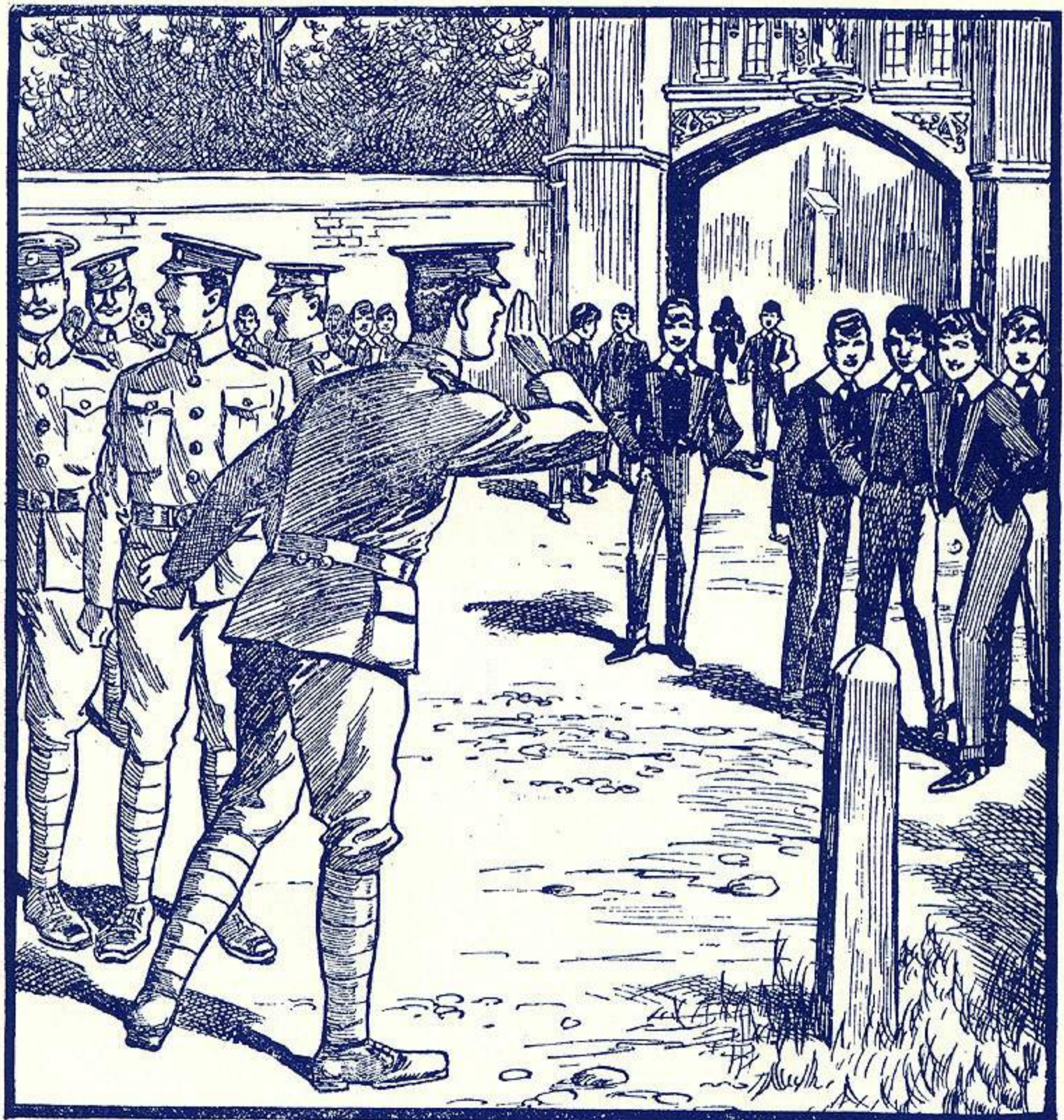


THE WHIP-HAND!



THE REAL CLAVERING!

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19-1-18

THE WHIP-HAND!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Boy in Khaki!

"COME on, you fellows!" shouted Bob Cherry.

There was a whir of marching-music on the road outside the gates of Greyfriars, and a tramp of marching feet.

A long line of khaki-clad lads, in tours, swung past the school gates.

At the sound of the drum and the marching feet Bob Cherry started for the gates at once.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed him fast, with a crowd of other fellows. Even Billy Bunter joined up, to give the soldiers a cheer in passing.

Clavering, the new boy in the Remove, came out of the school shop, and found himself caught by the arm by Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

"This way, my esteemed friend!" exclaimed the nabob.

"What's on?"

"It is a detachment of the worthy and ludicrous recruits marching to Wapshot," explained Hurree Singh. "We are going to greet them cheerfully."

Clavering grinned, and followed the nabob to the gates. He was quite ready to greet the recruits "cheerfully."

A crowd gathered in the grey old gateway. Down the dusty road went the marching men—a detachment of young recruits, many of them lads of nineteen or twenty. Fine, fresh, healthy lads they looked—lads of whom any country might well be proud.

"The three-cheerfulness is the proper caper," suggested Hurree Singh, in his weird and wonderful English, and the cheers rolled out heartily from the juniors crammed in the gateway. Some of the soldiers nodded and smiled as they passed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's a block on the road!" remarked Bob Cherry, as the marching column clattered to a halt at a gruff word of command.

Down the lane a huge market-cart and a motor-car were blocking one another, and the march had suddenly stopped.

Opposite the crowded gateway the men stood at ease.

"My hat! There's a kid, if you like!" remarked Johnny Bull, with a nod towards one of the lads in khaki. "Bet you that kid's not eighteen!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Clavering.

The new boy in the Remove was staring hard at the youthful-looking Tommy. His face had grown suddenly pale.

Clavering's exclamation was under his breath, but it drew several glances upon him from the fellows near at hand.

"Know the chap, Clavering?" asked Bob Cherry.

Clavering did not answer.

His eyes were fixed upon the young soldier with a startled gaze. The latter was speaking to the man next to him, and did not observe the new junior at Greyfriars.

Wharton tapped Clavering on the shoulder.

"What's the matter with you, kid?"

Clavering started.

"Eh? What?" he muttered confusedly.

"Do you know that soldier-chap?" asked Wharton, in wonder.

"I—I've seen him before!" stammered Clavering.

"No reason why you shouldn't speak to him, if you like," said Frank Nugent.

Clavering drew back hurriedly.

"No, no!"

His pale face had flushed red now.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked with new interest at the young recruit, whom Clavering evidently knew.

At the first glance he looked about eighteen, but at the second glance it could be seen that he was probably younger, but remarkably powerfully-built for his age.

His face was handsome, open, and frank, a face that the Greyfriars juniors liked at once.

He looked round as the juniors' eyes turned on him, and his glance swept over the crowd of them and the grey old buildings of the school behind them.

He was evidently interested in Greyfriars.

He caught Harry Wharton's eye, and called out to the captain of the Remove, saluting as he did so.

"Is that Greyfriars School, sir?"

"Yes; this is Greyfriars!" answered Harry.

"Thank you!"

Again the young soldier's glance dwelt on the grey old buildings, and there was a curious expression upon his face.

He started as his eyes fell on Clavering, wedged in among the swarm of juniors in the gateway.

Bob Cherry nudged the new junior.

"The chap knows you, Clavering," he whispered. "Why don't you speak to him, you ass?"

Clavering muttered something indistinctly.

His eyes were on the young soldier, and the latter smiled. Clavering, after a brief hesitation, stepped out into the road towards the khaki ranks.

All the juniors' eyes were upon Clavering now. It was evident that the young soldier was someone he knew, and that was a momentary distinction for the new fellow.

"You—you are here?" said Clavering, in a low voice, as he stopped near the khaki line, still halted in the lane.

"Yes, sir!" said the young soldier, with a smile. "I'm in training at Wapshot Camp. And you are at Greyfriars?"

"Yes!" muttered Clavering.

"You like it?"

"Very much."

"Good! I'm glad of that!"

"And you?" said Clavering. "You like the Army?"

"What-ho!" The young soldier smiled again. "First-rate! I wouldn't change with you, old scout!"

"You—you've a right—"

"Rats! You're getting on all right in the school?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Good luck! I'm glad I've seen you. You did me a good turn!"

"You did me one, I suppose," said Clavering. "It's not easy, altogether; but—but I'm glad to be there. But—but if you wanted—"

"I don't want anything, excepting to get into the next draft!" grinned the lad in khaki. "I like my part of the bargain as well as you like yours. I wish you luck. Get back!" he added, in a low voice, as a sergeant strode along the line.

Clavering stepped back among the juniors.

His hurried talk with the soldier had not been heard by the Greyfriars fellows. His face was calm again now, as if his talk with the lad in khaki had relieved his mind.

The khaki line swung on again.

Clavering waved his hand to his friend in the ranks, and moved back in the crowd of juniors. The long line went swinging by, with a regular tramp, tramp of feet, and disappeared, winding down the road. A last roar of cheers from the Greyfriars fellows followed them.

"Old pal of yours—what?" asked Bob Cherry, as the juniors went in.

"I—I know the chap," said Clavering evasively.

"What's his name?" asked Skinner.

"His—his name?"

"Yes," said Skinner, staring at him.

"You know his name, I suppose?"

"Yes, I know his name," said Clavering.

"Well, what is it?"

Clavering did not answer.

Skinner looked at him in astonishment. It was a harmless question enough. Even Skinner, the black sheep, was interested in the lads in khaki. Clavering's refusal to answer so harmless a question was amazing.

But Clavering plainly did not mean to answer.

He turned and walked away, leaving Harold Skinner fairly blinking with surprise.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Skinner. "Why can't he tell a fellow the chap's name, if he knows him?"

"Little boys shouldn't ask questions, you know!" remarked Vernon-Smith, whom Greyfriars called the Bounder.

"Oh, rats!"

"I don't see why he shouldn't answer, Smithy," said Bob Cherry, who was as surprised as Skinner. "No need for making a mystery about it that I can see."

"Lots of things you don't see, Bobby!" remarked the Bounder.

And he strolled away. But the Bounder's glance was very curious as it followed Clavering of the Remove. Vernon-Smith had observed all that had passed at the school gates, and he was thinking.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Bounder is Worried!

"FEELING seedy, old scout?" Harry Wharton asked the question as he came upon the Bounder of Greyfriars in the quadrangle after lessons. The Bounder

was pacing to and fro under the leafless elms, a deep wrinkle in his brow, apparently in a very reflective mood. Smithy was still looking a little pale from his recent illness.

But he looked up with a smile as the captain of the Remove spoke.

"No," he answered. "I'm jolly nearly well now!"

"Not up to footer form to-morrow?"

"Not quite that."

"It's a pity. I'd have liked to play you against Highcliffe," said Harry. "I suppose it can't be helped. Courtenay will be bringing a strong team over here. He's playing that new chap Derwent this time, I hear—and he's quite a corker. You were looking just now as if you were thinking out a problem. Anything up?"

"Oh, no! How do you like that new chap Clavering?" asked the Bounder abruptly.

"Clavering? He seems a decent chap."

"Straight as a die—what?"

"Yes, I should say he was quite straight," said Harry, puzzled by the question. "I've not noticed any sign of anything else. I understand that he was a friend of yours before he came here, Smithy."

"I had met him," said the Bounder evasively. "I feel quite friendly towards him. I think he is one of the best."

"You don't have much to do with him, though."

"No, that's so."

"Most of the fellows rather like him," said Wharton. "He's coming on well at footer, too, though it seems it's a new game to him. Rather queer that he's never played footer before he came here. I suppose because he spent a lot of time in South America."

The Bounder smiled.

"Not that he ever talks about South America," added Wharton. "He seems to dislike the subject—didn't have a very cheery time there, I should imagine. He's a good chap. I hear that he's not taking any allowance from Sir Hilton Popper, who sent him here, and that means that he won't have much tin. Old Popper never troubled to keep it secret that he was annoyed at having Clavering left on his hands, though it was he who urged Clavering's pater to come home from South America and join up, and the poor chap was killed. Nice man—Popper!"

"Beastly old Hun!" said Vernon-Smith. "Look here, Wharton, Clavering's a good fellow, and I can answer for it. If there's anything up against him in the school, you would have a good deal of influence, as captain of the Form, in putting it down."

Wharton nodded.

"You mean Bunter's yarn?"

"Yes, I was thinking of that," said Vernon-Smith.

"Nobody takes any stock in it," said Harry. "Clavering punched Ponsonby's head for ragging Bunter, and Pon said something about knowing him, and that his name wasn't Clavering. Just like Bunter to yarn it all over the school, the fat Bolo! Only Pon's gas, of course."

"Still, it's made some of the fellows curious. Bunter ought to be squashed!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, Pon was lying—he generally is lying," said Harry. "I suppose nobody's likely to believe that Clavering's name isn't Clavering. Can't imagine what made even that Highcliffe cad say such a silly thing."

"It's rather unfortunate——"

The Bounder paused.

"I don't see that it matters. Clavering had better punch Pon's head again," said Wharton, laughing. "If he comes over with Courtenay's team, that'll be a chance."

"Pon won't be coming over, surely? He doesn't care about footer."

"No; but I think he's coming over with his friends this time. Skinner says so, and he's seen Pon at Highcliffe."

"The cad!" muttered the Bounder, setting his teeth. "The rotter! Just like Pon to make all the mischief he can."

"How can he make any mischief?" asked Harry, in surprise. "There's nothing fishy about Clavering, is there?"

"He's one of the best!"

"Then he needn't mind Pon."

"You coming, Wharton?" bawled Bob Cherry. And the captain of the Remove, with a nod to Smithy, went to join his chums.

Vernon-Smith resumed his restless pacing under the trees. There was a problem in his mind, and it was a strange and troublesome one.

He stopped as he caught sight of the new junior in the Remove crossing the quadrangle. He hesitated, and then moved out from under the elms to meet Leonard Clavering.

That Clavering saw him he knew. But the new junior, without meeting his glance, changed his direction a little, with the evident intention of avoiding a meeting.

Vernon-Smith paused, biting his lip.

Clavering went into the School House, and the Bounder was left with a moody expression on his face.

"He, he, he!"

Vernon-Smith started, and looked round angrily, as he heard Billy Bunter's fat chuckle.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at him through his big spectacles, and grinned.

"Queer, ain't it?" said Bunter.

"What's queer, you fat idiot?" growled the Bounder.

"About Clavering! What does he give you the cold shoulder for, Smithy?" asked Bunter inquisitively.

"He doesn't, you fat dummy!"

"All the fellows have noticed it," grinned Bunter cheerfully. "You're the only fellow here who knew Clavering before he came to Greyfriars, and he never speaks to you if he can help it. He fairly dodges you."

The Bounder bit his lip.

"He's jolly fishy!" said Bunter, with a wise shake of the head. "Ponsonby says his name isn't Clavering at all—he says he knows him. He's coming over here to-morrow with the football team to rag him."

Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed.

"How do you know that, Bunter?" he asked quietly.

"Skinner says so. Pon's told him. He can't forgive Clavering for punching his nose!" chuckled Bunter. "He says he knew Clavering under another name somewhere, though he couldn't think of it at first."

"And has he thought of it now?"

"Skinner says so."

"And what's the name?"

Bunter shook his head.

"Skinner doesn't know that. Ponsonby's going to spring it on the fellows as a surprise to-morrow afternoon. What a scene, you know!" Bunter chuckled. "He's let Skinner into it on condition he kept it quite dark. He, he, he!"

"And if Skinner's keeping it quite dark, how do you know?"

"I happened to hear him telling Snoop, in confidence, of course. I was passing Snoop's study. Clavering wasn't there, of course——"

"And you listened at the keyhole, you fat toad?"

"Certainly not! It was quite by chance. I had stooped near the door to pick up a pin. Skinner and Snoop and Stott were chuckling over it like anything. Snoop and Stott don't like their

new study-mate, you know. They say he's a stuck-up prig—he doesn't smoke or play banker. Come to think of it, I don't see why you should like the fellow, Smithy—not at all your style!"

"You fat rotter!" murmured the Bounder.

Since the Bounder had given up his role of black sheep he did not like being reminded of it. Billy Bunter was not famous for tact.

"Well, he's not," said Bunter, grinning. "Snoop offered to introduce him to Mr. Hawke, at the Cross Keys—your old pal the billiard-sharper—he, he, he!—and Clavering told him he was a shady cad."

"So he is!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"I say, Smithy, as you knew Clavering before he came here, you know whether his name's Clavering or not," said Bunter curiously. "If he's a shady spoofer, as Pon says, you ought to show him up. I'll tell you what—you tell me the facts, old chap in strict confidence, of course——"

Bunter was interrupted at that point. Vernon-Smith made a grab at his fat ear, and gripped it with finger and thumb.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

"You fat villain!" said Vernon-Smith savagely. "Clavering got on the wrong side of Ponsonby through saving you from a ragging. Haven't you the decency enough to stand up for him after that?"

"Yow-ow! Leggo my ear, you beast!"

Vernon-Smith let go Bunter's ear, and seized him by the shoulders, and sat him down on the ground with considerable force. Then he walked away to the School House, leaving the Owl of the Remove sitting down, gasping for breath, and rubbing his ear.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Strange Discovery!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Wherefore the cackle?"

Bob Cherry looked in at the doorway of Study No. 11 in the Remove. There was a sound of chuckling merriment from that apartment, and it proceeded from Snoop and Stott, who shared the study with the new boy—not then present.

The Famous Five were coming along the Remove passage to join Wibley in the box-room, where a rehearsal of the Remove Dramatic Society was imminent. They paused to look in.

"What's the merry joke?" inquired Bob. "What dirty trick have you been playing, Snoopey, to make you so merry?"

"The dirtyfulness of the esteemed trick is probably terrific!" remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop and Stott together.

Snoop had a small pocket volume of Horace in his hand. He was holding it up, open at the title-page.

"Look at that!" he chortled.

"Nothing to cackle at in Horace, is there?" asked Harry Wharton, puzzled. "Horace Coker of the Fifth is funny enough, but that especial Horace is rather a serious proposition."

"It's Clavering's book," said Nugent. "I've seen it before. Are you playing tricks on Clavering's book, Snoop?"

"Ha, ha! No! I just thought of looking on the fly-page, that's all!" chortled Snoop. "After what Skinner said, I thought of it. Ha, ha! It's a fair bowl-out for that chap now!"

Wharton's brow darkened.

"What do you mean, Snoop?" he asked very quietly. "I've seen for some time that you fellows have something up against Clavering. You can't be fool

enough to take any notice of Bunter's silly yarn!"

"Is it a silly yarn?" jeered Snoop. "I know better! Ponsonby has seen him before, and Pon says his name's not Clavering."

"Pon's a Prussian," remarked Johnny Bull. "In fact, he can give points to a Prussian when it comes to lying. He daren't say so here!"

Snoop sneered.

"That's where you're mistaken," he answered. "Pon's coming here to-morrow to say so before all Greyfriars."

"Rats!"

"Shurrup, Snoopey!" murmured Stott. "Skinner said it was a secret!"

"Pooh! What does it matter? The fellow's going to be shown up to-morrow."

"You mean to say that Ponsonby of Highcliffe really thinks that Clavering's name isn't Clavering?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"He knows it!"

"What rot!"

"And after what Skinner said, I looked round the study," grinned Snoop.

"I thought I'd look in some of Clavering's books, if I could find 'em. Fellows often put their name or initials in a book. Most of his books are quite new—a new set he's got coming here. This is an old one. You can see it's jolly old! Looks as if he'd picked it up cheap on a second-hand stall, by Jove!"

"Why shouldn't he?"

"Look on the title-page!" chortled Snoop.

The juniors looked, and a very curious expression came over five faces at once. For on the title-page of the pocket Horace were the initials "T. R."

The book was Clavering's, but "T. R." certainly did not stand for Leonard Clavering.

"Oh!" said Wharton.

"M-my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Snoop and Stott chortled again, evidently very much pleased with their discovery. Harry Wharton frowned angrily. He had glanced at the book without thinking, but he wished he had not done so. Snoop and Stott were spying, and it was disagreeable to have been drawn into it.

"That's not your business, Snoop!" exclaimed Wharton. "You've no right to look into Clavering's book, and no right to show it to us!"

"I quite agree with you," said a quiet voice at the door.

Clavering stepped into the study.

The Co. coloured uncomfortably.

"Perhaps you'll explain this," said Snoop, not at all abashed. "Those initials stand for your name—what?"

"That is my book," said Clavering.

"Give it to me!"

His tone was quiet, but there was something in it that made Snoop obey him at once. Clavering slipped the Horace quietly into his pocket.

"Aren't you going to explain that, Clavering?" sneered Stott.

"I have nothing to say to a spy!" said Clavering contemptuously.

"Oh, draw it mild! Does that include Wharton?" asked Stott maliciously.

Wharton's face was red now.

"I'm sorry I looked at your book, Clavering," he said. "I did it without thinking."

"No harm done," said Clavering. "I know you wouldn't act as these cads have done. I don't need telling that."

"All the same, it wants explaining," remarked Johnny Bull, in his deliberate way.

"Dry up, Johnny!" whispered Nugent.

"I'm not going to dry up, Nugent! I

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think it needs explaining. There's a cad at Highcliffe says that Clavering's name isn't Clavering, and he's coming over here to-morrow to say so—"

"What?" exclaimed Clavering, starting.

"That's what he says. Now, it seems, you have books with wrong initials in them. Well, I don't believe a word that Ponsonby says—I wouldn't on principle. But you ought to explain this, Clavering."

"That's Clavering's business," remarked Bob.

"It's Clavering's business to knock this yarn on the head, if there's nothing in it," replied Johnny Bull stolidly.

Clavering did not speak.

"Well, are you going to explain?" grinned Snoop. "What do those initials stand for, Clavering?"

"I have nothing to say to you, Snoop."

"Or to Bull either?" chuckled Snoop.

"No. Nobody has a right to question me."

"I fancy the Head would question you, fast enough, if he heard of this," said Johnny Bull tartly. "But I don't want to, goodness knows! Come on, you fellows! We shall be late!"

"Hold on!"

The Bounder stood in the doorway.

"You know anything about it, Smithy?" grinned Snoop. "You knew Clavering before he came here. Was his name Clavering then, or Smith, Brown, Jones, or Robinson?"

"He, he he!" chortled Stott.

"I've got a suggestion to make," said the Bounder coolly. "That Horace—I've seen it—is a jolly old copy. Looks like an old second-hand book."

"That's what I thought," sneered Snoop. "Picked up cheap on a second-hand stall."

"Quite so. And as it had a former owner, mightn't the former owner have written his initials in it?" inquired the Bounder.

"Oh!" ejaculated Snoop.

Harry Wharton laughed. The explanation was so simple, and it so completely knocked Snoop out, that it seemed comic.

"The esteemed Bounder has hit the rightful nail fairly on the napper," grinned Hurree Singh. "The word of wisdom in time is a pitcher that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks."

"Did you get that book second-hand, Clavering?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes."

"That settles it, then. I don't see why you couldn't say so, all the same. Come on, you chaps! Wib's yelling for us!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Snoop. "That doesn't settle it! Clavering hasn't said that those initials were in the book when he bought it second-hand."

"Oh, rats!"

Harry Wharton & Co. left the study.

"Are you going to answer that, Clavering?" jeered Stott.

"I'm going to answer nothing to you," said Clavering.

"I've got a much better idea," said the Bounder. "Kick those two spying cads out of the study, Clavering. I'll help you!"

"Why, you rotter!" roared Stott, as Vernon-Smith collared him. "You cheeky cad! I'll— Yarooooop!"

Stott landed in the passage. The Bounder seemed extremely active, in spite of his recent illness. Clavering, with a laugh, collared Snoop, and sent him spinning out after Stott.

There were howls of wrath in the passage, but the two worthy youths did not venture to come in again. The Bounder closed the door.

"I want to speak to you, Clavering," he said.

Clavering coloured.

"Excuse me. I want to get along and see Linley," he said. "He's helping me about a prize exam."

"But—"

"Sorry!"

Clavering left the study as he spoke, leaving the Bounder dumbfounded.

"My hat!" murmured Vernon-Smith.

He left the study himself, and walked away, with a thoughtful brow, unheeding the furious glares Snoop and Stott gave him in the passage.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion!

MARK LINLEY received the new junior with a cheery smile.

The scholarship boy was helping Clavering a good deal. Both of them were hard workers, and they had tastes in common. Mark had very little money, and Clavering's position was somewhat similar, as he had refused to take the grudging allowance from his guardian, Sir Hilton Popper.

The two juniors were soon hard at work, and they were still at it when Mark's study-mates came in to tea. Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh and Wun Lung, the Chinese, came in together.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Slogging away?" exclaimed Bob. "Chuck it, and let's have tea. I'm famished!"

Clavering rose at once.

"You'll stay to tea, Clavering?" asked Mark.

"Do!" said Bob.

"The pleasurable to our respected selves will be terrific!" said Hurree Singh politely.

"Thank you, I'm going down to tea in Hall," answered Clavering.

And he left the study.

There were a good many of the Remove to tea in Hall. The food restrictions made tea in the study a much more difficult proposition than of old. Many of the Removites at the table glanced curiously at Clavering.

Snoop and Stott had evidently been talking.

Clavering appeared to notice nothing. But there was a faint flush in his cheeks as he sat down.

Bunter's yarn had not been taken much notice of, though his report of Cecil Ponsonby's statement had made the fellows curious. But it was backed up now by the discovery of the initials in a book that was known to be Clavering's. The Bounder's explanation was simple enough. But then, why could not Clavering state that those initials had been written in the book when he bought it second-hand, if such was the case? Snoop and Stott put their own construction upon the matter, and some of the fellows agreed with them. It was queer, at least, and the more suspicious minds thought it fishy.

Yet that a new fellow could have come to Greyfriars under a name that was not his own was rather too staggering to be easily believed. Still, Snoop pointed out the fact, well known in the school, that Clavering had never met his guardian, Sir Hilton Popper, before he came to Greyfriars. According to Snoop, he was some rank outsider who was spoofing old Popper and spoofing the school. As a matter of fact, however, Snoop himself was much more entitled to the description of "rank outsider" than was Clavering. It was only necessary to see them together to see which was the more decent fellow of the two.

After tea, when the juniors came out, Bolsover major dropped a heavy hand on Clavering's shoulder in the passage. The

bully of the Remove had taken up the matter, without any special right to do so. Bolsover did not trouble over a trifle like that.

"Look here, Clavering—" began Bolsover loudly, and the juniors gathered round.

"Let go my shoulder," said Clavering quietly.

Bolsover major, after a moment's hesitation, dropped his hand. He had had one fight with Clavering, from which he had learned some respect for the new junior.

"Snoop says—" he began.

"Bother Snoop!"

"I don't say he's telling the truth," admitted Bolsover. "But it looks fishy, and you ought to explain, Clavering. They say that Highcliffe cad is coming over here to-morrow with the football team to make a scene. We'll shut him up fast enough if he tells any lies about a Greyfriars chap. But is it lies? What about those initials in your book?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Rats isn't good enough. Were those initials in that book when you bought it second-hand? You can say 'Yes,' or 'No,' I suppose?"

"They must have been, as they're not Clavering's initials," said Tom Brown.

"But that's the point!" remarked Ogilvy. "Clavering can easily say 'Yes' or 'No.' His word will be taken."

"Right enough!" remarked Squiff. "Speak up, Clavering, and then we'll frog-march Snoop for making a fuss about nothing."

"Good egg!" grinned Russell.

All eyes were upon Clavering, but he did not speak.

"Well?" snapped Bolsover major.

"I am not going to be questioned because Snoop has spied into what doesn't concern him," said Clavering evenly. "That's all."

With that he walked away, leaving the juniors silent with astonishment.

"By gad!" murmured Lord Maulverer. "The chap must be potty, begad! He'll make the fellows think—"

His lordship paused.

"Then his name's not Clavering, and he's some spoofer!" said Bolsover major positively.

"Not so fast!" chimed in the Bounder, who had quietly joined the group. "If he was a spoofer, Bolsover, why shouldn't he say the initials were his?"

"Because they're not, of course!" snorted Bolsover. "It would be a lie!"

"Well, a spoofer wouldn't mind telling a lie, would he?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bolsover.

Squiff laughed.

"What a lot of rot!" he said. "If he was some chap under a false name he would be some awful swindler, and a lie or two would come easy enough."

"Smithy has a lot more to say for him than he has to say for himself," sneered Snoop.

"Why, he disdains to take notice of the existence of a worm of your kind!" replied the Bounder pleasantly.

"You cheeky rotter, Smithy—"

"Smithy's right!" said Lord Maulverer. "Besides, it's all rot! How could he be usin' a name that wasn't his own? Rats!"

"I don't see why he can't answer, all the same!" grunted Bolsover major.

"Anyway, Smithy knows!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "You knew the chap before he came here, Smithy! You know whether his name's right or not?"

"I know that he's one of the straightest chaps breathing!" said the Bounder. "I can answer for that!"

"Well, that's enough."

"Smithy doesn't say that he knows his name's Clavering, though," said Snoop, quick to seize the point.



Snoop and Stott are put out! (See Chapter 8.)

"Yes or no, Smithy?"

The Bounder compressed his lips a little.

"I met him only once before he came here, and he didn't tell me that his name was Clavering," he said. "But, as I said before, I know he's a straight chap."

"After meeting him only once?" jeered Snoop.

"Yee. He did me a good turn that only a thoroughly decent fellow would have done a stranger."

"Bow-wow!"

The Bounder walked away, his brows knitted. He left the juniors in excited discussion. Vague as the charges against Clavering were, they were gathering weight, like a snowball rolling downhill. All depended now on what happened on the morrow. It was certain that if Cecil Ponsonby had a plausible story to tell when he came over to Greyfriars he would find general belief in the Remove. And that was what the Bounder was thinking of. For the Bounder, alone in the Remove, knew that Ponsonby of Highcliffe was telling the truth for once, and he did not see how he was to avert the blow.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Leonard Clavering or Tom Redwing?

"CLAVERING!"

The new junior was coming up the stairs to the Remove passage, and he frowned slightly as the Bounder spoke to him. Vernon-Smith had evidently been waiting for him.

"Not engaged now?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a rather satirical smile. "I want to speak to you, as I said before."

Clavering breathed hard.

"You've been avoiding me ever since I came out of sanatorium," went on the Bounder. "The fellows are noticing it. It's bad policy, Clavering."

"What do you want with me?"

"Only a few words."

"I'll speak out plain. I'd rather not hear you!"

"I know that," said the Bounder, unmoved. "But, for your own sake, and

other reasons, you must hear me. Come into my study."

Clavering hesitated, but he followed Vernon-Smith into No. 4. Skinner was not there. He was engaged in a very animated discussion in the Common-room on the subject of the Spoofer, as Skinner & Co. called Clavering now.

Vernon-Smith closed the study door.

"Sit down, old chap," he said.

His tone was quite friendly.

Clavering sank into a seat.

The Bounder sat on the corner of the table facing him. The junior waited, with evident uneasiness, for him to speak.

"In the first place," said Vernon-Smith quietly, "I want you to understand that I'm your friend, Clavering. Whatever you are, and whatever you've done, I'm standing by you, through thick and thin. I owe you that."

Clavering did not speak.

"Two or three weeks ago," continued the Bounder, "I was wrecked in my boat at Hawkscliff, and you risked your life to get me out of the sea. You told me then that your name was Tom Redwing, and you were the son of a sailorman, working for your living. I was laid up in sanny some time, and during that time I asked my father to find you. I didn't want to lose sight of you. My pater searched for you at Hawkscliff, and after a time offered a reward for information about Tom Redwing. But Tom Redwing never turned up; he had vanished, and nobody at Hawkscliff had the faintest idea what had become of him."

Clavering's face had grown pale. His lips twitched a little, but he did not speak.

"When I was in sanny I heard about a new chap named Clavering coming into the Remove—a chap who had let it slip that he knew my name," went on the Bounder, "I met you the day I came out of sanny, and I recognised you as Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff."

He paused, but Clavering did not speak.

"You saved my life," said Vernon-Smith. "I wanted to be a friend to you, if you'd let me. As soon as I understood the game you were playing here, I backed you up—and spoke to you as

Clavering. But—don't you think you ought to explain to me, old man?"

No answer.
"There is a real Clavering somewhere," said the Bounder. "Captain Clavering was killed in Flanders, and his son was left with a parson at Cotswood, who sent him to Greyfriars. Old Popper was left in charge of him, and the mean old trunks never took the trouble to see him. Clavering must have started from Cotswood to come to Greyfriars. He didn't arrive here—you arrived in his name. Where is Clavering?"

Silence.
"Don't you see how it stands?" asked the Bounder, gently enough. "I know you're Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff. You saved my life; you did only what a thoroughly decent and straight fellow would have done. I know you can't have played any rotten trick on the real Clavering—"

"Wha-a-t?" The new junior spoke at last, breathlessly.

"Surely you must see how it looks!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Clavering disappeared, and you came here in his name, with his clothes and his box and his books and things. Something happened to keep him away from Greyfriars. If I did not know you were a straight chap, I should think, of course, that you, and some accomplices, had kidnapped him—or worse!"

"Oh!"
"I know it can't be that. But if the story gets out—and it seems likely to—you'll have to answer for what's happened to the real Clavering. Will you tell me what's happened?"

No reply.
"Taking it for granted that you're straight, I can only conclude that Clavering was unwilling to be sent to school, and that he fixed it up with you to come here instead of him," said the Bounder. "It's a tall story, but it's the only yarn to fit the facts—if you're straight, as I think you are. But—"

Clavering rose to his feet.
"Is that all?" he asked.
"Yes."
"Then I'll go."
The Bounder bit his lip.
"You won't explain to me?" he asked.

"I have nothing to say."
"You admit that you're here under an assumed name?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, beginning to show signs of irritation at last.

"I admit nothing."
"Do you deny it?"
"I have nothing to say."
Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed.
"You would have to say something fast enough if I told the Head what I know!" he exclaimed angrily.

Clavering winced.
"You are welcome to tell the Head anything you please!" he answered.
"You don't ask me to keep your secret?"

"I ask you nothing."
The Bounder drew a deep breath. He was calm again at once.

"You saved my life," he said. "I'm your friend, Tom Redwing, whether you like it or not. But—better be careful. I won't inflict my society on you if you don't like it, but don't let the fellows see you giving me the cold shoulder. Don't leave books about with your real initials in them. And what are you going to do about Ponsonby to-morrow?"

"Nothing."
"For goodness' sake, think!" exclaimed the Bounder anxiously. "Ponsonby must have seen you at Hawkscliff, when you were under your own name; I remember he did some sailing down there in the summer. He knew your name."
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face when he saw you; he's thought it out, and recalled your name. He's coming over to-morrow afternoon on purpose to make a scene while the team is here, and show you up. What are you going to say?"

Clavering did not answer.
"You could be out of gates, of course," said the Bounder. "But if you go out to avoid Ponsonby, it will be practically owning up to it. Snoop and his set are already saying that you will be out of gates on purpose."

"I shall not be out of gates."
"You'll face Ponsonby?"

"Why not?"
"Why not?" repeated the Bounder, in angry wonder. "Why not? Because Ponsonby knows your name is Tom Redwing, and he's going to tell all Greyfriars so, to punish you for thrashing him. It will come before the Head then, Ponsonby knows it must if he makes a scene about it. And you can't deny it; you wouldn't even deny that those initials were yours, because you won't tell lies. And I can tell you it would need some thumping clever lies to get you clear when Ponsonby's told what he knows."

There was no answer from Clavering.
"My only hat!" exclaimed the Bounder at last. "You're not going to keep it up to me that you're Clavering, are you, when you know that I know you're Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff?"

"It's time I got along to work, I think," said Clavering, looking at his watch. "Thanks for entertaining me, Vernon-Smith."

He left the study, closing the door after him.
Vernon-Smith stared at the door blankly.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.
The Bounder was utterly nonplussed. It was not often that the keen-sighted, cool-headed Bounder of Greyfriars was at a loss, but certainly he was at a loss now.

"It—it can't be a mistake!" he muttered, passing his hand over his brow.
"I can't—I can't be mistaken. He can't be really Clavering, and so much like Redwing. It can't be! My hat! If I've made such a bloomer—" He shook his head. "It can't be! Tom Redwing's disappeared from Hawkscliff—why? And Pon says he knows what I know. If I've made a mistake, Pon's made the same mistake, and Pon's no fool! He's Tom Redwing, and he's sticking to it that he's Clavering. And he's too proud to tell a lie about it, either. And—and to-morrow he's going to be shown up to all Greyfriars as an impostor, unless—unless he can be saved."

The Bounder slipped off the table, and moved restlessly about the study.

"An impostor—turned out in disgrace—perhaps sent to prison!" he muttered.
"And—and he saved my life! He's got to be saved—and I've got to save him!"

The Bounder went downstairs, his face set. A few minutes later he wheeled his bicycle out and rode away—in the direction of Highcliffe School.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Ponsonby!

"SMITHY, by gad!" yawned the Caterpillar.

Courtenay and De Courcy, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, were chatting by the fireplace in the hall with Derwent, the Tasmanian junior, when Vernon-Smith came in. The Caterpillar made a sign to him at once as he appeared in the big doorway, and the Bounder came towards the group.

"Pleased to see you, Vernon-Smith,"

said Courtenay. "Glad you're up again."

"Had a rather rotten time—what?" remarked Derwent.

"Well, yes, rather," agreed the Bounder. "All serene now—or nearly."

"Back me up, Smithy!" murmured the Caterpillar. "I know you're a good hand at an argument. I'm tryin' to persuade Frank that now he's got Derwent in the footer eleven he doesn't want me. I'm simply yearnin' to come over to Greyfriars to-morrow in the role of spectator."

Vernon-Smith laughed.
"You're not playing to-morrow?" asked Derwent.

"No; I'm still on the crooked list. Is Ponsonby anywhere about?" asked the Bounder.

"In his study, I think," said Courtenay, with a slight change of tone. The captain of the Highcliffe Fourth knew what Smithy's motive usually was when he dropped in to see Ponsonby.

"Thanks," said the Bounder calmly. "I can go up, I suppose?"

"I suppose so."
Vernon-Smith nodded, and disappeared up the staircase. The Caterpillar gave his chum a comical look.

"Why did you snatch me like a brand from the burnin', Franky?" he sighed reproachfully. "If you'd left me to my own wicked ways, I might have gone up with Smithy, and had a roarin' time at bridge."

"Oh, rats!" said Courtenay.
"I heard that Smithy had chucked that kind of game," remarked Derwent. "Field told me so. He's quite a model now."

"Must be my noble example that did it, then!" said the Caterpillar gravely. "After all, if the giddy leopard changes his spots, why shouldn't the merry Ethiopian change his skin—what?"

Meanwhile, Vernon-Smith was tapping at the door of Ponsonby's study, in the Fourth. Cecil Ponsonby's voice bade him enter.

Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour were in the study. They looked surprised enough to see Smithy.

"Welcome, little stranger!" smiled Ponsonby. "I heard that you were drowned, or nearly drowned, or somethin' of the sort."

"Not quite, luckily!" said Vernon-Smith. "Sorry to have caused you such painful emotions, as I'm sure it did."

"I was weepin' briny tears," said Ponsonby. "I used up my hanky, and Gaddy's. So you're out of sanny?"

"Yes; and here I am!"
"Jolly welcome, too, absolutely!" remarked Vavasour. "Somebody said you'd given up the giddy goat, an' taken to bein' a shinin' light. I knew it was a libel on you, Smithy!"

"Ought to sue that chap for damages, by gad!" remarked Gadsby.

"I don't mind a little game, if you're keen on it," observed Ponsonby.

The Bounder shook his head.
"I didn't come over for a little game, thanks."

"Is it true about the shinin' light bizney?" sneered Ponsonby.

"More or less," said Vernon-Smith calmly. "But never mind that. I wanted a bit of a jaw with you, Pon."

"Oh, all serene! Help yourself!"

The dandy of Highcliffe extended his cigarette-case. Vernon-Smith hesitated a moment, and then, perhaps upon the principle of doing in Rome as Rome does, he selected a smoke and lighted up.

"Anythin' doin'?" asked Ponsonby, with some interest. "Racin' is in the sere an' yellow leaf now, by gad. This war is knockin' everythin' on the head. About time it was wound up, I think."

"I think it must jolly well be wound up thoroughly—it's runnin' on long enough!" remarked Gaddy, quite brilliantly.

"Seen Hawke lately?" continued Ponsonby.

"That estimable character isn't allowed to drop in at the Greyfriars sanatorium," answered the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's awfully ratty with you, Smithy," said Gadsby. "He says you've given him the cold shoulder, an' left him in the lurch, an' all that sort of thing."

"I've done with him," said Vernon-Smith. "Better for you chaps if you had, too!"

"Smithy's preachin', absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"I wish I'd never seen him!" grunted Ponsonby. "He's done me pretty dashed brown. I can't pay him in a month of Sundays!"

The Bounder looked at him.

"Dunning you?" he asked.

"More or less," said Ponsonby carelessly. "Still, he knows he's got to wait. He knows my paper is good enough."

"I hear you're paying us a visit to-morrow, Pon."

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"It's a fact, then?"

"What-ho!"

"Something to do with a new chap at our school, named Clavering, I hear?"

"Right first—wrong second!"

"Eh?"

"New chap at your school—yes! Named Clavering—no!" explained Ponsonby. "That new chap at your school is a spoonin' swindler!"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"You know him, Smithy?"

"Seen him," said the Bounder carelessly. "I was in sunny when he came, you know. You seem to have rowed with him, Pon."

"The cad!" said Ponsonby viciously. "I was raggin' Bunter—a little harmless fun—an' he set on us. I'll make him smart for it!"

"By spinning this yarn, do you mean?"

"It's not a yarn—it's a fact!"

"You mean to say that the chap's name actually isn't the one he uses?" asked the Bounder, with an air of incredulity.

"I do. That's why I'm comin' over to-morrow afternoon!" Ponsonby laughed.

"You see, Courtenay an' his team will be there—quite a distinguished party—an' most of the Remove will roll up to see the match. It will be a rippin' audience. I'm goin' to show Clavering up before the lot of them. The low cad will be sorry he laid hands on me, I fancy—a common lout of a sailor, you know!"

"He's supposed to be a soldier's son."

"Well, he isn't!"

"I've heard something of this—you told Skinner something," remarked the Bounder. "It sounds steep, Pon."

"I told Skinner to keep it dark, too," growled Ponsonby. "I don't want the cad put on his guard—he may keep away an' dodge me!"

"He knows you're coming, now, and he says he's not going out of gates."

"Good! He's got a nerve, I must say! But I'll take the dashed nerve out of him to-morrow afternoon!" said Ponsonby, with satisfaction.

"Of course, I wouldn't hint that you're not a second Washington, Pon," remarked the Bounder. "But it does sound rather steep. The Greyfriars fellows will only cackle at a yarn like that."

"Let 'em!" said Ponsonby coolly.

"I'm goin' to make a regular scene of it—virtuous youth, greatly shocked, denouncin' a vile impostor, you know. It will cause a lot of excitement; an' the masters will get onto it—that's a cert.

Virtuous youth—that's me—will be called to explain to the headmaster! Reluctantly, but virtuously, he does it, and there you are!"

"You mean to say that it's true, then?"

"Honest Injun!"

"My hat! And who is the chap, then, if he's not Clavering?"

"I'm keepin' that bit of information for the giddy denouement," said Ponsonby coolly. "Rather dramatic, you know. Be on hand to-morrow afternoon, and you'll hear the tragic tale."

Gadsby and Vavasour chuckled. They were evidently looking forward to that dramatic scene at Greyfriars on the morrow. It was one up against the Greyfriars Remove, and it was a complete revenge upon the junior who had handled the Highcliffe nuts so easily.

The Bounder was silent for a moment or two.

"You've told these chaps the name, Pon?" he asked at last.

"Oh, yes!"

"They know as well as you?"

"Oh, no! They wouldn't believe me at first," smiled Ponsonby. "I've convinced them at last, though!"

"Well, it must be right, I suppose," said Gadsby. "If you make an accusation like that, an' have to take it back, Pon, it'll be rather serious. You can't speak without bein' sure."

"I am sure."

"Perhaps I could tell you the name?" suggested the Bounder.

"What rot! You don't know anythin' about it," answered Pon, with a stare. "I happen to know the fellow by sight—I met him at Hawkscliff when I was boatin' down there in the summer. He helped with the boat, the low hound—a young longshoreman, by gad, lendin' the fishermen a hand with caulkin' the boats. When I met him last week, an' he rowed with me, I remembered him at once, but couldn't recall his name. I remembered it afterwards, though."

"Tom Redwing?" suggested Vernon-Smith.

Ponsonby sprang to his feet.

"By thunder! How did you know?" he exclaimed.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

No Mercy!

PONSONBY & CO. stared blankly at the Bounder. Smithy sat unmoved, a light curl of smoke rising from his cigarette.

"How do you know?" repeated Ponsonby angrily. "I haven't told a soul, exceptin' these two chaps an' Monson!"

"Oh, I'm a giddy thought-reader, you know!"

"Dashed if I don't half think you are!" said Ponsonby sulkily. "Well, I don't care, anyway! It's coming out to-morrow, only I meant to make a dramatic surprise of it!"

"Plain enough how Smithy knows," remarked Gadsby, after a minute's thought. "He's seen that fellow Redwing at Hawkscliff, just as you have, Pon, and he recognises him, just as you do!"

"Oh!" said Pon. "Why, of course, that's it! By gad, you'll be a witness, Smithy! The fellow may be arrested. You see, there must be a real Clavering somewhere, an' Redwing or his friends must have kidnapped him an' kept him away—murdered him, perhaps. The fellow's bad enough for that!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" murmured Vavasour.

"Well, where is Clavering, then? If there is a Clavering at all," said Ponsonby. "An' there must be, or how could Redwing come there callin' him-

self by that name? Fellow of that name must have been expected at Greyfriars."

"I've noticed the resemblance, as you did, Pon!" remarked the Bounder.

Ponsonby stared.

"What resemblance?"

"Between Clavering and Redwing!"

"It isn't a resemblance—they're the same chap! Fact is, I took the trouble to bike over to Hawkscliff to make sure. I didn't want to risk a bloomer," grinned Ponsonby. "I learned that Redwing had disappeared from his usual haunts, just before the date Clavering arrived at Greyfriars!"

"That settles it, absolutely!" observed Vavasour.

"So you knew this kid Redwing, Smithy?"

"I met him. He pulled me out of the sea, and saved me from being drowned, when I was wrecked in my boat," said Vernon-Smith quietly.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Ponsonby, in amazement. "Did he?"

"Otherwise, I should be a few fathoms deep at this minute."

"I hope you gave him a good tip!" sneered Ponsonby.

"No, I did not give him a good tip," answered Vernon-Smith, his lip curling.

"I think he would probably have dotted me in the eye if I had."

"Haughty sort of longshoreman—what?" chuckled Gadsby.

"He saved my life."

"Well, that wasn't really what you'd call work of national importance, was it?" yawned Ponsonby. "There'd have been no end of dry eyes, Smithy, if you had stayed six fathoms deep. An' I can tell you plainly that if you've come over here to ask me to let him off you might as well have saved your journey. I'm not lettin' the cad off!"

Cecil Ponsonby rubbed his chin, where a faint mark still lingered of the Greyfriars junior's knuckles.

Ponsonby understood the object of the Bounder's visit. He had not come there for the delights of bridge or banker.

"You don't mean that, Smithy?" exclaimed Gadsby incredulously. "What do you care about the fellow?"

"I've said that Redwing saved my life."

"And you want me to let off Clavering in consequence? That's admitting that you know that Clavering is Redwing."

"I'm not admitting anything; but I like this chap Clavering, and I'd rather you didn't worry him, Pon."

"Sorry!" said Pon politely.

"But you're going to do it, all the same—is that it?"

"I'm goin' to show up the cad, and have him kicked out of the dasher school, an' perhaps sent to prison!" said Ponsonby, with relish. "It depends on what he's done with the real Clavering, if there is a real Clavering."

"You don't care about Clavering, if there is such a chap, as you say?"

"Not a brass farthing," agreed Ponsonby. "But I care a good deal about makin' that cad Redwing repent layin' his low hands on me!"

"Is he worth the trouble?"

Ponsonby laughed.

"Ease off, Smithy! It's no good. You can't beg the cad off! I tell you, I've been sharpenin' my knife for him, an' he's got to have it!"

The Bounder rose to his feet, his face very hard. He had come there rather to ascertain how much Ponsonby knew than to make any appeal to the cad of Highcliffe. He knew that an appeal to Pon's generosity was not much use. Pon's nature did not err on the generous side.

The three nuts eyed him with great

amusement. The 'dea of Smithy, the hardest case at Greyfriars, under the spell of gratitude for a service rendered tickled them.

"I'd like you to let Clavering off, Pon," said Vernon-Smith slowly.

"Well, I won't!"

"We've been friends, after all——"

"Not so jolly friendly, if you come to that!" sneered Ponsonby. "You're throwin' us over now because you've taken up the goody-goody bizney again, an' you can't deny it."

"You won't do as I want, then?"

"Not for Joseph!"

"I won't beat about the bush, Pon," said the Bounder. "I'm standin' by Clavering——"

"Because Redwing saved your life?" grinned Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind about that. I mentioned that to show you that Redwing is a splendid chap, and you needn't be down on him simply because he punched your head."

"I am down on him, all the same, the low cad!"

"I'm standing by Clavering, as I said. Anybody who goes for Clavering goes for me!"

"By gad! You're settin' up as his protector?"

"Well, yes."

"I wish you joy of your job, old scout! You'll have a chance for exercisin' your protective powers to-morrow afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder's jaw set very squarely.

"I'm a bad enemy to make, Pon," he said.

"Really?" drawled Pon.

"I'm going to stop you from persecuting Clavering. I sha'n't stick at a trifle in doing it, either."

Ponsonby yawned.

"Dear man, I'm a virtuous youth exposin' a rascally impostor," he explained. "It's a virtuous duty!"

"Whoever Clavering is, he is straight," said Vernon-Smith. "He's done nothing wrong; he's done no harm to anybody. I know that."

"I don't care whether he has or not. I know I've got the whip-hand of him, an' I'm goin' to use it."

"And nothing will stop you?"

"Nothin'."

"It's up to me, then," said the Bounder, very quietly. "I'm against you, Pon."

"So sorry!" smiled Ponsonby. "You really make me feel rather creepy, old scout! What awful things are you goin' to do, after I've shown up your spoofin' friend?"

"Wait and see!" said Vernon-Smith.

He crossed to the door, and left the study without another word. Ponsonby burst into a mocking laugh.

"I—I say, Pon," remarked Vavasour, after a pause, "is it worth while goin' on? Smithy's a dangerous enemy, you know."

Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"I'd go on, all the more, because he's threatened me," he replied. "I'll show the fellow whether I care for his threats or not! I'd do it now if only to make Smithy look an ass!"

Vernon-Smith rode away from Highcliffe on his bike, his brows deeply lined with thought. Clavering of the Remove was facing the morrow with cool quietness, unmoved; but he did not—he could not—realise how close the danger was, and how overwhelming it was. The Bounder knew—he realised only too clearly; and he knew that only he stood between Tom Redwing of Hawkscliff

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and Ponsonby's revenge. And a dim outline of a plan was already forming itself in the Bounder's fertile brain. He had told Ponsonby that he would be a dangerous enemy. Pon was destined to find him dangerous.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Great Expectations I

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were chatting in Study No. 1 after prep when Vernon-Smith looked in. There were welcoming looks for the Bounder at once.

"Just talking about you, old scout," said Wharton.

"Something to my credit, I hope?" smiled the Bounder.

"Well, yes. I wish you were able to play for us in the match to-morrow against Highcliffe; that was the topic."

"I wish I were," assented Vernon-Smith. "I'm pretty keen to get on to footer again. I shall have the pleasure of watching you, anyway. By the way, have you heard of the agreeable little surprise-party Ponsonby is arranging for us to-morrow?"

Wharton frowned.

"All the fellows are talking about it," he answered. "It's just like Pon to fix up an unpleasant scene while the Highcliffe Eleven is over here. The fellow

silly idiot. He won't do it unless he can prove his case. The Head will take up the matter, and if it turns out to be all gas he will see Dr. Voysey about it at Highcliffe. He couldn't overlook it. Pon knows that."

"Yes, but——"

"If it's only gas, Pon's booking himself to be reported to his headmaster for making a slander that's punishable by the law," said Johnny Bull. "Pon's not such a silly fool as that. Either he won't come at all, or else what he says is true."

There was silence in Study No. 1.

Johnny Bull had plainly been thinking the matter out, in his somewhat stolid but very thorough manner.

The Co. could not controvert his view. It was logical and unanswerable. With all Cecil Ponsonby's faults, he was no fool. He would not dare to make such an accusation in public unless it was true, and could be proved true.

Vernon-Smith compressed his lips.

"Mind, I'm saying nothing against Clavering," added Johnny Bull. "I rather like the chap. I don't believe Pon will come at all. I think he's only been talking out of the back of his neck. But, I say, if he does come, and does accuse Clavering, it will be true what he says. So I say, let him go ahead and prove it. If Clavering is a swindling impostor, we want him shown up more than Ponsonby does."

"Pon's only doing it as one up against us!" said Nugent.

"I know that! But he's doing right, if Clavering is an impostor and he knows it, and we can't stop him, and ought not to stop him."

"I—I suppose that's so," said Harry Wharton, after a long pause. "But I don't believe there's anything in it. Clavering's straight. You kind of feel when a chap's really straight, and you feel that with Clavering."

"My esteemed opinion is that the straightfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "The elegant and disgusting Ponsonby will not come!"

"He will come!" said the Bounder.

"Sure of that, Smithy?"

"I've just seen him, and he's got it all cut and dried!" answered Vernon-Smith quietly. "He's coming over to-morrow afternoon, and he's going to accuse Clavering in public."

"If he does, it will be true!" grunted Johnny Bull. "And, I say, let him go ahead and prove it, and let the swindler be kicked out!"

"Clavering isn't a swindler."

"I don't say he is. I only say that he must be if he's here under an assumed name, taking us in."

"Chap might have reasons for that."

"Rats!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. Johnny Bull's observations were, as usual, quite direct and straight from the shoulder.

"I looked in to speak to you chaps about it," the Bounder remarked, after a rather uncomfortable pause. "Suppose Pon was right, it will be rather a rotten scene, and a Highcliffe score over Greyfriars."

"And a Greyfriars score over a swindler!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Look here, Bull——"

"But, really, Smithy, Johnny's right!" interrupted Wharton. "I don't believe it for a minute; but if it should turn out that Clavering is a spoofing swindler, we shall owe Pon a vote of thanks for showing him up. Dash it all, we don't want a swindler in the Remove!"

"I agree!" remarked Bob. "But I believe Pon won't come up to the scratch. It's all Highcliffe gas!"

*Eat less
Bread*

seems to be potty. He may get handled if he starts any rot here."

"He will be, unless he does it while I'm playing footer," said Bob Cherry emphatically. "We don't want Pon making scenes here."

"Let him alone!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Why, you ass——"

"It's you that's the ass, Bob. I say, let him alone."

"So you're backing up Ponsonby, Bull?" exclaimed the Bounder, with a very curious look at Johnny.

"Draw it mild, Johnny, old chap!" murmured Nugent.

Johnny Bull looked obstinate.

"I wouldn't touch Ponsonby with a barge-pole, and you know it," he said. "But I say, let him go ahead. Don't ask me to believe that Pon's fool enough to come over here and make a scene for nothing. He's got an accusation to make against a Greyfriars chap. He accuses Clavering of spoofing us all, including the Head, and being an impostor. Well, he won't make that accusation unless he's got something to go on. He's not fool enough!"

"But——" began Wharton.

"There's no buts in the case," said Johnny Bull deliberately. "Ponsonby is choosing a public occasion, so as to attract attention. He knows it must come to the masters' ears, if he denounces Clavering publicly as an impostor. Pon is a rascal; but he's not a

"I tell you he's coming!" snapped the Bounder.

"If that is so," said Johnny Bull, "it settles it; and, I say, let him come, and more power to his elbow!"

"Then you're not inclined to back up and keep Pon's mouth shut?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a sarcastic smile.

"No jolly fear!"

"We—we can't very well, Smithy," said Wharton, in perplexity. "If Pon's telling the truth, surely we must let him go ahead with it, and tell the facts."

"Smithy, old scout," said Bob, "you don't propose backing up Clavering whether he's a swindler or not, do you?"

"I know he's straight."

"Well, so do I. But we're discussing the possibility that Pon is telling the truth. In that case, he isn't straight."

"I think he's straight, in any case."

"Oh, rot!"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"To put it in a nutshell, you fellows are for letting Pon go ahead?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Harry Wharton at once. "If Clavering's an impostor, he ought to be shown up, and I'd thank Pon for doing it, whatever his motives may be. While, if Pon makes an accusation he can't prove, I'll see that he doesn't get out of Greyfriars without being fairly smashed for his lies!"

"Hear, hear!"

"D'ye think Pon doesn't know that, and that he'd risk it?" snorted Johnny Bull. "I tell you, if Pon makes the accusation before all Greyfriars, it's because he can prove it up to the hilt!"

"Well, I'm standing up for Clavering," said the Bounder.

"Whether he's honest or not?"

"No. I know he's honest!"

"But be reasonable, Smithy!" expostulated Bob Cherry. "If he's under an assumed name, as Pon says, he can't be honest."

"Do you ever read Shakespeare?" asked the Bounder.

"Shakespeare! What the thump has Shakespeare got to do with it?" demanded Bob.

"Shakespeare says that there are more things in the heavens and the earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. It's barely possible that the circumstances of the case are a yard or two beyond your comprehension, you know."

"Oh, rats!" growled Bob Cherry. "Don't be a silly ass, and don't give me any of your sarc. I don't like it!"

"Smithy can stand up for the chap if he likes," said Johnny Bull. "I know what I shall do. If Ponsonby has the pluck to stand up in front of the Remove and denounce Clavering as a swindling impostor, I'll jolly well see that he has a fair hearing. I'll be the first to hit him afterwards if he's lying. But he's going to be heard first."

"I must say I agree with that," said Harry, with a very perplexed look at the Bounder. "Surely you think that's fair play, Smithy?"

"I suppose it's how you look at it, not knowing the chap as I do," the Bounder admitted. "Nuff said! It's settled, then, that if Ponsonby accuses Clavering he's to be given a fair hearing?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"That's all I wanted to know. Ta-ta!"

Vernon-Smith quitted Study No. 1, leaving the Famous Five considerably perplexed, and one of them, at least, somewhat exasperated.

He went to his own study, where he found Harold Skinner yawning over his prep.

Skinner greeted him with a grin.

"Rippin' entertainment booked for to-morrow, Smithy," he remarked. "Your dear pal Clavering, who always

gives you the cold shoulder, is going to get it in the neck."

"Sure of that, Skinner?"

"Oh, quite! Pon wouldn't risk it unless he was playing a dead sure hand."

"Perhaps Pon will climb down to-morrow!" suggested the Bounder. "He may have been pulling your leg, Skinner."

"Rot!"

"If I were still a betting chap, dear boy, I'd give you two to one that Pon climbs down."

"I'd take it!" grinned Skinner. "Are you up against Pon over this, Smithy?"

The Bounder yawned.

"How does it concern me?" he said. "Bother the whole thing! My hat! I wonder what enemy of the human race invented prep?"

And Vernon-Smith settled down to work, and did not say another word. Skinner looked at him very curiously, and left the study when he had scamped his prep, as usual. He joined Snoop and Stott in the Common-room, and found them chatting with much satisfaction over the expected dramatic denouement of the morrow. Bolsover

"Any reason why I should tell you, Bolsover?" asked Clavering evenly.

"I want to know."

"That isn't a reason."

Bolsover reddened, as some of the juniors laughed.

"You see, it's not your business," Clavering remarked. "You're really shoving your oar in where you've no business, you know."

"Right on the wicket!" grinned Peter Todd.

"By gad, though, you ought to stay in an' face that Highcliffe cad, Clavering!" remarked Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth. "It's up to you!"

Clavering nodded.

"I intend to stay in," he answered. "I shall be on the football-ground, watching the match, if anybody wants to find me."

"Well, that's all I wanted to know," growled Bolsover major, somewhat shamefacedly.

"Well, you know now, though it really isn't your business, anyway!"

Clavering dropped his eyes on his book again. Sidney James Snoop burst into a chortle.



Pon surprises the plotters! (See Chapter 12.)

major joined the group, looking somewhat surly.

"Look here, Skinner, is it straight—is Ponsonby coming?" he demanded.

"You bet!" answered Skinner tersely.

"The question is, will Clavering be here to face him?"

"That's what I'm going to settle."

Bolsover major crossed over to Clavering, who was reading in a chair by the fire, quietly and contentedly. He clapped the new junior on the shoulder, and Clavering looked up.

"You know that Highcliffe cad is coming here to-morrow, Clavering?" inquired the bully of the Remove. "He says he's going to denounce you as an impostor."

"Give us a rest," replied Clavering.

"What I want to know is, are you going out of gates or are you going to face him?"

Bolsover major's loud voice was heard all through the Common-room, and a dozen fellows turned their heads to look at Clavering. The red crept a little into the cheeks of the new junior,

"Bet he goes out, all the same!" he remarked.

Clavering laid down his book and rose, with an expression on his quiet face that Snoop did not quite like.

"That's as good as calling me a liar, Snoop!" he said. "You can have any opinion you like, but you're bound to keep an opinion like that to yourself, or else have your nose pulled."

"Why, you— Keep off! Oh! Goocooogh!"

Snoop put up his hands desperately as Clavering advanced upon him, but in a moment his nose was in an iron grip.

"Goog-goog-goog!" came in muffled accents from Snoop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clavering released Snoop's nose, stepped back, and pushed back his cuffs. But Sidney James Snoop did not accept the implied invitation. He retreated

from the Common-room, clapping his nose, followed by several hoots and howls of "Funk!" Clavering sat down again quietly, and took up his book. And

Skinner and Stott refrained from some remarks they had intended to make. They were too concerned for their noses.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Peculiar Bargain!

HARRY WHARTON stirred and awoke.

The hour was late. The Remove had long been in bed in the dormitory.

Some sound had awakened Wharton, and he turned his head on the pillow and blinked round him. There was a glimmer of moonlight in at the high windows, and he started as he caught sight of a dim, moving figure.

"Hallo! What—" he ejaculated.

"Shush!"

"Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton.

He sat up in bed, staring at Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder was fully dressed, and the hour was eleven, or later. Wharton's brows contracted.

"I thought you had given up this kind of thing, Smithy?" he said, very quietly.

The Bounder laughed softly.

"What kind of thing?" he asked.

"Breaking bounds at night!" said Wharton, with a tone of scorn in his voice. "But it's no business of mine! Good-night!"

"Don't get on the high horse too soon, old scout. I'm not going out on the tiles!" grinned the Bounder. "Not in the least!"

"You're going out?"

"Yes! To pay a call!"

"A call at midnight?"

"Exactly. I am going to do good by stealth, you know, and hide my light under a bushel."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I'm going out to do a chap a good turn—a chap who did me a tremendous good turn once," said the Bounder coolly. "I'm going to help him, now he's down, and an envious, unscrupulous rotter has got the whip-hand of him. That sounds rather steep, doesn't it?"

"It does, rather," said Wharton drily.

"And yet it's the frozen-truth. Would you advise me to stay in bed under the circumstances?" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Not if it's as you say, certainly. But I don't see—"

"Of course you don't! But you can take my word for it—if you like! Suit yourself, of course!"

"Of course, I take your word," said Harry. "But I'm blessed if I understand. But if it's as you say, I wish you good luck. If you're pulling my leg—"

"Not at all!"

"Well, good-night!"

"Good-night, dear boy!"

The Bounder, silent in rubber shoes, glided out of the dormitory. There was a low chuckle from Skinner's bed. He, too, had awakened.

"The Bounder's on the razzle again, Wharton—what?" he murmured.

"You heard what he said?" snapped Harry.

"Yes; rather too steep for me to swallow! You don't believe such a yarn, I suppose?"

"Oh, rats! Go to sleep!" was Wharton's reply.

The Bounder made his way silently to the lower box-room, and in a few more minutes he was out of doors. A few more and he dropped from the school wall into the moonlit road.

The Bounder was very wary as he made his way down the lane towards Friardale. He knew what it meant for him to be seen out of school bounds at such an hour of the night. But pedestrians were few

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at that hour in the lonely lane, and at the sound of footsteps, once or twice, the Bounder dodged into the hedge. He came in sight of the Cross Keys public-house, on the outskirts of the village, at last. The building was closed and dark.

But Vernon-Smith knew from of old his way about that delectable resort. He slipped quietly into the path beside the inn, squeezed through a hedge and a fence, and found himself in the inn garden. He mounted softly the wooden steps of the veranda at the back of the house, and stopped outside a window where a few stray gleams of light escaped through the thick curtains. It was a French window, and the Bounder turned the handle, but it was locked within. He tapped twice on the glass.

The hangings inside were drawn back in about a minute, and the door unlocked and partly opened.

"Who's that?" inquired a husky voice.

"An old friend, Jerry!"

"Smithy!" ejaculated Jerry Hawke.

The Bounder pushed in, the astonished man making way for him. In the lighted room Jerry Hawke, bookmaker, billiard-sharp, tout, and many other things, stared at the Greyfriars junior blankly as the latter closed the French window and let the hangings fall into place.

"You 'ere!" stuttered Hawke.

"Rather a surprise—what?"

"You young 'ound—"

"Shush!" smiled the Bounder. "That isn't the way to greet an old pal, Jerry!"

The sharper looked at him uncertainly. The Bounder's reform had led to much bitterness on the part of this shady acquaintance, and an attempt at blackmail, and Mr. Hawke had been somewhat roughly dealt with. He had not forgotten it. Yet his greedy instinct was to be civil to the millionaire's son, if the latter showed any sign of renewed friendliness.

"All alone this evening?" smiled Vernon-Smith.

"I'm expecting Cobb an' a friend or two!" grunted Mr. Hawke. "Look 'ere, young Smithy—"

"Then I won't waste time. Don't scowl, Jerry! What's the good of raking up old troubles? Is a ten-pound note any good to you?"

"A—a tenner?"

"Yes!"

"Course it is! You ain't come 'ere to make me a present of a ten-pound note, I suppose?" said Mr. Hawke sarcastically.

"Your mistake! I have!"

"Oh, come off! What's the game?" demanded the sharper impatiently.

"I'll explain! You have Ponsonby of Highcliffe down on the list of pigeons that you make a living by plucking. Pon is a goey youth, and he plunges pretty deep at times."

"And don't always square on the nail, neither!" grunted Mr. Hawke discontentedly.

"He owes you a little bit now?"

"S'pose he does?"

"You've got his paper for it?"

"I 'ave!" said Mr. Hawke emphatically. "Master Ponsonby's good for as much as he signs 'is name for. 'E don't want me to intervoo 'is 'eadmaster, I fancy!" And Mr. Hawke grinned.

"Pon's in rather low water," said Vernon-Smith. "He mayn't be able to settle up yet. But as Pon's a dear old pal, I'm open to settle up for him."

"You?" exclaimed Jerry Hawke.

"Little me!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Mr. Hawke, forcibly, if not eloquently.

"Money talks!" said the Bounder, taking out his pocket-book. "Pon's paper is good for cash, but I suppose

you'd rather have the cash than the paper, as a matter of choice?"

"You bet your life! But—"

"Well, the cash is on offer, if you choose!"

"I don't savvy this 'ere!" said Mr. Hawke slowly. "You ain't the young gent to shell out quids for a pal—excuse me, Master Smithy, I always speak plain. You want to get 'old of Master Ponsonby's I O U for reasons of your own."

"Have you any objection?"

"Well, I might, an' I might not!" said Mr. Hawke cautiously. "Master Pon's a rather 'igh-toned young gentleman, an' talks to a man as if he was dirt, sometimes. But I'm a sportsman! I ain't the man to do 'im an ill turn!"

"Who wants you to do him an ill turn?"

"Well, what do you want Master Pon's paper for? Explain that there!"

"Not to collect the money on it," grinned the Bounder.

"I knows that!"

"Perhaps I want to keep it as a souvenir of my old friendship with Pon."

"Oh, come off!"

"Perhaps I want to induce Pon to hold his hand and not play a dirty trick on a friend of mine."

"Oh!" said Mr. Hawke comprehensively. "Master Pon's got the upper 'and of you somehow, and you want to get him down?"

"Suppose I did?"

"Then that paper's worth more than its face value, that's all," replied Mr. Hawke coolly. "Master Pon owes me ten pounds, and I've got his fist for it. That paper's for sale for fifteen pounds."

The Bounder laughed.

"You always did drive a hard bargain, Jerry."

"Well, I've got to think of myself. Master Pon will be wild when he knows I've parted with the paper, and I can't afford to quarrel with my bread-and-butter," argued the sharper. "Course; I shall explain you offered to pay, as his pal, and I handed you the paper believin' you was going to 'and it to him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But he's a suspicious young gent—very suspicious. There's a risk. Fifteen quid is cheap for that paper."

Vernon-Smith opened his pocket-book, and took out a ten-pound note and a five-pound note. Jerry Hawke's eyes glistened at the sight of them.

"Show up!" said the Bounder laconically.

"By gum, I oughter made it twenty!"

"Fifteen is the figure. Take it, or leave it!"

Jerry Hawke unlocked a desk in the corner of the room, and took out a paper. He threw it on the table.

"Look at that, Master Smith."

Vernon-Smith examined the paper carefully. It was a promise to pay Jerry Hawke ten pounds, in Ponsonby's elegant caligraphy, signed with Cecil Ponsonby's name, and dated. It was thoroughly explicit. Jerry Hawke did not trust the sportive Ponsonby, and did not mean to allow him a chance of repudiating his paper. That note was enough to get Ponsonby expelled from Highcliffe School, if Hawke had taken it to Dr. Voysey. The paper, of course, had no legal value, but it was worth the money it represented to Jerry Hawke, who would have had no scruple in betraying Pon if he had refused to square.

"First-rate!" said Vernon-Smith.

He put the paper in his pocket-book, and flicked the banknotes towards Jerry Hawke, whose unclean fingers grabbed them greedily.

"You've done rather well on this deal, Jerry," remarked the Bounder. "You don't always make fifty per cent. so

easily. And, if it's any comfort to you, I'm only going to use this paper to prevent Ponsonby taking a cowardly revenge on a fellow whose boots he isn't fit to black."

"You beat me 'ollow, Master Smith," said Jerry Hawke.

"Well, good-night!"

"You won't stay for a little game?" inquired the cheerful Jerry. "Cobb an' some other pals are comin' in—"

"Thanks, no! At present I am settin' a shinin' example of morality in its higher forms to my friends."

"Haw, haw, haw!" chuckled Mr. Hawke.

The Bounder stepped out to the veranda, and in a few minutes he had left the place far behind. Midnight had tolled when he climbed into the dark window at the back of the School House at Greyfriars, and, trod softly to the Remove dormitory. The Bounder of Greyfriars slept soundly and contentedly that night.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

The Highcliffe Match!

"RIPPING weather for footer!" said Bob Cherry, with great satisfaction.

Harry Wharton & Co. came out after dinner on Wednesday in cheery mood.

Apart from the Bounder being missed from the eleven, Wharton's team was in great fettle, and the Removites looked forward keenly to the match with Highcliffe.

To the footballers the match was the event of the afternoon, and they gave little thought to the affair of Clavering. But they were more or less interested in that, too—and other fellows were keenly interested in it. It was taken as certain now that Cecil Ponsonby was coming, and it was an interesting question how his dramatic denouement would turn out.

When the Remove team went down to the ground most of the Removites gathered there. Skinner & Co. kept an eye on Leonard Clavering. They still suspected that he intended to be out of gates when Ponsonby came, and they were ready to call in Bolsover major's aid to stop him from clearing off.

Those cheerful youths were not to be deprived of the excitement promised by Ponsonby if they could help it.

But Clavering showed no disposition to leave the school grounds. He went down to Little Side, and Skinner & Co. followed him there.

Clavering was really playing into his enemy's hands by going to the football-ground to watch the match. It ensured a large audience for the cad of Highcliffe when he came to make his denunciation. That was what Ponsonby wanted very keenly—to crowd as much shame and humiliation as he could into the exposure of the fellow he hated. What Clavering thought about the matter was not to be discovered from his quiet, sedate face.

"He knows it's no good dodgin'," was Skinner's comment. "If he went out after all that's been said it would be admitting everything Pon chooses to say."

"Thinkin' of brazening it out," agreed Snoop. "I wonder whether Pon can prove it, after all?"

Skinner grinned.

"If he accuses a Greyfriars chap of being a swindling impostor without being able to prove it, I'm sorry for him!" he said. "There won't be much of him left when he gets away from Greyfriars."

"Well, that's right enough," said Stott. "If he's lying, it's up against our

school, and I'll lend a hand myself ragging him for it!"

"But he's not lying this time," opined Skinner. "And it will be worth watching. The Head or Quelchby is bound to be called in; it can't be avoided. And it's the finish for that rotten impostor who sets up to be a censor of morals."

Clavering did not seem to notice the group of grinning young rascals who stood near him, their eyes on him. He watched the juniors punting a ball about while they waited for the visiting team to arrive, chatting once or twice with Russell and Ogilvy, who stood near him.

His face did not betray the leaden weight that lay at his heart.

The Bounder joined him.

"Seeing the match through?" he asked.

"Yes," said Clavering.

"You don't think Ponsonby will come?"

"I don't know, and I don't care!"

"You're standing it well," said Vernon-Smith, in a low voice. "Clavering, I told you I was your friend."

"Thank you!"

"I'm standing your friend in this matter." His voice sank lower.

"You've nothing to fear this afternoon, Clavering, I think—I'm sure, in fact."

"You're very good," said Clavering, still unmoved.

"Hallo, here come the Highcliffe chaps!" called out two or three voices.

Frank Courtenay and his team were seen. The Bounder's glance was upon them at once, and he left Clavering's side. But the nuts of Highcliffe had not yet arrived.

The Highcliffe footballers had come, but not Ponsonby & Co. The nuts were leaving it later apparently.

"Gas, after all, Skinner!" remarked Stott discontentedly.

"Not a bit," said Skinner. "Pon wants an audience—not the backs of the heads of fellows who are watchin' footer. He will let them get the match over, so that he can have all the limelight."

"Yes, that's likely enough."

Harry Wharton & Co. greeted the Highcliffe footballers heartily. They were glad to see that Ponsonby had not come. The Famous Five were far from anticipating a denouement that afternoon with glee, as Skinner & Co. did.

Vernon-Smith lounged among the crowd while the two skippers tossed for choice of ends, and the ball was kicked off. Potter of the Fifth, the referee, blew the whistle.

"On the ball, Greyfriars!"

The football game drew almost the whole attention of the crowd now, and the Clavering affair was forgotten. It was a match well worth watching. Harry Wharton & Co. were at the top of their form. And the Highcliffe players were very good, especially Frank Courtenay, the Caterpillar, and Derwent, the recruit from Tasmania.

The first goal came to Courtenay, but Wharton scored soon afterwards, and then the game went on, ding-dong, to the interval.

Vernon-Smith, usually keen on footer, was giving the game a very divided attention. At half-time he left the ground altogether, and strolled away to the school gates.

He heard the whistle, and the shouts about the field, and the roar of "Goal!" and "Bravo, Wharton!" But he did not turn his head. He was watching the road for the nuts of Highcliffe. He knew they must come soon. Pon had evidently timed his dramatic interlude to follow the footer match while the place was crowded, and he would be on the scene in good time.

Four elegant figures came in sight on

the road at last—Ponsonby, Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson.

The nuts of Highcliffe sauntered up to the gates, and bestowed careless nods on Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder smiled.

"So you've come?" he remarked.

"Oh, yass!"

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"Game goin' on?" yawned Gadsby.

"Yes; they've started the second half ten minutes ago."

"May as well get on the scene, then," remarked Ponsonby. "Is Clavering there, Smithy?"

"Yes."

"Good egg! He's got a nerve. I suppose he couldn't have dodged it without quite givin' himself away, though," Ponsonby smiled evilly. "I've got him in a cleft stick. Are you comin' to look on at the merry denouement, Smithy? Do!"

"Oh, do!" grinned the nuts.

"The fact is, I'd like a little chat with you first, Pon," said the Bounder agreeably. "You're in no hurry. There's half an hour to go yet. Come up to my study an' put on a smoke."

"I'd rather get on the ground, I think."

"But I want to speak to you."

"The want is entirely on your side, Smithy," answered Pon coolly. "Come on, you fellows!"

"You'd better come to my study, I think, Pon," said the Bounder. "I've got somethin' to tell you about a paper of yours—and Jerry Hawke."

The dandy of Highcliffe started.

"What do you mean, Smithy?"

"I mean that that paper's in danger of getting to your headmaster."

"Good gad!"

Ponsonby's supercilious coolness was not proof against that. His jaw dropped, and he stared blankly at Vernon-Smith.

"Jerry Hawke would never dare!" he breathed. "He'd lose everythin' in connection with Highcliffe, and—and his money, too. He knows that! You're tryin' to spoof me, Vernon-Smith, you rotter!"

"I'm giving you the straight goods, Pon, and I give you my word on that! You'd better come to my study."

"I'll come," said Ponsonby shortly.

"Wait for me on the field, you chaps!"

"Right-ho!"

Ponsonby walked away with Vernon-Smith to the School House. Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour strolled down to the football-ground. The game was going on hard and fast, and, slackers as they were, they watched it with some interest.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Whip-Hand!

"NOW, Smithy!"

Ponsonby muttered the words, as he stood in Vernon-Smith's study, in the quiet and deserted Remove passage.

His face was angry and harassed.

"What did you mean?" he demanded.

"Were you tryin' to pull my leg? What do you know about Jerry Hawke an' my paper?"

"I've got it."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I've got it," repeated the Bounder coolly.

"Liar!"

"My dear chap, I don't expect you to take my word for it," smiled the Bounder. "I warned you yesterday that I was up against you, you know, if you're up against my friend Clavering."

"Your friend Redwing, you mean!" snarled Ponsonby.

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The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "Redwing or Clavering, it comes to the same thing. I'm standing by him, and seeing him through," he replied. "You're not seein' him through!" said Ponsonby, between his teeth. "I'm goin' to expose him, an' ruin him! I'm goin' to denounce him in a way that can't be got over! I'm goin' to drag the Head into it—"

"I know the programme, dear boy; don't bore me by goin' through the items! But that cheery programme will never be carried out."

"Why won't it, you fool?" shouted Ponsonby.

"Because," said the Bounder, slowly and distinctly—"because, Cecil Ponsonby, you will be sacked from Highcliffe if it is!"

"Gas!"

"I've got the paper."

"It's a lie!" hissed Ponsonby.

"Hawke would never part with it—he dare not! An' it's worth money to him, too."

"I've got it away from him."

"How?" hissed Ponsonby.

"Never mind how; I've got it!"

"I don't believe it!"

"Look!" said the Bounder.

He took the paper from his pocket-book, and held it up within a foot of Ponsonby's startled eyes.

Ponsonby glared at it for a second; he knew it well enough when he saw it.

Then he made a sudden, tigerish snatch at it. But the Bounder was prepared for that; he had expected it.

His left hand shot out at the same moment, and Ponsonby's arm was struck up so forcibly that he uttered a cry of pain.

"No, you don't!" grinned Vernon-Smith.

He thrust the paper into his pocket-book again, and slipped it into an inside pocket.

Ponsonby watched him with savage eyes, but didn't venture to make another attempt.

"That paper's mine," said Vernon-Smith. "Never mind how I've got it—here it is. You see that! You've got the whip-hand of Clavering, Pon, and I've got the whip-hand of you."

Ponsonby clenched his hands almost convulsively. There was bitter hatred in the look he gave the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"What do you mean to do with that paper?" he asked.

"Nothing! Let Clavering alone, and that paper lies locked up in a safe place—safe, so long as you let Clavering alone. It will save you ten pounds; you won't have to pay on it." The Bounder smiled. "You score there, you see."

"Hang you!"

"But if you carry out the sweet programme you've been sketching, this paper goes to Dr. Voysey this afternoon by registered post," continued the Bounder slowly and deliberately. "You know what that would mean! Yes, I know that your Form-master favours you, and your headmaster is a snob who bows down to your titled connections. I know that! But the Head of Highcliffe wouldn't have any choice in the matter. There's a limit even in an aristocratic school like Highcliffe. You know it! The Head must draw a line somewhere; and he would draw it with even a favoured youth like you, Pon, at gambling in a low pub with bookmakers who've been warned off the Turf!"

"Oh, you hound!"

"You know it," smiled the Bounder.

"I've heard yarns of a game you tried to play once on Courtenay—making out that he was the kind of shady goat you are yourself. You knew it would do for him if you could make it out. It would

do for you just the same, Pon. You know it!"

"You hound!" repeated Ponsonby helplessly. "You—you dare not! If you begin the peachin' game, I can peach, too. I know enough about you to get you kicked out of your school."

"Any proof?" drawled the Bounder.

"Anything in black and white?"

Ponsonby ground his teeth in helpless rage. He knew that the Bounder had the upper hand. He could not betray Vernon-Smith, for he had no proof. It would be assertion against assertion, that was all. The Bounder had proof, in Ponsonby's own elegant hand.

"It would finish you," resumed the Bounder. "You know it, an' I know it. You've had some narrow escapes before. I know your nobby relations have had to influence Dr. Voysey more than once to save you from the chopper. But this would be the limit, old scout."

"Hang you!"

"Dear man, I don't want to do you any harm. You can go on painting the town red as long as you like; it's amusing to watch you, in fact. But hands off my friends! Leave me alone, and leave my pals alone, and you can rip—and get the merry sack your own way at your own time. But say one word against Clavering—"

The Bounder's face grew stern, and his voice hard. "One word, Pon, and I'll crush you as I'd crush a poisonous adder!"

There was silence in the study.

Ponsonby's handsome face was quite white. Rage and chagrin and hatred rioted in his breast.

He knew that he was helpless. His teeth had been drawn. The Bounder had told him that he was a dangerous enemy; he was proving his words now. True, Ponsonby could never have foreseen anything of this kind. Only the Bounder of Greyfriars could have thought out such a device. But it was successful; the Bounder held the whip-hand, and he was as merciless as Ponsonby had intended to be.

The silence lasted long.

It was Vernon-Smith who broke it at last.

"Time's getting on," he remarked.

"They'll be getting to a finish soon. What's your answer, Pon—peace or war?"

"Give me that paper, and I'll keep my mouth closed!" muttered Ponsonby huskily.

The Bounder laughed.

"To open it again as soon as the paper was burned?" he smiled. "I'm not quite an idiot, Pon. I'm not in training to join the Diplomatic Service. Simplicity isn't exactly my strong point. That paper's going to be locked up. I'll hand it to you willingly when Clavering has nothing more to fear from you. It's yours when that time comes, if it ever does. Now, what are you going to do?"

"I—I'd like to smash you—"

"You're welcome to try!"

Ponsonby measured the Bounder with his eye. The desperate thought was in his mind of possessing himself of the paper by violence.

The Bounder burst into a hearty laugh.

"Go it!" he said.

Ponsonby gritted his teeth. The thought left his mind almost as soon as it had entered there. He could not handle the Bounder. He had tried that before, with disastrous results.

"I'm in your hands," he said, at last.

"I'll make you pay for this, some time, Vernon-Smith! I give in!"

"Good! You're saving ten quids by the transaction, you know!" laughed the Bounder. "You won't have to pay on this paper. Let that be a consolation to

you! It will pay you for the trouble I'm going to put you to!"

"What do you want me to do, hang you?"

"You've caused a lot of talk about Clavering. Lots of the fellows are expecting a dramatic denunciation this afternoon—there's a good bit of excitement. You've got to take it all back!"

"I won't!"

"I think you will! You've done too much harm, Pon, for me to consent to leave the matter where it stands. I might almost as well let you go ahead and do your worst. You've got to allay the suspicion you've raised. You've got to eat your words."

"Oh, hang you! I won't!" hissed Ponsonby.

Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed.

"You know the consequences, then!" he answered icily. "As sure as you stand there, Pon, I'll have no mercy on you—no more than you intended to have on Clavering!"

Ponsonby clenched his hands till his nails dug into his palms. His rage was so great that he fairly shook. He nodded at last, without speaking, and left the study.

Vernon-Smith smiled, and followed him. Ponsonby's footsteps led him to the football-ground, and the Bounder sauntered after him there.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Not a Denouement!

"GOAL!" The crowd were shouting, though it was a Highcliffe goal. The Caterpillar had scored, and the goals were two to two.

The footballers seemed about equally matched, and the game was keenly contested and exciting from start to finish. All eyes were upon the final struggle for the deciding goal.

Ponsonby joined Gadsby and his companions, his face darkly overcast. His nutty comrades looked at him curiously.

Pon did not explain. He had bowed under the Bounder's iron determination, but his defeat rankled bitterly, and he did not choose to refer to it. He stood with a gloomy brow, waiting for the match to end, with very different intentions, now from those he had had when he arrived at Greyfriars.

He knew what he had to do.

He had aroused suspicion concerning Clavering of the Remove. He had to allay it—to the Bounder's complete satisfaction. He could choose his own methods—but he had to do it. Unless Clavering was righted in the eyes of his school-fellows, the Bounder's vengeance would be short and sharp. Indeed, Ponsonby was by this time uneasily anxious to give the Bounder the fullest possible satisfaction, terrified by the thought that Vernon-Smith might choose to get his mouth closed by getting him turned out of Highcliffe in disgrace. With all his powerful connections, Ponsonby had had more than one narrow escape already, so thorough was the blackguardism of his character. It rested with the Bounder to give the finishing stroke, if he chose—and Ponsonby was chilled by the fear that Vernon-Smith might not consider that he had done enough, and might punish him for what he had left undone.

Skinner & Co. joined the nuts, with anticipatory grins, but Ponsonby did not speak to them. And when Skinner addressed him, Pon's reply was short, if not sweet.

"Shut up!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Skinner. "But, I say, Pon—"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!"

"Well, you seem to be in a cheery temper this afternoon," said Skinner sulkily. "Go and eat coke!"

Clavering glanced for a moment at the group. For a moment his glance rested on Ponsonby. It expressed nothing but a slightly scornful indifference. Whatever his feelings might have been, he did not betray them.

Ponsonby was thinking hard and savagely. Not only had he to leave undone what he had come there to do, but he had to undo what he had done already. He was still thinking it out when the final whistle went, and the footballers came off, having drawn the match, two all.

"Now then, Pon!" murmured Gadsby. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's cheery old Pon!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, stopping as he spotted the nuts. "When does the drama begin, Pon?"

Wharton threw on his coat, and came towards Ponsonby, with a grim expression on his face.

"You're here, Ponsonby!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" snapped the Highcliffe junior.

"I've heard why you've come. If you've got anything to say about a chap in my form, say it out, now and here! He's present to answer you!"

"Yes, rather!"

"By gad! What's this little game, Franky?" murmured the Caterpillar. But Frank Courtenay shook his head.

Ponsonby forced a grin to his face.

"Excuse me, I don't quite understand what you're driving at, Wharton!" he answered.

Vernon-Smith smiled.

His eyes were on Ponsonby, grimly watching. There was no mercy in his breast. Ponsonby had to play up, according to orders, or face the consequences.

"You know what I'm driving at well

enough, Ponsonby!" exclaimed Wharton sharply. "You've told Skinner that a chap here—Clavering yonder—is an impostor passing under an assumed name. You've said you were coming over here this afternoon to prove it. Well, you're here! Say it out—and then prove it up to the hilt, or it will be the worse for you!"

Ponsonby smiled a sickly smile. He had anticipated this moment—he had looked forward to it. And now that it had come he was forced to swallow his bitter hatred and malice, and let the opportunity pass him by.

"Oh, I catch on!" he said, with as much of his old supercilious drawl as he could muster. "Skinner said that, did he? I'm afraid, dear boy, that I must confess to the naughtiness of havin' pulled Skinner's leg!"

"What?" yelled Skinner.

"Wha-at?" exclaimed Wharton.

"You see, Skinner was so full of pleasant remarks about Clavering that I thought it would be rather amusin' to lead him on, and pull his leg," Ponsonby explained, in quite his old, airy way. "Skinner's very amusin' when you're pullin' his leg—he swallows things so easily. By gad, you know, I'd forgotten the whole matter! I came over here to see the football match, really!"

There was a buzz of amazement.

Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson stared at Ponsonby, wondering if they were dreaming. Clavering of the Remove looked at him—quietly, grimly, but perplexedly. Only the Bounder understood, and the Bounder smiled.

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton, at last. "Is that all?"

"That's all, dear boy! No special punishment under the Defence of the Realm Act for pullin' Skinner's leg, I hope?" drawled Ponsonby.

"No," said Wharton, laughing. "Skinner, you silly ass—"

"He wasn't pulling my leg!" yelled Skinner furiously. "He's changed his mind for some reason—Smithy's got at him! That's it!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bob Cherry. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, Skinner's raised a storm in a teacup, and made things unpleasant for a chap we all like—old Clavering yonder. I suggest bumping Skinner as a warning!"

"Hear, hear!"

And Skinner was promptly bumped, amid many yells and howls from the unfortunate Skinner. Ponsonby & Co. sauntered away. In the road outside, Gaddy and the rest turned on their leader.

"Pon, what the thunder—"

"Pon, you howlin' ass—"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Ponsonby savagely, and then he went on with a string of savage curses that drove his companions away. Gaddy & Co. were not particular, but they speedily left Pon to himself. It was a defeated, savage, and furious Ponsonby who tramped home to Highcliffe in the dusk.

The rumours that had gathered about Clavering of the Remove had died away like mist at the rising of the sun. Skinner & Co. were angry and disappointed. But, though defeated, they did not give up hope of unmasking the junior who they persisted was living at Greyfriars under false colours. Clavering did not heed them. But the Bounder heeded them, and the Bounder's watchfulness did not sleep.

(Don't miss "A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN!"

By Frank Richards.

"Hereabouts died a very gallant gentleman." That was the epitaph given to that splendid Englishman, Lieutenant Oates, of Scott's Antarctic Expedition, who, hopelessly incapacitated, and knowing that he could only be a drag on his comrades, went out into the cold and darkness of the Polar night to die alone. And what finer epitaph could any man have? It touched the heart of France. I remember how at the time one Paris paper said that only an Englishman could have written anything so terse and yet so fine, and that the words were worthy of the man they honoured.

Gallant gentlemen have died in their thousands on the battlefield over there—leaders and men of the rank and file. But it is not only on the stricken field or in wild lands that courage and high unselfishness may flower. And I think that when you have read next week's fine story you will all agree with me that Arthur Courtney, of the Sixth, who figures as the hero of it, was indeed "a very gallant gentleman!"

NOTICES.

I fear that within the next few weeks I shall have to knock these off for some months to come. Again and again I have warned readers that I cannot print their notices at once, and cannot tell them when their turn will come—it depends on so many things. And now I have a drawerful of notices, as to which I can only say that they will go in when I am able to find room. But if I keep on accepting a hundred or two every week, and can only squeeze a dozen or two in, some of you will have to wait a very

long time. And it's not a bit of use your writing to grumble; I can do no more than try best, and that is to insert a few when I have room. I do not pretend to keep them in the order received—I haven't anyone available to do the work which regulating a queue of notices would entail. But, except that I give as early insertion as possible to footer notices, I am strictly impartial. I take out the whack in waiting, and choose them here and there quite at random. It is a kind of lottery, you see. If your luck is in you may see your notice in, too, within five or six weeks; if it is out you may have to wait as many months.

Not much heed has been paid to my request that numbers, not titles, shall be given when old issues are wanted; and because of that back number notices are apt to fare badly. An average notice of this kind takes up twice the space that a footer or correspondence notice does. I know your difficulty—you don't know what the number of the story you want is. But I am tired of typing out "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out" for the printers, and in future I want you to call this story No. 254. And here are the numbers of a few more which are very frequently asked for: "Drummed out of Greyfriars" (a double number), 253; "Bunter the Boxer," 81; "Bunter the Bully," 83; "Wingate's Secret," 108; "The Bounder of Greyfriars" (the first Vernon-Smith yarn), 119; "The Postal-Order Conspiracy" (generally asked for as "Billy Bunter's Postal-Order," 133; "Bunter's Bust-Up," 148; "The Yankee Schoolboy" (the first Fish yarn), 150; "John Bull Junior," 152; "Wingate's Chum," 162; "The Greyfriars Tyrant," 171; "The School on Strike," 172; "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," 179; "The Outlaw of the School," 199; "Wingate's Folly," 200; "The Hidden Horror," 239; "The Schoolboy Policeman," 244; "Fishy's Fag Agency," 257; "Wun Lung's Secret," 276; "The Sandow Girl at Greyfriars," 283; "The Four Heroes" (a double number), 305; "The Rival Ventriloquist," 361; and "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves" (double number), 392. And the story which you will persist in calling "Billy Bunter's Love Affair" bears the title

"Surprising the School," and is No. 364. There is no such story as "The Race to the Tuckshop." That was the title of a game included in an issue of the "Gem" some three years or so ago.

I may be able to give more of this information a little later; but I do not care to do it unless you make use of it. Don't ask for "Bunter the Bully"—ask for No. 83—see?

Back Numbers, Etc., Wanted.

By Charles Pearce, c/o Messrs. Read & Roberts, Helston, Cornwall—MAGNET, Nos. 376, 377, 380-397, 408-423, 425, 441, 444, 453-458, 460-464, 472, and 479; also numbers before 375; "Gem," Nos. 472, 481, 491, also numbers before 465; "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library, No. 394, and Nos. before 389; "Penny Popular," Nos. 222-265. Please state price.

By W. R. Hubbard, Stortford Road, Dunmow, Essex—old numbers of "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library, especially footer stories.

By Arthur Rhoads, 98, Killingham Road, Bradford—any back numbers, and "Boy Without a Name."

By H. Goodbudge, 24, Cranworth Road, East Worthing, Sussex—to exchange "Nelson Lee" and "Sexton Blake Library," also "Boys' Friend" Library, for MAGNETS and "Gems" before 400—wanted to send to men in the trenches.

By A. S. Jennings, 33, Rectory Road, Stoneyholme Road, Burnley—back numbers of MAGNET and "Gem" for soldier friend.

By F. Longstaff, 16, Marlborough Hill, 53, John's Wood—"Tom Merry for England," "Kildare for Ireland," "Hero of Wales," "Son of Scotland," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding"—1/6 offered.

Your Editor

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 55.—GATTY AND MYERS.

GATTY'S Christian names are George Adalbert; but he never says much about the "Adalbert," because it is the sort of name upon which the Second Form is apt to cast ridicule. You might put him down as George Alfred Gatty without his protesting. Godfathers and god-mothers don't always remember what they may be bringing upon innocent infants. It is bad enough to be "Gag," without being "Adalbert"!

Myers is Edwin—but more commonly "Teddy." The two are staunch chums. They were so before Dicky Nugent came along,



George Alfred Gatty

and they are so still, when Dicky has made good his claim to be considered leader of the Form, and they have got over their early dislike to him.

Gatty is a hefty youngster, quite big enough and old enough to be in the Third, but not quite up to the Third in—er—scholastic attainments. He especially dislikes the nickname of "The Babes," which some of the older fellows are wont to apply to his Form.

The lot of a new-comer in the Second is not apt to be a happy one. Gatty has more than a little of the robustness that characterises such fellows as Coker, Hobson, Bolsover major, and Tubb. And new boys in the Second really are rather difficult propositions at first in many cases. They come quite unbroken, fresh from the nursery governess or some small preparatory school, where they have been persons of some importance, and they fail to realise that in the Second at Greyfriars they amount to a trifle less than nothing at all to start with.

Dicky Nugent was a rare specimen of the spoiled child; but it really was a bit unreasonable of Gatty and Myers to accuse him toadying to Remove chaps because he was asked to tea by his brother and his brother's chums. They were ragging Dicky, aided and abetted by the rest of the Form, when Frank Nugent came along. Frank naturally went to the rescue of his brother; and the Second plied in on the pair of them.

But there was soon plenty of cause to object to Dicky apart from this rather fanciful grievance. The new-comer showed a complete disregard for Second Form opinion, and was even suspected of the dire offence of sneaking. Gatty, in his lordly way, sent for Billy Bunter when this charge was being inquired into. Bunter came—possibly scenting grub. He gave his evidence, and then Gatty ordered his myrmidons to kick him out! Which was done, and Dicky was treated to a complexion aid of burnt cork.

There was good stuff in Nugent minor,

however; and before long Gatty and Myers became his chums, and, as it was abundantly evident, that his brains were quicker than Gatty's, very soon thereafter his lieutenants. They might not admit it; but Dicky was really leader thenceforward.

And they have confidence in their chief. When Nugent minor was sent home at Mr. Quelch's instance, and said that he would be back within twenty-four hours, Gatty was sure that he would come back. "If Dicky says so, it will be so," he told Myers. And verily it was so! Dicky returned as Inky minor; and Gatty and Myers soon found out through the latter's spotting the fact that Inky minor's complexion came off on the pillow—which would have been improbable had Inky minor been a real Hindu Jam! They kept his secret loyally.

They were very loyal, too, when Dicky was taken away by his mother, who had quarrelled with his father. Dicky wanted Gatty to go with him; but Mrs. Nugent could not quite see this, and without his chum Dicky found it dull. He wrote to Gatty to get him cash to enable him to run away from home to school; and Gatty collected twenty-four shillings and fivepence in the Second—partly by something very like compulsion, no doubt—and sent the money along. Also he prepared a feast of ham and tongue and hard-boiled eggs to welcome the returning prodigal.

But such edibles are only for big occasions. The usual feast for the Second is one of herrings in some form or another—fresh, bloaters, or kippers. And they don't mind them a bit "wanky"—herrings have more flavour in that state, and go farther! Cooked on a pen at the Form-room fire, and burned a little for preference—adding still more flavour—herrings of any sort seem to Gatty, Myers & Co. the real goods, with the advantage of being cheap—though that advantage is less marked now. Still, as everything else has gone up, perhaps there is not much in this.

At Bob Cherry's benefit Gatty, Myers & Co., with threepenny tickets, collared and kept front seats. They numbered the tickets themselves; and the arrival of Dr. and Mrs. Locke prevented methods of force from being used against them. It was a score over the Remove, and the Second love that.

It was not much of a score over the Remove, though, when Harry Wharton yielded to the urgent demand of the Third and Second for a footer-match between them and the Remove, and the combined fag Forms went under to the tune of 25 to nil. That had been Dicky Nugent's wheeze; and Gatty did not forget to let him know what he thought of it after the disaster had taken place.

New boys do not always prove the soft thing the Second expect; and the case of Hop Hi was one in point. The Famous Five were anxious that Wun Lung's minor, a stranger from a far land, should get decent treatment, and they asked Gatty to tea in order to talk him over. Then Myers said things about sucking up to the Remove. It was a tactical error on the part of the Famous Five to omit Myers from the invitation. And Gatty was wroth with his chum. No promise was made, and the ragging of Hop Hi began as soon as he was inside the school. They tied an inkpot to his pigtail; but he swung round quickly, and they got the ink in their faces. Hop Hi soon made his footing good. A lavish dormitory feed showed the Second that he was the right sort; and they were ready to back him up against the bullying of Bulstrode.

It was far otherwise with Sammy Bunter. Sammy has never become a favourite in the Form. It is true that Gatty, who had fought with Dick Nugent for the right to rag Hop Hi, took a different attitude this time. He considered that the best plan to adopt with Bunter minor would be to give him a licking to start with; but, as Dicky had promised Wingate to look after the kid for the first day, Gatty relinquished this eminently reasonable course of action. From which it would appear that Dicky may possibly have

got the best of the fight about the little Chinese!

Sammy did not gain much. He was not grateful to Dicky; and when once his term of grace had expired he caught it hot from his protector, as well as from the rest of the Second. But one does not feel inclined to waste any sympathy on Sammy.

Gatty did not agree with Dicky's going botanising with Vernon-Smith, though he had no suspicion that it was all part of a plot by the Bouncer against Frank Nugent. He withdrew his objection when he learned that the sum of half-a-crown was promised to Dicky if he found a certain rare specimen. Neither he nor Dicky realised that that rare specimen was not likely to be found, or that the Bouncer would have no use for it if it were found!

Gatty and Myers were among the fags provided by Fishy to Lord Mauleverer, of course. Gatty was engaged as clothes-brusher. It is to be hoped—though doubted—that he brushed Mauly's clothes better than he brushes his own. There is not much of the dandy about George Adalbert. He has his qualities, though, and he and Myers were prominent in the bumping of Fishy which followed the collapse of the Fag Agency.

The most serious episode with which Gatty has been concerned was in connection with Bolsover major. That worthy had borrowed five shillings of Dicky Nugent. Gatty and Myers went with their chum to collect the debt. Funds were low in the Second; and all three felt that they could not afford to have the money outstanding longer. Bolsover was not minded to shell out, and there was a row, which brought upon the scene other members of the Remove. The matter made clear, Bolsover had to cash up, at which he was greatly annoyed. A little later he saw Dicky and Gatty on the towing-path by the river, and pursued them. Gatty tumbled in. Bolsover funk'd the attempt at rescue that he might and should have made, even though he felt doubtful of his ability to carry it through. But Nugent minor plunged in and got his chum out.



The two fags had to go into sanny. Dicky got out first, and he and Myers planned a feed for Gatty, who did not think that the sanatorium rations were sufficient. They got in by a ladder, and essayed to cook with a spirit-stove. The stove was knocked over, and a fire resulted—and Bolsover, in the nick of time, came to Gatty's rescue, and redeemed his earlier cowardice.

Decent youngsters and staunch chum; Gatty and Myers, if a trifle inclined to be rough on new-comers. It is enough to be going on with; other qualities equally important will develop in them later, no doubt. Decency and loyalty and pluck make a good foundation, anyway!

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

TRIMBLE'S 'TRAMP! By SIDNEY CLIVE.

I SHOULD have knocked him down!"
Thus Baggy Trimble of the Fourth.

Trimble's remark was greeted by a general howl in the Common-room in the School House.

"Shut up, Trimble!"
"Yaas, wathah! Shut up, you howwid fat boundah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wrathfully. "Othahwise, I shall punch your head, Twimble!"

"Why didn't you punch the tramp's head?" jeered Trimble.

"Wats!"
"I," repeated Trimble firmly, "should have knocked him down!"

Trimble of the Fourth felt quite secure in making that declaration, in the Common-room. There was no likelihood of a ruffianly tramp appearing there to put him to the test.

Arthur Augustus was pink with indignation. Arthur Augustus had had a most unpleasant adventure.

He had been stopped in Rylcombe Wood by a tramp who, with a big cudgel to back up his request, had demanded money.

Arthur Augustus feared no foe; but there was no arguing with a heavy cudgel in the hands of a six-foot ruffian.

He had paid up.
He had related the adventure in the Common-room, after reporting it to the House master. He had expected sympathy, and had got it—from all; but Trimble.

Trimble smiled superior.
"You see," continued Trimble, "there's only one way of dealing with a hooligan of that sort. Knock him down! It's the best way."

"You uttah ase!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "How could I knock down a man six feet high, with a twemendous big cudgel?"

"Well, that's what I should have done," said Trimble.

"How would you have done it, you silly fathead?" demanded Tom Merry gruffly.

It was rather too thick for a well-known funk like Trimble to set up to read Gussy a lecture.

"I should have hit him in the eye."
"You couldn't have weached his eye, you fat little beast!"

"Then I should have caught him under the chin with a regular one."

"You couldn't have weached his chin, either."

"Well, a right-hander on the chest, straight from the shoulder, would have done it," said Trimble. "Then I should have marched him off to the police-station."

"Bai Jove!"
"What was wanted," explained Trimble, "was pluck. Now, I've got plenty of pluck. That's where I should have scored."

"You silly, fat duffer!" roared Jack Blake. "You'd have run away if you'd seen him—if you'd only dreamed that you'd seen him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
Trimble sneered.

"All very well to pass it off like that!" he said. "I don't consider you showed pluck, D'Arcy! That's what was wanted—pluck!"

And Baggy Trimble rolled out of the Common-room, feeling that he had scored.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep, wrathful breath.

"The howwid little wottah!" he said. "I have a gweat mind to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"I jolly well wish he'd drop in with the tramp," growled Blake. Blake felt that Trimble's impertinent remarks were a reflection upon Study No. 0.

Levison of the Fourth burst into a chuckle. "Why shouldn't he?" he remarked.

"That beastly twamp has cleached off long befoah this, Levison."

"There are others," chuckled Levison. "For instance, there's Lowther—"

"What's that?" ejaculated Lowther of the Shell. "Who's a tramp, you silly chump? Whoo are you calling a tramp?"

"Weally, Levison, your wemark is wathah personal! Lowthah is not what I call a weally well-dwessed fellah, but to call him a twamp is—"

"Fathead!" said Lowther.
"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Fatheads, both of you!" said Levison. "You don't understand. I don't mean Lowther in his ordinary person, but as a member of the School House Dramatic Society. He's rather good at making-up."

"Bai Jove!"
"Well, that's not a bad idea!" exclaimed Lowther, placated at once. "You've got a head on you, Levison."

"Good!" I'd say the same for you, if I wasn't so jolly truthful—"

"Why, you chump—"

"Shush!" said Manners. "Let's hear the wheeze! I'll lend a hand in anything to take that fat beast Trimble down a peg or two."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Go ahead, Levison!" said Tom Merry encouragingly.

Levison smiled, and went ahead.
"We've got all the things in the dramatic outfit," he said. "Lowther's about the best in this House at acting; he beats everybody at it but Kerr of the New House. Well, Lowther could make up as a rough tramp as easy as falling off a form—ragged clothes, big beard, cudgel, and all complete. And if he came on Trimble all of a sudden—"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry.
"Yaas, wathah! I think it is a wippin' wheeze!" said Arthur Augustus heartily. "I wegard you as a bwainy chap, Levison. Lowthah can make himself look feahfully ugly and low—it won't be vewy difficult for Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.
"Your silly ass!" roared Lowther. "What do you mean?"

"Weally, Lowthah, I was only wemarkin' upon your abilities as an amateur actah," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I fail to see anythin' to cause this mewwiment, deah boys—"

"Buck up and get ready, Lowther," said Cardew. "Take the things out of school. I'll get Trimble to go down to the village, and you can tackle him as he comes back. It will be dusk by then."

"But will he go—"

"He will if I ask him to get somethin' for me at the tuckshop there. He will scoff it, but that won't matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Five minutes later Trimble of the Fourth was on his way to the village with one of Cardew's half-crowns in his pocket. And five minutes after that half a dozen juniors left the gates, among them Monty Lowther, carrying a big bag.

T RIMBLE of the Fourth sauntered home along the lane, and came in sight of St. Jim's as the dusk was falling.

Trimble had expended Cardew's half-crown at Mrs. Murphy's shop, according to instructions. Instead of bringing home the goods to Cardew, he had devoured them—which was not according to instructions. As he rolled home he was debating in his mind what excuse he should make to Cardew: whether it would sound better to say that he had lost the half-crown, or that a Grammar School fellow had raided the tuck.

Baggy Trimble was not scrupulous on the subject of truth. As a matter of fact, Cardew had no expectation of seeing again either the tuck or the half-crown. He knew Trimble.

Trimble was thinking of anything but tramps just then.

He had carefully refrained from taking the short cut through the wood. On the high road, and so near the school, no one would have dreamed of danger.

But just as Baggy came in sight of the school gates there was a rustle in the hedge.

A ragged figure leaped out into the road. Trimble stood rooted to the ground, his heart jumping.

"Yer money or yer life!" growled a husky voice.

"G-g-good gracious!" stuttered Trimble. His fat knees knocked together.

The tramp was a most truculent-looking customer. He could not have been the same tramp that D'Arcy had fallen in with, for he was not tall. In fact, he was short, for a grown-up man. But his face was thickly covered by a red beard and moustache, and caked with dirt. A battered bowler hat was on his tousled head, and cracked boots on his feet, and his trousers and coat consisted chiefly of holes and patches. He flourished a thick stick before Baggy Trimble's startled eyes.

"And over yer rhino!" he said huskily.

"Now, then, sharp abart it!"

"I—I—I—"

"Wotcher stuttering abart?"
"Oh, dear! I—Ow, ow!"

"Will yer 'and over yer rhino?" roared the tramp, flourishing the thick stick.

Alas for Trimble's heroic plans for dealing with a rough character! He did not feel the ruffian with a well-placed blow! He did not knock him spinning along the road! Far from it!

He stood with his knees knocking together and his eyes almost starting from his head.

"Ow, ow!" he gasped.
"Har you goin' to 'and hover your rhino?" roared the tramp.

"Ow, ow!"
"Then I'll brain yer!"

Trimble dodged as the tramp jumped at him, the cudgel whirling aloft. He made a desperate rush to escape.

Baggy Trimble wasn't an athlete. But the speed he put on at that moment would have won him the mile at the school sports, provided he could have kept it up.

He fairly flew.
"Come back!" roared the tramp.

Trimble was not likely to come back. He whizzed along the road towards the school, letting out a gasping yell at every bound.

Tramp, tramp! came heavy beats behind him on the road!

Trimble ran frantically.
He reached the school gates, which were fortunately open. He bolted into the gateway like a rabbit into a hole.

Tramp, tramp!
In the quadrangle Trimble ventured to sneak down, puffing like old bellows. He felt safe there. To his amazement and horror, a ragged figure with a flourishing cudgel came swooping through the gateway after him.

The tramp was pursuing him even within the school walls.

"Hallo, who're you?" roared Taggles, staring out of his lodge in surprise and wrath.

The tramp did not heed. He rushed on after Baggy Trimble.

Trimble let out a shriek of terror, and bolted for the School House. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground.

Up the steps of the School House he went like the wind—speedy, and blowing hard!

"Bai Jove!"
"Hallo!"

There was a group of juniors in the doorway; and they caught Trimble by the arms and the ears and stopped him.

Trimble struggled furiously.
"Lemme go! Yaroooh! He's after me! Leggo!"

"Gweat Scott! What—"

"Who's after you?" demanded Tom Merry, still holding the struggling Baggy.

"Yaroooh! The tramp!" shrieked Trimble.
"Fathead! There isn't any tramp!" said Manners.

Trimble glared back fearfully into the

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growing dusk in the quad. To his surprise and relief no tramp was visible.

"So you met a tramp, did you, Twimble?" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Groogh! Yes!"

"Did you knock him down?" grinned Blake. Trimble cast one more glance into the quad. There was no sign of the tramp; and Baggy's courage revived.

"Yes, rather!" he replied. "I fancy he'll have a jolly good black eye, the coast! I gave him a one—"

"While you were running away?" yelled Blake.

"I—I wasn't exactly running—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I had to clear, because there were two of them," explained Trimble.

"Two!"

"That's it! One of them came for me first, and I knocked him down—fairly knocked the teeth down his throat," said Trimble. "Then they came at me together, and I had to clear. Two grown men, you know—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You should have acted like me, D'Arcy, when you met your tramp," said Baggy loftily. "A terrific blow, you know, straight from the shoulder—"

"Bai Jove! Of all the whoppahs—"

"You haven't much pluck," said Trimble scornfully. "Now if you'd seen me handle that tramp— Oh, crumbs! Yah!"

From behind the tree near a fearsome figure emerged, and ran up the stone steps.

Trimble gave a yell of terror, and bolted down the passage into the Common-room.

The fearsome figure rushed after him.

"Yaroooh! Help!" yelled Trimble, dodging round the table. "Help! Rescue! Yaroooh! Help! Murder! Burglars! Huns! Zeppelins! Yoooop!"

"Now I've got yer!" roared the tramp, pursuing Trimble round the big table.

"Help!" shrieked Trimble.

"Bless my soul! What is this dreadful noise?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, striding into the Common-room. "Why—what—bless my soul!"

The House-master stared blankly at the tramp.

The ferocious-looking ruffian took off his battered bowler hat respectfully.

"Good-evening, sir!"

"It's Lowthah, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus, from the doorway.

"Lowther!"

"Yes, sir!" said the tramp cheerfully. "I hope I didn't startle you, sir—only some of our amateur theatricals, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton, scanning the tramp curiously. "Your make-up is certainly very clever, Lowther—very creditable indeed. But please do not make so much noise with your theatricals."

The House-master quitted the room, and Tom Merry & Co. crowded in.

Baggy Trimble's face was a study.

"You fat rotter!" roared Tom Merry. "If you hadn't been in a blue funk you'd have known that a real tramp wouldn't follow you into the House!"

"I—I—"

"So you knocked me down, did you?" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"I—I—th—the fact is, I—I knew it was you, Lowther—"

"What?" yelled Lowther.

"You can't act, you know—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I was simply playing up," said Trimble calmly. "I'll bet I made you think that I was frightened. He, he, he!"

"Gweat Scott!"

The juniors stared at Trimble for a minute. His colossal cheek had taken their breath away.

Then they rushed at him.

For the next five minutes Trimble's podgy person was bumping on the Common-room floor.

"Now, you fat fraud!" roared Lowther. "Did you take me for a tramp—what?"

"Yes," howled Trimble. "Oh! Yes! Yes, rather! Certainly! Yarooop!"

And after that Baggy was not heard to say what he would have done if he had met D'Arcy's tramp. He had had a sufficient lesson from Trimble's Tramp!

THE END.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF LONDON!

By a New Member of our Staff.

(Note—This is not a "Greyfriars Herald" or "Tom Merry's Weekly" contribution. It is the work of a new hand here. He is not, I may add, one of the old crooks who, being above military age, are putting their shoulders to various wheels to keep things going. In fact, he is well below military age—and looks it! A simple and ingenuous youth, as you will see! His impressions have interested me, and I think they will interest my readers.—EDITOR OF THE "MAGNET.")

THE moment I popped my head out of the train I knew I was in London. We hadn't pulled up at a station—the signals were against us, or something, and, as I shortly afterwards learned, we were just outside Finsbury Park—yet I knew that it was London as surely as if it had spoken.

Something in the very atmosphere told me that.

I had been told that the Sunday train I was travelling by invariably reached London half an hour late, and as this was a quarter of an hour before time I naturally expected that we had three-quarters of an hour's journey yet to go. But when I let down the window and peered out, I was downright, positively certain we were in London!

There was an indescribable foggy feeling about the place which seemed to spell London. Not that it was foggy at all to speak of. The moon was shining clearly in the sky, and many of the stars stood out distinctly. We were not, by any means, on short rations of fog in my native town of Mudanslush, which, as all the world knows—at least, Mudanslushians think it does—is on the borders of Boganswamp Moors, in Yorkshire. But the London fog is quite a thing of itself, even when there are only faint traces of it, as on that memorable Sunday night when the population of the Metropolis was added to by—ME!

After arriving at King's Cross, and spending about an hour finding my luggage and wheeling it about the station on a trolley—monocled members of the Upper Ten were engaged on the same job—I reached Farringdon Street without mishap by the Underground, and then looked about me for Blackfriars Bridge.

I expected to be buffeted all over the place by the throng, but, to my surprise, the streets were so deserted that I began to think that my unerring instinct had been pulling my leg, and I had landed at the wrong show after all. Suddenly up marched two young fellows, who stopped short in front of me with affable glances.

"Keep your money in your hand, and your hand in your pocket!" was the sage Mudanslushian advice I had received regarding pick-pockets; and I was proceeding to carry it out when one of the suspects spoke.

Being more ignorant than of the Cockney dialect than I am now—fully twenty-four hours later—I could not understand them at

first; but presently I began to tumble that they were asking me the way to Blackfriars Bridge, the very place I was making for!

A man, who reminded me pleasantly of Sam Weller, happened up just then, and we inquired the way of him. He directed us in the same mysterious language employed by my companions.

His knowledge of London, however, proved to be more peculiar than extensive; and when we found ourselves in the vicinity of Whitechapel, heading for Mile End Road, my two companions interchanged quite a number of remarks—my ignorance of their vernacular prevented me from distinguishing more than an oft-repeated "Gorblimee!" for which, perhaps, I should be thankful—and then made off along what I now know to be Queen Victoria Street, leaving me headed for London Bridge.

Here was another blow to my expectations. I had vaguely imagined that London Bridge was a sort of narrow, wooden structure over a winding and swirling river, with a battlemented castle and turnpike, and Beefeaters and watchmen, and all that sort of thing. Instead of which it was rather like—only wider than—the main thoroughfare of Mudanslush. Thus are illusions shattered!

When at last I reached my destination everything seemed like a dream—as it very shortly was, for I fell asleep almost directly.

Sunday gives one an absolutely wrong impression of London. On the Monday I simply couldn't believe the crowded streets were the same I had traversed the day before.

But, still, I didn't feel out of place at all. Things which in Mudanslush would have made me stare open-mouthed—buses, tubes, St. Paul's, the river and the seagulls, Whitehall and the Guards—all seemed as a matter of course in London.

"People greatly exaggerate the difficulties of London," I said to myself, dodging an omnibus—things that run after you and try to bowl you over when you don't want them, and run away helter-skelter when you do—and narrowly missing being knocked down by a lorry as I strode across Clerkenwell Road in the lunch-hour. "It beats me how anyone could possibly lose his way here. Look at that ass over there gazing at a map! Haw, haw, haw!" I laughed a scoffing laugh, which made several motorists jump out of their cars to make sure none of their tyres had gone. "Here's King's Cross; there's Pentonville Road, Farringdon Street is— Let me see! Farr-ing-don Street— Where on earth is Farringdon Street?"

After running almost dementedly about Gray's Inn Road, Rosebery Avenue, and a variety of other streets in the neighbourhood, I arrived back at Ludgate Circus twenty minutes behind my time. I began to think London wasn't such a dear, cosy place after all.

And then came the air-raid. That gave me a very Hun-favourable impression of London.

Just when I was warm and cosy in bed I was aroused by the sound of tremendous feet clumping along the pavement, and the words "Take cover!" resounded on all sides. I couldn't quite grasp what they were driving at at first, but presently I found myself jumping into my clothes, full of the idea that it would be raining bombs a couple of minutes later. I got down just in time to view the anything but pleasing spectacle of a policeman riding a bicycle with a placard upon his back bearing the awful words:

"TAKE COVER!"

After a number of hours had elapsed, and nothing striking had happened—except for the clocks—I went to the corner of the street in the hope of seeing a few silent hand-to-hand conflicts taking place in mid-air.

There appeared to be nothing doing in the silent conflict line, but the aforementioned policeman was still scorching up and down. I gave him a gaze of abject scorn, and rolled back to bed in disgust.

That was the signal for a regular volley of guns to begin, and I heard, or persuaded myself I heard, the shells whistling over the roof. Down I went again, and with fifteen others—we counted each other—took shelter in what we were pleased to call a dug-out, measuring approximately four feet square.

The monotony of the guns was relieved considerably by the whirring of the machines, which we could hear between the breaks in the firing. But I wasn't relieved worth speaking of. Then, when the Huns got overhead, about a hundred gunners got to work, and succeeded admirably in making a veil of smoke across the sky, behind which the Gothas could do practically what they liked.

Although I took this as a sign of affectionate and considerate dispositions on the part of the London people in general, I failed utterly to appreciate it at the time, and I was gradually getting a very bad impression of the great city.

But it was quite evident that what the Gothas liked best was to get away, though that was the one thing they found a difficulty in doing. They kept making a dash to vamoose, and being driven back until everybody got fed up with them, and after going out in search of bits of shrapnel, which weren't there, I went back to bed for the third time before the "All clear!" was given. And I registered a solemn mental resolve to walk off back to Mudanslush before breakfast in the morning.

But when the morning came, and I woke bleary-eyed and stiff all over, with a cold and a headache, and dead-tired withal, I thought I would have breakfast before starting on the two-hundred-and-odd-mile-walk to Mudanslush. And, feeling a good deal better after breakfast, I relented considerably, and decided to honour London with my presence until the next time—the very next time—the Gothas came.