grin came over his leathery countenance.

"Thank you kindly, Master Bunter. I shouldn't wonder if you found the young gents in the wood-shed, sir."

"In the wood-shed?"

"Yes. Leastways, I know Master Wharton asked me—"

Bunter waited for no more.

He ran off in the direction of the wood-shed, inwardly anathematising his own stupidity in not having thought of it for himself. There had been feeds in the wood-shed before, as he very well knew.

Right up to the wood-shed at the back of the school buildings he rushed, and pounded on the door. It was fastened, and there was a murmur of voices from within.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Mass Meeting.

"GENTLEMEN of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Hurrah!"

"Order!"

"The orderfulness is terrific!"

Bob Cherry banged upon the floor with a hammer.

"Silence for the chair!" he shouted.

"Order!"

"Shut up!"

"Thanks," said Harry Wharton, as soon as silence was sufficiently restored for his voice to be heard. "Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"This Form meeting has been called to deal with a situation unexampled and unprecedented in the history of Greyfriars!"

"Bravo!"

"Where on earth did he get those words?" gasped Nugent.

"I saw him looking them out in the dictionary," said Skinner.

Harry Wharton turned scarlet.

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"You didn't!" he exclaimed warmly. "I thought of them myself. They—"

"What's the difference between unexampled and unprecedented?" asked Ogilvy.

"Shut up, Ogilvy! You know-jolly well that this isn't a time for asking conundrums!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, severely.

"Ha, ha! I wasn't asking conundrums. I want to know. Wharton would get stung for tautology if he used that sentence in class—"

"Order!"

"Rats! I suggest that Wharton, if he's going to make a speech, should make it in English, so that we can understand."

"Hear, hear!"

"All words over three syllables barred."

"Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Very well!" he exclaimed. "The chief thing is for some of you to shut up, and give a chap a chance to speak at all."

"Yes! Order!"

"Order yourself, Bob Cherry! You're making more blessed row than any of us!"

"Silence!"

"There's an unprecedented situation—" began Wharton.

"We've had that."

"No more tautology!"

"Talk English!"

"Faith, and it's British, you mean!" exclaimed Micky Desmond warmly.

"Hear, hear! Talk British, Wharton!"

"Things are in a rotten state, then," said Harry. "That's plain English—I mean British. There's a new chap come to Greyfriars—"

The speaker was interrupted by a deep and dismal groan for the new chap.

"We've had all sorts of new chaps here—rotters, some of 'em—"

"Yes; it isn't so long since you were a new chap," remarked Bulstrode, and there was a giggle from Skinner and Snop.

"Order!"

"Shut up!"

"But this new chap fairly takes the cake," went on Harry Wharton, without taking any notice of Bulstrode. "He's the meanest, rankest rotter that ever bounded—the very worst bounder that ever rotted!"

Groans.

"He drinks, and he smokes, and he spreads himself all over the place, flashing off his money and his blessed jewelery—"

Groans.

"He's the son of a rotten millionaire, who makes millions by cornering cotton and throwing decent chaps out of employment—"

Groans.

"Of course, we wouldn't dream of ragging a chap on account of what his people were," said Harry. "That would be caddish. But this chap seems to be a regular chip of the old block—as big a cad and bounder as his father is a rotter!"

Groans.

"We've had enough of him!"

Cheers.

"Too much, in fact!"

Renewed cheers.

"He's disgraced the school and the Form he belongs to half a dozen times already," said Harry, his eyes flashing as he warmed up to his subject. "The Remove isn't a good little Georgio Form, I know; but we bar drinking and smoking and playing the cad generally. We bar cheeking the Head."

Groans.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE FIRST ELEVEN."

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"Somehow or other, I can't make out how the Head seems to have made up his mind to let the Bounder stay at Greyfriars—"

"He can't help himself," said Hazeldene.

"So Vernon-Smith says; and as the Head lets him stay, it looks as if there's something in it," said Wharton, with a nod. "The only explanation I can think of is, that Smith's people have influence on the Governing Board, and the Governors have brought pressure to bear on the Head."

"They're not likely to do that," said Bulstrode.

"I know they're not, and I can't understand it; but it's the only explanation I can think of. If you can think of a better one, you're at liberty to state it."

Bulstrode was silent.

"But whatever the reason is—and really that doesn't concern us—the Head cannot, for some reason or other, kick that cad out of Greyfriars, as we know jolly well he'd like to do!"

"Hurrah for the Head!"

"Hear, hear!"

The cheers were given enthusiastically. The juniors sometimes had painful little interviews with Dr. Locke. But there was no doubt that the Head of Greyfriars was popular, and the boys liked and respected him with an unbounded affection and respect.

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "I take it that we all stand up for the Head."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Hear, hear!"

"And for Quelch, too, against that unspeakable rotter!"

"Good old Quelch!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then to come to the object of this meeting—"

"About time you came to it!" muttered Bulstrode.

"Order!"

"To come to the object, this meeting has been called, of the whole Form, to decide what is to be done in the matter. The situation is this—there's a rotten bounder at Greyfriars, whom the Head can't get rid of, and who takes advantage of it to be caddish and cheeky. He's got to be educated."

"Hear, hear!"

"He wants to cut cricket—and there's an order to the prefects that he's to be let off compulsory practice. He neglects his prep.—and Mr. Quelch says never a word to him in the morning. It's as clear as daylight that his people have got some sort of unholy influence somewhere, and the masters don't like it any more than we do."

"Quite right!" said Nugent.

"The rightfulness is terrific!" chimed in Hurree Jamset

Ram Singh.

"Well, as the masters and prefects don't seem to be able to deal with this worm, my suggestion to the meeting is that the Remove should take the matter in hand itself," cried Harry Wharton.

Loud cheers.

"Is he to be allowed to do as he likes; carry matters with a high hand; crowd over us; and be generally as cocky and caddish as he pleases?"

"Never!"

"Well, then; it's a matter for the whole Remove to take up," said Harry, with an emphatic stamp upon the rickety bench he was standing on, which very nearly precipitated him and his improvised rostrum upon the floor together.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"There are differences on other matters between some of us here," said Harry Wharton. "I have disagreements with Bulstrode, for instance. But Bulstrode and I are willing to pull together in this matter."

"What ho!" said Bulstrode.

"I believe we're all of one mind—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is great."

"Then I put it to the meeting whether the Remove shall or shall not undertake the education of Vernon-Smith!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Hurrah!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Rather!"

"Hands up for the education of Vernon-Smith!"

A forest of hands went up.

Some of the juniors, in their enthusiasm and excitement, elevated both hands. There wasn't any doubt as to the keenness of the meeting.

Wharton's eyes gleamed as he looked over the crowd.

"Thanks! Now hands up against!"

Not a single hand was shown.

"Passed unanimously!" said Bob Cherry.

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"The unanimity is terrific."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "I see we're all of one mind. All the Remove are here, with the exception of the Bounder himself."

"And Bunter?"

"Oh, Bunter doesn't count!"

"And we're all determined. Now, as we've decided to stand together in this matter, I suggest that we should interview Vernon-Smith in a body, and explain the situation to him. As it would be inconvenient for the whole Form to visit his study—"

"We'll make him come down to the common-room," said Tom Brown.

"Hear, hear!"

"There will be put it to him plainly that he's got to mend his ways, or the Remove will mend them for him!"

Loud cheers.

"If he doesn't choose to turn over a new leaf, his education starts to-morrow," said Harry. "Is that all right?"

"Hurrah!"

"And mind, the thing must be kept dark. The masters don't like the Bounder any more than we do, but they wouldn't like our taking the law into our hands like this. Or, rather, I mean they'd feel bound to disapprove of it officially!"

"That's so!"

"So we'll keep the matter to ourselves—"

"In that case, we'd better not make too much row," suggested Mark Linley. "I know we're some distance from the school, but—"

"But there's been a jolly lot of row!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Marky's right. Moderate your giddy transports!"

"Quite so," said Harry. "We don't want to hear a master knock at the door in the middle of the meeting, and—"

Knock!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that?"

Knock!

It was a loud knocking at the door of the wood-shed.

"My only hat!" muttered Bob Cherry. "Your warning's a little too late, Marky!"

Knock, knock! Bang!

Then came a voice the assembled juniors knew well, and it made them gasp with relief:

"I say, you fellows, open the door! I jolly well know you're there!"

And there was a general exclamation.

"Bunter!"

"Only Bunter!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Feed for Bunter.

BUNTER thumped at the door of the wood-shed again.

"I say, you fellows," he called through the keyhole, "open the door! I know you've got a feed on there, and I'm jolly well not going to be left out!"

The juniors chuckled.

Thump, thump! Kick.

"Oh, go away, Bunter!" called out Bob Cherry.

"I'm jolly well not going away. I want some of the feed—"

"I'm hungry!"

"There isn't any feed!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It's only a Form meeting!" called out Harry Wharton.

"Buzz off!"

"Well, I'm a member of the Form, ain't I?" howled Bunter. "You just open this door, you bounders, and let me in!"

"Better let the silly ass in," said Harry. "He'll make a row there if we don't!"

"Right you are!"

Bob Cherry unlocked the door of the woodshed, and the Owl of the Remove came in, blinking round through his big spectacles.

"Oh, really, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "I think you might have told me it was a Form feed, and asked me to come. I've been hunting for you everywhere. Where's the grub?"

"There isn't any grub, ass!"

"Of course, you're joking!" said Bunter. "If you wanted to hold just a Form meeting, why couldn't you do it in the Form-room?"

"Because it's private and confidential!" said Bob Cherry.

"And now that you see that there is an feed you can roll along!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, the meeting's about at an end," remarked Harry

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Wharton. "We'd settled the plan of campaign, hadn't we?"

"Now—"

"Isn't there anything left?" asked Bunter.

"Any what?"

"Grub."

"Don't I tell you there wasn't any feed?" shouted Bob Cherry, in exasperation.

"Yes, but—"

"You—you fat wot! Do you mean to say you don't take my word?" exclaimed Bob, pushing back his cuffs.

"Oh, yes—yes, of course!" stammered Bunter. "I—I wouldn't think of doubting your word, Cherry. But—but I think you might let me have just a few tarts."

"I tell you there aren't any."

"Well, some cake, then."

Bob Cherry burst into a laugh. There was evidently no getting the idea out of Bunter's head that there had been a feed in the wood-shed.

"Well, come this way," said Skinner.

Bunter went towards him eagerly. Skinner was the humorist of the Remove, but Billy Bunter was too hungry to think of that for the moment.

"You're an awfully decent chap, Skinner!" he exclaimed.

"Where's the grub?"

"Follow me, kid."

Skinner mounted a short wooden ladder that led into the loft over the wood-shed. Billy Bunter followed him quickly enough. He had no doubt that the supply of "grub" was in the loft.

The juniors stared at them and chuckled.

They could easily guess that Skinner was going to jape the fat junior—Bunter deserved it, for his unbelief—and Harry Wharton & Co., laughing, quitted the shed.

Some of the Removes followed them, and others remained to see what would become of Bunter. The fat junior clambered into the loft after Skinner, with many a grunt and gasp. He blinked round him in the semi-darkness of the loft.

"There you are," said Skinner, pointing.

Billy Bunter stumbled in the direction indicated.

In a moment Skinner whipped down the ladder into the lower room, and Bulstrode lent him a hand to take the ladder away from beneath the trap.

There was a disgusted exclamation from the loft.

"I can't see any grub, Skinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Billy Bunter's fat face glimmered over the open trap. He blinked down at the laughing juniors.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There isn't any grub up here."

"Go hon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Skinner—"

"Have another look," said Skinner.

"I'm jolly well not going to. I believe you're japing me, you beast. I'm coming down. Oh! Where's the ladder?"

"Here it is."

"You've taken it away!"

"Go hon!"

Bunter blinked down at the juniors in alarm. He began to realize that he was a prisoner in the loft. The floor was ten feet below, and it was very hard. Bunter would as soon have dropped a hundred feet as ten.

"I say, you fellows, shove that ladder back here," he said.

"Rats! We told you to go, and you wouldn't—now you can stay."

"Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you chaps," said Skinner. "No good sticking here now. The meeting's over. Good-bye, Bluebell—I mean Bunter."

"I—I say—"

But no one stayed to hear what Billy Bunter had to say. The Removes, laughing loudly, streamed out of the wood-shed, and Billy Bunter was left alone in his glory.

The fat junior yelled after them despairingly.

"I say, you fellows, bring that ladder back here! Come back! Skinner, you beast, shove that ladder back here! I say, Skinner, old fellow, bring me that ladder! Beasts!"

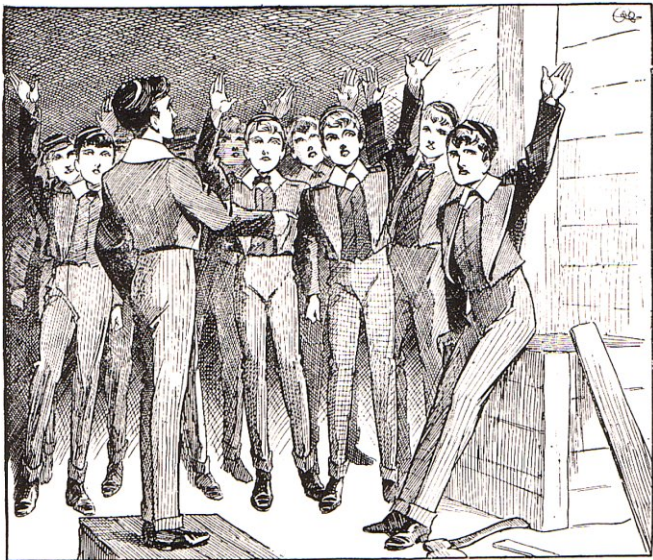
The wood-shed was deserted, save for Billy Bunter.

The fat junior was red with rage.

He cast a look down into the lower storey, but he knew that he dared not drop. He was a prisoner in the loft till someone chose to come and get him the ladder.

And it was quite possible that the Removes, after having their laugh out, would forget all about him, and leave him there.

"The rotters!" muttered Billy Bunter. "The beasts! I'm blessed if I know how I stand the Remove! I shall have to yell for help! I suppose Gosling will hear! Hallo, there's somebody coming into the shed!"



"Hands up for the education of Vernon-Smith!" said Harry Wharton. A forest of hands went up.

It was Gosling.

The school porter had been tipped to leave the Form meeting undisturbed in the wood-shed, but as soon as they were gone he came along to see whether any damage had been done. It was quite probable that there might have been a bear-fight, as well as a Form meeting, and in that case the place would want putting to rights.

Billy Bunter blinked at the porter with great relief.

"I say, Gossy!" he called out.

The porter gave a jump.

The voice from above his head startled him. He looked up, and saw the fat, red face of Bunter framed in the square opening.

"Oh!" he grunted. "You startled me."

"I'm sincerely sorry, Gosling. Put that ladder there, will you?"

Gosling did not move.

"Wot do you want to get hup into the loft and chuck the ladder down for?" he demanded. "Wot I says is this 'ere—you can put it up again!"

"I didn't chuck it down, Gosling," said Bunter pathetically. "I was tricked into getting up here, and Skinner took the ladder away."

Gosling chuckled.

"Please put the ladder there, Mr. Gosling," said Bunter softly.

"Mr. Gosling!" grunted the porter. "It's old Gossy, and silly old Gossy at other times, but when you want something done it's Mr. Gosling! Ho! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"I am sure I always speak of you respectfully, Mr. Gosling. I think you're a very nice chap, and I don't believe you live on gin-and-water, as the fellows say you do."

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"Ho! Do they?"

"Yes, they do, but I never believe it! And I don't think you're half such a beast as the fellows make out!" said Bunter flatteringly.

The porter glared at him.

"Ho! I'm a beast, am I?"

"Yes—I mean, the fellows say so; but I always stand up for you, you know. I always say that a man can't help having a disagreeable temper and a face like a hatchet if he's born like it."

"Ho!"

"Please put the ladder here, Mr. Gosling."

"It hain't my dooty to put ladders back after young himps 'ave moved them," said Gosling obstinately.

"Oh, really, Mr. Gosling—"

"Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Would a shilling be any use to you, Mr. Gosling?"

"Thank you kindly, Master Bunter."

"Then I will present you with one out of the postal-order I am expecting to-morrow morning. Please put the ladder back."

"It's a 'eavy ladder," said Gosling. "I don't think I could lift it without 'elp."

He moved towards the door of the shed. Bunter gave a yell.

"Gosling! Put that ladder here!"

Gosling grunted, and moved on. Perhaps Bunter had not been quite tactful in the way he had talked to him. Anyway, Gosling did not seem inclined to help. Bunter blinked with rage as he saw his only chance going.

But suddenly a new thought flashed into his mind, as he

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remembered that his ventriloquism had served him in time of trouble before.

A deep, sharp voice was suddenly heard in the woodshed. "Gosling! Place that ladder in position immediately!" Gosling jumped at the well-known tones of the Head.

"Yes, sir!" he gasped. He grasped the ladder, and swung it up to its place under the trap. Then he looked round apologetically. "I was just going 'o, sir," he said. "I was just going 'o to put it there. Wot I says is this 'ere, sir—that—"

Gosling broke off. There was no sign of the Head in the shed, or in the doorway. Gosling went to the open door and looked out. The Head was not in sight, neither was anyone else.

The porter stood astounded. Billy Bunter, with a fat chuckle, clambered down the ladder, and darted out of the shed. Outside, he paused to grin back at the astonished porter.

"It was the 'Ead's voice," murmured Gosling dazedly, "but where's the 'Ead?"

"You've been drinking again, Gosling," said the deep voice, behind the school porter this time.

Gosling whirled round. "Oh, sir, I—"

Then he stopped. There was no one in the shed. Gosling stared round him with staring eyes, and suddenly leaving the shed, strode away towards his lodge with jerky steps, every now and then casting a nervous glance back over his shoulder.

And Billy Bunter, with a fat chuckle, scuttled away, leaving the school-porter in a state of hopeless perplexity.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith Threatens the Remove Form.

"SMITH!" Herbert Vernon-Smith was standing at the window, looking out of his study into the sunset, with his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets.

He looked round sulkily as his name was spoken, and found Bulstrode, Trevor, Ogilvy, and Micky Desmond at his door. He looked at the four juniors with a clouded brow.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded.

"You!" said Bulstrode.

"Faith, and you're to come down with us," explained Micky Desmond. "There's been a Form-meeting, and we want you to know the result."

"Don't talk rot to me!"

"Faith, and I—"

"The Remove are all waiting for you in the common-room," said Bulstrode. "Come!"

"I don't care to."

"It's not a question of what you care to do, but of what you've got to do," said Bulstrode unceremoniously. "Are you coming, or shall we take you?"

Vernon-Smith clutched his hands convulsively. "I won't come."

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"Collar him, kids!"

"What-ho!"

And Vernon-Smith was promptly collared. He struggled fiercely in the grasp of the juniors. Getting his right hand free, he dashed his clenched fist with all his force into Bulstrode's face, and the burly junior reeled back and crashed to the floor.

"Faith, and what a blessed wild-cat!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "Hould him, intirely!"

"I've got his paws," said Ogilvy, grasping Vernon-Smith's wrists and dragging them together in a grip like that of a vice.

"And I've got his toes," said Trevor, swinging Vernon-Smith up from the floor with a sudden grasp upon his ankles.

"Let me go!" howled Smith furiously.

Bulstrode staggered to his feet.

His face was bruised, his nose bleeding, and his features were convulsed with fury. All the evil in the nature of the Remove bully had been roused by that knock-down blow.

"Hold him!" he panted. "I'll show him—"

Ogilvy pushed him back.

"Here, hold on, Bulstrode! You can't hit a chap while we're holding him."

"Hands off!" roared Bulstrode.

"But—"

"I'm going to smash him!"

"Then you can jolly well tackle him without our holding him," said the Scottish junior, and he released Vernon-Smith's wrists.

The new boy tore himself loose, and sprang up.

Bulstrode rushed upon him.

Vernon-Smith met him savagely. He was not brave, but he was so furious now that temper took the place of courage.

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A CHALLENGE! The Rylcombe Grammar School Rifle Corps hereby challenge the St. Jim's Junior Cadet Corps to a shooting match on Empire Day.—Signed, GEORGE GAY, Company Commander.

But he was no match for the burly Bulstrode.

The attack simply swept him away, and he was knocked round the study under a shower of fierce blows, and finally went with a crash into the grate.

There he lay gasping and groaning amid the clanging fire-irons.

Bulstrode stood over him with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"Now, then, do you want any more?" he panted.

Vernon-Smith groaned in response.

"He doesn't," said Trevor, with a short laugh. "Bring him along!"

Vernon-Smith was dragged to his feet.

There was no fight left in him now, for the present, and he only gasped and grunted as the Removites hurried him out of the study.

He walked down to the junior common-room, where the whole of the Remove were assembled.

The Remove had the room to themselves for the time, for it was still bright sunlight in the Close, and the Third and the Upper Fourth were all out of doors.

Vernon-Smith shrank a little as he was marched into the room, and found the eyes of the whole Form fastened upon him.

He realised that he was in a most unpleasant position, and the remarks that greeted his entrance were not flattering or gratifying at all.

"Here's the Bounder!"

"Here's the cad!"

"Looks rather rumpled, doesn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did he give any trouble?" asked Harry Wharton, with a rather amused glance at Bulstrode's nose, which was swelling visibly.

"Yes, he did," grunted Bulstrode; "but I think he got as good as he gave."

"He looks like it," said Nugent.

Vernon-Smith glared at them savagely.

"What does this foolery mean?" he exclaimed. "I won't be bullied, if that's what you're after. You'd better take care."

"Rats!"

"Shut 'em up!"

"You know jolly well I've got influence with the Head," said Vernon-Smith. "I'll have some of you sacked for this."

There was a hiss, and Wharton compressed his lips hard.

"That's what we want to talk to you about," he said quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"Close the door, Ogilvy!"

The Scottish junior closed the door, and turned the key in the lock to prevent any possible interruption. Vernon-Smith viewed this proceeding with considerable alarm, but his manner was none the less truculent.

It was evident that he believed that he held a trump card, in the circumstance of his mysterious influence with the Head of Greyfriars.

"Now, Vernon-Smith, we're going to put it straight to you," said Harry Wharton grimly, "as Form-captain, I'm taking the lead in this matter; but there isn't a fellow here who doesn't feel as I do about it, and who doesn't back me up entirely."

"Hear, hear!"

The shout from the Removites was a sufficient proof that Harry Wharton had stated only the truth.

Vernon-Smith looked round him with a sullen scowl, and fixed his sulky eyes upon the Remove captain.

"Well, what have you got to say to me, confound you?" he demanded.

"Now we're getting to business," said Wharton. "In the first place, you are an unspeakable cad, and we're not going to stand it."

"Hear, hear!"

"You've brought all sorts of blackguardly manners and customs to Greyfriars with you, and we don't like it."

Vernon-Smith sneered.

"I don't ask you to like it," he said. "You can do the other thing, you know."

"That's what we don't choose to do. Instead of that, we're going to educate you."

The Bounder started.

"Educate me! What do you mean?"

"What I say. You've come to Greyfriars for your education, I suppose, and we're going to educate you," explained Wharton, while the Removites chuckled. "You are going to stop your caddish tricks. You're not going to keep smokes in your box or in your study, and you're not going to drink anything stronger than tea or coffee."

"Who says I'm not?" demanded the Bounder savagely.

"The whole Remove says so."

"Hear, hear!"
"The Remove had better mind its own business," said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "I'm not a safe chap to meddle with."

"Listen to the cad!"
"Oh, rag him, and have done with it!"
Wharton shook his head.
"That doesn't begin till to-morrow," he exclaimed. "It's been settled that we explain matters to Smith, and give him this evening to think it over and turn over a new leaf if he likes."

"That's only fair," said Nugent.
"The fairness is terrific."
"He's a rank rotter, but I think we ought to give him a chance," said Harry. "He can make the most of it. Now, look here, Smith—"

"I've had enough of this."
"Stay where you are."

"I won't!"
And Vernon-Smith strode towards the door.
Harry Wharton's brow darkened.

"Put him where he was," he said.
Half a dozen pairs of hands grasped the Bounder, and dragged him back to where he had been standing. He struggled, but the juniors had had enough of his nonsense.

"Bump him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry angrily.
Bump!
Vernon-Smith yelled as he was bumped. He was considerably shaken up in the process.

"Now, will you stand quiet?"
"Ow! No!"
Bump! Bump!
"Let me go, you cads!"
"Will you be quiet?"
"No—yes!"

Vernon-Smith was placed upon his feet again, very rumped, and very furious. He was gritting his teeth as he stood there, but he made no movement towards the door again.

"Look here, Smith," said Harry quietly, continuing as if there had been no interruption, "there's no reason why you shouldn't behave decently if you choose, and we're going to give you rope enough. Somehow or other, you seem to have some sort of a pull in the school—I suppose it's influence with the governors—and the masters don't treat you as they treat the other chaps."

Vernon-Smith grinned.
"I can do as I like," he said.
"That's where you make a mistake, old dear," said Bob Cherry. "You can't."
"You can't," said Wharton. "You've cheeked Mr. Quelch, our Form-master, and you've cheeked even the Head."

"That's my business."
"And ours. There's going to be no more of it."
"What?"
"It's going to be stopped."
"Who's going to stop it?" said Vernon-Smith, breathing hard.

"We are!"
"Rats!"
Wharton controlled his temper with difficulty. It was all he could do to keep his hands off the Bounder of Greyfriars, but he did.

"Mind, Smith, we are in earnest," he said, "we mean every word. You are going to treat the Head and Mr. Quelch with proper respect, whether they make you or not. If they don't, we jolly well will. The first time you're cheeky to a master, and don't get called up for it, we are going to rag you."

"Mind your own business."
"And all the rotten habits you've brought to Greyfriars, such as drinking and smoking, are going to be stopped, too. We're going to do it."
"Hang you!"

"That's a fair warning. We give you this evening to think it over. You can start clear to-morrow morning if you like, and we'll give you every chance. But if you keep on as you've begun, your life won't be worth living at Greyfriars, that's all."

"Rats!"
"Open the door, kids, and let the cad go," said Wharton. "I shan't be able to keep my hands off him much longer."

"Just how I feel," said Bob Cherry sympathetically.
Ogilvy threw the door open. Vernon-Smith strode to it. He turned in the doorway, and cast back a savage look at the Remove.

"I don't care a rap for the lot of you," he said. "I'll do as I like. I don't care a twopenny rap for the whole Form."

There was a yell, and a rush was made for the Bounder. But Harry Wharton stopped that at once.

"Hold on, chaps; remember the agreement. He can say what he likes, until to-morrow."

"It's rotten—"

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"Let him have his chance."
And the Remove reluctantly agreed. Vernon-Smith strode away, with his nose in the air, and the fellows consoled themselves by the thought of how they would rag him on the morrow if he did not mend his manners—a thing that was not likely to happen.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Caught in the Act.

"PHEW!"
Skinner uttered that exclamation as he opened the door of his study.

The room was thick with tobacco smoke. The Bounder was sitting in the armchair, with his feet on the table, smoking a cheroot, and the atmosphere of the study was growing decidedly thick.

Skinner stopped and coughed. Snoop, who was behind him, began to snort.

Both Skinner and Snoop belonged to the set in the Remove who frequently smoked cheap cigarettes in secret, partly with the idea of persuading themselves that they were awfully manly, partly for the purpose of provoking Harry Wharton.

But neither of them liked the idea of the room where they had to do their preparation being turned into a tap-room.

Skinner strode in, coughing in the haze, and caught the Bounder by the shoulder.

"Here, stop that!" he exclaimed.
Vernon-Smith looked up with a scowl.

"Let me alone!" he growled.
Snoop threw up the window.

"My hat, it's pretty thick!" he said.
"Stop it, Smith!"

"I'll do as I like in my own study."
Skinner pushed back his cuffs.

"It happens to be my study, too," he remarked. "You see, what do you think would happen if a prefect came along and found the room like this?"

"I don't care!"
"Well, I do. Chuck it!"

The Bounder looked at him through the haze of the cheroot.

"Look here," he said, "you're not one of Wharton's set. I saw you smoking a cigarette yourself yesterday."

"That's different."

"Have a cheroot," said the Bounder, pushing a box across the table. "They're the real thing, and you needn't be afraid of them."

Skinner changed his expression.

The cheroots were expensive ones, as he could see, and he had never smoked one before. He closed the door, and looked dubiously at Snoop.

"Have one," said the Bounder. "Hang it! Why should you let Wharton dictate to you? Who is he, anyway?"

"Well, he's Form captain, you know."

"He hasn't any right to dictate to you."

"That's so," said Snoop. "Wharton is a great deal too cocky, and I've always said so."

"You haven't said so to him," said Skinner, with a grin. To which Snoop made no rejoinder.

"You're such a reckless beggar, Smith," said Skinner irresolutely. "You see, if a prefect swooped down on us while this was going on, it might mean the sack, and a flogging at any rate."

"It wouldn't mean anything of the sort," said the Bounder confidently. "You can trust to me to see you through."

"How do you mean?"

"The prefects will have to let me alone."

"Rot!"

"You will see."

"Look here, what is this pull you've got in the school?" asked Skinner abruptly. "I know the Head can't sack you, for some reason."

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies," he said coolly. "But I can do pretty well as I like here, and you must have seen it."

"You've got the Form up against you."

"I don't care for them. There are a few fellows I should like to clum with, and the rest can go hang. I can give my friends a good time, too."

Skinner had taken a cheroot by this time. He lighted it, and Snoop followed his example.

The three juniors smoked.

The sense of wrongdoing has a certain fascination for some natures, and both Skinner and Snoop felt it.

But the cheroots were too strong for them, even after the preliminary course they had had in cheap cigarettes.

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Snoop began to cough violently, and a pale-green look came over his face.

"I—I'm blessed if I like it," he muttered.

"Oh, it's all right," said Skinner, assuming a cheerful contentment he was far from feeling, for a mysterious sense of unsettlement was beginning to make itself felt in his inward regions.

"They're rather strong, ain't they, Smith?"

"No; quite mild."

"I—I don't think I'll finish it."

Smith grinned.

"Oh, go ahead, Snoopsey, and take another!"

"Thanks; I—I won't!"

"Stick to it!" said Skinner.

"No—I— Oh, lor'!"

Snoop made a sudden rush to the grate.

The cheroot went fizzling into the fire, and we draw a veil over the sufferings of Snoop that immediately followed it. He had been on the Channel in a steamer on a rough day, once; but that was nothing to this!

Skinner watched him with horror.

He had a feeling that the same fate was about to visit him, and he sat, not daring to move, lest it should overwhelm him suddenly.

He took the cheroot from his mouth.

"Have another?" asked Vernon-Smith, lighting a second one, with a nonchalance that Skinner wildly envied.

Skinner shook his head silently.

"Good, ain't they?"

"Yes," gasped Skinner.

"A dozen of them wouldn't hurt you."

"N-n-no!"

"You like them?"

"Ye-es!"

"Well, have another!"

"N-n-no, thanks!"

The door of the study opened, and an angry face looked in. The smoke in the room was so thick that some had escaped into the passage. Skinner and Snoop had not thought of that, and Vernon-Smith did not care.

It was Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of the school, who was looking in upon the three culprits.

Skinner let the cheroot end drop to the floor.

But he had no strength or nerve left to make any pretence of not having smoked. He sat in dumb misery.

Wingate coughed violently.

"You young scoundrels!" he exclaimed, with an anger that was very unusual in the good-tempered captain of Greyfriars.

"What do you mean by this?" Vernon-Smith had not even removed his cheroot. He looked with gleaming eyes through the haze at the astonished captain of the school.

"You've all three been at it, I see," said Wingate. "You will all three follow me to my study. What you want is a lesson."

"Oh!" groaned Snoop.

The big Sixth-Former gave the wretched junior a glance of pity mingled with contempt. He saw what was the matter with Snoop.

"You wretched worm!" he said scornfully. "Perhaps you're punished enough. You can stay where you are. Skinner and Smith—"

"Groo!" murmured Skinner.

It had come at last!

He sat helpless, sick as a dog, and the Head himself could not have induced Skinner to move at that moment. He hadn't sufficient energy left.

Wingate smiled grimly.

"Oh, you've got it, too!" he remarked.

"Groo!"

"You're the cause of this, Smith, I suppose," said Wingate, eyeing the new boy sternly. "I needn't ask you those cheroots belong to."

"They're mine," said Vernon-Smith sullenly.

"Good!" Skinner, I hope that will be a lesson to you—I think it will. You need another kind of a lesson, Smith. Come with me."

Vernon-Smith eyed him squarely.

"I won't!"

Wingate almost jumped.

"You—you won't!"

"No, I won't!"

"Do you understand that you're talking to the head prefect of the school?" thundered Wingate.

"I don't care!"

"My hat!" said Wingate. "Don't you? Then you'll learn!"

He strode towards the Bounder, and grasped his collar. With one swing of his powerful arm, the captain of Greyfriars wrenched the Bounder out of the study, knocking over a couple of chairs with him as he swung out.

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The Bounder, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, staggered into the passage, and Wingate followed him out.

Skinner and Snoop exchanged a glance of misery.

"Ow!" groaned Snoop. "This is awful!"

"Horrid! Ow!"

"The beast!"

"The cad!"

"I hope he'll be flogged!"

"I hope he'll be sacked!"

"Ow!"

"Groo!"

"Yow!"

"Oh! Ah! Groo!"

And so the unhappy duet continued.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Appeal to the Head.

"OW get along to my study!"

The Bounder staggered against the wall of the passage, his senses whirling for the moment, his hands clenched convulsively, his eyes gleaming. Winger pointed along the passage.

The Bounder did not move.

Wingate drew a deep breath.

"Will you go?" he asked quietly.

"No," said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth.

"I shall use force, you understand."

"Let me alone!"

"I think you must be mad," said Wingate, with a shrug of the shoulders. "But while you're at Greyfriars you'll obey orders. For the last time, get along."

"I won't!"

Wingate laid hands upon the Bounder at once.

In the strong grip of the captain of Greyfriars, the Bounder had no chance.

He was whirling along the passage before he knew what was happening, and had almost reached the head of the stairs before he could begin to struggle.

But there he began to resist savagely.

"My hat! It's the Bounder again!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking out of his study.

Fellows were looking out of nearly all the doors now, attracted by the uproar in the passage.

Wingate's face was red and angry.

It wasn't a particularly dignified occupation for the head of the Sixth Form, dragging a recalcitrant junior along by main force.

But the captain's authority had been defied, and he had no alternative but to inflict a condign punishment upon the Bounder.

"The Bounder again!"

"What's the cad been doing this time?"

"Niff the smoke!"

"The rotter!"

"Shall I help you, Wingate?"

"The rotten bounder!"

"The boulderfulness is terrific!"

Wingate paused outside No. 1 Study. Harry Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh were in the doorway, brought out from their prep. by the disturbance.

"Wharton! Nugent! Take hold of this mad young fool!" said Wingate, as the Bounder began to kick savagely at his shins.

"Yes, Wingate!"

"Take him to my study."

"Right-ho!"

"The right-hofulness is terrific."

The three juniors grasped the Bounder, and Wingate let him go.

The Greyfriars captain had received several hard kicks, but it was not that he was thinking of. His dignity as captain of the school was compromised by an unseemly tussle with a junior.

In the grasp of the three juniors the Bounder was whirled along at a pace that took his breath away.

But all the evil in his nature was roused now.

He struggled on every step of the stairs, clung to the banisters, and kicked and fought savagely, using hands and feet and nails and even teeth.

"What a blessed wild cat!" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"Bring him along!"

"Down him."

Tom Brown, Mark Linley, and Bob Cherry rushed to help. Bulstrode lent a hand, and Elliott and Stott.

In the midst of a scrambling, gasping crowd, the Bounder was whirled down the stairs and along to the Sixth-Form passage.

Wingate followed with a grim face.

He had never come in contact with a fellow like the



"Oh, really," murmured William George Bunter, blinking up and down the passage in surprise. "I wonder where they've got to! It's jolly curious that everybody's gone!"

Bounder before, and he wondered greatly why he was allowed to remain at Grayfriars. Wingate thought that a reformatory would be a more suitable place for him.

In the Sixth-Form passage the Bounder resisted afresh.

Several seniors came out of their studies, and looked upon the scene in great astonishment.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Loder. "It's Smith!"

"The new kid!" said Courtney.

"What's the trouble, Wingate?"

"Put him into my study!" said Wingate briefly.

Courtney, North, and Carne grasped the Bounder.

"You kids can buzz off!" said Courtney.

Harry Wharton & Co. were not sorry to leave off.

Most of them had received scratches, kicks, or bites, and all of them were breathless and exhausted.

The Bounder, as Bob Cherry facetiously remarked, was more trouble than he was worth.

In the hands of the three big seniors Vernon-Smith was quite helpless.

He was tossed into Wingate's study like a sack of straw.

Wingate followed him in.

"Now—" he began.

The Bounder gasped for breath, and eyed him fiercely.

"You're not going to lick me!" he panted.

Wingate smiled grimly.

"You'll see, my lad!"

"Ah, that boy again!" said Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looking in at the door. "You are in trouble again, Smith."

Vernon-Smith scowled.

"He was smoking in his study, sir, and refused to follow

me when I told him to," Wingate explained. "He has fought all the way downstairs."

Mr. Quelch looked at the Bounder with a darkly-frowning brow.

"You seem utterly incapable of even understanding the meaning of discipline, Smith," he said. "You have brought your punishment upon yourself."

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

"I won't be caned!" he growled.

"I should advise you to inflict an unusually severe caning,

Wingate," said the Form-master.

"I intended to, sir, but, as you are here, shall I leave the matter in your hands?"

"It is not necessary."

Wingate picked up a cane.

"Hold out your hand, Smith."

Vernon-Smith put his hand behind him.

"Hold out your hand."

The Bounder did not stir.

Wingate looked at the Form-master.

Mr. Quelch bit his lip.

"Smith," he said quietly. "Hold out your hand."

Vernon-Smith set his teeth, and kept his hands behind him.

"Then there is only one thing to be done," said Mr. Quelch

quietly. "Two of you hold him over the table while—"

"I appeal to the Head!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith suddenly.

Mr. Quelch started. Wingate drew a deep breath of relief.

The junior certainly had the right to appeal to the Head

if he chose to do so, though it was only to be supposed that

in that case his punishment would be more severe.

But Wingate was glad to hear him make the appeal. It

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relieved him of the responsibility of dealing with the Bounder—a responsibility that Wingate was finding a heavy one. The Bounder was not the sort of boy he cared to deal with, and he did not care to inflict the severe punishment he knew would be necessary to bring Smith to his senses.

But Mr. Quelch looked greatly troubled. He knew only too well the Head's reasons for not wishing to be called upon to punish Vernon-Smith, and he knew that Smith knew them, too.

Vernon-Smith watched the Form-master with a dawning grin upon his face.

"I appeal to the Head!" he repeated.
"Very well," said Wingate, as the Form-master did not speak. "He must go before the Head now, sir."

Mr. Quelch nodded slowly.
"Yes, I suppose so."

"The Head will know how to deal with him, sir, better than I," said Wingate. "I suppose he will be expelled, sir, and I must say I think he ought to be."

"Follow me, Smith!" said the Form-master abruptly.
"Shall I come, sir?" asked Wingate.

"No; I will send for you if necessary."

And the Bounder, with a glance of triumph round at the seniors and the juniors in the passage, followed Mr. Quelch to the Head's study. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another in a curious way.

"He must be flogged now," said Bob Cherry.
"Or sacked," said Tom Brown.

"Or both," suggested Hazeldene.
Wharton shook his head.

"That would happen to anybody else," he said; "but with the Bounder—"

"It's uncertain."

"Yes. He appeals to the Head because—"

"Because what?"

"Because he knows the Head, for some reason, can't act towards him as he would towards another fellow," said Wharton gloomily. "That's why."

The Removites looked grim and savage.
"All the more reason for our educating him," said Mark Linley at last.

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, we shall see," Nugent remarked. "If the Bounder isn't either flogged or sacked we shall know that we've simply got to take him in hand."

"And he won't be either," said Harry Wharton.

"And the juniors could not help feeling that Wharton would prove to be right."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Before the Head.

"D R. LOCKE!"
The Head of Greyfriars looked up.

He had not heard the tap on the door or the opening of the door, and he did not see the Form-master till the latter spoke.

He nodded gravely.

The lines on the Head's kind old face had deepened very much during the last few days—since Vernon-Smith had been at Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch noted it, and a deep anger burned in his breast against the man who held the good doctor in his power in so mysterious a way, and against the boy, too, who made so unscrupulous a use of it.

The Head started as he caught sight of Vernon-Smith, who followed the Form-master into the study.

There was a lurking smile upon the face of the junior.

"Ah! What is it, Mr. Quelch?"

"This boy, sir."

Dr. Locke cast an almost appealing glance at the Remove-master.

"My dear Mr. Quelch, did I not ask you to keep matters concerning that lad in your own hands without referring them to me?"

"You did, sir."

"Then why—"

"The boy has appealed from me to you."

"Oh!"

"He has appealed to the Head."

Dr. Locke was silent.

Every boy at Greyfriars had a right to appeal to the Head if he chose, and if he chose to take the consequences.

Vernon-Smith had chosen.

The Head looked very weary.

"What is the charge against Smith?" he asked.

"Smoking in his study, sir, and refusing to obey a prefect, and resisting him with violence."

The Head's brow darkened.

"Ah! Very well, you may leave him with me, Mr. Quelch."

"Very well, sir."

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The Remove-master went out of the study and closed the door. His brow was very dark. He foresaw that this meant that Vernon-Smith was not to be punished as he deserved. And that, then, was to become of the discipline of the school?

The Head did not speak for a few minutes.

He regarded the boy standing before him.

Vernon-Smith was looking and feeling confident. He did not expect to receive any punishment. He looked and felt as if he knew that the trump card was in his hand.

The Head broke the silence at last.

"Smith," he said, in a low voice, "you have acted in a disgraceful manner."

"The boy's face took on a sullen expression."

"It is not the first time you have done so," said Dr. Locke.

"Ever since you came to Greyfriars—a few days, but it seems years to me—you have gone from one disgrace to another, and you have shocked and disgusted the whole school."

The junior did not reply.

"In the case of any other lad who had done half as much, you must know what I should do," said the Head. "The culprit would be expelled from the school."

A gleam of triumph shone for a moment in Vernon-Smith's eyes, but still he did not speak.

"Well, Smith, have you nothing to say?" said the Head at last.

"No, sir."

"You know," resumed Dr. Locke, after a pause, "that I am compelled by circumstances to oblige your father, and that he makes it a condition that you should be taken in at Greyfriars, and allowed to remain here."

"Yes, sir."

"But surely you know that you cannot go on like this," said the Head patiently. "Smith, I am going to make an appeal to you—to your better nature."

Smith's lip curled a little. He was conscious of his triumph. And his expression showed how much "better nature" he had for anyone to appeal to.

"You have come to Greyfriars," said the Head; "you have acted in a way that it is impossible for me to tolerate at this school. You have set an example of insubordination and bad conduct. Fortunately, the boys of your Form have condemned your conduct instead of imitating it, as they might have done. But you must see that it cannot go on, Smith. For your own sake, you should be more careful. If you are compelled to leave Greyfriars, no other public school will open its doors to you. If I am driven to expel you, it will be a great misfortune for you."

Vernon-Smith grinned.

If the Head had dared to expel him, he would not have taken this tone with him at all, and that Vernon-Smith knew full well.

"For your own sake," repeated the Head—"for the sake of your future, of your education, you must take a new line."

Vernon-Smith was silent.

"Come, my boy," said Dr. Locke, "can I rely upon you to meet my wishes in this way—to turn over a new leaf, and do better?"

The boy set his lips.

Dr. Locke waited a few moments for the reply that did not come.

"Very well, Smith," he said, changing his tone, "I will now put it in a way you cannot misunderstand. Your father has apparently told you that he has a certain influence over me."

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"You are aware of its nature?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are aware, then, that it is in the power of a bad and unscrupulous man to cause me injury," said the Head, raising his voice a little. "Is it generous, Smith, to take such an advantage of this?"

Vernon-Smith sneered.

"That is not what I was going to say, however," said the Head, checking himself. "Smith, your conduct in this school is impossible. If it does not alter, I shall be forced to expel you; and that I shall do. You understand? If you persist in the disgraceful course you have commenced, I shall relieve Greyfriars of your presence, whatever the consequences may be to myself. You may go."

Vernon-Smith turned on his heel and quitted the study.

The Head remained motionless for many minutes, his gaze fixed unseeingly upon the door which had closed behind the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Oh," he murmured at last, and his head sank into his hands, "what am I to do? What can I do? Ruin and disgrace if I defy that villain; and if I do not, how can I face that alternative either?"

The Head rose from his seat, and paced the study with quick, nervous strides.

"HERE he comes!"

"Here's the Bounder!"

"Here's the cad!"

A crowd of juniors were waiting for the Bounder to reappear from the Head's study. The passage for some distance from the Head's door was crammed.

Feeling ran high among the Removites.

Fellows who went into the Head's presence usually emerged in a state of considerable bodily discomfort, and sympathy was generally felt for them.

Not so in this case.

There was hardly a fellow in the Form who did not hope that Vernon-Smith would be flogged soundly. And if he were flogged, he would not receive a spark of sympathy.

And the juniors waited eagerly.

It seemed impossible that the Bounder could escape punishment, after what he had done; yet there was a general uneasy feeling that unfair influence was at work, and that the Head was not his own master in the matter.

"Here he comes!"

"Has he been licked?"

"He doesn't look like it," growled Bob Cherry.

"By Jove, no!"

The Bounder scowled at the crowd as he came up.

He knew that they were waiting there to see whether he had been flogged, and that they sincerely hoped he had.

An ugly grin appeared upon his face as he met their glances.

"Well?" demanded Tom Brown.

"Well!" sneered the Bounder.

"Have you been licked?"

"Do I look like it?"

"Well, no."

"I haven't been licked, and I sha'n't be licked," said Vernon-Smith. "You can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"Thanks, I don't smoke," said Tom. "But why on earth haven't you been flogged?"

"Because I don't choose."

"Well, nobody chooses, as a rule," said Hazeldene, with a grin. "But I don't see how you could be allowed any choice in the matter, Smith."

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't see everything," he retorted. "The Head knows better than to flog me. I can tell you that much."

"Hold your tongue!" said Harry Wharton fiercely.

Vernon-Smith started back a pace.

"I'll say what I please," he replied.

"You won't! Mind, we've given you till to-morrow morning to start fresh, and we'll keep our word with you," said Wharton, with bitter scorn. "But a word against the Head, and I'll wipe up the passage with you now; so look out."

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth, but he changed his tone. He might have a cowardly advantage of the Head, but he had no influence over the captain of the Remove.

"I've said nothing against him," he said sullenly. "He hasn't flogged me, that's all, and he won't."

"Not after smoking, and kicking Wingate!"

"No," sneered Vernon-Smith.

"Blessed if I can understand it," said Stott.

"It's a rotten shame," growled Bulstrode. "The cad ought to be sacked, and the Head ought to sack him."

"I suppose he can't, as the cad says," Russell remarked. "Quite right, he can't," said Vernon-Smith.

"Very well," said Harry Wharton. "We take you in hand to-morrow, that's all."

"You'll mind your own business," said Vernon-Smith; "I'm my own master here. And if you want a proof of it, just follow me to my study."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm going to smoke."

"Rats!"

"You daren't!"

"Come and see!" sneered Vernon-Smith.

He walked away to his study, and a number of the juniors followed him, out of sheer curiosity. The study was empty. Skinner and Snoop had gone out into the Close for some fresh air, to help them to recover.

Vernon-Smith took a cheroot from the box and lighted it. The juniors watched him; some of them in admiration for his nerve, others with disgust.

"Look out!" exclaimed Stott. "Here comes Wingate!" Wingate looked into the study.

He seemed petrified as he saw the Bounder smoking, and without any signs about him of having been punished.

"Smith!" he ejaculated at last. "Smith! What—?"

Vernon-Smith removed the cheroot from his lips.

"Well?" he said.

"Are you mad? What does this mean?"

"It means that you'd better let me alone," said Vernon-Smith. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 120.

Smith. "I've got permission to do as I like, if you're curious about it."

Wingate almost staggered.

"Permission?"

"Yes."

"It's a lie! It's impossible!"

"Ask the Head."

Wingate stared blankly at the boy.

"You must be mad," he said.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, go to the Head," he replied. "Ask him whether I'm to be interfered with."

"He hasn't been punished, Wingate," remarked Stott.

"No, punished!"

"Do I look like it?" said Smith.

"You don't," said Wingate, eyeing him grimly. "I can't understand this. It's impossible that the Head should allow this—"

"Ask him, then."

"I shall do no such thing. Put that cheroot into the fire."

"I appeal to the Head," said Vernon-Smith coolly.

"What?"

"I appeal to the Head."

"You are insane, I think."

"I'm willing to go to the Head with you now, if you wish."

"Then you jolly well shall!" said Wingate, seizing the Bounder by the collar.

And he marched the boy away. Vernon-Smith did not resist this time. There was a sneering smile upon his face, as if he felt himself the master of the situation.

Wingate knocked at the Head's door, and pushed the boy in. Dr. Locke turned an almost haggard look upon him.

"This boy, sir—" began Wingate.

The Head waved his hand.

"Do not bring him before me again now, Wingate. I—I have already dealt with him."

"But, sir—"

"Pray leave me now; I am very busy."

Wingate silently left the room. He was puzzled, astounded. The Bounder looked at him with a sneering smile in the passage.

"Well?" he said.

"I don't understand it," said Wingate; "I think the Head must be ill. As for you, you unspeakable young cad, here's what you've been asking for."

Vernon-Smith yelled as the Greyfriars captain boxed his ears right and left. He made a rush to escape, and Wingate ran after him, kicking him the length of the passage.

It was not very dignified, but it relieved the captain's feelings considerably.

Vernon-Smith escaped at last, very sore and savage, and ran to his study. There he soon had another cheroot going, and the captain of Greyfriars did not pay the study another visit.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Bunter, the Smoker.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were busy with their prep. when Billy Bunter came into the study. The fat junior was looking very discontented.

"I—I," he remarked, "I—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

That was generally the reply when the Owl of the Remove made any attempt at conversation. But Billy Bunter was used to it, and it did not affect him very much.

"I say, Wharton, I'm hungry!"

"Go hon!"

"We had such a measly tea—"

"Rats!"

"And you chaps wouldn't let me have any of the feed in the wood-shed—"

"There wasn't any feed, ass."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry, glancing sternly up from his work, "if you imply that I'm telling you a crammer, I'll jolly well lick you."

"Of course, I don't mean to say anything of the sort," said Bunter hastily. "I—I know you wouldn't tell a whooper, Wharton. All the same, I—I think you might have let me have just a few of the tarts."

Wharton laughed, but he could not help it. It was no use being angry with Billy Bunter.

"You see, I've got a delicate constitution," explained Bunter. "I don't know whether I've ever mentioned it to you before, but I have to keep up my strength by taking

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constant nourishment. It's fortunate I have a good appetite, I think. As it happens, I am expecting a postal-order to-morrow morning—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"And if you fellows like to lend me five bob off it—"

"Shut up!"

"Look here," said Bunter, "I've had enough of the rotten meanness I get in this study. I've stuck to you fellows a long time—"

"Like a leech," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I've stuck to you because I'm—I'm loyal and—generous by nature," said Bunter. "But you might as well understand that there are others." Wharton shook his head.

"No others will stand you, Bunter," he said.

"Rather not!"

"The rutherfordness is terrific."

"There's that new chap," said Bunter. "I could get any amount of smokes from him, only I've a mind above such things. I've no doubt he would lend me money, though, if I liked."

"Go and ask him."

"He's simply rolling in money. I saw him open his sovereign-purse to-day, and he had seven sovereigns and a half-sovereign in it, and a banknote."

"My lat! He oughtn't to be allowed to have money like that."

"He'd be a jolly good chap to chum with," said Bunter meditatively. "He'd know how to treat a fellow decently."

"Well, go and chum with him," said Nugent. "I wish you could change into his study—anyway, don't bother now."

"I'll jolly well—"

"Why don't you do your prep?"

"I'm hungry."

"There'll be a row again with Mr. Quelch in the morning."

"It will be your fault."

"Our fault!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring.

"Yes. I can't do my prep, unless I have some grub, you know, and you fellows are so jolly mean. I wonder you have the nerve to do it, really."

"Oh, shut up!"

"If you could make it a bob—"

"Dry up!"

"Or a tanner—"

Harry Wharton picked up a ruler. Bunter blinked at him, and retreated hastily from the study. He saw that he had reached the limit of Wharton's patience.

The fat junior grunted discontentedly. He turned it over in his mind whether he should tackle the Bounder of Greyfriars. His last interview with him had not been very promising—but Bunter remembered the boundless wealth of the Bounder, and resolved to try. He tapped at the door of Study No. 3, and opened it, and started back, coughing, as a cloud of tobacco smoke assailed him.

"Ugh!" gasped Bunter. "Gerrooh!"

The Bounder grinned at him through the smoke.

"What do you want?" he said.

"I—I say, you know—groo—"

"You young ass! Do you want a smoke?"

"N-n-no, thanks, Smith—I—I don't do those cadlish things, you know!" said Bunter. "I—I mean, yes, please," said the fat junior hastily, as he saw Vernon-Smith's brows contract.

Vernon-Smith smiled grimly.

"Here you are, then!"

He pushed the box across the table.

Billy Bunter hesitated.

He had attempted to smoke a cigarette before, and he

had unpleasant recollections of it. The cheroots were evidently stronger than many cigarettes. Yet Vernon-Smith was smoking them, and several stumps on the table showed that this was not the first.

"Are they—or—mild?" stammered Bunter.

"Yes, awfully mild."

"I—I'm not a great smoker, you know!" said Bunter, toying with the cheroot he picked from the box. "I—I looked in to ask you—"

"There's the matchbox!"

"Thanks—to—to ask you if you could lend me five bob."

"Light up."

"I'm expecting a postal-order by the first post in the morning," explained Bunter. "It's only a temporary loan, of course; I can let you have it back before morning lessons."

"I'll lend you five bob when you've smoked that cheroot," said Vernon-Smith, with a disagreeable grin that the fat junior was too short-sighted to see.

"Oh, really, Smith—"

"Here's a light."

Billy Bunter accepted the light promptly enough now. After all, why couldn't he tackle cheroots if Vernon-Smith did?"

"Go it!" said Vernon-Smith encouragingly.

"Is—is it alright?" stammered Bunter.

"Yes. Draw."

"There—is that right?"

"That's right—go it!"

And Billy Bunter smoked.

"Why, it's jolly good," he said, in great relief. "I don't feel in the least rocky, you know. It's all right."

"Of course it is. Look at the brand!"

Bunter smoked about an inch of the cheroot. Then his fat face lost a little of its ruddy colour. Vernon-Smith watched him with a grin. The fat junior remembering that the loan depended upon his smoking the whole cheroot, stuck to it manfully, and resisted the desire to take it from his mouth and hurl it into the fire.

Another half-inch.

The cheroot had been about five inches long when Bunter started. He had smoked an inch and a half—but there seemed to him to be about six or seven feet of it left. And the feet were becoming yards, as it were. By the time he neared the end the cheroot was likely to seem half a mile long.

But Bunter was not destined to reach the end.

His fat face was growing green and yellow now, and he had a faint feeling with him, and a general sensation as if the earth no longer rested upon a solid foundation.

"Like it?" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Y-e-e-s!" gasped Bunter.

"Good—eh?"

"W-r-r-ripping!"

Bunter smoked on. The strange and mysterious sensations within him were growing in intensity. The cheroot was apparently growing, too—it loomed as large as a torpedo in Bunter's disordered imagination.

But he thought of the coming loan, and stuck to it.

Suddenly he gave a wild gurgle, and the half-cheroot that remained dropped from his mouth, and his face became ghastly.

"Ow—groo—yarroohoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Vernon-Smith.

Bunter gave him a wild look and rushed from the study. He would not have touched that cheroot again for five shillings, or five pounds.

Disaster overtook him in the passage. He clung to the wall and moaned. Life was not worth living to the Owl of the Remove at that moment.

"EMPIRE DAY AT RYLCOMBE."

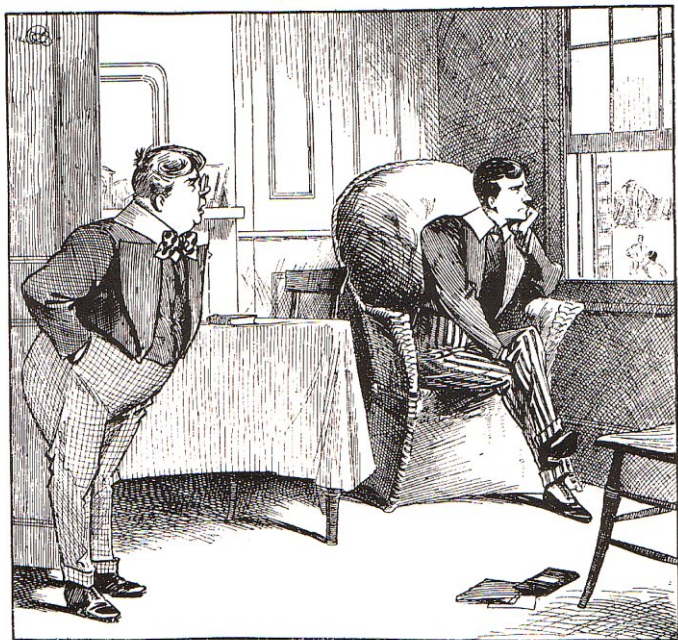
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"The whole Remove seems to have disappeared," said Billy Bunter. "I think they must have gone to a feed."

Five minutes later he crawled into No. 1 Study. The chums of the Remove did not look up. The fat junior collapsed into the armchair and groaned feebly.

Still they did not look at him. They were used to Bunter's malingering. The fat junior had pretended to be ill too often for them to take any notice of his groans.

"Ow!" moaned Bunter.

"Shut up!" said Nugent, without looking round.

"Yow! I—I'm dying!"

"Well, die quietly, then!"

"Yow! Groo! Oh!"

Wharton finished his work, and rose. Then he caught sight of Billy Bunter's ghastly face in the gaslight. He started a little.

"Great Scott! What's the matter, Bunty?"

"Ow!"

"Are you ill?"

"Groo!"

"Oh, he wants some grub!" said Nugent, unlocking the cupboard. "Here's a jam-tart, Bunter—here you are! Bolt it!"

Billy Bunter feebly waved him back.

"Ow! Gerrway! Wow! Oh!"

Nugent stared in blank astonishment.

"My hat! He must be ill, if he doesn't want to eat!" he exclaimed.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 120.

"The illfulness must be terrific!"

"What's the matter, Bunty?" asked Harry Wharton, with real concern now. Bunter's refusal of the jam-tart was proof enough that he was really feeling bad. "What have you been doing?"

"N-n-nothing! Ow! I'm dying! Yow! Groo!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Nugent. "He's sick! It's biliousness, I suppose, from overeating. I've often wondered he wasn't bilious."

"Ow! It was that cad!" groaned Bunter.

"Eh! What do you mean?"

"That—that worm Smith! The beast! He—he offered me a loan if—I got to the end of a cheroot!" groaned Bunter.

"You young ass!" exclaimed Harry, in disgust. "Have you been smoking?"

"I—I—"

"You frabjous ass!" said Nugent. "Smoking cheroots? Great Scott! No wonder you're looking rocky!"

"Ow! The beast knew it would make me rocky! Ow! He never meant to let me have the five bob! Yow! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Serve you right!"

"The rightfulness of the serve is terrific."

"Ow! He's smoking in his study now—you—you ought to go and rag him!"

"Rats!"

"You know jolly well you ought to put down smoking in the Remove, Wharton—it's—it's rotten and blackguardly! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Groo!"

"Let's get down to the common-room, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Nugent. "I shall weep over him soon; it's so touching!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter was left to groan in solitude.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. The Bounder's First Lesson.

THE next morning there was a considerable amount of subdued excitement in the Remove. Vernon-Smith's respite had expired.

The Bounder of Greyfriars had been given rope enough, and, as Bob Cherry had put it, he had hanged himself nicely. He had broken all the written and unwritten laws of Greyfriars. He had smoked in his study, defied the prefects, chucked his Form-master, and evidently taken advantage of the difficult position the Head was placed in. His insolence had reached the limit. It was clear that the "powers that be" in Greyfriars could not, for some mysterious reason, deal with the Bounder as he deserved, and as was necessary. Hence that duty devolved upon the Remove.

And the Remove were far from shrinking from it.

It was not a passive dislike they felt for the Bounder—it was an active hostility; and, indeed, some of them were glad that the Bounder had showed no signs of turning over a new leaf, because they simply longed to rag him.

And many eyes watched the Bounder that morning.

Had he decided to profit by the chance the Remove, under Wharton's influence, had agreed to give him? If he had, well and good—if he hadn't, well and better, as Bob Cherry put it. The Remove would soon make him march to time.

The clang of the rising-bell was the signal for the education of Vernon-Smith to commence.

The juniors turned out—the laziest and slackest of them turning out as promptly as the rest—curious to know how Vernon-Smith would behave. Was he going to do the sensible thing, or had he to be educated?

Evidently he had not decided to do the sensible thing, for he simply turned his head on his pillow, and drew the blanket over it to shut out the resonant clang of the rising-bell.

Harry Wharton glanced at him, and his lips came together tightly. It was clear that the Bounder had resolved upon defiance.

The rising-bell ceased to clang. Harry walked over to the Bounder's bed.

"Smith!" he said quietly.

"Don't disturb me, please," said Vernon-Smith.

"It's time to get up."

"Stuff!"

"The rising-bell has stopped."

"Hang the rising-bell!"

"You're to get up."

"Bosh!"

"If a fellow doesn't get up, the prefects come and lick him," said Wharton. "You know that as well as I do."

Vernon-Smith chuckled softly.

"They won't touch me," he said. "I shall appeal to the Head."

"Will you, you cad? You can appeal to the Head from the prefects, but you can't appeal from the Remove," said Harry, between his teeth. "I warned you yesterday that we'd had enough of your rot. We've stood all we're going to stand. From this time forward you're going to act decently, whether you like it or not. You're not going to disregard the rules, and you're not going to cheek the prefects, or the masters, or appeal to the Head."

"What ho!" said the Removites, with one voice.

"First of all, you're going to learn to get up at rising-bell. Get out of bed."

Vernon-Smith drew the clothes more tightly round him.

"Get up!" said Wharton, raising his voice.

"I won't!"

"Then we'll make you."

Wharton dragged the bedclothes off, and threw them on the floor. Vernon-Smith struck out at him savagely, and caught him on the cheek. It was the only blow he had time to strike.

Harry Wharton grasped him, and flung him off the bed. The Bounder plumped on the floor with a thud, and uttered a howl of pain. He was on his feet again in a moment, black with rage.

Wharton faced him grimly.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 120.

A CHALLENGE! The Rycombe Grammar School Rifle Corps hereby challenge the St. Jim's Junior Cadet GET Corps to a shooting match on Empire Day.—Signed, GORDON GAV, Company Commander.

"Now, then, if you're not satisfied, I'll have the gloves on with you in the gym., or we'll have it out now," he said.

"You bound!"

"Better language, please."

The Bounder snapped his teeth. He suddenly caught the jug from his washstand, and swung it through the air. A grasp from behind wrenched it from his hand before he could hurl it, and it was overturned in the act, and the water swamped out upon Vernon-Smith. He gave a choking yell as he was drenched from head to foot with the cold fluid.

"You dirty cad!" said Bob Cherry, lowering the jug to the floor. "You cowardly bound! You were going to throw that at Wharton!"

"Oh! Ugh! Grooh!"

Wharton set his teeth.

"Get yourself dressed," he said.

"I won't!"

"I give you five minutes." And Wharton turned to his own dressing.

Vernon-Smith mopped himself with a towel, and when he was dry he felt too thoroughly awakened to have any desire to return to bed again, but from sheer obstinacy he would not give in.

Wharton turned to him again when the five minutes had elapsed. He had not made a movement to dress himself.

"Are you going to dress, Smith?"

"No, hang you!"

"Very well. Collar the cad, some of you."

Bob Cherry, Bulstrode, and Russell collared the junior. He fought furiously, but they had him face downwards over the bed in a twinkling.

"Now, Vernon-Smith, are you going to act sensibly, or do you want licking first?"

"Let me go."

Wharton picked up a belt.

"You understand me, Smith?"

"Hang you, you bound!"

Swish!

Vernon-Smith gave a terrific yell.

"You coward!" he roared.

Wharton turned red.

"Let him go," he said quietly.

The junior released the Bounder. He rose, his face flushed with fury, his eyes glittering. Wharton stepped close to him.

"I was licking you as Form-captain," he said quietly.

"You called me a coward. Very well, I'll lick you in another way. Are you ready?"

"I—"

"Put up your fists!" said Harry, between his teeth.

"I—I won't."

"You will—or you'll be licked."

"I won't fight you!"

"Coward!" said Harry contemptuously. "Do you think you can escape that way—by refusing to fight, and howling when you're bolted? Now, dress yourself at once and come down, or I'll give you the licking of your life."

"I won't."

"Then take the licking."

Wharton's open hands slapped soundly upon the Bounder, who was clad only in pyjamas and felt every slap keenly. He had to defend himself or be slapped—and he chose to do the former. He flung himself upon Wharton like a wild-cat.

Wharton set his teeth and squared up to him.

The Bounder had no chance against the best athlete in the Remove—a fellow who was always in good condition, as Smith never was.

The Bounder was knocked right and left, and a drive on the chin sent him sprawling across his bed. He lay there muttering.

"Now will you dress?"

"No!" yelled the Bounder. And he rushed at Wharton again.

Harry let out his left, and the Bounder crashed on the floor. There was a sharp voice at the door:

"What is this noise about?"

Mr. Quelch looked in.

Harry turned respectfully enough towards the Form-master. The Bounder was sprawling at his feet, and it was, of course, easy enough for Mr. Quelch to understand all that had passed.

"I'm keeping order in the dormitory, sir," said Harry quietly.

The Remove-master gave Vernon-Smith one glance.

"Very well, Wharton," he said. And he walked away.

The Removites grinned. It was pretty clear that the "education" of Vernon-Smith would not be interfered with by the Form-master.

ANSWERS

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Vernon-Smith staggered to his feet. After that knock-down blow, he was not inclined to carry the dispute any further. He gave Wharton a glance of poisonous hatred, but he showed no desire to renew hostilities.

"Are you coming down with us?" asked Harry quietly.

"Yes," snarled the Bounder.

And he dressed without another word, but with a black brow followed the Remove downstairs.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Second Lesson.

MR. QUELCH did not look at the Bounder as he took his place at the breakfast-table with the Remove. He affected not to notice the sullen face, the glittering eyes under the bent brows. But he gave Wharton a look, and in that look Wharton read that the master understood, and that he approved.

The Bounder took his place in the Form-room with the rest of the Remove, and his face was still sullen.

His first lesson had come, as a matter of fact, as a disagreeable shock and surprise to the Bounder. He began to realize that he would not be able to follow the course he had marked out for himself at Greyfriars.

His father's power over the Head, and his own unscrupulous use of that power, could not help him in a struggle with the juniors.

When the Remove took the matter into their own hands, Vernon-Smith had only his own hands to depend upon for his defence, and he began to see that he would be in an awkward position.

It did not make him any the more inclined to give way—it increased his sullen obstinacy, as a matter of fact.

But if the first lesson was not sufficient there were more to come, and they were likely to increase in severity till the Bounder saw reason.

The Removes were not to be trifled with now. They had started, and many of them saw fun in the education of Vernon-Smith, and wouldn't have turned back from the self-imposed task for any consideration.

Mr. Quelch had fallen into the way of treating Vernon-Smith very lightly in class. The Bounder's attainments, as a matter of fact, were more suited to the Third or Second Form than to the Lower Fourth, but he was too old for the Infants Forms. True, there were fellows as old as Vernon-Smith still in the Third. But Vernon-Smith senior had had a word to say about that. The Cotton King had dictated to the Head in that matter, as in others. Vernon-Smith had not wished to be placed among fellows averaging an age much less than his own, and so he was put into the Remove. Had he been bright or painstaking he would soon have pulled up, especially as the Form-master was willing to help him in every way. But he was neither. He did not care for work, and he had very plainly intimated his intention of not doing very much. He was lowest boy in the Form now, and was likely to remain there.

When he was called upon to construe he stood silent, unable to make a word of it, and the Form-master frowned and told him to sit down.

In all other lessons he blundered, much to the amusement of the Remove, who chuckled audibly over blunders which no Second-Form boy would have made.

Vernon-Smith's face grew more and more sullen.

He did not care to work, but he had no liking for looking ridiculous, and the chuckles of the juniors were exasperating to him.

Finally, when he gave an impertinent answer instead of a correct one, Mr. Quelch lost patience.

"Vernon-Smith, you will take fifty lines!"

Vernon-Smith sniffed.

"I shall expect them at tea-time this evening," said Mr. Quelch.

The Bounder sat down.

His expression showed as plainly as anything could show that he had not the slightest intention of doing those lines.

Mr. Quelch, the next moment, probably regretted having imposed them. Under the peculiar circumstances of the case the Bounder was not amenable to discipline, and taking him before the Head was worse than useless.

Morning lessons over, the juniors swarmed out into the Close.

Vernon-Smith went straight to his study, with a glitter in his eyes. Even the Bounder did not want to smoke so early in the day, but he intended to do so to show the Removes that he did not care a rap for them.

Harry Wharton's brows contracted as he saw him go, but he took no notice of him. He would not appear to watch the fellow in any way. But there was no escaping knowledge of the fact that the Bounder was persisting in his bad courses.

Harry Wharton caught sight of Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, staring up at one of the study windows of the Remove.

Temple, the captain of the Upper Fourth, was sniffing with great scorn.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 120.

NEXT WEEK: "THE FIRST ELEVEN."

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"That's the way the Remove kids amuse themselves, these days," he remarked to Fry, pretending not to see Wharton at hand. "What do you think of it?"

"Disgraceful," said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" chimed in Dabney.

"Not cigarettes, either—blessed cigars, you know."

"Rotten!"

"Caddish!"

"And at midday, too! That's the richest part of it."

"Beastly!"

"Oh, rather!"

"I don't know what Greyfriars is coming to," said Temple loftily. "I think monitors ought to be appointed from the Upper Fourth to look after the Remove."

"Jolly good idea!"

Harry Wharton smiled; he could take the badinage of the Fourth-Formers in good part. But when he glanced in the direction the Fourth-Formers were looking, his smile vanished, and his handsome face darkened.

For the window of No. 9 was open, and at the window, in full view of everybody in the Close, sat Vernon-Smith, smoking.

It was reckless even of the Bounder, for a master might have passed at any moment and seen him, and trouble would have followed. Doubtless the Bounder depended upon his "appeal to the Head" to save him in that case. His object was to defy the Remove, and especially Harry Wharton.

Harry gazed up at the study window, and caught the Bounder's eye, and Vernon-Smith smiled evilly.

The captain of the Remove strode away.

"Bob! Frank! Some of you others, come with me!" he called out, to a crowd of Removes who were playing leapfrog in the Close.

"Certainly, old son," said Bob Cherry, glancing in surprise at Harry's grim face. "What's the trouble?"

"Anything up, Wharton?"

"Yes—the Bounder!"

"Oh! We'll come."

Half a dozen Removes followed Harry Wharton into the House, and up to the Remove passage. Harry strode into No. 9, with a frowning brow.

The Bounder half rose from his seat at the window.

Harry raised his hand imperatively.

"Put that thing down," he said.

"Mind your own business."

"I've no time to waste with you. That's your last smoke. Put it down!"

"I won't!"

Wharton waited for no more.

He grasped the Bounder and swung him round, and the cheroot dropped from his lips upon the floor. Wharton set the fellow whirling, and he crashed into a corner, and sat there gasping, looking dazed.

"Bravo!" chirruped Bob Cherry.

"Make a fire in the grate," said Harry. "We're going to get rid of these things."

"What-ho!"

Bob Cherry soon had a fire going.

There was a box of cheroots on the table, and Wharton thrust them, box and all, into the fire as Bob lighted it.

The Bounder scrambled to his feet.

"Let them alone," he said huskily. "They're mine."

"You won't have anything of that sort inside Greyfriars again," said Wharton contemptuously. "Have you any more smokes in this study?"

"Find out!"

"I intend to. Open his things, you fellows."

"What-ho!"

"Right you are!"

The Removes were not slow to obey. They dragged out the drawer of the table, and turned open all the receptacles belonging to Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder raged, but in vain.

He dragged Bob Cherry away from a box, and Bob turned round and smote him, and the Bounder rolled on the carpet.

After that he attempted no more interference.

Cheroots, cigars, and cigarettes were turned out in considerable quantities, representing an amount of money which might have been much better spent by a fellow of fifteen.

They were piled on the fire as fast as they were brought to light, and a dense odour of burning tobacco filled the study, and spread into the passage.

Courtney came along and looked into the study, and coughed and snorted as he put his head into the cloud.

"What on earth are you kids up to?" he exclaimed.

"Only making a bonfire, Courtney," said Nugent, looking round. "Getting rid of some rubbish that's not wanted at Greyfriars."

Courtney sniffed again, and laughed, and went down the

passage. Vernon-Smith looked on at the scene of destruction, his face pale with rage, his finger-nails digging into the palms of his hands.

When a charred mass in the grate was all that remained of his precious property, the Removites grinned and walked out of the study.

They said nothing to Vernon-Smith. There was nothing to say. They had come there to do their work, and they had done it. It was the second lesson.

They walked away, leaving the Bouncer gritting his teeth; but there was nothing more than that he could do, except to mutter impotent vows of vengeance.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing for Bunter.

"MASTER VERNON-SMITH!"

Vernon-Smith looked round with a sulky face. Afternoon lessons were over, and Vernon-Smith was in the common-room, while most of the Remove were out of doors. It was the school page, Trotter, who called, as he put his round head in at the door of the junior common-room.

"Well!" growled Vernon-Smith.

"Package for you, sir."

"Oh!" Vernon-Smith rose. "Where is it?"

"The carrier has just brought it, sir. It's in the 'all,'" replied Trotter. "Shall I take it up to your study, sir?"

"No," said Vernon-Smith hastily.

He glanced round the room.

It was deserted save for himself and Billy Bunter. Bunter had not spoken to the Bouncer since his unhappy experience as a smoker. The fat junior was standing at the window, looking out, turning over a problem in his mind. His postal-order had not come, and he was wondering who was the likeliest person at Greyfriars to be successfully exploited of a small loan.

He did not turn his head as Trotter was speaking, and Vernon-Smith imagined that he was taking no notice of the matter. He did not know William George Bunter.

"Shall I take it to the dormitory, sir?" asked Trotter, who was on the look-out for a tip.

He knew that Vernon-Smith was plentifully supplied with cash, and that a shilling to him was no more than a penny to anybody else in the Lower Fourth.

"No," said Vernon-Smith. "Take it upstairs—to the top box-room."

Trotter grinned intelligently.

He knew that this meant that there was something in the package that Vernon-Smith did not want his Form fellows to see, and he guessed that it was a feed, which the new boy meant to keep to himself. But that was no business of Trotter's.

"Certainly, sir," he said.

"And here's a shilling for you."

"Thanky, sir!"

Trotter pocketed the shilling and disappeared. Vernon-Smith glanced uneasily at Billy Bunter. But the fat junior was still staring out of the window, as if intensely interested in the pigeons in the quad.

The Bouncer quitted the room.

Then Billy Bunter looked round. His fat face was quite excited, and his round eyes glimmered under his spectacles.

"The rotter!" he muttered. "That's a feed, of course, and he wasn't going to ask anybody—not even me! He might have asked me—he knows I've got a good appetite, and that I don't get enough to eat in my study. Lommo see; we don't have tea in No. 1 till six, and it's turned five now. Plenty of time for a feed before tea."

And Billy Bunter followed cautiously on the track of Vernon-Smith.

Trotter had carried the package up to the box-room, and left it there when Vernon-Smith arrived, and Billy Bunter was not far behind him. Bunter peeped in at the doorway of the box-room, and caught sight of a large package, which looked like a box, wrapped up in layers of brown paper. Then the door closed, and the view was shut off. The fat junior stood blinking in the passage.

He heard a sound of cord being cut, and paper unrolled crumpling, as he applied his ear to the keyhole.

"The beast!" murmured Bunter. "It's a feed, of course." He hesitated.

If he entered the box-room, the chances were that the Bouncer would kick him out. How was he to obtain a share of the feed? He might call up aid from the Remove—but if the feed should be only a small one, there would not be enough for a crowd. The fat junior opened the door at last, and blinked in.

The Bouncer was unpacking the box.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 120.

A CHALLENGE! The Hylcombe Grammar School Rifle Corps hereby challenge the St. Jim's Junior Cadet Corps to a shooting match on Empire Day.—Signed, GORDON GAY, Company Commander.

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He did not hear Bunter for the moment. From the box he was taking a half dozen bottles, each carefully packed in straw.

Bunter imagined them to contain ginger-beer or some kind of currant wine, and paid them little attention; though he had certainly not seen currant wine in bottles of that shape before.

What caught his eye chiefly was a large cake, which Vernon-Smith had laid aside, and several paper bags of dried fruits. Bunter's mouth watered.

The feed was not large, but it was certainly an expensive one.

The fat junior closed the door, and Vernon-Smith heard the sound of it, and looked round with a start and a scowl.

The Owl of the Remove made a friendly gesture.

"It's all right, Smith—"

"You young cad! So you're spying."

"You see—"

"Get out!"

"I—I thought I might be able to help you unpack," said Bunter. "I don't bear any malice for that—that little joke of yours yesterday, you know. I—I'm fond of jokes. I think it was a good jape. He, he, he!"

"Outside!"

"I—I want to help you if possible. You might want some cooking done; I'm a regular dab at cooking," pleaded Billy Bunter.

"Will you get out?"

"Those muscatels look ripping!"

"The carrier has just brought it, sir. It's in the 'all,'" replied Trotter.

"I'll kick you out if you don't go!" he exclaimed angrily. Bunter blinked at him warily.

"Look here, do you want a lot of the Remove to raid you here?" he exclaimed desperately. "If—if you let me into the feed, I'll keep it dark."

"I can lock the door, I suppose."

"Look here—"

Vernon-Smith strode towards him. Billy Bunter dodged among the empty boxes and trunks with which the room was lumbered.

"I—I say, Smith, don't be a cad, you know. I—I say, I'm awfully hungry. I—"

"Take that!"

"Yaroo!"

"Get out!"

"Yowp!"

Bunter dodged desperately, and trampled on the row of bottles. They rolled over among his feet, and Bunter blinked at them as he sat down.

"Champagne!" he gasped.

"Get out!" roared Smith furiously.

He kicked savagely at the fat junior. Bunter roared and rolled and scrambled, and squirmed out of the doorway.

Vernon-Smith gave him a last kick that started him down the stairs, and then slammed the box-room door, and turned the key.

Bunter rolled down five or six of the narrow steps before he saved himself by clutching at the banisters.

When he righted himself at last, he sat on the stairs, and gasped for breath.

"Groo-ooo-oo-h! I'll make the beast sit up for that! Yow! Ow!"

And when the fat junior's breath returned a little, he rose, and staggered down the rest of the stairs. He heard a tell-tale "pop" in the box-room as he went. Vernon-Smith had opened one of the champagne bottles.

The Owl of the Remove ran out into the Close.

Harry Wharton & Co. were going down to the cricket, looking very fit and clean in their white flannels, with their bats under their arms.

"I say, you fellows!" exclaimed Bunter, dashing after them.

The chums of the Remove walked on, apparently not hearing him. The Owl of the Remove increased his pace, his fat little legs going like clockwork.

"I—I say, you fellows! I—"

Bob Cherry's arm.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that you, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry shook him off.

"Good-bye!" he said blandly.

"Oh, really, you fellows! Look here, Vernon-Smith—"

"Oh, never mind the verdant Smith-bird now," said Nugent.

"We're going to play cricket. We've got the match with St. Jim's coming on."

"Well, if you like to let the chap get drunk—"

Wharton stopped dead.

"What's that?" he exclaimed sharply.

"I—I thought I ought to tell you," said Bunter. "The beast kicked me out of the box-room, because—because I remonstrated with him, and pointed out the error of his ways."

"Don't lie, Billy. Have you anything to say or not?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Buzz off, then!"

"Oh, really, you know, he kicked me out, and—and he was drinking champagne when I left him—honour bright, you know."

Harry Wharton grasped the fat junior by the shoulder, with a grip that was unconsciously so hard that Bunter squeaked.

"Now, then, Bunter, is that the truth?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Is it the truth?" roared Harry.

"Ow! Yes! I'm sincerely sorry that you should doubt my word. Yow!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Wharton abruptly.

And the cricketers followed without a word.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Champagne Is Taken Externally.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. reached the door of the upper box-room. The room was somewhat isolated, and was therefore frequently used for secret feeds, and for meetings which the juniors wanted to keep "dark," in discussing the politics of the Lower School.

Wharton turned the handle of the door, but it was fast. He knocked.

There was a sound within of gurgling, as of liquor pouring into a glass. That was enough to confirm Billy Bunter's information.

There was no reply to the knock, and Wharton knocked again.

"Open this door!" he called out.

"Go and hang yourself," came the reply, in Vernon-Smith's voice.

Harry controlled his temper with difficulty.

"Smith," he called out, "open the door! If that's simply a feed you've got there, I give you my word that you sha'n't be interfered with, or the stuff touched."

"Oh, really, Wharton!" came Bunter's piping voice from the stairs behind.

"Shut up, Billy!"

"Oh, really—"

"Kick that porpoise downstairs," said Bob Cherry.

And a wild howl from Bunter showed that someone had literally obeyed the command. There was a bump further down.

Harry Wharton did not join in the general chuckle. He was too excited and exasperated to have anything like a sense of humour just then. Vernon-Smith had reached the limit before. He had well passed it now.

Wharton struck the door savagely with his clenched hand.

"You heard me, Smith?"

"Yes."

"What have you got to say?"

"Nothing."

"Will you open this door?"

"No."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Stand back, you fellows!" he said curtly.

The landing was small, and the juniors had to crowd back down the box-room stairs. Harry still had his bat in his hand, and he brought it into use now for a purpose it certainly was never designed for.

Holding it by the handle, he jammed the end fiercely upon the lock of the box-room door, with all the force of his powerful arms.

The lock creaked ominously.

Crash, crash, crash! Again and again he struck fiercely at the lock, and it was slowly but steadily yielding to the attack.

The blows rang along the passage below, and the juniors listened uneasily, lest the noise should bring a prefect upon the scene. It was not many minutes before Wingate came along the passage, and looked up the box-room stairs with a dark brow.

"What's all this confounded row here?" he demanded angrily.

Wharton glanced down at him.

"I'm keeping order in the Remove, Wingate," he said quietly. "It's my business, as Form captain, and it's more necessary now than ever."

Wingate understood.

"Someone's locked in that room?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"Vernon-Smith."

"Is he up to his tricks again?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Don't make more noise than you can help." And the captain of Greyfriars walked away.

The juniors breathed more freely. It was quite clear by this time that the education of Vernon-Smith would not be THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

interfered with by the school authorities, either masters or prefects.

Crash, crash, crash!

The lock of the box-room door groaned.

There was a sound of shuffling inside, and Wharton guessed that Vernon-Smith was dragging a heavy box to shove against the door inside.

He crashed the heavy end of the bat harder than ever upon the lock.

Crash—ash!

The lock was broken at last, and the door flew open.

Wharton strode into the room.

The cricketers crowded in after him.

Vernon-Smith ceased to drag the box, useless now, and stood with clenched fists, looking fiercely at the Removites.

"Hang you!" he muttered, between his teeth. "Hang you! What do you want?"

Harry Wharton glanced round the room. The champagne bottles, one of them opened, stood in full view. A glass was still half-full of the liquid. There was no more evidence needed than that.

Wharton cast a glance of bitter scorn at the Bounder.

"So it is true!" he said.

Vernon-Smith gasped with rage.

"Mind your own business!" he said thickly. "Get out! I shall do as I like!"

"You said!"

The Bounder snatched up one of the champagne bottles, and swung it in the air by the neck, his furious gaze fixed upon Wharton.

"If you come near me I'll brain you!" he muttered.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Put down that bottle!" he said.

"Hang you!"

"Put that bottle down!"

"Pah!"

Wharton strode forward.

"Look out!" exclaimed Nugent, for Vernon-Smith's look was desperate.

But Harry would not have stopped then if it had been a loaded firearm in the hand of the Bounder.

He strode straight at the new junior, his hands clenched.

"Take that, then!" shrieked Vernon-Smith.

And he brought the bottle down, straight for Wharton's head.

If that savage blow had reached its aim, Wharton would have been stunned, if not more seriously injured; but it did not.

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove was too much in every way for the sullen, weedy Bounder. His eye was on the young rascal. He sprang upon him in time, knocking aside the bottle as it descended, and it crashed into the grate and broke.

Then Wharton's grip was on the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith was hurled to the floor with a thud, the concussion upon the hard planks knocking all the breath out of his body.

He lay gasping, unable to rise, and it was fortunate for him, for Wharton stood with clenched fists, ready to knock him down again.

The Removites crowded round him with dark looks. His cowardly and savage intention was as bad as the action. For a terrible moment the juniors had pictured Wharton stretched upon the floor, stunned and bleeding.

"Rag him!" said Bob Cherry savagely.

"Put him through it; there's nothing else to be done," said Tom Brown. "He wants a lesson, if anybody ever did."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Give him his champagne," he said. "It's got to be got rid of, and he's not going to drink it. Drench him with it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!"

Vernon-Smith gasped, and would have scrambled up then; but five or six pairs of hands grasped him, and held him down.

Then Hazeldene picked up a bottle of champagne, skillfully knocked the neck off, and turned the streaming, bursting liquor upon the Bounder.

There was a wild gasp from Vernon-Smith as the champagne streamed and fizzed all over his face and head.

He gasped and struggled and yelled spasmodically, but the juniors did not let him go.

"Shove the rest over his togs," said Russell.

"What—ho!"

Bottle after bottle of the precious liquid was broken, and the Bounder drenched from head to heel.

He was soaked to the skin with champagne, and, feeling as uncomfortable as it was possible to feel, when the juniors had finished.

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Then he was released.

He staggered to his feet, breathless, gasping, speechless with rage. Harry Wharton looked into the box, but there was nothing more of a harmful nature. With the feed he had nothing to do.

But Bunter apparently considered that he had something to do with it. He was bolting cake as fast as he could. Bob Cherry seized the fat junior by the collar and jerked him out of the room.

Bunter gave a choking yell, and stuttered wildly. The jerk had lodged a lump of cake in his throat.

"Ugh!" gasped Bunter. "Groo-o-gerrrooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo! Jerrear? Leg-g-go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter collapsed on the landing, coughing and spluttering. The juniors crowded out of the box-room after him, Wharton last. Harry fixed a stern look on the Bouncer before he followed his comrades.

"I won't ask you if you're ashamed of yourself," he said contemptuously, "you're too thick a hide for that, I suppose. But I want to point out that the sooner you drop into decent ways the better it will be for you. What you've had so far is nothing to what you'll get if we find you drinking intoxicating liquor again."

The Bouncer did not reply, and Wharton went out and joined his comrades going downstairs. Billy Bunter was complaining loudly.

"I say, you fellows, he ought to be ragged, you know, for being such a beastly blackguard; and how can you rag a chap better than by collaring his grub?"

"Shut up, Billy!"

"But I'm hungry——"

"You don't want any of that chap's tommy," said Wharton angrily.

"What rot—of course I do!"

"Well, you won't have any, then. Get out, or——"

Bunter got out. Wharton was not in a mood to be trifled with just then.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Bath for the Bouncer.

VERNON-SMITH was left alone in the box-room. He was in an unenviable state, both in body and in mind.

His clothes were sticking to him, and his hair was matted with drying champagne, his collar was sticking to his neck, and he was aching all over.

He did not feel comfortable.

He waited, gritting his teeth, till after the juniors were gone, and then he went downstairs, in search of a bathroom.

He met Loder, the prefect, in the Remove passage. Loder stared at him in blank amazement. The soaked clothes, the dust that was clinging to them, the generally dishevelled flushed condition of the Bouncer, would have attracted attention anywhere.

"What on earth have you been doing?" demanded Loder. The Bouncer looked at him sullenly.

"Nothing."

"How did you get into that state?"

"I've been ragged, if you want to know."

Loder grinned.

"Then the sooner you get yourself clean the better," he said. "You'd be a disgrace to any respectable dust-heap in that state. Who's been ragging you?"

"The Remove," said Vernon-Smith sullenly.

"What for?"

"Because they're a set of cads, I suppose."

"Some more of your tricks, I suppose," said Loder. "By the way, I hear that you keep smokes in your study—awfully bad thing for juniors. Smoking is very bad—spoils the wind, and makes you generally unfit. As a prefect, it's my duty to confiscate all the smokes you have. I did so the other day, but I hear you have been seen smoking since then."

"I've none now," said Vernon-Smith, with a momentary feeling of satisfaction at being able to disappoint the bully of the Sixth.

"How's that?" said Loder. "I heard Temple saying that you were seen smoking at your study window only a short while ago."

"The rotters have destroyed all my smokes."

"Oh! Well, that was silly—I-I mean serve you right—but I expect you have a few left, hidden away somewhere—eh?"

"No."

"If you like to hand them over," said Loder persuasively, "I'll say no more about the matter."

The Bouncer sneered.

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A CHALLENGE!

The Rylands Grammar School Rifle Corps hereby challenge the St. Jim's Junior Cadet

Corps to a shooting match on Empire Day.—Signed, GORDON GAY, Company Commander.

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"Do you think I don't know that you smoked those you took from me the day I came here?" he exclaimed. "Pah! Don't talk to me about your duty as a prefect! You can't pull the wool over my eyes, I can tell you."

An extremely ugly look came over Loder's face. It was quite true that he smoked, and that was the way he had "destroyed" the cigars and cheroots he had taken from the Bouncer, but it was very injudicious of the Bouncer to tell him so plainly that he knew it.

"You are a very sharp youngster," said Loder, with a sneer. "You haven't learned to hold your tongue yet; but I dare say you will learn. I don't believe you. I am certain that you have plenty of smokes hidden somewhere. However, never mind that—unless I find you out. At present, I'm going to see that you're cleaned. You're going about in a disgusting state, and I'm going to see to it—as a prefect."

Vernon-Smith eyed him warily.

"You let me alone," he exclaimed. "I shall appeal to the Head."

"You won't have the chance," exclaimed Loder. "Come, old man, lend me a hand here, will you? This brat is kicking over the traces again."

Came, who had been listening to the dialogue with a grin, willingly came to the aid of his fellow-bully. The two seniors grasped the Bouncer, who began to struggle; but they whisked him into the bath-room he had been approaching in the twinkling of an eye. Loder closed the door.

"Fill the bath, Came, old man," he said, keeping a tight grip upon the Bouncer.

"What ho!" grinned Came. "Warm or cold?"

"Cold, my son."

Came turned on the cold water tap and jammed in the plug. The bath began to fill.

Vernon-Smith eyed the two bullies with great apprehension now. He was helpless, of course, in the hands of the two powerful seniors. Loder was a prefect, too, and had the authority for punishing him, if not for bullying him; but the Bouncer had made himself so generally obnoxious, that it was not likely that anyone would care if he were bullied. His appeal to the Head might come after he had been ragged; but it would not do him much good then.

The bath was soon two-thirds full of water, and Loder signed to Came to turn off the tap.

"Now, then, Smith, what about those smokes?"

"I haven't any."

The Bouncer was telling the truth; but it was certain that he would have made the denial in any case, so Loder could hardly be blamed for not believing him.

"Very well," said Loder, with a grin. "You're in a disgusting state, and we're going to bath you."

"Leggo!"

"In with him!"

Splash!

The Bouncer went into the bath, clothes and all. He gave a gasping yell as he soaked into the cold water, but the water flowing over his head cut it short.

He came up panting and choking.

"You—you cads! Let me go!" he spluttered.

"Where are the smokes?"

"I haven't any!" yelled the Bouncer. "And I wouldn't tell you if I had."

"Then it's my duty to wash you," said Loder.

"You heard!"

"Nice language to a prefect! Turn the tap on him."

"Ha, ha! All right!"

The Bouncer made a furious effort to scramble out of the bath. But Loder held him there, and he was ducked under again and again.

He was almost fainting with exhaustion and rage when the two bullies allowed him to scramble out of the bath, looking and feeling very much like a half-drowned rat.

Loder shook a warning finger at him.

"Don't let me find you in a dirty state again," he said.

And he strode out of the bath-room followed by Came. The Bouncer followed, dripping. He wanted to get to the dormitory to get a change of clothes and a towel; he had had enough of bathing.

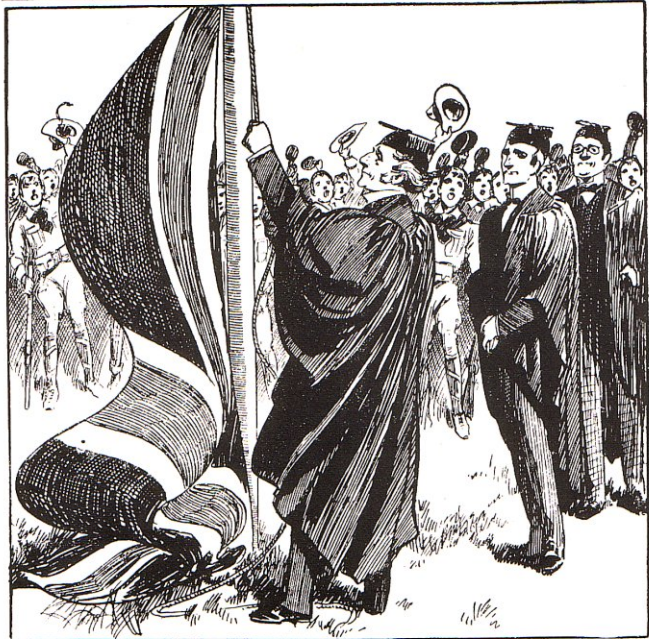
"Good heavens! What is the matter with that boy?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, catching sight of the Bouncer as he emerged from the bath-room.

Loder coloured a little.

"I found him in a disgusting state, sir, and thought it best to clean him," he said; "as he did not take off his clothes, he had his wash with them on. He was in a most outrageous state, covered with dust, and soaked with some kind of liquor."

"Ah! Very good!"

In the case of any other boy, Mr. Quelch would have investigated the matter very closely, and the two bullies would probably have been made to feel sorry for themselves. In



"Hip, hip, hurrah!" Led by the Cadet Corps, the Grammarians cheered lustily as Dr. Monk ran the halyard through his fingers, and hoisted the Union Jack to the top of the flagstaff.

(An incident in the specially-written, long, complete, school tale of Gordon Gray & Co., entitled "EMPIRE DAY AT RYLCOMBE," by Prosper Howard, in "THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY. Now on sale, price one halfpenny.)

the case of the Bounder it was different. He could expect no sympathy.

"You had better go and change your clothes," said the Remove-master.

And he walked away.

The Bounder went up to the dormitory, leaving a trail of water behind him as he trod. He realized that defiance of a Form-master, however great a triumph at the time, might have its disadvantages. He knew that Loder would never have dared to treat him as he had done, but for the fact that the Bounder's conduct had set all the masters against him. He could go to the Head and complain, if he liked, but what would be the use of that? He could not compel the Head to punish a prefect—Vernon Smith, little as he was given to reflection, realised that his power stopped far short of anything like that.

He crawled away to the dormitory, feeling dimly that perhaps it would be as well, if not to turn over a new leaf, to alter his conduct to the extent of securing greater comfort for himself at Greyfriars, by kicking over the traces less frequently. And when that thought entered into his mind, it showed that the real education of the Bounder had commenced.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"THE FIRST ELEVEN."

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Great News for Bunter.

THE cricketers came in to tea hungry and cheerful. The form of the Remove players was very good, and Wharton was satisfied with the progress of the team he was shortly to lead against the juniors of St. Jim's. He had forgotten all about the Bounder, in the keen interest of playing the grand old game.

He came into No. 1 Study, and dropped his bat into a corner with a thud that made Billy Bunter jump. Bunter was ensconced in the armchair, as usual, and he had fallen asleep while waiting for the cricketers to come in.

He started up and rubbed his eyes, and adjusted his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Why haven't you got the fire lighted?" demanded Nugent indignantly.

"Oh, really—"

"You slacker! If you don't play cricket, you might make yourself useful. Shove some wood into the grate, Inky, while I open the sardines."

"I'll cut down to the tuckshop and get in some grub, if

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you like, while you chips are making the fire," suggested Bunter.

"Cut away," said Harry.

"Hand over the tin."

"What tin?"

"The tin to pay for the things, of course."

"Oh, I haven't any tin to give you!"

"Oh, really Wharton—"

"Hasn't your postal order come, Billy?" demanded Nugent, with a serious look.

The fat junior shook his head.

"No, Nugent, I'm sincerely sorry it hasn't. There must have been some delay in the post. I'm thinking of writing to the Postmaster-General about it."

"Yes, I should—that would be bound to bring the postal order—I don't think! Get and fill the kettle."

"But about the grub—"

"There's the bread and cheese and cake, my son, and four eggs, and they're going to be enough."

"But—"

"Bunter's been in the study," said Harry. "I don't suppose there's anything left."

Nugent chuckled, as he produced a key from his pocket.

"I locked them up," he remarked. "It's all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Fill the kettle."

"I'm hungry."

"Well, you're at liberty to contribute anything you like to the feed," said Nugent. "If you're standing treat, I'll have a cold chicken. If you're not, shut up."

Bunter went sulkily to fill the kettle. Nugent unlocked the cupboard, and spread out the frugal repast upon the table. Inky and Harry between them succeeded in getting the fire going, and the kettle was jammed on to boil.

Bob Cherry looked into the study, with a grin upon his rugged, ruddy face.

"Got a big feed going?" he asked.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No," he said. "It's one of the lean years here. But you're welcome; we can make it go round, and will with pleasure."

"The pleasuredfulness will be terrific, my worthy chum," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur, looking up with a crimson face from the fire.

"That's all right," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Come in, Marky."

And the two juniors from Study No. 13 entered, each with a bundle under his arm.

"Good!" exclaimed Nugent.

Bob and Mark unfastened the parcels, and rolled out cakes and jam-tarts galore, with a packet of ham, and several sausage rolls.

"Corn in Egypt!" ejaculated Wharton.

"The cornfulness is terrific."

Billy Bunter eyed the supplies with glistening eyes.

"I say, you fellows, this is really decent of you," he remarked. "I suppose you knew that I was hungry."

"Ha, ha! I never even remembered that you existed, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry, with his usual candour. "Thought I'd come and have tea with you, Harry, and join forces—see?"

"Jolly good idea!"

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "But who have you been robbing?"

"Oh, I can't tell you, or Bunter will be off to get a lot like this," said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"If he knew that I never gave Mrs. Mimble a penny for this lot—"

"What!" ejaculated Bunter.

"He'd think she was dotty, and he'd buzz off like anything to get some of the good things while there was a chance."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Nugent. "You don't mean to say that Mrs. Mimble is giving grub away like that. What's the matter?"

"Nothing! Perhaps she wants to get rid of her stock," said Bob, with a wink to the chums that Bunter was too short-sighted to see. "Anyway, look at this lot. It didn't cost me a shilling—nor a penny, for that matter. If Bunter—"

"She must be off her rocker!" said Bunter breathlessly.

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"She looked much the same as usual."

"I've often suspected that Mrs. Mimble drinks," said Billy Bunter confidentially. "I say, you fellows, if she's intoxicated and giving things away, now's the time to get a really first-class feed."

"You young rotter!"

"Well, Cherry's got some, and he's set the example. Why

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don't you call Cherry a rotter?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"Shut up!"

"I sha'n't shut up. Let's all go down to the tuckshop and get a lot of grub while it's going," exclaimed Billy Bunter excitedly. "If—"

"Oh, you can go!" said Bob Cherry. "I've got enough here."

"Quite enough!" said Nugent.

"Well, that's all very well," said Billy Bunter, between bites at a jam-tart he had already annexed. "But the more the merrier, you know. I—I say, you fellows, if I run down to the tuckshop now, you—won't begin till I get back, will you?"

There was a roar of laughter at that.

"But I say, you know, you fellows—"

Wharton lifted the teapot upon the table.

"Ready," he said.

"But it's a chance we oughtn't to miss," said Bunter, starting on a second tart. "We could get in a supply of tinned things, you know—bloaters-paste and salmon and lobster, that would keep—as well as cake and tarts and jam-puffs for eating now."

"Hats!"

"I think you must be off your rocker, Wharton. Look here, will you lend me your cricket bag to take down to the tuckshop?"

"Yes, if you like," said Harry, laughing.

"I—I say, Cherry, it's not a j-joke, is it? You really got those things from Mrs. Mimble's shop?" exclaimed the Owl of the Remove.

"Of course I did, ass!"

"And you didn't pay for them?"

"Not a cent."

"Or owe Mrs. Mimble the money?"

"Not a farthing."

"Didn't she ask you to pay for them?"

"No."

"Wasn't it even mentioned between you?"

"Not a word about it."

"How—how did you work it?" gasped Bunter, almost overwhelmed by the good news, and his eyes dancing behind his spectacles at the thought of unlimited feeds.

"I just walked into the shop and selected what I wanted," said Bob.

"Just picked out the things—eh?"

"That's it."

"And carried them away?"

"Yes."

"And—and she never asked you to pay, or reckoned that you owed her for them?" exclaimed Bunter, with bated breath.

"Not a whisper of anything of the sort."

"She must be dotty!"

"She looked same as usual."

"My—my hat! I'm jolly well going down to the tuckshop!" gasped Bunter. "I'll take your bag, Wharton, and—a couple of those tarts to eat on the way. I feel that I need a snack. I shall have plenty to eat coming back. I—I say, you fellows, this is simply ripping!"

And the fat junior, with tarts in one hand, and Wharton's cricket bag in the other, rushed out of the study, and his heels pattering away down the stairs.

The chums of the Remove chuckled softly, and settled down to tea, much more at their ease without the fat junior.

Bob Cherry grinned in a reflective sort of way as he stirred his tea.

"Curious thing that Bunter shouldn't guess that Linley paid for these things," he remarked, looking round.

The juniors roared.

"What a curious idea for him to get into his head, that Mrs. Mimble is giving her stock-in-trade away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bob Cherry grinned, and started on the ham.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Takes His Choice.

BILLY BUNTER had never been known as an athlete. Even at the time when he had taken up physical culture as a hobby, his efforts had evoked more laughter than admiration. But anyone who had seen the fat junior at this moment, would have imagined that he could cut a very respectable figure on the cinder-path if he liked.

Bunter went down the stairs three at a time, with two narrow escapes of rolling to the bottom. He ran blindly for the door, and ran right into Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, who were standing there talking. Bunter was very short-sighted, he was in a great hurry, and

he did not even see the Fourth-Formers—till he was upon them. And then he felt them more than he saw them.

Billy Bunter was not a light weight, and he was going at top speed. The impact of the fat junior was what Hurree Singh would have described as terrific.

Temple rolled to the left, and Dabney rolled to the right. Fry was hurled clean out of the doorway, and he rolled down the steps outside.

Billy Bunter reeled for a moment, catching at his spectacles. He put them straight again, jumped down the steps, and ran.

Temple, Dabney & Co. sat up in a state of great astonishment.

"My hat!" gasped Temple. "What was that?"

"A blessed thunderbolt, I think," groaned Fry.

"Oh, rather!" gurgled Dabney.

"I—I'm winded!"

"So am I!"

"It was some blessed fag—"

"Bunter, I think."

"Where is he?"

"Gone."

Bunter was indeed gone, long before the Upper Fourth fellows could pick themselves up. He was sprinting across the Close at a splendid rate.

"Faith, and where are ye going?" asked Micky Desmond, stopping—rather imprudently—in Bunter's way. "Sure, ye—Ow! Tare and ounds! Yarrah!"

He rolled on the ground, and Bunter rolled over him.

"Ow! Yah! Faith, ye blithering spalpeen—"

"You dummy!" gasped Bunter.

"Ye frabjous ass—"

"Idiot!"

Bunter staggered to his feet.

Without stopping for any further exchange of compliments, he continued on his wild career, leaving Micky Desmond dazed and astounded.

Snoop was standing in the doorway of the tuckshop, but Bunter did not see him. He ran into Snoop with a terrific shock, and Snoop sat down on the floor.

"You ass!" roared Bunter. "You're about the seventh idiot that's got in my way."

"Ow!"

"Yah!"

"You ass, what do you mean by bolting into a chap like that?" howled Snoop.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Snoop scrambled up, with a somewhat disagreeable expression on his face. Bunter was the only fellow in the Remove whom Snoop wasn't afraid of; and naturally he didn't intend to let the only fellow he wasn't afraid of roll him over with impunity. He gave the fat junior a smart tap on the nose.

"Oh!" roared Bunter.

"You fat dummy, I'm going to lick you—"

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter, backing away towards the counter. "I'll stand you a feed if you like, Snoopey. I'm going to have a big one."

Snoop's manner changed at once. Bunter's air indicated that he had obtained funds from somewhere, and Snoop had no doubt that Harry Wharton had had a remittance from home, and that Bunter was helping him spend it.

"Oh, all right, Bunt!" he said, in quite a friendly manner. "Of course, I know it was an accident."

"Of course," said Bunter. "You can help me to select the things, if you like. I'll have a half-dozen saveloys, Mrs. Mimble."

Mrs. Mimble looked suspiciously at the fat junior for a moment. But Bunter's excitement gave her the same impression that it had given Snoop.

"Very well, Master Bunter," said the good dame, with unwonted civility.

"And a couple of pounds of cold ham and beef," said Bunter. "Pack the things into the cricket bag, will you?"

"Certainly!"

Mrs. Mimble did so. She did not intend to let that bag of good things go out of her hands till they were paid for.

"And a dozen tins of salmon."

"Oh, Master Bunter!"

"And a dozen of lobster."

"Dear me!"

"And a dozen of bloater-paste."

Mrs. Mimble obeyed dazedly.

Billy Bunter must certainly have had a remittance of unusual dimensions if he were able to pay for things on such a scale. The fat junior knew that he could not get credit at the school shop. Mrs. Mimble had made that clear to him, in painfully plain English, on more than one occasion. Mrs. Mimble therefore felt that it was impossible that Bunter was going to propose that the payment for this enormous order should be left over. The only thing was, that Bunter had had a remittance, or borrowed of someone who had had one; and the extent of his orders, after making Mrs. Mimble gasp, had the effect of making her smile genially. In fact,

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she cast a quite affectionate look at Billy Bunter as he proceeded to select more and more things in the most lavish manner.

"I—I'll have six dozen tarts, twopenny ones," said Billy. "Mersey me, Master Bunter, I haven't so many left at this time of day!"

"Oh, put in all you have, then, and a couple of dozen buns, and the same number of scones, and a whole cake!" said Bunter.

"V-v-very well," murmured Mrs. Mimble.

"Three dozen eggs—the best."

"Yes."

"Six pounds of biscuits."

"Yo-e-es."

"Three dozen oranges, three dozen apples, and four pounds of nuts."

"Dear me! Yes."

Snoop was simply gasping.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated. "Have you come into a fortune, Bunter?"

The fat junior chuckled.

"A dozen jars of pineapple, Mrs. Mimble."

"Yes, Master Bunter."

"Three jars of jam."

"Who is going to pay for all that?" demanded Snoop, in blank astonishment. "Why, the lot you've ordered will cost pounds and pounds."

"That's all right, Snoopey."

"But I say—"

"Got them all packed up, Mrs. Mimble?"

"In a moment, dear Master Bunter."

"May as well put in these meringues, too, and some dough nuts," said Bunter, blinking round the shop, "and a big bunch of bananas."

"My only hat!" said Snoop.

"You'll lend me a hand to carry the bag, Snoopey?"

"With pleasure—if all the blessed things will go in it!"

"They'll just go in," said Mrs. Mimble. "There! Now wait a minute or two while I make out the bill, Master Bunter."

Bunter did not even hear her. He reached across the counter for the crammed bag.

"Push it along, Mrs. Mimble, please!"

"Yes, when you have settled up, Master Bunter."

The fat junior blinked at her.

"Settled up?"

"Certainly!" said Mrs. Mimble, and her genial manner melted away at once, and a tone of great asperity came into her voice. "You surely do not imagine that I am going to begin giving you credit, and on such a scale?"

"You're j-j-joking, Mrs. Mimble."

"Master Bunter—"

"But—but you're giving the things away, you know."

"What?"

"Ain't you giving the things away?" demanded Bunter feebly, as he began to realise that there was a mistake somewhere.

Mrs. Mimble threw down her pencil with a sniff, or rather a snort.

"Then you are not going to pay for these things?"

"Of course not," said Bunter indignantly. "You're giving your stock away; you know you are, and you ought to let me have some. I don't believe in favouritism."

"He must be wandering!" gasped Mrs. Mimble.

"Ain't you giving them away?"

"You silly, foolish boy, of course not."

"But—but—but—"

"You have given me all this trouble for nothing, then?" said Mrs. Mimble angrily, and she began to unpack the bag.

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"I—I say, Mrs. Mimble, Bob Cherry told me that—that you were giving your stock away, and that you—you had given him a lot of things," he said feebly.

"Nonsense!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop. "It's a jape of Cherry's. He's taken you in, and serve you jolly well right, pig!"

Bunter made no reply. He almost crawled from the shop.

"Don't you want to take the bag?" called out Mrs. Mimble.

"Oh, you can send it to Wharton," said Bunter dispiritedly.

And he went out, leaving Mrs. Mimble frowning portentously, and Snoop cackling like a hyena.

Billy Bunter returned to No. 1 Study at a much slower pace than that at which he had left it. He entered the study, and found the Famous Four and Mark Linley enjoying their tea, which was nearly at an end now. The supply of provisions, plentiful as it was, had diminished wonderfully under the attacks of five hungry juniors.

Billy Bunter blinked at them.

"Well," said Nugent, "where's the grub?"
 "Did you clear out Mrs. Mimble's shop?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Was the clearfulness terrific?"

"Mrs. Mimble isn't giving anything away," said Bunter, in a tone of deep reproach. "What did you say she gave you that grub for, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry looked astonished.

"I didn't say so!" he exclaimed.

"Why, you said—"

"I said I never paid for it."

"Yes, and that you didn't owe for it, either."

"Well, that was quite true."

"And that Mr. Mimble never said anything about your paying for it, when you took it," said Bunter.

"Quite true, too. You see, Linley paid for it."

"What!"

"It's Linley's treat," said Bob innocently. "He's won a cash prize in a 'Pluck' competition, and he's stood treat." Bunter stood speechless.

"Of course Mrs. Mimble never asked me to pay, or considered that I owed her anything, when Linley had settled for the things," said Bob cheerfully. "She's a business woman. She wouldn't expect to be paid twice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors simply roared.

Billy Bunter said no more. He squeezed room for himself at the table, and started on what was left. And while the juniors yelled with laughter, Billy Bunter's jaws were busy; and he did not make so bad a tea after all. But he ate only twice as much as was good for him, and naturally he wore an expression for the rest of the evening of one who was very much injured.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Imposition.

"SMITH!"

Vernon-Smith stopped. He was passing the door of Mr. Quelch's study when the Form-master called to him. Two or three juniors who were in the passage stopped, too, very much interested in what was to pass between the Bounder and his Form-master.

"Yes, sir," said Vernon-Smith sulkily.

"Have you done your lines?"

Vernon-Smith started. As a matter of fact, he had wholly forgotten the circumstance that lines had been imposed.

"Well, Smith?" said Mr. Quelch, as the junior did not reply.

"No, sir," said Vernon-Smith at last.

"Indeed! And why not?"

"I forgot, sir."

The juniors in the passage almost held their breath. There was not a fellow in the Remove who would have dreamed of saying that to Mr. Quelch; at all events, without ample regrets for the omission.

The Remove-master's brows darkened.

"You forgot them, Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Your imposition is doubled. I shall expect it before bedtime."

The Bounder did not reply, but a very sullen look came over his face.

Mr. Quelch closed his study door. The Bounder went slowly on his way. Harry Wharton tapped him on the shoulder, and Vernon-Smith looked round sulkily.

"You are not intending to do those lines!" said Wharton.

"No."

"You had better."

"No."

"I shall not."

"You had better," repeated Wharton. "Have you forgotten what you were told only last evening?" His grasp tightened upon the Bounder's shoulder as Vernon-Smith tried to move away. "Listen to me, please!"

"Let me go!"

"Listen, first. We've stopped some of your blackguardly tricks; we'll stop them again, if you're fool enough to start them. Mind, disrespect to a Form-master is worse than your smoking and your other idiocies. You've got to get those lines done, and take them to Mr. Quelch."

"I won't, though!"

"Then the Remove will see to it."

"Hang you!" broke out Vernon-Smith savagely. "Why can't you mind your own business? What does it matter to you whether I do the lines or not?"

"Nothing at all, as far as that goes."

"Then let me alone."

"It's a question of treating our Form-master with decency."

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"I suppose Mr. Quelch can look after himself without you to look after him," said the Bounder, with a sneer.

"I shan't argue that out with you."

"Well, I won't do the lines!" said Vernon-Smith, as Harry released him, and he walked away with a sneer on his lips.

Harry looked after him for a moment, and then went into the common-room. He called to his chums, and a crowd of other fellows gathered round, attracted by the scent of trouble in the air, as it were.

"What's up?" asked Tom Brown.

"Smith refuses to do the lines Quelch set him."

"Here, hang it, call him by his double-barreled name!" interposed Smith, minor, of the Remove indignantly, and there was a grin.

"Well, Vernon-Smith, then," said Wharton, smiling a little. "Vernon-Smith refuses to do his impot. You know what that means. He'll appeal to the Head when Quelch goes for him, and then he'll get off scot-free, after cheeking our Form-master before us all. Quelch can't do anything. It's the Head who should act and doesn't. Can't or won't, whichever it is. Are we going to see our Form-master checked in public by that cad?"

"Not much!"

"The not-muchfulness is terrific."

"We agreed that he was to be brought to his senses," said Mark Linley. "That is a more important matter than any others we've settled for him!"

"That's so!"

"Marky's right!" said Bob Cherry. "Only we shall have to be careful to keep this dark from Mr. Quelch. We don't want to do anything that looks like sucking up to a master. Good-little-Georgie in the story-book was a beast."

"Quite so; for goodness' sake don't let's do anything like the good little hero of a good little story-book!" exclaimed Tom Brown, in alarm.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Goodness knows I don't want to be a prig!" he said. "But the cad goes too far. He cheeks Quelch before the lot of us, and Quelch can't do anything, because the Head doesn't back him up. Only a worm would take advantage like that; but Vernon-Smith is an utter worm!"

"The wormfulness of the esteemed rotter is great!"

"He's got to have his lesson!" said Nugent decidedly.

"He's got to write the lines, and take 'em to Mr. Quelch."

"You're all agreed on that?"

"Yes, all," said a score of voices.

"Good! Then we may as well get it over!"

Vernon-Smith had gone to his study, and a crowd of Removites followed him there. Skinner was at work in the study, and the Bounder was sitting moodily in the armchair. He was not smoking now, that solace was gone.

Skinner jumped up as the Removites crowded in.

"What's the row?" he demanded. "I haven't asked you chaps to tea, and if you've come to help me with my prep., there are too many of you!"

"We haven't, Skinny! We've come to help Smithy do his lines!"

Vernon-Smith scowled.

"I'm not going to do them," he said.

"Your mistake, kid," said Bob Cherry blandly, "you are. Shut the door, kids!"

The door was closed.

Vernon-Smith made a rapid step towards it, but a crowd of juniors in the way barred his path. He was pushed back to the table.

"Give him some foolscap, Skinner, old man!"

"Here you are."

"Sit down, Vernon-Smith!"

"I won't!"

"Take your pen."

"I won't!"

"No time for argument," said Bob Cherry; and his powerful grasp crushed the Bounder into a chair. "Now give him a pen."

And the pen was placed in the Bounder's hand.

He hurled it savagely to the floor.

"I won't write a line!" he said.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

No Complaints.

HARRY WHARTON came forward as the Bounder threw the pen to the floor. He picked it up quietly, but with his lips compressed. The Bounder looked uneasy for a moment as he caught the expression upon Harry's face.

"Better write, Smith," said Harry coldly.

"I will not!"

"You've got to take that impot. to Mr. Quelch at bedtime. Mind, we're in earnest. If you don't write out a hundred lines, we'll rag you till you do."

"You can do as you like; I won't write!"

"For the last time."

"Hang you!"

"That's enough, then. You're going to be licked, until you agree to write," said Harry quietly. "So that you sha'n't have any unfair play to complain of, you're welcome to fight instead of being licked if you like. Will you fight me?"

"No, I won't!"

"Or Nugent—he's not so big as you are?"

"No, I tell you!"

"Very well. You've got the cricket-stump, Bob?"

"What-ho!"

"Shove him across the table!"

The Bounder made a wild leap for the door. But many hands were upon him. Many hands, it is said, make light work; they certainly made short work of the weedy Bounder. He was whirled to the table, facing it, and forced into a bending position, his nose very nearly in the inkpot.

The grasp of a dozen strong hands held him there.

"Now lay on with the stump," said Harry Wharton. "When the cad's tired of cricket practice, perhaps he'll write the impot."

"Let me go!"

"Lay it on!"

Bob Cherry twirled the stump in the air, and brought it down upon the person of Vernon-Smith. The blow was not a hard one, but it elicited a fendish yell from the Bounder. "Lay it on—till he caves in!"

"Right you are!"

And the punishment, facetiously known among the juniors as cricket practice, continued, the lashes growing harder each time.

Vernon-Smith struggled and howled.

The noise rang along the Remove passage, and, as was to be expected, attracted the notice of a prefect at last. Courtney came along the passage; but when he observed that the din came from Study No. 9 he judiciously turned and walked away again. He knew that the Remove had taken the education of the Bounder in hand, and he was not in the least disposed to interfere with them.

The cricket-stump made rapid play.

The Bounder yelled and struggled, but he soon learned that that made no difference, and his struggles ceased at last.

"Leave off!" he gasped. "You hounds! Leave off!"

"Are you going to write the impot?"

"Ye-es!"

"Let him go, you chaps!"

The Bounder was released.

Aching all over from his castigation, and with a face full of evil spite, he sank into his chair.

Wharton placed the pen in his hand.

"It's a hundred lines you have to do," he remarked.

The Bounder nodded sullenly.

He began to write. He had had enough of the "cricket practice," and he knew that he would get more unless he obeyed orders.

His pen moved slowly over the paper.

The Removites stood round the table, watching him as he worked. His pen moved on slowly but steadily. As he had the work to do, he wanted to get it over as quickly as possible. It was a long task, and many of the juniors walked away before it was half over. But Harry Wharton & Co. remained to the end.

The Bounder was very weary before the last line was written. But it was written at last, and then he threw down the pen.

"There it is!" he said savagely.

"Very good!" said Wharton. "Now you'll take it to Mr. Quelch."

A refusal was on the Bounder's lips, but he did not dare to utter it. He blotted the last page, and gathered up the impot.

"We'll see you deliver it," said Harry.

"Hang you!"

"Enough of that. As we've started on the job, we'll teach you better manners while your education's going on. Better language in future. Mind, the next time you use an expression of that sort you'll get it straight from the shoulder."

Vernon-Smith was on the point of replying "Hang you!" once more; but the look in Harry Wharton's eye restrained him.

He sullenly left the study with the imposition in his hand. The Famous Four followed him to the door of Mr. Quelch's room.

Vernon-Smith tapped and entered.

The Remove-master was at his table, and he laid down his pen as the Bounder of Greyfriars came in.

"Ah, it is you, Smith!" he said. "Have you done the lines?"

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NEXT WEEK: "THE FIRST ELEVEN."

"Yes, sir," said the Bounder sullenly.

He was aware that four juniors were waiting just outside the door, which was ajar, and that they could hear every word he uttered.

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch.

His face did not betray what he thought; that he was surprised at the submission shown by the Bounder in writing out the lines.

He took the imposition, and frowned a little as he glanced at it.

"This is very badly and hastily written," he said. "Never mind, you may go."

"I wouldn't have written it, but—"

"What?"

"I've been assaulted by the fellows in the Lower Fourth," said Vernon-Smith savagely. "They hold me down over a table and thrashed me with a stump."

Outside the study the juniors stared at one another.

"The cad!" breathed Bob Cherry. "Sneaking to Quelch!"

"The worm!"

"The beast!"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips, but he did not speak. If any trouble came of his process of "educating" the Bounder, he was willing to face it.

Mr. Quelch elevated his eyebrows, and looked at the Bounder with a peculiar expression.

"Indeed, Smith?"

"They ought to be punished, sir!"

"Why did they thrash you?"

"Because I wasn't going to write out the impot," said Vernon-Smith recklessly. "I shouldn't have done it."

"Indeed! Then they seem to have a better sense of discipline than you have, Smith, and I shall certainly not have them punished."

"They ought to be flogged."

"Kindly leave my study."

"Are you going to punish those cads?" demanded Vernon-Smith, his voice trembling with passion.

"That is not the tone to take with me, Smith. The boys will not be punished. You will be punished, however, if you do not curb your insolence. Leave my study!"

"Then I'll appeal to the Head," said Vernon-Smith between his teeth. "I'll show you whether I'm to be treated like this. My father could buy up this school, if he chose, and not miss the money."

"Leave my study!"

"Then I'll go to the Head."

Mr. Quelch rose from his seat, and Vernon-Smith dodged out of the study just in time.

The Remove-master's brow was black as he resumed his seat. Mr. Quelch was not often at a loss; but in view of the Head's peculiar attitude in the matter, he was at a loss how to deal with the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith hurried out of the study fairly into the arms of the Famous Four. They grasped him and dragged him away.

"Leave me alone!" panted Vernon-Smith.

"You're not going to the Head," said Wharton quietly.

"I shall do as I choose."

"Haven't you learned yet that you can't? Come up to the study."

"Pah!"

"Yank him along!"

"Hold on; I—I'll go!" stammered Vernon-Smith.

He was learning his lesson quickly now.

With the four sturdy juniors round him, he tramped upstairs. He was taken into No. 1 Study, and told to sit down.

"I'm not going to stop here!" he exclaimed.

"You're going to stop here while we do our prep," said Harry.

"But—but—"

"We're not going to lose sight of you till bedtime."

"I won't—"

"You will!"

And Vernon-Smith, after a glance at Harry's set face, decided that he would.

He sat sullenly in the chair, and hardly moved while the chums of the Lower Fourth did their evening preparation; and when it was over he was allowed to leave the study, but in their company.

Not for a moment did Vernon-Smith escape the eyes of one or another of them till bedtime came for the Remove.

Then he was marched upstairs in the crowd of juniors, and went with them into the Remove dormitory.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Is Sorry.

VERNON-SMITH suddenly undressed himself with the rest of the Form. Loder, the prefect, saw the Lower Fourth to the dormitory, and retired with a remark to the effect that if they weren't all in bed when he returned in ten minutes, they would hear from him and wish they hadn't.

When the prefect was gone, Harry Wharton turned to Vernon-Smith.

"I've a word to say to you before we go to bed," he exclaimed. "You have checked Mr. Quelch again, when you took him the impot., and you've threatened to go bothering the Head."

"That's my business," growled the Bounder.

"Never mind that; I've said I won't argue about that with you. This is what I've got to say. You're not to go to the Head with any complaint, either to-day or any other day. If you do, we'll rag you till you wish you'd never been born."

"Yes, rather!" came a chorus.

"The rathfulness is terrific."

"You're not going to worry the Head; we're not going to let you," said Wharton. "You seem to be able to get out of floggings, but you can't get out of a Form licking, and that's what you'll get if you go to the Head."

"I—I don't want to go, as far as—as that goes," said Vernon-Smith, hesitating a little. "I—I was wild when I spoke to Quelch, that's all."

"Very good; mind you don't go, and all's well. The other matter I've got to mention is this—you checked Mr. Quelch when you took in your lines. You've got to apologise to him to-morrow morning before all the Form in the Form-room."

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearflessness is great."

The Bounder's face was convulsed with rage.

"I won't! I won't!" he shrieked.

"You will!"

"Who's to make me, hang you?"

"The Remove," said Harry. "You'll promise to-night to do it, and we'll rag you until you promise. If you break your word in the morning, we'll make you run the gauntlet of the whole Form. I suppose you know what that means. You'd better think it over, and come to your senses. You've got the Remove up against you, and we mean business."

"Business, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "Think it over, Smithy."

"I shan't apologise to Mr. Quelch."

"We will see."

The juniors turned in, with the exception of Vernon-Smith. He did not continue undressing, but laced up his boots again.

Loder came into the dormitory. He stared at the dressed Bounder with an angry scowl.

"Why aren't you in bed?" he exclaimed sharply. "Are you trying to waste my time, you young scoundrel?"

"I'm not going to bed."

"What?"

"These cads are going to rag me after lights out," exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "I'm not going to stay in this dormitory."

"Get into bed!"

"They're going to rag me."

"That's your look-out. My business is to see that you go to bed," said the prefect. "Get into bed at once!"

And by way of emphasising his orders, he cuffed the Bounder right and left. Vernon-Smith yelled, and began to drag off his clothes.

"There!" exclaimed the prefect breathlessly. "Now jump in."

The time for kicking the shins of a prefect had passed with Vernon-Smith. He had realised by this time that the prefects ruled by the strong hand as much as by the rules of the school, and that he had no chance against a big fellow of seventeen.

He dragged off his clothes and tumbled into bed.

"Mind, if you get out of that bed again, I'll warn you," said Loder. "I'll bring a cue with me if I have to see you again."

And he extinguished the lights and went out.

There was silence in the Remove dormitory.

It lasted for five minutes, good time for the prefect to get back to his own quarters, whence he was not likely to emerge again to interfere with the Lower Fourth, if he could help it.

Then several of the Removites sat up in bed.

"Vernon-Smith!" called out Harry Wharton.

There was no reply.

"Smith!"

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Still silence.

The obstinate Bounder did not open his lips.

Wharton sprang out of bed, and lighted a bicycle lantern. Several more juniors rose, and candle-ends were lighted, shedding a dim illumination through the long, lofty dormitory.

A dozen juniors gathered round the Bounder's bed. Bob Cherry had a cricket-stump in his hand.

"Get up!" said Wharton.

The Bounder sat up in bed.

"Get out of bed, Smith!"

The Bounder got out.

The juniors looked a little surprised. This was wonderfully docile for the Bounder.

But Vernon-Smith was coming to his senses at last. What was the use of resisting the order to get out of bed, when he knew that he would be dragged out by force if he refused?

"Now, then," said Harry Wharton, "you understand what you've got to do. You've got to apologise to Mr. Quelch in the Form-room, before all of us, to-morrow morning at first lesson."

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"Will you do it?"

"No."

The Removites looked grimly at the recalcitrant Bounder.

"I ask you for your own good," said Harry Wharton. "It doesn't matter to me whether you promise now, or whether we rag you till you agree."

"I won't do it," said the Bounder thickly; "I tell you I won't! I'll do as I like. My father could buy up this school, lock, stock, and barrel."

Wharton smiled contemptuously.

"Never mind what your father could buy up," he remarked. "We're not concerned just now with Mr. Samuel Smith's millions."

"Not much!" said Bob Cherry. "For goodness' sake forget the money for a minute or two, Smithy!"

"The moneyfulness of the honourable Smith is terrific."

"The question is, will you apologise to Mr. Quelch in the morning, or will you be ragged now?" said Wharton.

"Well, I won't!"

"Form up, you chaps!" said Harry concisely. "Double row, and each of you take a pillow, or a belt, or something."

"Right you are!"

The Bounder watched the Removites with deep uneasiness.

"What are you going to do?" he broke out at last.

Wharton glanced at him.

"You're going to run the gauntlet," he said. "Each chap will take a swipe at you as you pass. When you get to the end you'll run again, unless you make the promise I've asked of you."

"Hang you, I won't!"

"Very well; you'll take the consequences."

The double row of Removites was soon formed. Every fellow had a stuffed stocking, or a cricket-belt, or a pillow in his hands, and the looks of the Remove showed that they meant to use the weapons.

The Bounder stood with set lips and white face.

"Ready!" called out Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton waved his hand.

"Smith, start!"

"I won't!"

"Collar him!"

Hands grasped the struggling Bounder on all sides, and he was pushed to the end of the row, and whirled into it.

Then the blows began to fall.

Fellows craned over to get a swipe at the Bounder, and the blows were heavy too. The Bounder staggered forward.

A rain of blows fell upon him.

"Run, you beggar, run!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The Bounder realised that it was better to run than to stand still, under a shower of blows.

He ran!

Faster and faster he ran, and faster and faster fell the blows from both sides as he ran, and he staggered out at the end of the double row of grinning juniors, bruised, breathless, almost exhausted.

He sank upon the floor, a gasping heap.

He was left for a few minutes to recover his breath. Then Harry Wharton lent him a hand to rise, and he sank upon a bed.

Wharton's face was relentless.

"Are you going to apologise to Mr. Quelch in the morning," he said grimly, "or are you going through that again?"

"I—I—I apologise."

It was the total surrender of the Bounder. He crawled back to bed, aching in every limb.

"I say, you fellows, better make him run again," said Billy

Bunter. "I didn't get a fair swipe at him at all, you know."

Bob Cherry was in the way."

"Shut up, Bunter."

"But I say—"

"Shut up, and go to bed."

The Remove turned in, with many a chuckle over the exciting episode of running the gauntlet. It had been a rough punishment for the Bounder, but there was little doubt that it had done him good.

It was a long time before Vernon-Smith slept. The whole Remove was buried in slumber while the Bounder lay awake, his eyes burning into the darkness.

He was too exhausted and aching to feel hatred and malice towards his "educators." He was only conscious of the fact that the course he had marked out for himself was impossible to follow, and that he would have to toe the line, or his life would be a burden to him in the Greyfriars Remove. And having come to that wholesome conclusion, he fell asleep.

When the rising-bell went in the morning many curious glances were turned upon the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Some of the fellows grinned as he turned promptly out of bed before the bell had ceased to ring.

But Harry Wharton did not even glance at him. He would not appear to triumph over a defeated enemy in the remotest degree.

Vernon-Smith was down as early as the others, and he looked very quiet and subdued as he took his place at the breakfast-table.

But it was when the Remove went into the class-room that the juniors watched him with the keenest interest.

Would he keep his word? There was little doubt of it.

Harry Wharton & Co. had shown that they were in deadly earnest, and Vernon-Smith had learned, too, that complaints to the "powers that be" could not save him from punishment at the hands of his Form-fellows.

It was a bitter pill for him to swallow, but he swallowed it.

As Mr. Quelch took his place at his desk every eye was turned upon the Bounder, and the new junior rose to his feet, his face scarlet.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him.

The First Chapters of a New Serial.



STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, having just returned from a trip to Australia, is staying at an hotel in Deal, when a man comes to him, grievously wounded, with a story of a girl being in danger of her life. The stranger collapses into unconsciousness before he has time to go into details, and the young detective is left with no clue to the mystery except the torn scrap of a note written on the back of an envelope. He becomes interested in the case, however, and proceeds to investigate it. To his friend, Professor MacAndrew's anxiety, he leaves the hotel one day and does not return. Professor MacAndrew's search for him leads to the house of a certain Mr. Thorndyke, but he is rudely received by Mr. Thorndyke's valet and shown the door. He stands secretly, however, and is keeping a watch on Finlay, the valet, in the grounds, when the most appalling crime comes from the house, causing Finlay to rush in. Picking up an old spade, MacAndrew prepares to follow.

A Mysterious Struggle.

Following the manservant, who did not suspect his presence, Professor MacAndrew also ran into the house, and mounted the stairs towards the upper room, at the window of which he had noticed Finlay staring.

On the first landing he ran against the housekeeper, who was wringing her hands, and standing there, wild-eyed with terror.

"What has happened?" asked MacAndrew. "I don't know, sir," cried the woman. "Something terrible. It sounded to me as though it was the master crying out!"

"Don't say I'm in the house," pursued MacAndrew. "The devil's work is going on here, and I mean to find out what it is!"

He ascended the second flight of stairs. At the end of a short passage was a half-open door, and from beyond that door came confused sounds—cries, savage curses, and the shuffling of feet, such as would be made by men engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle.

Hurrying along the passage the professor entered a room that was in a state of semi-darkness. It was empty. Another

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"If you please, sir—" faltered Vernon-Smith.

"Well?"

"I—I wish to speak to—to—"

"You may go on."

"I—I want to apologise to you, sir, for—for my—my impertinence yesterday evening, sir," stammered the Bounder. Mr. Quelch was not easily surprised, but he almost jumped as he listened to the unexpected apology of the Bounder.

"Indeed, Smith," he exclaimed at last, "that is very right and proper of you, and I am glad—very glad—that you have shown this much of proper feeling."

"I—I am sorry, sir."

"That is enough, Smith. Your apology is accepted, and I hope that this new spirit you have shown will continue," said Mr. Quelch genially.

And the morning's lessons commenced, and it was noticeable that the Bounder was much more attentive than ever before, and that there was not the faintest trace or suspicion of impertinence in his manner to the Form-master.

The Remove grinned as they poured out of the class-room after lessons. Wharton did not join in the general grin, however; he tapped the Bounder on the arm.

"You've done the decent thing, Vernon-Smith," he said, with an effort to infuse some cordiality into his voice. "Keep it up, and you'll find plenty of friends here."

The Bounder did not reply, but his face was a little less sullen than usual as he turned away.

Whether Mr. Quelch ever suspected the pressure that had been brought to bear upon the Bounder the juniors did not know; at all events, his position was much easier since Harry Wharton & Co. had undertaken the education of Vernon-Smith.

THE END.

(Another Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday, entitled: "The First Eleven." Please order your copy of The "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

door faced him. He pushed it open, and found that the room beyond was in absolute darkness. It was in this chamber of gloom that the mysterious struggle was taking place. There was a very pandemonium of sounds now, but the professor could not distinguish either of the combatants.

As he took a couple of steps into the room he struck a wax vesta and held it up to see what was going on, and who were the combatants.

In an instant the match was struck from his fingers, and he was seized by someone whose grip was like the pressure of a powerful vice. He could not free himself from it.

With a maniacal laugh of glee his unseen assailant lifted him from the floor and hurled him through the doorway and clean across the outer room. Finlay came staggering from the inner chamber a second later; the door crashed to, and then there fell a sudden silence, in startling contrast to the turmoil which had preceded it.

The manservant had a long, pointed knife in his hand. He was glaring about him like a wild beast. His eyes fell upon the professor, who had fallen heavily, and was now slowly getting on his feet again, and he rushed at him with a scream of rage. All his oiliness and servility were gone now.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 120.

NEXT

WEEK:

"THE FIRST ELEVEN."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

"You spy!" he howled. "You wouldn't take a warning; you shall pay dearly for meddling in matters that don't concern you!"

As he spoke he seized MacAndrew by the throat and forced him backwards. He raised his knife to strike, when suddenly it was struck from his grasp to the further side of the room. Then he was dragged away from the prostrate Scotsman and flung after the knife, but not quite so far.

A lithe-limbed Hindu, in whose white turban there gleamed a tiny jewelled dagger no longer than a man's forefinger, bent down and helped MacAndrew to rise.

"Hope you're not hurt much, professor?" whispered the Hindu, in excellent English. "Lucky I turned up just at that moment, wasn't it?"

The Hindu Introduces Himself to the Professor.

Professor MacAndrew stared at the Hindu, hardly crediting his senses. It was Stanley Dare's voice, of that he was positive, but this dark-skinned Oriental, with the coal-black hair and moustache and the Eastern dress, bore no outward resemblance to him whatever.

Stay, the eyes! They were blue, and no Oriental ever had eyes that twinkled with amusement like that. Yes, it was Stanley Dare, and the disguise was perfect.

Dare put his finger to his lips as a caution to the professor not to mention his name; and then, turning to the discomfited scoundrel who was creeping across the floor in order to regain possession of his knife, he addressed him volubly in Hindustani, putting in anything with a similar sound when he was stuck for a few words, and assuming a threatening attitude which caused Finlay to abandon his idea of regaining possession of his knife and scramble to his feet as quickly as possible.

The pretended Hindu thereupon picked up the weapon and stuck it in his belt, while Finlay watched him with a mixture of rage and amusement that would have been amusing had the matter been less serious.

Not for a moment did he imagine that it was Stanley Dare before him. He knew that the young detective had been left on the "shivering" sand in an unconscious condition, and he believed that he was dead. For the manservant was in league with the Luggar Inn gang.

As Finlay did not understand Hindustani—which was fortunate, as Dara had only been reciting a Hindu poem to him—the young detective turned to MacAndrew and spoke to him in that language. He knew enough to be able to carry on a conversation fairly well in it, while the professor knew the language thoroughly. Translated into English, their conversation was as follows:

"Where is Mr. Thorndyke? Was it him that I heard shouting and yelling?"

"It must have been," replied MacAndrew. "But I have not seen him."

"What is wrong? Has he gone mad?"

"That would seem to be the only explanation."

"Where is he now?"

"In the inner room. It is as dark as pitch in there."

"We must get this fellow out of the way; but we mustn't hand him over to the police, as I don't want the gang to know that I'm alive."

"What gang do you refer to?"

"I will tell you afterwards. I couldn't explain it all in Hindustani. Better work on this fellow's fears somehow. I want to get that room door open."

The professor turned to Finlay, and in the calm tones of superiority which he could assume so well when occasion required it he ordered him out of the room.

"What fiendish work you've been up to, wot your master ye know best yourself!" he said. "For your attempt on my life I could hand you over to the police and get ye severely punished. I will not do that. This Indian

gentleman heard the shouts, and came to see what was wrong. From what he says, I gather that he means to find out, as it appears he knew Mr. Thorndyke some years ago. I shall see this business through with him. I'll give ye three meenutes to get clear of the hoose. Go!"

Without a word Finlay slunk off. Possibly he was glad enough to get off so cheaply, and the professor half repented the leniency they had shown him when he saw an unmistakable gleam of malicious triumph in the fellow's eyes.

"I'm sorry we let him go," he said to Dare.

"It is necessary," replied the young detective. "And I have an idea I shall know where to find him if I want him."

Taking a skeleton key from a pocket in his loose Eastern robe, he tried it in the lock of the inner door. There was a soft "click," and the door was open. No sound came from within.

"We must have a light," said Dara.

MacAndrew went down to the housekeeper's room and obtained a candle. The poor woman was sitting there in a perfectly helpless condition through sheer terror. Saying a few words to reassure her, the professor ascended the stairs again, and with Stanley Dare entered the mysterious room from which he had been so forcibly ejected.

The room was empty!

"Do you think your assailant was Mr. Thorndyke?" asked Dara.

"I can hardly imagine that Mr. Thorndyke has so powerful a grip," MacAndrew replied. "See here!" He bared his right arm. The flesh was black and blue just above the wrist, the bruises showing the imprints of a man's fingers.

"A good job he didn't get you by the throat!" exclaimed Dara.

"There is only one way to account for such a sudden accession of strength as those bruises indicate," said MacAndrew gravely, "and that is that he had gone mad."

"He was a bit peculiar when we interviewed him," replied Dara; "but I did not observe any sign of madness."

He said no more. His whole professional instinct was now on the alert to arrive at a solution of this fresh mystery. With keen eyes he subjected the apartment to a rapid but thorough scrutiny. There were plenty of traces of the recent struggle, for the few articles of furniture which the room contained were flung about in all directions, and one chair was broken into fragments.

There was a narrow door at one end of the room, and a narrow flight of stairs led down from it. The young detective descended, followed by MacAndrew. The stairs terminated in a stone-paved passage, at the end of which was another door, that opened into the garden.

"Your unseen assailant, whoever he was," said Dara, "came out this way!"

They were able to follow his tracks quite easily where he had trodden down the rank grass and undergrowth. He had circled round the house, and eventually gained the main road, where all further trace of him was lost.

Stanley Dare had gone back to some bushes, which the man had evidently tried to push through, possibly with the idea of escaping observation from anyone in the house. He picked something up from the ground.

"It was Mr. Thorndyke," he said. "I remember noticing this charm on his watchchain when we were interviewing him. It was broken off when he tried to force his way through these bushes!"

He showed MacAndrew the charm which he had picked up—a tiny horseshoe of gold. The professor also recognised it.

"We ought to search the hoose," said the professor. "It's just possible we may make some discovery that will throw a light on this strange affair."

"We must certainly search the hoose," agreed Dara. "For aught we know the girl who sent that message to me may be incarcerated somewhere in the place."

"What about the housekeeper? She wouldn't aid in sic a plot as that!"

(Another long instalment of this story next Tuesday.)



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By
PROSPER
HOWARD.



The sergeant-major stepped forward and read out the list of names of the juniors in the order they were to fire.

"For the Grammar School:

"Carboy
"J. Wootton
"Morgan
"Dumbarton
"H. Wootton
"Carpenter
"Lake
"Preston
"O'Donnell
"Gay

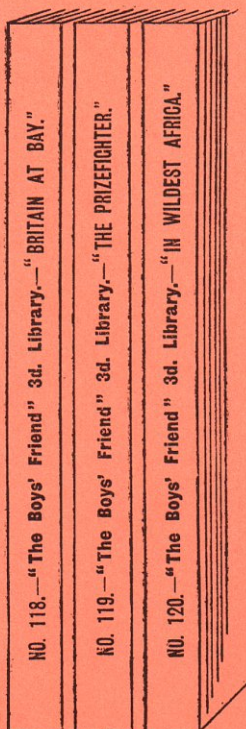
"For Greyfriars College:

"Nugent
"Cherry
"Singh
"Desmond
"Baltrode
"Linsley
"Stott
"Skinner
"Ogilvy
"Wharton

"For St. Jim's College:

"D'Arcy
"Kerr
"Figgina
"Blake
"Manners
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"Digby
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"Berry

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