BRILLIANT NEW COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY INSIDE!

A dramatic incident from this week's extra-special story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

More Pocket Knives and Wallets Awarded This Week!

Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).

"PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"

THAT'S the title of the splendid new serial I have in store for you when Geo. E. Rochester's yarn draws to a close in next week's issue. The new serial is a winner all the way and it tells of a youngster's struggles to make good in a big industrial area where circumstances seem to be all against him. Peter Frazer is a lovable character, typically British and unyielding in the face of odds. Yes, there's a fine sporting element in this tale, too, for the benefit of you footer fans, so keep your peepers open for the first long instalment which will appear in the MAGNET the week after next.

When I leave this earth I reckon that anyone who takes the trouble to look for it will find "Marie Celeste" written across my heart! I'm beginning to feel sorry that I ever mentioned that ill-fated ship to you fellows! I told you that nearly everyone has his or her own story about what happened, and the result is that I am always getting letters from readers who claim to know "the true story."

HERE'S AN INGENIOUS YARN

which Howard Mickelthwaite, of Barnsley, Yorks, sends along to me.

ACCORDING to Howard, the "Mary Celeste"—he says this is the proper way to spell the name of the brig—was loaded with sperm oil, spirit, and dunnage wood in New York harbour, and her skipper had become friendly with the skipper of another vessel, named the Dei Gratia. Some of the "Mary's" surplus cargo was put on this second ship, and off the two of them started. The "Mary Celeste," however, was short of hands, so they borrowed four men from the Dei Gratia.

So far so good! Off went the ships, Captain Briggs of the "Mary Celeste" having his wife aboard with him. Quarrels and fights broke out on the brig, and she struck a hurricane off the Azores. A piano broke loose and killed the skipper's wife, and the skipper, driven nearly frantic, disappeared during the night. The mate, thinking he might be asked to give an explanation, left the brig with three men, and went ashore in a bumboat at St. Michael's. This left only three men—three of the men from the Dei Gratia—and they continued with the voyage, and came across the Dei Gratia. The three men went aboard the latter vessel, and,

HAVING TOLD THE TALE,

abandoned the "Mary Celeste," which they subsequently towed into Tarifa. They stated they had found it drifting around without a crew, and claimed salvage money on it.

Well, that's the tale which Howard claims to be the true one, and it may be for all I know. As I told you a few weeks ago, there are hundreds of tales told about the same vessel, and I've heard so many of them that I really cannot make up my mind which one to believe. But I must point out to Howard that his story does not explain what became of the captain's daughter, who, according to most versions of the yarn, was also aboard with Mrs. Briggs at the time of the mystery! However, thanks very much, Howard, for letting me hear your version. I expect many other readers are also interested in it!

After mystery, let's have mirth! Here's a yarn which has been sent in by W. Taylor, of 55, Wellington Avenue, Wavertree, Liverpool, and for which he earns a penknife:

Having written out the necessary prescription the doctor turned to his patient.

"You had better have this made up at the chemist's," he said. "It will probably cost you five shillings."

"Five shillings!" exclaimed the patient, in surprise. "All right, then, I'll get it made up." Then, as he turned to leave the surgery, he added: "I say, could you lend me five shillings to pay for it?"

The medico gasped, but recovered in a second, however, and asked for the prescription.

The patient handed it back, and after the doctor had scratched out one of the items on it, he returned it together with a shilling.

"You can get what is left for ninepence," he remarked dryly. "What I scratched out was for your nerves!"

The next query on the list is:

WHAT IS A QUIDNUNC?

M. Williams, of Old Street, E.C.1, wants to know if it is anything like a Gugnunc? Not at all. The word is derived from the Latin, and means: "What now?" It is used to describe a person who is curious to know, or pretends to know, everything that goes on. Billy Bunter is an excellent example of a quidnunc! He also asks about "Toc H." This is a semi-religious organisation of ex-Service men. "Toc" is simply the Army signallers' way of saying "T," and "T.H." were the initials of their headquarters in France.

Ready for another laugh? You'll get one at this limerick, which earns a pocket wallet for Allan Bailey, 35, Tennyson Avenue, Chanterland's Avenue, Hull, Yorks:

That young Bunter weighs many an ounce
Is a fact I need scarcely announce.
In fact, I believe if
He dropped from a big cliff
He wouldn't be hurt, 'cause he'd bounce!

I TOLD you fellows last week that I would get "Mr. X." to explain a few of the magical mysteries which must have puzzled you during your visits to various music-halls, etc. The particular trick which "got me guessing" was the "hat trick." I dare say you have all seen conjurers borrow a hat, and, after waving a "magic" wand over it, produce a profusion of all manner of articles from the apparently empty hat. Perhaps you have wondered how it is done. Well, it's

QUITE EASY, MY DEAR WATSON!

and there are several ways of doing it. First of all, the articles which are produced are specially made, and can be bought from any of the big stores which have conjuring departments. They consist of flowers, which are made of thin silk, and have a spring inside them; flags which fold up into a remarkably small space, and lanterns, and so on, which may be packed in a small compass. These are made into a little bundle, which is tied round with black silk thread.

The conjurer borrows a hat, shows that it is quite empty, and then leans forward to pick up his wand. As he picks up the wand with his right hand, the left hand takes the hat behind a chair or a table for a second or so. Behind this "cover" the parcel is placed on a special shelf, and it is the simplest matter in the world to knock the bundle from the shelf into the hat. The conjurer now waves his wand over the hat, dives in his hand, breaks the thread which holds the parcel together, and proceeds to bring out the objects, which, owing to the springs inside them, unfold to quite respectable proportions.

Some conjurers carry the parcel in a specially enlarged pocket on the left-hand side of their waistcoat, and have a watch fob attached to it. They stand holding the hat in front of them for a little while with its crown to the audience, and the thumb gripping the hat above the brim, while the fingers are below the brim. A little practice at home will soon enable you to slip out the fob—and the attached parcel—and smuggle it into the hat. Quite easy, isn't it—when you know how!

Black book forward! Let's see what's in store for next week's issue! Here's a yarn you'll like:

"SKINNER'S SHADY SCHEME!"
By Frank Richards.

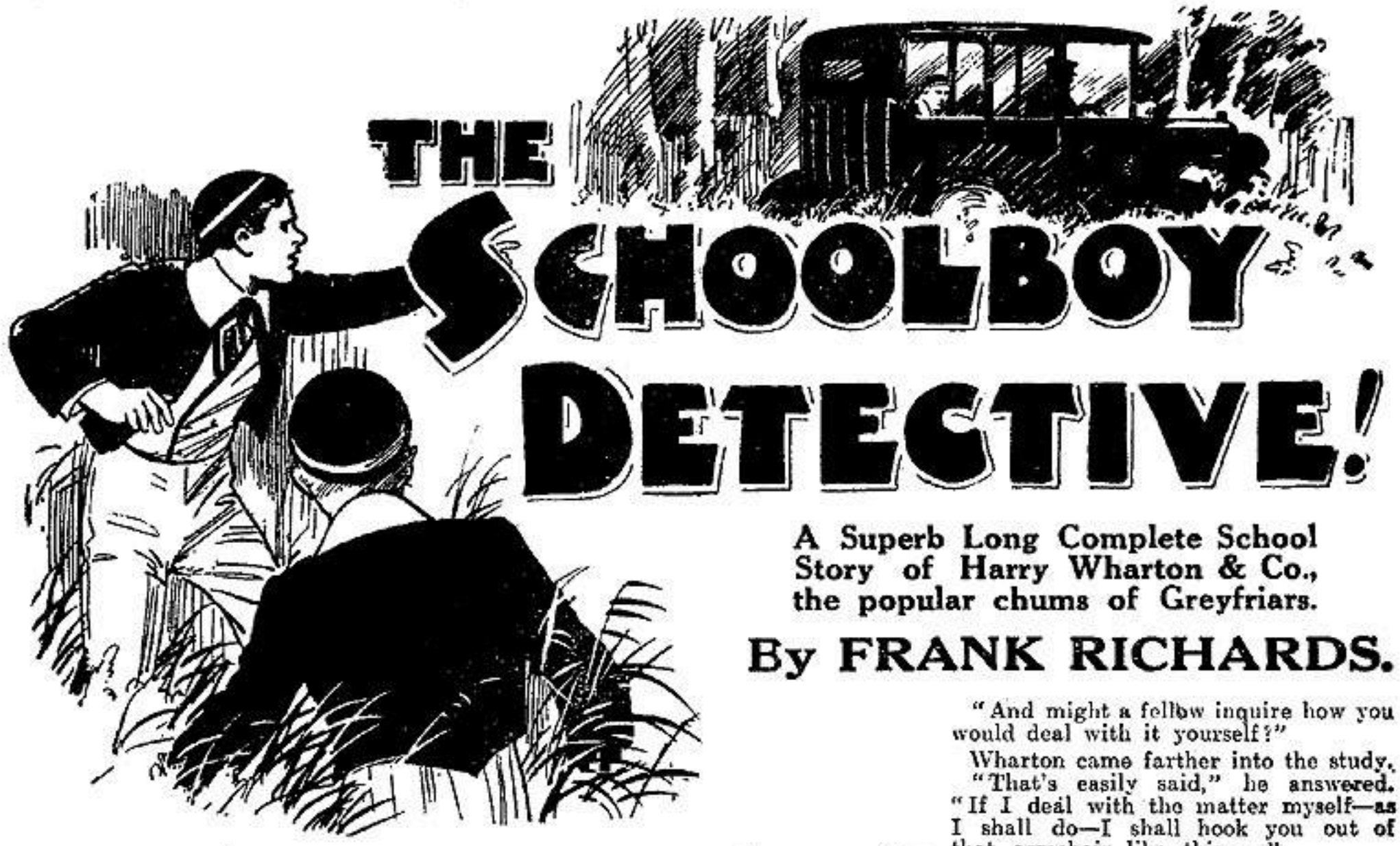
I guess most of you fellows wonder how on earth Frank Richards manages to turn out such jolly fine yarns week after week. So do I, sometimes—but he does it, and never lets us down! And you'll find that next week's yarn is as good as any he has ever done for the good old MAGNET. You'll be sure of getting your fill of fun—yes, and of thrills, too, in our next issue.

Next week the curtain rings down on Geo. E. Rochester's splendid French Revolution yarn, and, to judge by some of the enthusiastic letters I get from some of you, you were hoping this yarn would run on for ever! All good things have to come to an end some time or other, unfortunately! I mustn't forget Master Dicky Nugent's contribution, which is entitled: "FOOTBAWL FEVER AT ST. SAM'S!" and which is calculated to bring a smile to the brazen face of a Chinese idol.

Then there's another article on flying, and another invitation to step right into my den and have a yarn with me. Could you want a better programme than that?

Cheerio, chums!

Your Editor.



THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE!

A Superb Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the popular chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Heavy Hand!

"DURANCE!"

Harry Wharton threw open the door of study No. 4 in the Greyfriars Remove, as he called the name.

There was one fellow in the study, the new junior who shared No. 4 with Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing. Smithy and Redwing had already gone down to Little Side, where the Remove were gathering for games practice.

Wharton frowned as he looked at the fellow who was sprawling in the study armchair. There was a cigarette in his mouth which he did not remove as the captain of the Form came in.

"You heard me calling you, Durance?" exclaimed Wharton sharply.

The new junior glanced round at him.

"Yes, I heard you," he assented.

"Well, you're wanted. Get a move on."

"What's up?"

"Games practice."

"Not in my line, thanks," drawled the new fellow. "You can leave me out."

Wharton looked at him.

"You can't be left out, it's a compulsory day," he answered "Take that thing out of your mouth and get down to the changing-room."

"I don't play football."

"Time you learned, then," said Harry.

"And I don't want to."

"You're wasting time," said the captain of the Remove. "I'm due on the football ground. Get a move on."

"Look here," said Durance testily, "isn't Saturday afternoon a half-holiday? I'm going out."

"You can go out after games practice, if you like."

"I'm going out in ten minutes."

"You don't seem to understand." Wharton was trying to be patient with the new fellow, though Durance irritated him more than any other fellow with whom he had ever come in contact. "It's a half-holiday, but there's games practice from three to four. Every man in the Remove has to turn up, and as captain of the Form, I'm responsible. Now do you understand?"

"What rot!"

Wharton breathed rather hard.

"Well, rot or not, that's how the matter stands," he said. "Now get a move on, and give your chin a rest."

The junior in the armchair eyed him in a calculating way. He made no move to rise.

"And suppose I don't come?" he asked.

"There's no question of that. You're coming."

There's no shrewder fellow in the Greyfriars Remove than Herbert Vernon-Smith, and this he proves in sensational fashion in the amazing story which is yours to enjoy this week.

"Still, just for the sake of argument, suppose I don't?" suggested the new junior. "What awful thing will happen to me? Do I get lynched or will it be something lingering with boiling oil in it?"

"If you don't come down to games practice, after being warned, you get reported to the Head of Games."

"And who's that terrific personage?"

"Wingate of the Sixth, captain of the school."

"And what will he do?"

"Most likely give you six."

"Well, I don't want six from a cane," he remarked, "but I'd rather have that than waste an hour mopping up mud and playing a kid's game with a set of mugs. Leave it at that, then."

"But that isn't the only alternative," explained the captain of the Remove. "Instead of reporting you to Wingate, which I don't want to do if I can help it, I may deal with the matter myself."

"And might a fellow inquire how you would deal with it yourself?"

Wharton came farther into the study.

"That's easily said," he answered. "If I deal with the matter myself—as I shall do—I shall hook you out of that armchair like this——"

There was a yell from the new junior as Wharton grasped his collar, and whirled him out of the chair.

"Ow! Let go!" he howled.

"I'm demonstrating what I shall do if you don't toe the line, Durance."

"Leggo!"

"Having hooked you out of the chair," continued Wharton coolly, "I shall run you out of the study——"

"Will you let go?" hissed the new junior.

He resisted savagely as he was run out of the study. But the weedy fellow's resistance did not bother the sturdy captain of the Remove. He went whirling out into the Remove passage.

"Then," went on Wharton, "I shall walk you along the passage, like this and——"

Durance found himself walked along the passage to the stairs, still with an iron grip on his collar.

He wriggled as he went.

"Will you let go?"

"Not till you get to the changing-room."

"I'll hack your shins."

"Better not," said Wharton cheerfully. "If you do, you'll get hurt—rather badly. Come on!"

The cool impudence of the new junior had quite vanished now. His sallow face was red with rage as he was propelled down the Remove staircase, with Wharton's grip on his collar.

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter was on the next landing, and he greeted the two with a fat cachinnation.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows——"

"Come on, Bunter," said Wharton. "You've got to turn up."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Follow on, fatty."

"The fact is, old chap, I'm ill," said Bunter. "I was coming up to tell you so. I've got a pain——"

"You'll have another and a worse one, if you don't get changed for footer at once, fathead."

"I've got a severe pain in the spinal column of my chest," said Bunter. "I think it's pneumonia, or—or plumbago. There's a lot of plumbago in my family. I want you to let me off games practice to-day, old chap. If Wingate says anything, tell him I'm ill, fearfully ill."

"Come on, ass."

"Don't I keep on telling you I'm ill?" demanded Bunter indignantly. "You don't want to see me writhing in agony on the football ground, do you? Look here—— Yaroooogh!"

Wharton's right hand gripped Bunter's collar.

"This way!" he said cheerily.

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo!"

With a prisoner in either hand now, the captain of the Remove pursued his way downstairs. Billy Bunter gasped and spluttered, and the new junior resisted, but both of them went.

Wharton was a little breathless by the time he arrived at the changing-room. But he got them there.

"Now, get in and change," he said, "and look sharp."

"Oh, really, Wharton—yoooooop!" roared Bunter, as he went spinning into the room, and sat down on the floor.

"You going in, Durance?"

"No!" yelled the new junior.

"Your mistake—you are!"

And a spin of Wharton's powerful arm sent the new junior spinning in after Bunter.

"Now," said the captain of the Remove, looking in at them, "I've no more time to waste on you, the fellows are waiting for me. Get changed and come down to the football ground, and don't lose time, or something will happen to you."

And with that Harry Wharton turned away and left them, and walked out of the House.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Cheek!

BILLY BUNTER sat and spluttered.

"Ow, ow! Wow!"

The new junior was already on his feet. With a black scowl on his face, he sat his collar straight. There was no one else in the changing-room; Durance and Bunter had it to themselves.

Bunter picked himself up slowly.

With a dismal fat face he proceeded to change. Bunter was not keen on games practice. It was a form of exertion, and therefore it did not appeal to William George Bunter. But there was no help for it. The sad condition of his spinal column, and the threat of pneumonia and lumbago having failed to touch Wharton's heart, the Owl of the Remove slowly encased himself in shirt and shorts, grunting the while. Any amount of games practice was not likely to turn Bunter into a footballer, but it was likely to do him a lot of good in other ways. Bunter did not want to have good done him in any way that entailed exertion; he preferred to frowst, on a cold day, over a study fire.

But it could not be helped; and Bunter made up his fat mind to it, with many grunts and groans. And he blinked in some surprise at the new junior, who was not following his example.

"I say, Durance, you'd better get a move on," said Bunter. "That beast means business, you know."

"Hang him!" snapped the new junior.

"Wish I could!" sighed Bunter. "Absolutely heartless beast, you know. Dragging a chap out in the cold and wind, when I've told him that I'm ill—seriously ill. If I get galloping lumbago, it will be Wharton's fault."

"You silly idiot!"

"Oh, really, Durance——"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. He did not like being told to shut up, especially by a cheeky new kid. Besides, Bunter never did shut up.

"Look here, you cheeky rotter——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

The new junior crossed to the window and looked out in time to see Harry Wharton disappear in the direction of the playing-fields.

He turned again from the window, scowling.

"Ain't you going to change?" asked Bunter.

"No."

"You'll get a whopping!"

"Mind your own business!!"

Billy Bunter sniffed. As he was "for it" himself, and there was no help for it, and he had to make up his fat mind to the ordeal, Bunter assumed the natural contempt of a footballing fellow for a slacker. That was the way Bunter's powerful intellect worked.

"Yah! Slacker!!" he sneered. "What are you afraid of? A little mud, or getting your poor little feet trodden on? For goodness' sake, buck up, and come down to the footer instead of frowsting about like a moulting chicken!"

Durance did not heed that exhortation. He stepped to the open doorway and looked out. He seemed to hesitate.

"Buck up!" urged Bunter. "What's the good of slacking about? Be a man—like me!"

"You fat dummy!"

"Oh, really, you know——"

The new junior fixed his keen, bird-like eyes on Bunter.

"I'm going out," he said. "You can tell Wharton that I've gone to the pictures at Courtfield, if he wants to know."

"You wouldn't have the nerve!" grinned Bunter.

"You'll see, you fat chump!"

"I say, old chap, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter, as the new junior was going to the door again. "Hold on a minute! I'll come with you, if you like. I'll chance it! Wait a minute, while I change back."

The new junior did not wait a minute. He did not wait a second. Possibly the prospect of Bunter's fascinating society for the afternoon did not appeal to him. He quitted the changing-room.

"Beast!" snorted Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove completed his change, threw on his coat, and rolled away. He was the last to arrive on the junior football ground. All the Remove were now there, with the exception of the new member of the Form. There were a few grousers like Bunter—Skinner and Snoop, and a few such fellows—and Lord Mauleverer was yawning deeply, but most of the fellows were keen enough.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Roll up, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry. "Where's the other slacker?"

Bunter grinned.

"He's not coming," he answered.

Harry Wharton looked round sharply.

"Where's Durance?" he called out.

"He told me to tell you he'd gone to the pictures at Courtfield," grinned Bunter. "He, he, he!"

Harry Wharton's brow darkened.

"Didn't he change for footer?" he asked.

"He jolly well didn't!"

"Has he gone out?"

"Yes."

"That chap wants kicking!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The kickfulness would be the proper caper," observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep. If a fellow did not turn up to games practice on a compulsory occasion, after being duly warned, it was his duty to report the delinquent to the Head of Games. That was a duty he disliked to perform. Apart from that, the fellow's cool impudence irritated him extremely.

Herbert Vernon-Smith came over to him. There was a gleam in the Bounder's eyes.

"So that new fellow has cut games practice," he said.

Wharton nodded.

"He's gone to the pictures at Courtfield, so he told Bunter. The cheek of it!"

"He can't have got far yet. Why not go after him and yank him back?" suggested the Bounder.

Wharton made an impatient gesture.

"I can't leave the ground. But, by Jove, I've a jolly good mind to send a couple of fellows——"

"I'll go, if you like, and take Reddy."

Wharton paused a moment. He was well aware that the Bounder was on the worst of terms with his new study mate, and that Smithy's offer was more likely inspired by dislike of Durance than by anything else. At the same time, he felt disposed to accept the offer. Reporting a fellow's absence was an unpleasant task, and it was something like an admission that he could not make his own authority as Form captain respected.

"It wouldn't take long," said the Bounder; "and he won't argue much when we come up with him."

Wharton smiled faintly.

"Well, cut off," he said. "Only don't be away long, whether you get him or not. Wingate's coming down, and I don't want him to find a lot of the men missing."

"Right-ho!"

Vernon-Smith, his eyes gleaming, hurried over to Redwing, spoke a few words to him, and the two juniors threw on their coats and left the football ground.

Games practice went on without them.

It was about half an hour later that Wingate of the Sixth came down to take the Removites in hand. By that time Vernon-Smith and Redwing had not returned with Durance, or without him. The captain of Greyfriars called cheerily to Wharton:

"All here?"

It had to come out now.

"Durance has cut," answered Harry.

"Without leave?"

"Yes."

"I'll make a note of that. Anybody else missing?"

"I sent Smithy and Redwing to fetch him back, but they haven't turned up since," admitted Wharton, wishing from the bottom of his heart that he had not accepted the Bounder's offer.

Wingate frowned.

"That's three," he said. "This sort of thing won't do, Wharton. The fellows are expected to turn up, and you're expected to see that they do. If you're captain of the Form you can't expect to make the job a sinecure."

Harry Wharton swallowed that as best he could. He did not see that he was to blame; but he had to be judged by results. So he made no rejoinder.

"Well, get going, before many more of you sneak off," said Wingate gruffly.

And games practice got going again.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Shadowed!

"THIS way!" said the Bounder as he left the school with Tom Redwing; and he turned to the left.

Redwing caught his arm.

"That's not the way, Smithy! Courtfield's the other way."

"I know that! Come on!"

"But I don't catch on. We're after Durance——"

"We are!" assented the Bounder.

"Well, he said he was going to the pictures at Courtfield," said Tom, staring at the Bounder. "We shall catch him on the Courtfield road, if we catch him at all."

"I don't think!" grinned the Bounder. "I fancy Durance told Bunter he was going to Courtfield, in case he was followed and grabbed. I fancy he's more likely to have gone the other way."

"Oh, that's rot!" said Redwing.

"Well, let's see, anyhow," said Vernon-Smith. "I fancy that merchant has something on this afternoon more important than pictures. He's got a licking to come; and he wouldn't take that simply to butt into a picture palace. Follow your leader, old bean."

Redwing followed the Bounder along Friardale Lane, but with a dissatisfied expression on his face. Following a cheeky fellow who cut games practice without leave, to walk him back to the football ground was one thing, but this was quite another. If the fellow had lied, and if he was bent on some private business of his own, Redwing did not want to know what it was, and was not in the least interested. He could not help feeling that there was something in this that savoured of spying.

The Bounder proceeded at a rapid trot, and Redwing kept pace. They followed the winding lane towards Friardale at a good speed. For some distance from the school there were only two directions to choose from—Courtfield or Friardale. If Durance had not, as the Bounder suspected, headed for Courtfield, he must have taken the other way; and unless he reached a turning before he was overtaken, he was certain to be run down. And the Bounder was not giving him time to reach the first turning.

As if afraid that their quarry might somehow give them the slip, Vernon-Smith quickened his pace, and Redwing, with a curious glance at his chum, followed suit.

"Look!" muttered the Bounder suddenly. "What did I tell you?"

There was many a turn in Friardale Lane. Coming round one bend at a trot, the two juniors were just in time to see a figure disappearing round another bend ahead.

It was out of sight the next moment; but both of them had recognised it as Durance.

"Oh!" ejaculated Redwing.

The Bounder grinned sourly.

"What did I tell you?" he repeated.

"Well, you were right, Smithy! Let's cut on and get hold of the fellow," said Redwing. "The sooner we get him back, the better—I don't want to miss the footer."

"Never mind the footer now."

"But that's what Wharton sent us for——"

"I know that; but we're on our own now," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "I'm not in a hurry to bag him. I want to know where he's going."

"He's heading for Friardale."

"I don't imagine there's much in a country village to attract him. We'll keep him in sight, anyhow."

"Look here, Smithy——" said Tom Redwing restively.

"Oh, come on and don't talk!"

With a more and more dissatisfied expression on his face, Redwing followed the Bounder along the lane. They sighted the figure ahead once more as Durance stepped over the stile that gave on the footpath through Friardale Wood. The new junior vanished into the wood; and the Bounder was hurrying on towards the stile, when Tom caught his arm and pulled him to a halt.

"Look here, Smithy, are we going to collar that fellow and walk him back to Greyfriars?" he demanded.

"No; we're not."

"What do you mean, then?"

"I mean to keep him in sight, see where he goes, and watch anybody he meets!" answered the Bounder deliberately.

"That's spying, Smithy."

"Call it detective work!" grinned the Bounder.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Are you coming!" exclaimed the Bounder impatiently, as Redwing made no move.

Tom shook his head.

"No," he answered. "I'll come, if we're going to carry out Wharton's instructions, and take Durance back to the football. That's what we're here for. But if not, I'm not coming."

The Bounder knitted his brows.

"Now, look here, Reddy," he said quietly, "you know what I told you and Wharton the other evening in the study. That fellow who calls himself Arthur

Harry Wharton gripped Bunter's collar in his right hand and the new boy's collar in his left. "This way!" he said cheerily. "Yow-ow-ow! Leggo!" With a prisoner in either hand now, the captain of the Remove pursued his way to the changing-room. Billy Bunter gasped and spluttered, and Durance resisted, but both of them went. (*See Chapter* 1.)

Durance, is not Arthur Durance at all. I knew Arthur Durance in Devonshire, a year ago; and I tell you that fellow is not he. He, and somebody working with him, have got rid of the real man, and that young scoundrel has got his box, his papers, his clothes, his name, and come to the school in his place. I've said so."

"I know that."

"Well, then, don't you believe me?" snapped the Bounder angrily.

"I don't know what to think about it," confessed Redwing. "When you first saw Durance it didn't strike you that he wasn't the same fellow you'd seen before——"

"A year is a long time, and I'd seen him only a couple of days. But afterwards I was quite sure about it."

"After you'd become enemies," said Tom, rather dryly.

"Do you think——"

"Well, old man, when you've got your back up, you'd think anything about any fellow," said Redwing. "You can't deny that you follow your temper a lot more than you follow your judgment."

The Bounder set his lips.

"Then you think that I've discovered a mare's nest?" he asked.

"Well, it's a steep story, anyhow," said Tom. "But if you feel certain of it, you ought to go to the Head. The Head's the proper person to deal with such a thing, if there's anything in it."

"How can I go to the Head without proof, you fool?" snapped the Bounder. "The fellow has come to Greyfriars as Durance—he's got all Durance's things—he belongs to Devonshire, and nobody in this part of England knows him by sight. And at first sight I didn't spot that he wasn't Durance—and I can't say I did. The Head would think it all moonshine—especially if he found out we were on bad terms personally."

Redwing was silent.

The Bounder's discovery, if discovery it was, had startled him, as it had startled Wharton. But, on reflection, both of them had doubted very much. Both of them agreed that, if the Bounder felt assured of the truth of his suspicion, he should go to the Head at once, and place the matter in older hands. And the fact that Smithy was unwilling to do so, seemed to hint that he had some lingering doubt himself; some misgiving that his bitter and resentful temper had led him astray, as it had often done before. It was all very well for Smithy to assert that he desired to make absolutely certain first. But making certain by such methods as spying on a fellow did not appeal to Redwing in the least.

He stood silent and troubled, the Bounder watching him impatiently. Smithy broke the silence angrily.

"Will you come?"

"I can't, Smithy—and you can't! You can't follow a chap and watch him, and spy on him, like Bunter. It's not good enough for me, or for you either."

"Please yourself, then!" growled the Bounder. "I'm going."

"Wharton sent us to take him back to the footer——"

"Wharton can go and eat coke!"

"It's not treating him fairly——"

"Rats!"

The Bounder hurried on towards the stile. He was uneasy already lest the new junior should have left the main footpath and escaped by some winding track in the wood.

Tom Redwing remained where he was, looking after his comrade, with a frowning, troubled brow. But as the Bounder did not stop or look back, Tom followed him at last and overtook him at the stile.

"Look here, Smithy——" he began.

Herbert Vernon-Smith vaulted over the stile and started up the footpath at a run. His face was angry and determined. Whether he was or was not convinced that the new junior in the Remove was a cheat and a rogue, at all events he was resolved to find out what he could. If, as the Bounder believed, Arthur Durance had disappeared before reaching Greyfriars, and this hawk-eyed fellow had taken his place, obviously the fellow could not be working alone in such a scheme—he must have confederates.

With those confederates he had to keep in touch. And Smithy suspected that it was to such a meeting that the new junior was going now. At least, he must have had a particular reason for clearing off without leave, and facing the certainty of a licking when he returned to the school.

For Tom's scruples on the subject the Bounder did not care two straws. He was not an over-scrupulous fellow himself, and he believed that at present he was engaged upon showing up a scheming rascal and righting a wrong. That was enough for him. At the best of times the Bounder of Greyfriars was not too particular in his methods.

Redwing followed him reluctantly along the footpath. The Bounder went so rapidly that Tom had to put it on to keep pace. But if Durance was on that path, he was well ahead now, for they did not sight him in the wood. The end of the footpath, opening on the Redclyffe road, appeared in sight, with another stile.

The Bounder reached the stile and stopped there a few moments, breathing hard after his run. There was the sound of an engine a little way along the road, and Smithy's eyes turned on a motor-car that was just starting.

He uttered an exclamation:

"There he is!"

"Where?" panted Redwing, coming up.

The Bounder pointed.

"In the car!"

Redwing followed his gaze. The car was closed and beginning to move rapidly, but Tom had a glimpse of the schoolboy who sat within for a moment. It was the new junior who was known in the Greyfriars Remove as Arthur Durance.

A few moments more, and he was out of sight as the car rushed on in the direction of Redclyffe.

"Sold!" muttered the Bounder.

He sat on the stile, staring after the vanishing car. It disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Redwing smiled faintly.

The Bounder's attempt at shadowing had come to a sudden end.

"Well, that's that!" said Tom. "Let's get back to Greyfriars, Smithy."

"No hurry!" grunted the Bounder. "Games practice will be over long before we can get back."

"It seems to me that we're in the same boat as Durance. We've cut games as much as he has."

"Who cares?" growled Smithy.

"Well, I do, for one," said Tom quietly. "We could have bagged that young ass in Friardale Lane if you——"

"I didn't want to bag him; I wanted to see where he went." The Bounder snapped his teeth "Somewhere Redclyffe way—that's all we can tell. If there was a taxi to be picked up—"

"Not likely," said Tom. "Let's get back."

"I shall know that car again—a blue Daimler," said Vernon-Smith, unheeding. "You didn't think of noticing the number?"

Redwing shook his head.

"Well, I did!" sneered the Bounder. "KG 2468. I shall know it again."

"If you ever see it again," said Redwing.

"Don't you think it likely?"

"Not if it's a hired car. Likely as not, the young ass had fixed up a motor run this afternoon, and that's why he cleared off instead of coming down to footer."

Vernon-Smith started a little and bit his lip. That commonplace explanation of the whole occurrence rather dashed him. Redwing smiled again.

"That's not it," said the Bounder, after a moment. "If the fellow hired a car for a run, why should he walk or run a mile by a footpath to meet it?

Why shouldn't it come to the school for him—at least, near the school?"

Redwing did not answer that. It was, indeed, difficult to answer, if the truth was that Durance was simply going out on a motor run.

"Well," snapped the Bounder, "what do you think about it?"

"I don't think about it at all! It's no business of mine!" said Redwing, rather sharply.

"Not if that young rogue is one of a gang who have kidnapped a fellow coming to our school?"

"Well, yes. If I believed that——"

"Haven't I proved it?" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Well, no! It's possible, but it's jolly unlikely," said Tom. "Look here, Smithy, if you really believe all that, and you won't put it to the Head, what about your father?"

"Well, what about my father?" grunted the Bounder.

"Durance came up from Devonshire and stopped the night at your father's house in London. Mr. Vernon-Smith saw him into the train for Greyfriars. Your father knows him perfectly well by sight. It must have been the real Durance that he put into the train for Greyfriars."

"Well?" snapped Smithy.

"Well, if you got your father to see him, that would settle it. Can't you get your father to come down to Greyfriars?"

"I've thought of that."

"Well, why not?"

"My pater's a busy man. He would come down to the school if I gave him a jolly good reason. But——"

"Isn't this a good reason?"

The Bounder was silent.

"You see how it stands," said Redwing quietly. "You suspect this chap, but you don't feel certain enough to speak to the Head, or to give it as a reason for your father to come down to Greyfriars. You're afraid of it turning out to be all moonshine."

"There's a chance—a slight chance!" muttered the Bounder. "A fellow doesn't want to risk looking an utter fool!"

He dropped from the stile.

"Let's get back!" he grunted.

And they walked back to Greyfriars in silence.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"So you've got back?"

"Where the dickens——"

The Famous Five were in the Remove passage when Vernon-Smith and Redwing came in. Games practice was long over, and Harry Wharton & Co. had come in to tea.

Wharton's brow was frowning as he looked at the two, and Redwing coloured uncomfortably and the Bounder scowled.

"Look here, you men——" began Harry.

Vernon-Smith unceremoniously shouldered past him and went into his own study. Wharton's eyes flashed.

"I'm sorry, Wharton!" said Tom awkwardly. "The fact is—is——"

He broke off. He could not explain that his chum was to blame.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you, Reddy!" said the captain of the Remove. "I've had a jaw from Wingate, and I've got a few words to say to Smithy."

And, with knitted brows, the captain of the Remove followed Vernon-Smith into Study No. 4. Redwing followed him in, worried and troubled. Bob Cherry winked at the Co.

"Now listen for the jolly old fireworks!" he said.

The Bounder had thrown himself into a chair in Study No. 4, and he scowled at Wharton as he came in.

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

"A few words," said Harry. "I sent you and Redwing after that cheeky cad Durance to bring him back to the footer. It was quite understood that you weren't given leave to cut games practice. I've been jawed by Wingate for letting three fellows off without any reason."

"That's one of the pleasures of being Form captain!" sneered the Bounder. "You have to take the rough with the smooth. If you're tired of the job, there are other fellows ready to step into your shoes!"

"That's not the point. I've reported Durance, and he gets six when he comes in."

"Report me, too, and get me six! I can stand six better than that weedy rotter can."

"Oh, cheese it, Smithy," broke in Tom Redwing. "The fact is, Wharton, you'd better report both of us. We could have bagged Durance and brought him in, and we didn't do it. We could have got back for games practice—and we didn't! And there's no excuse."

"I'm not making excuses, anyhow,"

> CONGRATULATIONS
> to Charles R. Clowes, "Sandycroft," Frances Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire, for his winning joke:
>
> **"Have you anything to say in your defence?" asked the magistrate of the tramp charged with stealing a carpet.**
> **"Yes, your Worship," answered the man in the dock. "I asked for work, and the lady gave me a carpet and told me to beat it. So I did!"**
>
> A pocket-knife has already been dispatched to him.

said the Bounder. "You can do as you jolly well like, and go and eat coke."

"And that's all you've got to say?" asked Harry.

"That's the lot."

"You'd better tell him, Smithy," said Tom. "Anyhow, Wharton knows what you think about Durance."

The Bounder grunted.

"Wharton's as silly an ass as you are," he replied. "Still, I'll tell him if he likes to listen."

The Bounder had come back in a thoroughly bad temper. His attempt at shadowing had been a hopeless failure, and the disappointment was all the keener because he knew—after it had happened—that he might have guessed that Durance would have a car waiting for him. If, as the Bounder suspected, the rogue of the Remove was going to a meeting with confederates, they were not likely to be near the school, very unlikely indeed to be within walking distance. The Bounder felt that his usual astuteness had failed him, and it was irritating.

Harry Wharton looked from one to the other of the chums of Study No. 4.

"What are you driving at?" he asked. "If anything happened to prevent you from coming back, you'd better tell me."

"We followed Durance," grunted the Bounder, "I mean, the cheating rogue who calls himself Durance."

"What on earth for?"

"To spot his game. At least, I followed him, and Redwing followed me. Redwing is too particular to do anything of the kind, of his own accord—only under my bad influence," sneered the Bounder.

"Well, and what happened?" asked Harry.

"The cad got into a car and vanished."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I suppose it was funny," sneered the Bounder. "But I'll be ready for that dodge next time."

"What utter rot," said Harry. "Do you mean to say that you're going to set up as a sort of detective, and keep the fellow watched?"

"I mean exactly that."

"Then the sooner you chuck it, the better," said the captain of the Remove. "I'm not surprised to hear that Redwing didn't approve of it. I should be surprised if he had."

"It's rather lucky for the fellow I knew at Barnstaple a year ago that we're not all good little Georgies at Greyfriars," said the Bounder. "I'm going to help him, somehow. I've told you that that hawk-eyed cad is not Arthur Durance at all."

"You've told us so!" said Harry slowly, "but——"

"You heard me pumping him. I spun a yarn of something that had never happened, while I was with Durance in Devonshire—and he pretended to remember the whole bag of tricks."

"That's queer, I know; but a fellow might be a liar without being a kidnapper or an impostor," said Harry. "He came here as Durance, and he's satisfied his Form master and the Head. Any day your father might come down to the school, and would spot him at once if he was a cheat."

"He would take jolly good care to clear out of gates if he heard that my father was coming down to the school."

"No reason why he should hear. Ask your father to come down to Greyfriars and settle the matter."

The Bounder grunted and did not answer. Redwing had already made the same suggestion, only bringing into the Bounder's mind a faint, lingering doubt that he might have made a mistake. Smithy was not blind to the fact that his own bitter temper sometimes led him astray, and that his beliefs were very much coloured by his likes and dislikes.

"It's too thick, I think," said Harry slowly. "It's possible, of course—but—it's awfully steep. Why should the fellow be playing such a game?"

"He's got some object, of course."

"Well, what object?"

"How should I know?" exclaimed the Bounder irritably. "He's not taken me into his confidence."

"If it's as you say, a Greyfriars man has been kidnapped, and is being kept a prisoner somewhere," said Harry.

"That's a certainty."

"Your father put him in the train for Greyfriars," went on the captain of the Remove. "It was the non-stop express for Courtfield, that gets in at three. I suppose your father knows Durance all right?"

"Of course he does."

"Then it must have been the genuine article that he put into the Courtfield train?"

"Yes."

"As the train doesn't stop before Courtfield Junction, nothing could have happened to Durance before that."

"They got him at Courtfield, I suppose, and this hawk-eyed young scoundrel took his place."

"Then it's your fault," said Harry.

The Bounder started.

"What? How do you make that out?"

"Quelch sent you to meet Durance at Courtfield Junction that day and you cleared off instead, and let him shift for himself. If you'd been on the platform, waiting for him——"

The Bounder bit his lip hard.

"There's something in that," he admitted. "But if it's my fault that they got him, it's all the more up to me to see him through. Not that I'm at all sure it would have saved him. If I'd been with him, they might have got me, too."

"Who are 'they'?" asked Harry.

"How should I know? The gang that this young hawk-eyed rascal is a member of, who've got Arthur Durance somewhere." The Bounder stared angrily at Wharton, who smiled. "You think I'm letting my imagination run away with me?"

"Well, it sounds a bit like the films," said Harry. "Look here, if you really think this about Durance, put it to him. If he's an impostor, the sooner he's shown up the better. Put it to him plain, in the Rag, before all the fellows, and get the facts out, whatever they are."

"And put him on his guard?" sneered the Bounder. "I know a trick worth two of that."

"Well, that's what I'd do," said Harry.

"You're a fool, and I'm not."

"Thanks!" said the captain of the Remove dryly, and he walked out of Study No. 4.

Vernon-Smith turned a scowling brow on Redwing.

"You think the same as that silly idiot?" he demanded.

"I don't think Wharton is a silly idiot!" answered Tom mildly.

"Do you think the same as he does?"

"Well, yes."

"Then you're a fool, too!"

Redwing laughed.

"We're all fools, excepting you, old chap," he said. "Let it go at that, then. What about tea?"

It was rather a dismal tea in Study No. 4. The Bounder was in a black ill-humour, and did not seek to disguise it.

He was convinced that his suspicion was well founded, that the fellow with the hawkish eyes, who called himself Arthur Durance, was not Arthur Durance. And yet, at the thought of making such a startling accusation in public, of committing himself without retreat to it, the Bounder's heart failed him. He was sure—but he realised that he was not sure enough for that. He had to find proof—something definite that would convince others—and the fellow was as cunning as a fox, and not easily to be caught—and in seeking proof, he had to work alone.

"I'm going on with it," he said, as he rose from the tea-table. "You can think what you like, and that other ass can think what he likes—but I'm going on with it, and you'll see."

And with that the Bounder walked out of the study and slammed the door after him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Laying the Snare!

HARRY WHARTON looked rather grimly at the new junior, as he joined the throng of fellows going to Hall for call-over.

"Durance!" he called out.

"Hallo!"

"You're to go to Wingate's study after call-over."

"What for?"

"To be licked," answered Harry curtly.

The new junior made a grimace. He came over to the captain of the Remove, his manner unusually civil.

"Look here, Wharton," he said, "I'm rather sorry I put your back up to-day; but I had to go out. You see, I'd already made arrangements for the afternoon, and I knew nothing about the games practice."

"The time was posted in the Rag," answered Harry.

"Well, I'm new here, you know——"

"And I came to tell you specially, and marched you down to the changing-room," said Harry. "After that——"

"I know. But I'd booked a seat for the pictures at Courtfield yesterday, and I was rather keen on it. Look here, you can put in a word for me with Wingate."

Wharton looked at him steadily.

He knew that Vernon-Smith and Redwing had followed the new fellow more than a mile from the school, in a direction opposite from that of Courtfield, and that Durance had taken a car towards Redclyffe. It was obvious that wherever he had been he had not been to the pictures at Courtfield.

"You booked a seat yesterday?" repeated Harry.

"Yes. So you see——"

"You mean to say that you went to the pictures at Courtfield this afternoon?"

"Yes. I asked Bunter to tell you, but——"

"You did nothing of the kind," said Harry. "And I will tell you this, Durance, that telling lies won't do you much good here."

"What do you mean? I tell you——"

"Oh, chuck it!" interrupted Wharton, in disgust. "You never went anywhere near Courtfield."

The new junior started.

"How do you know where I went?" he exclaimed.

"I don't know where you went, and don't care. I know you never went to Courtfield!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "You didn't want a car on the Redclyffe road to get to Courtfield."

The sallow face reddened, and the sharp, bird-like eyes had a sudden glitter in them.

"You followed me—you spied——"

"Don't be a silly ass!" said Harry, contemptuously.

"If you did not, how do you know?" snarled the new junior.

"You admit it, anyhow."

"I suppose some fellow saw me." The hawk-like eyes gleamed at Wharton. "Who was the fellow?"

"You can find that out for yourself."

"Well, it's true that I went for a motor run. No harm in that, I suppose, on a half-holiday?" said the new junior. "I've hardly ever been out of Devonshire, before I came here, and I wanted to see the country. Why shouldn't I?"

"No reason why you shouldn't. But lots of reasons why you should not tell lies about it," said Wharton scornfully.

And he turned away and went into Hall.

After call-over the new junior made his way unwillingly to Wingate's study in the Sixth. There he received his due, six from the prefect's ashplant. And his face wore a black scowl as he came up the Remove passage.

He was there when the Bounder and Redwing came in. Redwing sorted out the volume of Milton that was required for prep that evening. The new junior did not speak to either of them. He was accustomed to preserving a sulky silence when he was with his study-mates, and, except for prep, he was seldom in the study with them. But his sharp eyes dwelt on the Bounder several times with an evil look. Perhaps he suspected who it was that had seen him in the car on the Redclyffe road that day.

Vernon-Smith gave him no heed. The new junior finished prep very quickly, and rose to leave the study. But he paused on his way to the door as the Bounder made a remark to Redwing.

"Did I tell you my pater was coming down to the school, Reddy?"

Redwing looked up.

"No," he answered.

The new junior had been putting his hand to the door to open it. He dropped it again.

He turned from the door, and stepped to the bookcase, and began to sort over the books there.

The Bounder smiled grimly.

He knew that, but for his remark, the fellow would have left the study, and that he was lingering to hear more. If Durance was the impostor the Bounder believed him to be, he was deeply interested in any visit Mr. Vernon-Smith might pay to Greyfriars, as the millionaire knew Arthur Durance well.

"I'm going to ask Quelch to let me off class on Monday afternoon," said the Bounder carelessly.

"Well, Quelchy will let you off, if your father's coming," said Tom. "You're going to meet him!"

"I haven't seen him since the hols, you know," said Vernon-Smith. "He is never able to stop long when he comes. Look here, the pater likes you, Reddy, and I'd like you to come with me."

"I'd like to, if Quelchy will let me," said Redwing. "He's not keen on letting fellows off classes, though."

"You can ask him, anyhow."

"Yes, rather, I'll ask him as nicely as I can," said Tom, with a smile. "Your pater won't be coming down in his car, then?"

"No. If we can get off, we'll get a car from Courtfield Garage, and pick him up at Lantham," said Vernon-Smith. "The express gets into Lantham at three."

"That means asking Quelch for the whole afternoon," remarked Redwing, a little doubtfully.

"That's it. We get back here for tea," said Vernon-Smith. "The pater hasn't been here this term, and I want to make rather a fuss of him."

"I'll help, old chap."

"What about you, Durance?" asked Vernon-Smith, looking across to the junior who was fumbling at the bookcase.

"What do you mean about me?" asked the new junior over his shoulder, without turning his head.

"My father will want to see you, of course."

"Why should he?"

"Your father is his friend," said the Bounder. "The pater wanted us to be friends here, for that reason. He said so."

"It hasn't worked, has it?" said the new junior, with a sneer.

"No; but there's no need to shove that at the pater. I suppose you'd like to come to tea in the study while he's here."

"I shouldn't."

"We're not friends, or likely to be," said Vernon-Smith. "But you've nothing against my pater, I suppose?"

"I'm not keen on Mr. Vernon-Smith at all, thanks!"

"Then you won't come?"

"No, I won't."

"How do you know where I went?" said Durance. "I don't know where you went, and don't care," snapped Harry Wharton. "But I know you never went to Courtfield!" The new boy's sallow face reddened, and the sharp, bird-like eyes had a sudden glitter in them. "So you followed me, then!" he snarled. "You spied on me!" (*See Chapter* 5.)

"At least, you'll have to see him," said Vernon-Smith. "He's certain to ask to see you."

"If I'm in the House, of course, I'll see him if he wants to see me," answered the new junior carelessly.

"You'll be in the House, as you'll be at class on Monday, and you won't get off till four."

The new junior looked round at that.

"If you're bringing your father here to tea, that won't be till later than four o'clock," he said. "Tea-time's later."

"Tea's a movable feast, you know," said the Bounder coolly. "If the pater comes straight here from Lantham Station, he will get in long before classes are over. So you'll be in the House."

"I shall be in class, at any rate. And I don't think fellows are allowed to see visitors in the Form-room."

"After class——"

"Oh, I'll see him, if he likes!" said the new junior. "No reason why I shouldn't, though I can't say I want to. What time will he leave?"

"That's not settled."

"Before calling-over, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes!"

"All right, I'll see him, if he asks about me."

And, taking a book under his arm, the new junior left the study.

Redwing looked curiously at the Bounder across the study table.

"You've fixed this up on Durance's account, Smithy?" he asked.

"Quite."

"Well, it's a sensible thing. Your pater knows the kid thoroughly, and when he sees him it will settle the matter."

"When!" grinned the Bounder.

"Well, he's bound to see him, isn't he?"

"Not if that fellow can help it."

Redwing looked grave.

"Do you mean that you think he will try to keep clear of your father?" he asked.

"I don't think—I know!"

"Well, if he does——"

"No 'if' about it—he will!" said the Bounder tersely. "He will manage to get out of gates Monday afternoon."

"He can't, in class!"

"Fellows have cut classes before now, and for less serious reasons," said the Bounder, with a grin. "That fellow will cut classes on Monday afternoon and chance a flogging!"

Redwing was silent. The Bounder spoke with complete conviction, as if there was no shadow of doubt in the matter. But doubt was lingering in Tom Redwing's mind.

"If he cuts classes, to dodge seeing my father, what will you say then, Reddy?" asked the Bounder mockingly.

"I shall say that it's jolly suspicious, but not proof."

"Exactly. But the proof will turn up about the same time, I hope," said Vernon-Smith.

He added nothing further to that rather cryptic remark. But it was clear that the Bounder had formed some plan, and that the proposed visit of Mr. Vernon-Smith to Greyfriars School was only a part of it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

French Leave!

"QUELCHY looks cross," murmured Bob Cherry.

"The crossfulness appears to be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Who's for it?" grinned Squiff.

"I say, you fellows——"

Mr. Quelch glanced along the Remove table, and the whispering voices promptly died away.

There was no doubt that Quelchy looked cross, as he sat at the head of the Remove table at dinner that Monday. Something, evidently, had occurred to disturb the serenity of the Remove master.

The juniors wondered what it was. Skinner uneasily speculated whether Quelch had noticed a scent of smoke about him. Billy Bunter felt a misgiving that Quelch might have heard something from below stairs about a missing pie. It was not till dinner was over that the cause transpired.

"Vernon-Smith!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

The Bounder did not seem alarmed under the stare of Quelch's gimlet eyes.

"I have received a telephone message from your father," said Mr. Quelch. "He has requested me to give you an exeat this afternoon."

"Indeed, sir."

"It is very unusual," said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "But as Mr. Vernon-Smith has made a very special request, I have acceded."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Mr. Vernon-Smith has asked for leave for Redwing also," added Mr. Quelch. "To this also I have acceded."

"You are very kind, sir," said Tom.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him rather more amiably than at the Bounder. Tom Redwing was one of his best pupils, and steady work was the way to a Form master's heart.

"You will both be free for the afternoon," said the Remove master, in a somewhat acid voice.

The juniors marched out of Hall, some of them grinning. The cause of Quelchy's

frown was known now. Any such interruption of routine was disagreeable to Mr. Quelch. He disapproved of it strongly. Indeed, there was no doubt that he would greatly have preferred to refuse the special request of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, and to point out to him that boys were at Greyfriars to learn things, not to take extra holidays. But no doubt he felt that a special request was difficult to refuse.

"Lucky bargees!" said Bob Cherry, as the Removites went out. "Some kids have all the luck!"

"The luckfulness is preposterous!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Your esteemed and ridiculous father might as well have requested leave for us also, my worthy Smithy."

The Bounder laughed.

"I fancy he didn't find it easy to put it across Quelchy for us two," he said. "But it's all right, Reddy. You're rather a swot, old bean, but you must miss history and maths for once."

"Not at all," said Tom, with a smile.

"But what's the big idea?" asked Harry Wharton. "Anything very special on this afternoon?"

"Lots!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Smithy's father is coming down," explained Tom, rather surprised that the Bounder did not mention it. "We're going across to Lantham to meet him and bring him to the school."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton. "Is that it?"

"That's it," said Tom.

Wharton gave the Bounder a quick look. He remained behind with Smithy and Redwing as the other fellows went out into the quad.

"So you've done it now, Smithy?" he asked. "It was the best thing. I suppose your pater's pretty busy; but if there's anything in what you fancy about Durance, the sooner he sees the fellow and identifies him the better."

The Bounder's lip curled.

"The fellow won't be in class this afternoon," he said.

"He's not got leave."

"I fancy he will take french leave."

"What rot!" said Wharton. "He wouldn't dare! Quelchy would be like a tiger."

"Look!" said the Bounder, with a nod in the direction of Masters' passage.

Mr. Quelch had gone in that direction, and Wharton, following the Bounder's nod with his eyes, saw the new junior following the way the Remove master had gone.

"Well?" said Harry.

"He's gone to ask Quelch for an exeat."

"More duffer he, if he has. Quelchy will jump on him."

"Exactly; and he will cut class and stay out."

"I suppose he would, if there's anything in what you think about him," said Wharton slowly. "But——"

"Well, you'll be in class, and you'll see."

"That's so," assented Harry.

He followed his friends out of the House, little enough interested in the new junior, though the Bounder's strange suspicion had certainly given him food for thought.

Vernon-Smith stayed where he was, and Redwing with him.

"Waiting for something, Smithy?" asked Tom.

"Yes."

"Well, what are we waiting for?" asked Redwing, rather puzzled.

"To see that fellow come back from Quelchy's study."

"Why?"

"To see whether he's got an exeat."

"If you ask him——"

"No need to ask him. I shall be able to tell by his face," said the Bounder coolly. "He won't be long."

In a few minutes the new junior came back from Masters' passage. His face wore a sullen, angry scowl.

The Bounder closed one eye at Redwing.

Durance passed them, and went out of the House, still scowling, and evidently thinking deeply.

"Looks as if he didn't get it—what?" grinned the Bounder.

"He looks disappointed," said Tom. "But you don't know really what he has been asking Quelch."

"I fancy I do. Anyhow, come on. We're finished here."

They went out into the quad, and the Bounder loitered about for some time, with his eye on Durance in the distance. Redwing remained with him, but he was growing more and more restive. At length the new junior, who had strolled down towards the gates, went out into the road.

"He's made up his mind to it," smiled the Bounder.

"Lots of fellows have gone out, and will come back for class."

"That fellow won't."

"I don't like the idea of keeping an eye on a chap like this, Smithy. In fact, I dislike it a good deal," muttered Redwing.

"You can chuck me, if you like," sneered the Bounder. "There's a lot of high-minded youths in the Remove who would be glad of your company, if you're tired of mine."

"Oh, don't be an ass," grunted Redwing. "When do we start?"

"Now!" answered the Bounder. "I only wanted to see that cur safe out of gates."

When the Bounder and his companion passed out, Durance of the Remove was disappearing along Friardale Lane, in the direction of the village. It was the way he had gone on Saturday afternoon, when Smithy's attempt at shadowing had ended so ingloriously. The Bounder glanced after him, with a cynical grin, and to Redwing's relief, turned his back on the disappearing junior, and started towards Courtfield.

When the Remove went to their Form-room that afternoon, they expected to find two places empty—Smithy's and Redwing's. As a matter of fact, they found three. Durance was not there.

Harry Wharton had intended to note whether he was there or not, but his mind, as a matter of fact, was more occupied with football matters than with the Bounder's theory regarding the new junior. And he had quite forgotten Durance.

Mr. Quelch, however, was not likely to forget a member of his class. He was already annoyed at having been induced to give two Removites leave for the afternoon, and he was not likely to overlook the fact that a third was missing.

Certainly, he did not suspect, as yet, that the new junior was cutting class. He supposed that he was late. But when the class was over, it was obvious that Durance was not merely late. The next class was with Mr. Lascelles, the mathematics master, but Durance was not there to take it.

"Wharton!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "Do you know where Durance is?"

"No, sir," said Harry.

"Does anyone here know where he is?" asked Mr. Quelch, looking round over the Remove.

Nobody did.

"Has anyone seen him since dinner?"

"I saw him go out of gates, sir," said Skinner.

"Very well!"

Mr. Quelch's jaw set grimly. Evidently Durance had cut classes, and cutting a class was a serious matter where a master like Henry Samuel Quelch was concerned. Nobody in the Remove envied Durance his interview with Mr. Quelch when he came in, though a good many envied him his absence from maths that afternoon.

Wharton could not help feeling startled. The Bounder had predicted that Durance would cut class to avoid seeing Mr. Vernon-Smith. His prediction had been fulfilled, whatever the new junior's motive might be. And what could it be, but the one suggested by the Bounder?

The captain of the Remove was in a thoughtful mood that afternoon, and his thoughtfulness was not caused by the valuable instruction he was receiving in the Form-room.

— —

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tracked!

"HERE we are!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Is that our car?" asked Tom.

"That's it."

At a short distance from the school, on the Courtfield road, a car was waiting at the corner of a little lane off the high road. The chauffeur standing by it touched his cap to the juniors as they came up.

"Hop in, Reddy," said the Bounder, as the chauffeur opened the door.

"What about having the car open?" asked Tom. It was a mild October afternoon, with no sign of rain, and the sailorman's son was keen on fresh air at all times.

The Bounder shook his head.

"I'd rather have it closed, if you don't mind," he answered.

"Oh, all right!"

Redwing sat down in the car. The Bounder remained talking to the chauffeur for a few minutes, in a low tone. The man's expression was rather curious, as Redwing noted, as if he was receiving directions of a rather unusual kind.

"You quite understand, Dixon?" asked the Bounder, at last.

"Quite, sir."

"A blue Daimler." Redwing caught the words, as the Bounder was no longer subduing his voice, "The number's KG 2468, unless they've changed the number plate, as they may have."

"I understand, sir."

"Get going, then."

The Bounder stepped in after Redwing, and the car started. It whirred away by cross lanes in the direction of Redclyffe.

Tom looked at the Bounder curiously, a little uneasily. The car Smithy had mentioned to Dixon was obviously the one Durance had used the previous Saturday; but why he had mentioned it was a mystery to Redwing. And there was a lurking cynical grin on Smithy's face that he did not quite like.

However, he asked no questions, and remained silent till they came out on the Redclyffe road. There the car slowed down and Tom broke the silence.

"This is rather a long way round to Lantham, Smithy."

"We're not going to Lantham."

"We're not!" exclaimed Redwing, in astonishment.

"Not in the least."

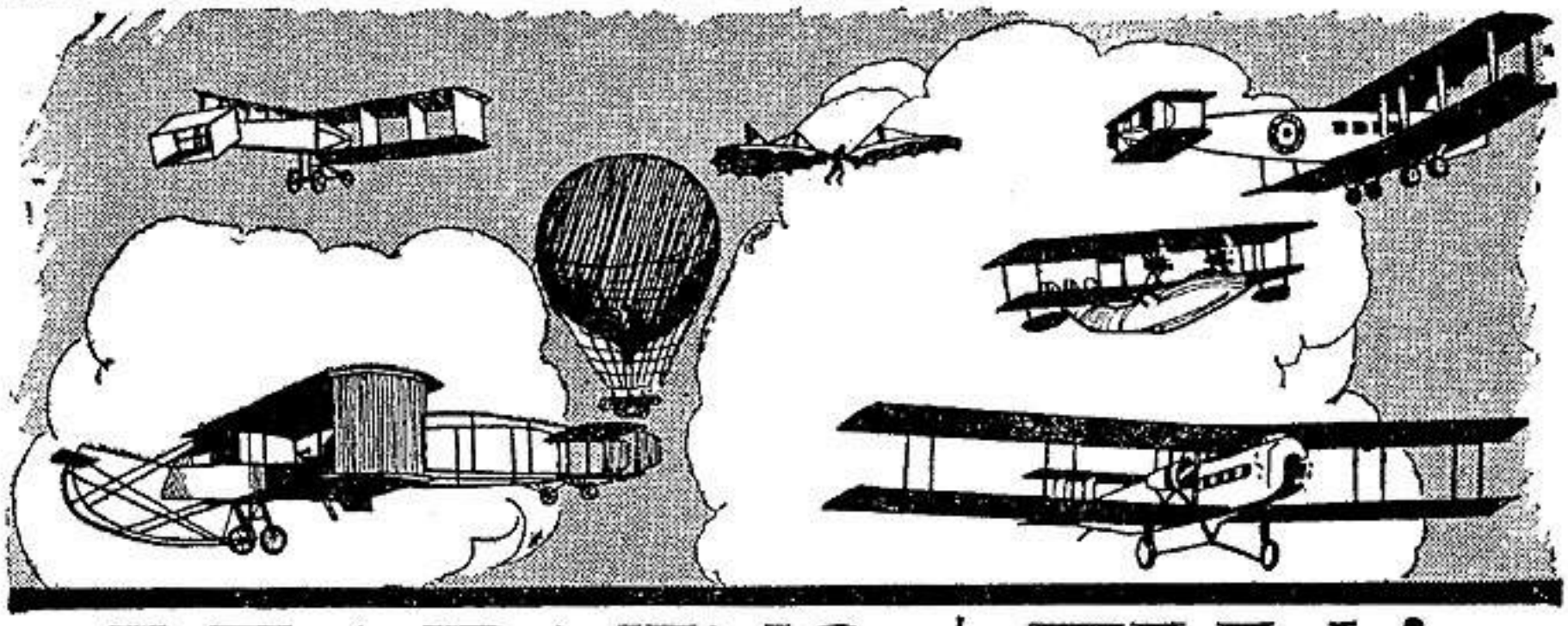
"But what about meeting your father?"

"We're not meeting my father."

"Smithy!"

(Continued on page 12.)

Another Topping Article by Our Special Contributor!



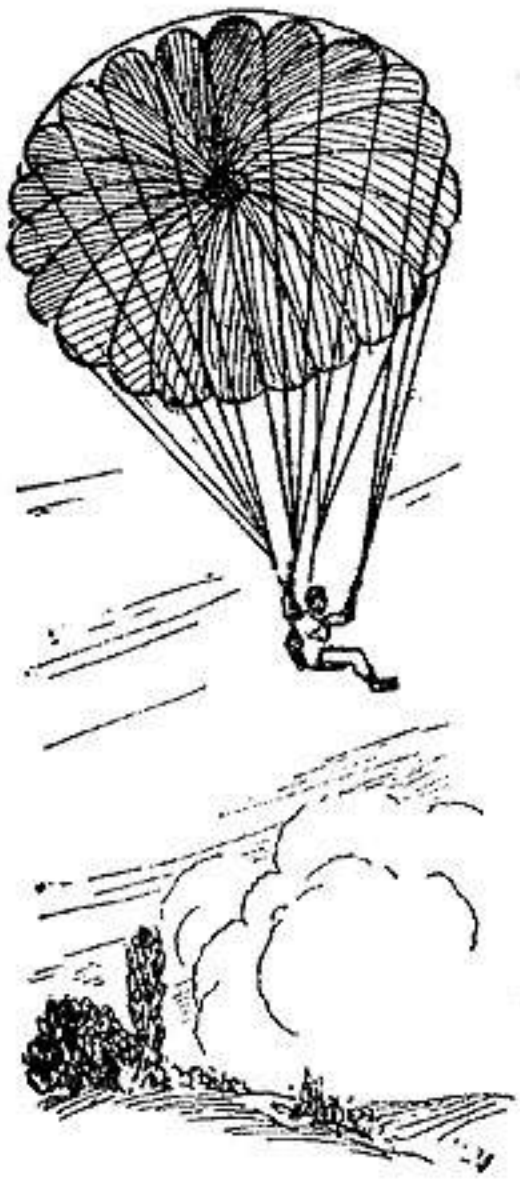
LEARNING to FLY!

Thirty years ago few people thought that it would be possible for a human being to launch himself from a plane thousands of feet up in the air and land safely on terra firma. Yet to-day parachute descents are almost commonplace!

Engines and Parachutes!

ALL the world clapped when Bleriot flew the Channel. When his monoplane came down, near Dover Castle, breaking its running gear and propeller, he was almost exhausted. I wonder what the small crowd that rapidly assembled around the machine and the hero would have said if anyone had dared to prophesy that by 1929 airmen would have done the air-trip to India in a couple of days!

That, and much more, has been accomplished since the memorable flight of Bleriot in 1909. For the engines fitted to aeroplanes have been improved beyond all recognition. A big start in engine improvement proved successful that same year, when Henri Farman took part in a big flying contest in France.



The most-favoured type of parachute used by our present R.A.F. experts.

He fitted his biplane with typical landing gear—two long skids, fitted with small, pneumatic tyred bicycle wheels—which itself was a big innovation—and a new kind of motor. They called it the Gnome—and of course the "experts" all scoffed at it, as they did at most daring departures from the "just ordinary."

But that Gnome engine was going to make history. It developed 50 horse-power, and weighed only 165 lb., and with its aid Farman established a world's record by remaining in the air for four minutes over three hours and covering 112 miles.

The £10,000 Prize!

Another of the daring flying pioneers, Latham, at that contest, won a prize for the greatest height reached—500 feet. And Paulhan did big things, too—all by way of preparation for winning, as he did later on—a £10,000 prize given by the "Daily Mail" for the first flight from London to Manchester!

Fancy that! And now moneyed folk skip over to the Continent for lunch, leaving Croydon aerodrome after a leisurely breakfast, do their shopping in France, and skip back again by air in time for early tea!

When that memorable aeroplane meeting concluded, captains of finance became intensely interested in the money side of the flying craze. A biplane factory was started by Farman. Bleriot started building monoplanes. And in England, Wright planes were being constructed by Short Brothers. Another notable early flyer who began to build planes for sale was Mr. A. V. Roe.

Cody, of man-lifting kite fame, was getting very busy, and, as that memorable year 1909 began to draw to a close, Moore-Brabazon bought a British built biplane from Short Brothers and with it won the £1,000 prize offered by the "Daily Mail" to the first British airman who should manage a circular flight in an all-British plane.

To crown the glory of that wonderful year Farman "busted" the world's record for flight duration by remaining aloft for well over four hours, during which time he flew 150 miles.

"Safety First!"

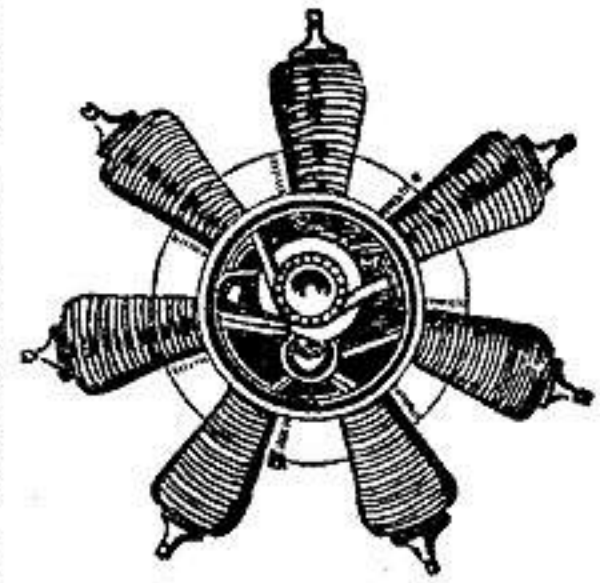
And now everyone actively interested in flying was concerned with the ways and means of improving the engines—for on these depended all further progress. As improvements were effected, so records were broken in rapid succession, and then at last came the perfect life-savers of the air—the parachutes.

They were sorely needed, these absolutely reliable parachutes. For constantly things were going wrong up above the clouds, and without some such perfect landing device the stricken airman hadn't a ghost's chance of saving his bones.

To-day there are several varieties of parachutes, one of the most favoured being the type which is folded up compactly in a kind of cushion on which the pilot sits. It is strapped to him, with braces over the shoulders and around the thighs. All he has to do is to jump—when it comes to that—as far out from his plane as possible.

At the same time he pulls a ring attached to a cord which forms part of his life-saving equipment, and the whole package opens itself and, an instant later, he is being borne lightly down to the ground by what looks like a gigantic umbrella suspended high above his head.

Jumping from an aeroplane is now part of the routine drill of air pilots, and at this apparently tremendously dangerous game some of them are superhumanly expert. R.A.F. parachute experts think little of hopping off their plane when 15,000 feet up.



A front view of the Gnome engine, with the aid of which Farman established a world's record in 1909.

Airmen who have had to use the parachute in deadly earnest—in dire necessity—have banded themselves together in what they call "The Caterpillar Club." There is a touch of humour about this—with a certain grim flavour, too. You know how some kinds of caterpillars when disturbed at their feeding on a shrub or tall plant promptly let go their hold and dangle unobtrusively and leisurely to the ground at the end of a silken thread which they spin specially for the purpose?

Well, that's where the Caterpillar Club derived its queer name. If ever you want a startling sensation that will last to the end of your days, get a pilot to take you up a few thousand feet and then see how *you* feel as your feet leave the plane and you tug your ring—and wonder whether the parachute will work!

THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE!

(*Continued from page* 10.)

"My father isn't coming," said the Bounder coolly. "The pater's too busy a man to run down to Greyfriars at a minute's notice. I told you I should not put it to him about Durance till I felt sure. Besides, it would be useless to get him to make a long journey to identify the fellow, when the fellow would take care to keep out of his way at the end of it."

"But——" stammered Tom, bewildered. "I—I thought we'd got leave from school to meet your father, and——"

"So did Durance!" said the Bounder grimly.

"Then what you were telling me in the study on Saturday evening——"

"Spoof, for that fellow to hear!" said the Bounder coolly. "I was setting a trap for him, and he walked into it. Believing that my father was coming down to the school, I knew that he would take care to be out of gates at the time—one more proof that I've got him down right. I've no doubt that he asked Quelch for leave, that Quelch refused, and that he cut."

"You've no proof of that."

"I shall have plenty when we see him."

"You expect to see him?"

"That's what we're here for."

"But I don't see——"

"Taking it, just for argument's sake," said the Bounder sarcastically, "that I may be right, what is the fellow likely to do? He's got to keep away from my father, who knows Durance perfectly well, and would spot the swindle at a glance. The farther he keeps away from Greyfriars, while my father is supposed to be there, the safer he will feel."

"I suppose so—but——"

"Last Saturday he walked through the wood by the footpath, and picked up a car that was waiting for him on the other side of the wood. It took him to his friends—whoever they are, and wherever they are. He'd got to lie low this afternoon, and his best game is to do exactly the same again, and stay with his friends till it's safe to get back to the school. I gave him plenty of time to make all his arrangements, by letting out on Saturday that he might expect to see my pater to-day. He thinks we've headed for Lantham, he hasn't the faintest idea we're hanging about on the Redclyffe road. But——"

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"Unless I've read him wrong, that car will pick him up again, and we shall see him, and this time we won't be left in the lurch."

Redwing was silent.

He could not deny that the Bounder's plans had been laid with skill, indeed, with cunning, and that if Durance was the rogue Smithy supposed him to be, it was very probable that his movements that afternoon would be as Vernon-Smith described.

But there was something distasteful to Tom in the whole business, and he liked it less still when Smithy curtained the windows so that no passing glance could detect who was in the car.

The car slowed to a halt. From a chink of the blind, the Bounder watched the road, and grinned.

"There's the car," he said.

Redwing breathed hard.

"Sure?" he asked.

"Look for yourself."

Redwing looked. At a distance, drawn up beside the road, was a blue Daimler, and Tom recognised it at once as the car that had waited for Durance the previous Saturday afternoon.

So far, at least, the Bounder's prediction had been verified. The blue car was there, waiting, in the same place as before, on the Redclyffe road, at a short distance from the opening of the footpath that led through the wood to Friardale Lane.

Dixon dismounted, opened the bonnet, and appeared to become very busy. Redwing understood now what instructions the Bounder had given him before starting. If the driver of the blue car noticed them at all, he would simply suppose that he had engine trouble. The two juniors inside were quite invisible.

"You think that Daimler's waiting for Durance?" asked Tom at last.

"What do you think?" jeered the Bounder.

"Well, it looks like it, of course. He won't be here for some time, though, if he's walking through the wood as he did on Saturday."

"We're going to wait."

They waited, while Dixon tinkered at the engine. The chauffeur of the blue Daimler was seated on a grassy bank beside the road, smoking and reading a newspaper. He glanced towards Dixon once or twice, but evidently without interest.

Vernon-Smith gripped Redwing's arm suddenly.

"Look!" he breathed.

Redwing looked from the chink and caught his breath.

A schoolboy clambered over the stile on the footpath, and came out into the road and walked to the blue car.

It was the new junior in the Greyfriars Remove—at even a greater distance his sharp features and bird-like eyes would have been unmistakable.

"What now?" grinned the Bounder.

"It's Durance," admitted Tom.

The Bounder rubbed his hands. He was openly gleeful at the outcome of his plans for the afternoon. If he was mistaken in his judgment of the new junior he had been at all events right in forecasting his movements. It was plain now that Durance had cut classes at Greyfriars, and that he intended to spend the afternoon at a distance from the school.

Redwing sat back in the seat; but the Bounder continued to watch. He saw the new junior arrive at the car and speak to the chauffeur who was sprawling in the grass. The man rose, Durance entered the car, and the Daimler got into motion.

At the same time Dixon came to the end of his engine trouble, remounted into his seat, and drove on, in the wake of the blue car, but at a distance.

The Bounder rubbed his hands again and grinned.

"Now we shall see what we shall see!" he murmured.

"Are we following that car?" asked Redwing.

"We are."

"You've told Dixon——"

"Yes."

"If Durance is only going for a joy-ride, you're running up a bill for nothing," said Tom.

"If he's only going for a joy-ride you can use my head for a football!" answered the Bounder.

"I don't like following the chap!" muttered Tom.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"You can jump out if you like!" he sneered.

Tom Redwing made no reply to that, and he sat in silence, while the car glided on swiftly in the wake of the blue Daimler.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

At the Old Red House!

"NOT a joy-ride!" grinned the Bounder.

Three miles or so along the road the Daimler turned into a country lane, where the Bounder's car followed it over ruts and ridges, jolting and jarring. From the lane it turned into a mere track—a narrow lane that led towards the cliffs, where there was a good deal of traffic in the summer, when holiday-makers abounded along the coast, but in the winter almost none. The way was rutty and miry, between hedges and clumps of willows.

Durance, apparently, was not on a "joy-ride," as Tom Redwing had suggested; he would scarcely have chosen such a route for a drive for pleasure.

He was heading for some destination; and in that direction there were no buildings, save a few scattered farmhouses, and the holiday places that were now shut up since the end of the summer.

Across the hedges a building came into view, a building of red brick, with red chimneys, and creepers on the walls. It was the Old Red House—a building that had been renovated for use as a holiday resort, and was on the books of Mr. Pilkins, the estate agent at Lantham, as a "desirable summer residence." In the summer it was always let; in the winter it was closed and shuttered and deserted. The Bounder's eyes sparkled as he glanced at it.

"The Old Red House!" he muttered.

Redwing looked at him.

"Do you remember," asked the Bounder, "that day last week, when we were caught in the storm, we tried to get shelter at the Old Red House? Wharton and his gang were with us——"

"I remember."

"You told us the place was never taken after the end of the summer——"

"It never is," said Tom.

"But we found it was occupied——"

"I remember," assented Redwing. "It's very unusual. It's the loneliest place for miles round, and the bleakest in the winter."

"And the man there slanged us for getting under his porch out of the rain, and refused to let us in."

The Bounder's eyes were dancing. Evidently the sight of the Old Red House had brought some new train of thought into his mind.

"What about it?" asked Tom.

"Only it looks as if the Daimler is heading for the Old Red House," said the Bounder.

"Oh!" said Redwing.

"If that's where he's going——"

"He may know somebody there——"

"He's just come up from Devonshire, and hasn't a single relation in England, now that his father's gone to South America—if he's Durance. He's a complete stranger in this part of England. And he knows somebody who's suddenly taken the Old Red House!" said the Bounder derisively. "The loneliest and bleakest place on the coast, never occupied in the winter—till now. What does it look like?"

Redwing did not answer that.

The Bounder watched from the chink in the window-blind. The blue Daimler turned from the rutty lane to the gate of the Old Red House, and the gate was opened by a man in horn-rimmed glasses, who came down from the house as the car arrived.

Smithy spoke quickly to Dixon, and

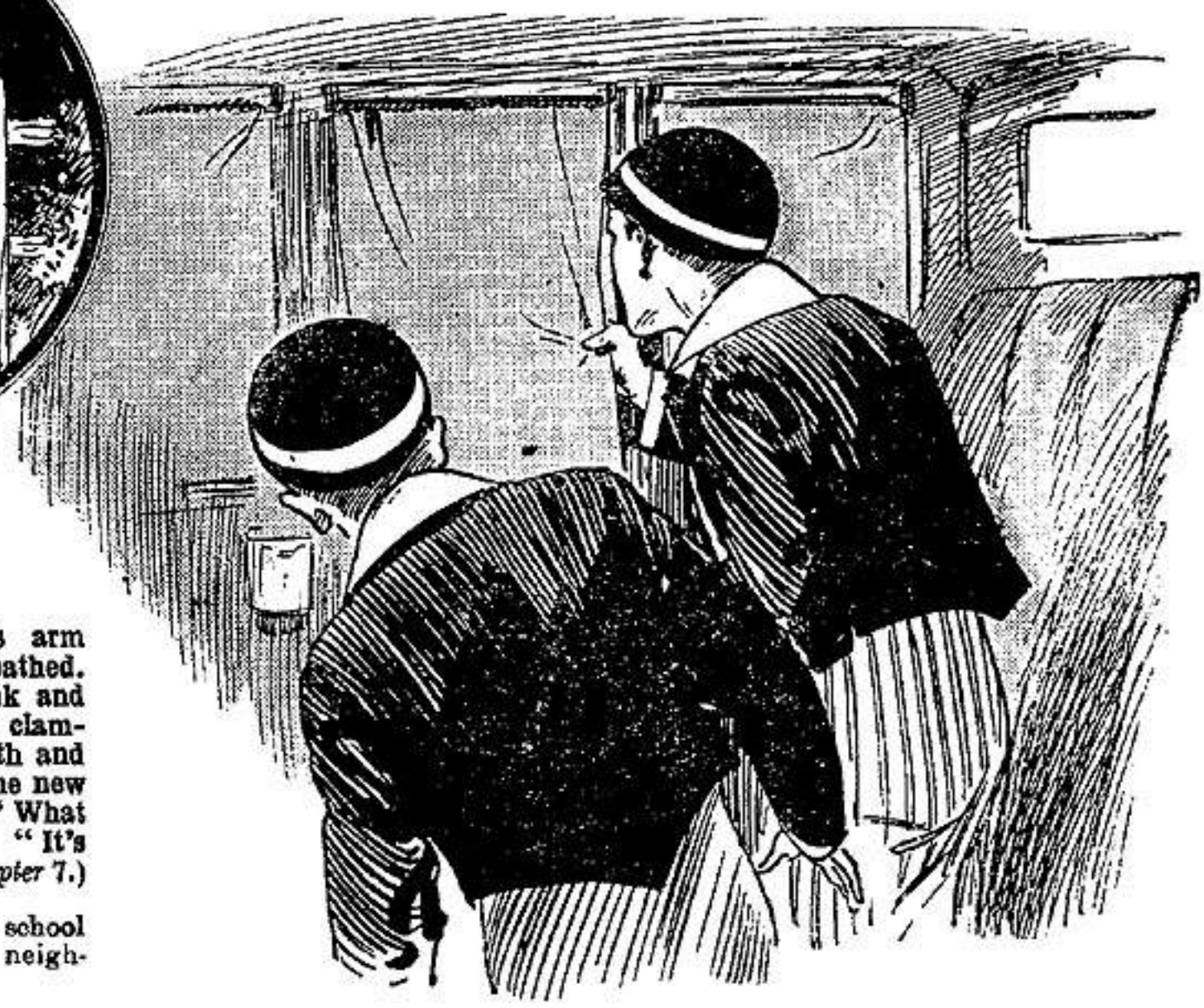
the car put on speed, and fairly shot past, and sped on towards the cliffs.

In a few moments the Daimler and the Old Red House dropped out of sight behind.

The Bounder sank back into his seat, grinning. He was deeply elated by his success.

"We've run him down!" he said. "The Old Red House is his headquarters, and he was expected there. That johnny in the specs was ready to open the gate when he arrived. You remember the day we were there, we saw the tyre marks on the gravel—the car was locked in the garage. It was that Daimler, Reddy. That spectacled johnny was the man who opened the door a few inches and slanged us. And that toad who calls himself Durance goes there secretly to visit him."

"Secretly?" said Tom.



Vernon-Smith gripped Redwing's arm suddenly. "Look!" he breathed. Redwing looked through the chink and caught his breath. A schoolboy clambered over the stile on the footpath and came out into the road. It was the new junior in the Greyfriars Remove. "What now?" grinned the Bounder. "It's Durance!" admitted Tom. (*See Chapter 7.*)

"Has he said a word in the school about knowing anybody in the neighbourhood?"

"Not that I've heard."

"He said last Saturday that he was going to the pictures at Courtfield. We know where he went. Why did he lie about it?"

Redwing was silent. It was borne in upon his mind that the Bounder was, after all, on the track of the truth. At all events, there was no doubt that Durance's movements were surreptitious and stealthy, and not easy to explain except on the Bounder's theory.

The Bounder spoke to Dixon again, and the car, by another lane, reached the Redclyffe road once more, and was let out for Lantham.

"Where are we going now?" asked Tom.

"Lantham!"

"And what are we going to do at Lantham?"

"Call on Mr. Pilkins!"

"Pilkins! The estate agent?"

"That's the johnny!"

"What on earth for?"

"To ask him a few questions about the man who's taken the Old Red House," grinned the Bounder. "Pilkins must have let him the house—he lets all these holiday places along the cliffs. And I fancy the Old Red House is the only one he's let since the end of the summer. He will be able to tell us something about this johnny with the specs."

"He's not likely to talk about his tenants to a schoolboy."

"Leave it to me."

And nothing more was said till the car ran into Lantham, and stopped at the office of Mr. Pilkins.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Smithy—Detective!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was received very courteously at the estate agent's office, and shown in at once to Mr. Pilkins. The fat and florid estate agent brimmed with politeness to the millionaire's son. Redwing realised that his chum was not likely to have any difficulty with Mr. Pilkins. His name was enough for anyone who had heard of Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire financier.

Mr. Pilkins was surprised to hear that his schoolboy visitor desired to inquire concerning holiday residences along the coast. That branch of Mr. Pilkins' business, as a rule, closed down when the holiday season was over. But Mr. Pilkins was always ready to do business, especially as he gathered that Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was thinking of taking one of his desirable residences for a term. The Bounder did not exactly say so, but he gave Mr. Pilkins that impression, and a millionaire tenant was exactly the tenant that Mr. Pilkins wanted. But he doubted whether there was anything on his books magnificent enough for Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"I've seen a place from my car," the Bounder casually explained. "It's called the Old Red House, I think. I noticed that there's a garage, and, of course, a garage would be needed."

"The Old Red House!" repeated Mr. Pilkins. "I fear that that would scarcely suit your father, sir. The accommodation for servants is very limited—and the garage will only take one car——"

"It looks a rather pretty place," remarked the Bounder.

"Picturesque," agreed Mr. Pilkins, "but in that quarter there is no gas or electricity—— Now a little nearer to Lantham I have——"

But the Bounder was not interested in residences, however desirable, nearer to Lantham.

"The house is on the telephone, at least," he said. "I noticed the wires."

"That is so," assented Mr. Pilkins, "but——"

"Well, can I view the place?" asked Vernon-Smith. "If I could look over it I could let my father know."

Mr. Pilkins hemmed and hawed, and admitted at last that the Old Red House was already let.

"Let at this time of the year?" said Vernon-Smith. "I know it was let in the summer, but I understood the people left."

"Quite so," assented Mr. Pilkins, "but it was taken again in September, by a Mr. Knowles."

"Knowles!" repeated the Bounder. He knew now the name of the horn-rimmed gentleman, or at least the name he went by.

"That is the name," said Mr. Pilkins, referring to a hefty volume, "Mr. Knowles—Mr. John Knowles. The house has been taken, furnished, for one quarter, with the option of renewal. I assure you, however, that the Old Red House is very lacking in accommodation, and nearer Lantham I have a number of very desirable——"

"Look here, I've taken rather a fancy to the place," said the Bounder. "It's picturesque, as you say, Mr. Pilkins. Do you think the tenant would be willing to let me look over it?"

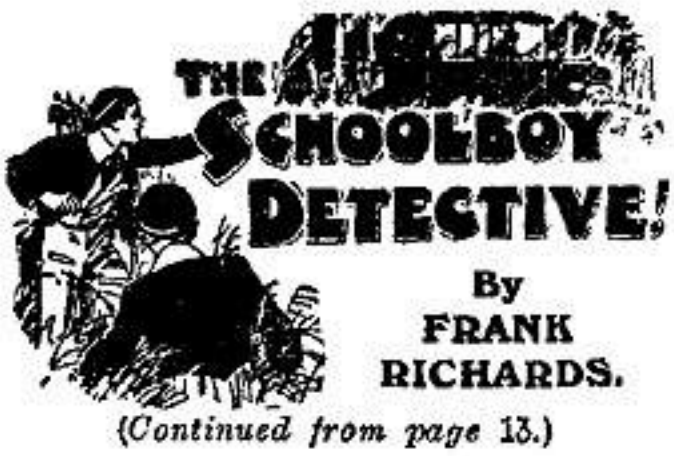
Mr. Pilkins hemmed and hawed again.

"The fact is, sir——"

"It's usual for the tenant of a furnished house to let it be viewed by anybody who might take it later," remarked the Bounder.

"Quite so, within reasonable limits; in fact, we generally make a condition to that effect in the agreement," said Mr. Pilkins. "But Mr. Knowles—'hem—the fact is, Mr. Knowles explained to

(*Continued on page 16.*)



By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Continued from page 13.)

me that he was a literary gentleman, and desired, above all, quiet and repose, which was his reason for taking so solitary a place so late in the season. He made it a condition that he should be absolutely undisturbed there."

"Do you mean that he refuses to let the house be viewed by any prospective tenant?"

"Well, yes, it amounts to that. We made this concession as Mr. Knowles was prepared to meet our views in other ways," explained Mr. Pilkins.

"You mean that he was willing to pay extra to be left alone?"

Mr. Pilkins smiled.

"It would amount to that," he admitted.

"Well, that puts the lid on, of course," said the Bounder. "All the same, I've taken a fancy to the place, and money is no object with my father. Mr. Knowles might be willing to make terms. I suppose he's a local man—you know him?"

"No, that is not the case. He was quite a stranger to me when he called one day in September to inquire about a furnished house. He comes from London, I think."

"My hat! Do you let houses to strangers you don't know anything about?" asked the Bounder.

Mr. Pilkins laughed heartily.

"Scarcely," he said. "Scarcely, sir! Not at all! We always require a banker's reference. Moreover, the rent is paid in advance—which is a good reference in itself—the one we like best!" added Mr. Pilkins, with another laugh.

"Look here, if all the man requires is a quiet place for scribbling you've got lots that would suit him," said Vernon-Smith. "He might come to terms. Does he live alone there?"

"He keeps a car and a chauffeur," answered Mr. Pilkins, "but I believe there are no servants in the house. He is not, I believe, a wealthy man."

"All the more reason why he should take a good offer. Look here, will you ring him up and ask him whether he will let the house be seen?"

"I am afraid it would be useless, sir! Mr. Knowles is a rather—well, a rather forbidding gentleman," said Mr. Pilkins. "Distinctly disobliging and unsociable. He generally drives into Lantham, to the hotel, to dine—very naturally, as he keeps no servants, except the chauffeur. But he makes no acquaintances—he is very stand-offish. A distinctly unsociable man!" repeated Mr. Pilkins, his manner indicating that he had had some unpleasant personal experience of Mr. Knowles' unsociable manners and customs.

"No harm in trying!" said the Bounder.

"'Hem! You see——"

"You know his telephone number, I suppose?"

"Oh, quite."

"Well, give him a ring, and ask him if the house can be viewed by a tenant who will agree to any terms in reason if he likes the place, and an arrangement could be made for transferring the tenancy."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Pilkins, "but I assure you that it will be futile. However, as you say, I can but give him a ring."

And the estate agent turned to his telephone, called the exchange, and asked for Redclyffe, 24.

The Bounder closed one eye at Tom Redwing.

It was some minutes before Mr. Pilkins was through to the Old Red House. But the answer came at last.

"Mr. Knowles?" asked the estate agent, "Mr. Pilkins speaking from Lantham. Pilkins, the estate agent. I have had an application for the furnished house you have taken from us, sir—the Old Red House."

The Bounder was near enough to the telephone to catch the reply, which came in a deep and angry voice.

"What is that to me? The house is let to me—I have my agreement. That ends the matter."

"Quite so, Mr. Knowles, quite so," said Mr. Pilkins, in a soothing voice, "there is no question of traversing your agreement. But I have an application from a prospective tenant who has taken a fancy to the place——"

"Nonsense!"

"A very wealthy gentleman who would be prepared to agree to very generous terms——"

"That is nothing to me."

"If you would consent to allow the house to be viewed——"

"Certainly not!'

"My dear sir——"

Mr. Pilkins stopped, staring at the telephone. He hung up the receiver, with a faint grin.

"Mr. Knowles has cut off," he said.

"My hat! That does it," said Vernon-Smith.

"It does!" agreed Mr. Pilkins. "I was afraid it would be useless, sir. Mr. Knowles is not an accommodating gentleman. Now, sir I have a number of very desirable residences, completely and handsomely furnished, with bath, electric light, and gas cooking——"

"Thanks, I won't go into it now," said the Bounder, and he took his leave of the courteous Mr. Pilkins rather abruptly.

Redwing had not spoken a word during the interview at Mr Pilkins' office. He was still silent, as he walked back to the car with his chum.

"Well?" said the Bounder, with a grin.

"I suppose it looks fishy altogether," said Tom.

"I rather think it does. There's three in the gang—old Knowles, the chauffeur, and that rascal who calls himself Arthur Durance. They got Durance the day he reached Courtfield, last week—and the literary gentleman who is so keen on solitude and repose is keeping the kid shut up at the Old Red House."

"But why?"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"They've got some purpose to serve by putting that hawk-eyed young rascal in at Greyfriars in Durance's place," he said.

"I can't imagine what."

"Neither can I, just at present—but they're not in the business for their health," said Vernon-Smith. "They've got some object. What it is, we're going to find out."

"I don't see how, Smithy," said Tom slowly, "you can't go to the police with a flimsy tale like this. They would have to get a search warrant. to search the house—and they couldn't, on a tissue of suspicion like this."

"I know that!"

"Well, then——" said Tom.

"I'm going to find out whether anyone is being kept a prisoner at the Old Red House," said the Bounder quietly. "If that turns out to be the case, it settles it."

"If they're the kind of gang you believe, it's risky."

The Bounder snapped his fingers.

"That for the risk," he answered.

The car glided down Lantham High Street with the two juniors in it.

"What's the game now, Smithy?" asked Tom.

"I've told you! I know there's a risk, and you can beat it back to school in the car, and leave me to it."

Redwing knitted his brows.

"Don't be a silly chump, Smithy," he answered. "I'm with you in this, of course, all the more if there's risk."

"You're beginning to believe that I'm right about that hawk-eyed young villain?"

"I—I think so."

"Stick to me, and we'll see it through together," said the Bounder. "Once I get hold of proof, I'll have the bobbies down on them fast enough. Leave it to me, and follow your leader."

Redwing smiled faintly as he glanced at the Bounder's eager face and gleaming eyes. Smithy, no doubt, was actuated by dislike and suspicion of the new junior, and had some concern for Arthur Durance, the son of his father's friend, whom he believed to be a prisoner in the hands of a kidnapping gang. But it was the adventure, the keen contest, that appealed to the Bounder most. He was determined to prove that he was right; determined to show that in astuteness and resource, he was equal to his opponents. He was feeling the elation of a keen struggle, and the desire for a dramatic success.

The car stopped in a country lane off the Redclyffe road. The early October dusk was falling.

The Bounder stepped from the car.

After a few words to the driver, he looked into the car, at Redwing, who was waiting.

"Stopping in the car?" he asked.

"Not without you, Smithy."

"Come on, then."

Redwing stared round in the falling gloom, as he stepped from the car.

"Where now, Smithy?" he asked.

"The Old Red House," said the Bounder. "Follow me! The car's waiting here."

And Redwing, with a deep breath, followed the Bounder of Greyfriars; the car and the waiting driver disappearing in the thickening dusk.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoner of the Old Red House!

DARK and gloomy looked the Old Red House, as the two juniors drew near to it. It was dark now, and a dim mist from the sea hung over the fields and lanes surrounding the solitary house. Not a gleam of light came from a window, not a curl of smoke from a chimney. No one passing the building would have dreamed that it was occupied. The windows on the ground floor were shuttered, those on the upper floor hidden by thick curtains. Except for the estate agent who had let the house to "Mr. Knowles," it was probable that hardly anyone in the neighbourhood knew that there was a tenant in the "Old Red House" at all.

The Bounder entered by clambering over the gate, Redwing following. If all Redwing's doubts had not been banished by this time, he was at any rate ready to follow the Bounder's lead, and in any case he would not have allowed Smithy to go into this strange adventure alone. The dusk and mist effectually hid them, as they followed a path

that led to the tradesmen's door at the back of the house. That path was thick with weeds, and showed no sign of ever being used. The Bounder had already learned that Mr. Knowles generally dined at the hotel in Lantham, and he could guess that necessary shopping was done by the chauffeur in the car, and that tradesmen did not call at the Old Red House.

The rear of the house was as dark as the front. Redwing's heart was beating fast now, as he stood with the Bounder in the gloom, nearly knee deep in weeds in the neglected garden, scanning the place. They were trespassing now. But the Bounder, though eager, was as cool as ice.

"Wait here," he whispered.

"But you——"

"I'm going to scout."

Redwing waited, as the Bounder disappeared into the shadows. Smithy came back in about ten minutes.

"The car's still in the garage," he whispered. "That shows that that young rascal hasn't left yet."

"Then we——"

"They're in a front room downstairs," said the Bounder. "I got close enough to hear a sound of voices inside—enough to tell that they were there. The chauffeur's in the garage—I spotted him from the window—he's sitting in the car smoking. Young hawk-eyes is in the house, with the man in the horn glasses, Knowles, as he calls himself. And now——"

"What now?"

"We're going in."

"It's frightfully serious, Smithy, if it turns out that you're on the wrong track."

"I know. But there's a kidnapped prisoner in that house, and I'm going to make sure enough to call in the police."

"I—I believe you're right, now. But——"

"Chuck the buts, old bean—and follow me."

The Bounder, with his audacious recklessness, combined plenty of caution. He made no sound, as he crept closer to the rear of the Old Red House, his chum equally silent at his heels.

Without a sound he tried doors and windows, and found them all fast, doors and shutters securely locked. Even the kitchen windows were carefully fastened inside, and looked as if they had not been opened for a long time.

The kitchen was built out from the back of the house, with a flat lead roof. The roof was nine feet from the ground. In the angle of the wall, where it projected from the back of the house, was a large wooden water-butt, with a thick iron rain-pipe above. Vernon-Smith climbed on the butt, and tested the strength of the pipe—and then, regardless of the grime and the damage to his clothes, climbed up to the kitchen roof. Redwing followed in silence, and they stood on the leaded roof.

A window of small size, apparently that of a box-room, looked over the leads.

The Bounder, kneeling on the sill, tried it. It was fastened within, with an ordinary catch, and covered, like all the upper windows, with thick, dark curtains.

Smithy opened his pocket-knife.

Redwing, standing on the kitchen roof below the sill, watched him, his heart beating uncomfortably. But he had given up arguing with the Bounder now.

The Bounder inserted the strongest blade of the knife between the two sashes and worked at the catch.

It was old and stiff, and evidently had not been turned back for a very long time. But the Bounder worked slowly, steadily, patiently, and gradually the catch moved under the pressure.

It snapped back suddenly at last, with a sharp sound that, though not loud in itself, seemed loud and startling to the ears of the schoolboys in the silence.

They listened for a few minutes, but there was no sound from within the house. Then the Bounder worked up the lower sash.

He pulled aside the curtain within, only darkness meeting his view. Warily he lowered himself into the room.

Redwing followed him. It was neck or nothing now, and Tom had given up thinking of possible consequences. He was, indeed, by this time almost convinced of the truth of the Bounder's belief, and feeling something of Smithy's keenness.

The room in which they found themselves was unfurnished, save for an empty trunk that stood in a corner.

Vernon-Smith let the curtain drop back across the window, and they were in deep darkness. He groped across the room to the door. Silently he turned the handle, opened it, and looked out.

The Old Red House was not a very large building. The staircase from the hall below led to a wide landing, which extended into a passage, on which were five doors, including the one by which the two juniors were leaving the box-room. In the hall below a lamp on a bracket was burning, sending a dim illumination up the stairs. The close curtaining of every pane of glass prevented a gleam of light from escaping into the outer air. Even the narrow fanlight over the front door was curtained. It was scarcely to be doubted that the occupant of the Old Red House desired to give the impression, to any casual passer, that the place was untenanted.

In the dim light from below the Bounder stepped along the passage. He opened door after door. Three of them opened to his touch—one room so musty that it was easy to guess that it was never used or opened; the other two bed-rooms that showed traces of occupation, though they were vacant now. But the fourth door, at the end of the passage, did not open. It was locked, the key in the outside of the lock.

"Here we are!" breathed the Bounder.

He groped over the door.

On the outside were two strong bolts, both shot home into the sockets.

In the dim glimmer of the passage the Bounder looked at his comrade, his eyes dancing with excitement and triumph.

"What do you think now?" he whispered. "Ever heard of a man having bolts on the outside of a bed-room door?"

"It looks——" breathed Redwing.

"It looks like what it is."

The Bounder stepped silently along to the head of the stairs, and peered down and listened. The occupants of the house were in the sitting-room downstairs, as he had judged by the sound of voices he had detected there, listening outside at the window. There was no sound of a movement in the house. Evidently they were still there. Vernon-Smith came softly back to the bolted door.

"All serene!" he whispered.

He drew back the two bolts. They were well oiled and looked new, and it was easy to guess that they had been screwed on in their places since Mr. Knowles had become the tenant of the Old Red House.

He turned back the key, turned the handle, and opened the door of the room a few inches.

There was a movement within.

All was dark, but it was obvious that someone was there.

The Bounder felt a deep thrill of excitement at his heart, and Tom Redwing was almost as excited. The next few moments would prove whether the Bounder had judged correctly, or whether a strange chain of circumstances had led him on a wild-goose chase.

But Smithy had no doubts.

He whispered softly at the aperture.

"Quiet! If you're Arthur Durance, make no sound! We're friends come to help you; but keep quiet."

There was a startled gasp in the shadowed room.

"Quiet!" repeated the Bounder. "If you're Durance, you know me. I'm Herbert Vernon-Smith, the chap you knew in Devonshire a year ago."

A trembling, whispering voice came back:

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes. And you——"

"I'm Arthur Durance. I'm a prisoner here. I was kidnapped the day I came to Greyfriars, at the railway station, and brought here blindfolded in a car. For mercy's sake, help me out of this!"

The Bounder pressed Redwing's arm.

"How about it now?" he breathed.

His voice was shaking with excitement and elation.

"You were right, Smithy; and those scoundrels——"

"Hush!"

There was a sound of a movement below in the house.

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

So far, fortune had favoured him, and he had gone on, step by step, to success. But interruption now meant failure, and, likely enough, deadly danger to the two schoolboys who had penetrated into the solitary den of the kidnappers.

"Durance!" whispered the Bounder tensely.

"I'm here!"

A hand from within opened the door farther, and the prisoner of the bolted room looked out into the dim light of the passage.

Vernon-Smith and Redwing saw a boy of about their own age, with handsome features and pleasant blue eyes, but worn and almost haggard from long confinement and want of fresh air. Dim as the light was, the Bounder could recognise him. It was Arthur Durance, the son of his father's friend.

"Help me out of this!"

"Quiet! They're stirring downstairs," muttered the Bounder. "If they come up, we're done! There's three in the gang, and they may be armed. We've got no chance. Keep quiet, and trust to me, Durance. We'll get you out of this; but keep quiet where you are till the coast's clear."

"I'll do as you think best; but——"

"Quiet!"

The Bounder pushed him back into the room, closed the door, and silently locked and bolted it as it had been before. Then he grasped Tom Redwing's arm and drew him away. There was no time to lose, for already voices could be heard, and there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs. Redwing's heart was throbbing with excitement, but the Bounder was as cool as ice. Swiftly and silently he drew his comrade to the room which he had already ascertained to be unused. They passed into it, and the Bounder softly closed the door. With suppressed breathing, and hearts beating almost to suffocation, they stood in the darkness while footsteps passed outside.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Precious Pair!

"IT was nothing, father!"

The voice came to the two juniors, only a few feet away from the speaker. The Bounder pressed Redwing's arm in silence.

For the voice was that of the new junior at Greyfriars, who called himself Arthur Durance, and who they now knew for a certainty was not Arthur Durance.

And he was addressing someone——evidently the man of the Old Red House—as "father."

The two juniors made no sound. From the passage outside the room came the deeper voice of the man in the horn-rimmed glasses.

"Probably, Ulick! But one cannot be too careful! I heard the boy's footsteps go to the door, and it seemed to me——"

"You're nervous, old bean," said Ulick, with the impudent, mocking tone in his voice that had made him disliked in the Remove.

"One cannot be too careful," repeated Knowles. "It seemed to me that I heard a sound as if the door had opened——"

"I heard nothing."

"There was something—perhaps only the boy trying the door, as he has done a hundred times before."

"But it's bolted on the outside—at least, it was when I came here on Saturday."

"It is still; but, as I have said, one cannot be too careful," said the man in the horn-rimmed glasses. "I have myself been behind bolts and bars, Ulick, and they failed to hold me. You may yet have the same experience one of these days, if anything should go wrong with the game we are playing at Greyfriars."

The new junior gave a grunt, evidently not pleased by the suggested possibility.

The man in the glasses, lamp in hand, looked over the door of the prisoner's room. He was relieved to find the bolts in their places and the key turned.

"All right, isn't it?" exclaimed Ulick impatiently.

"Yes, quite."

"I told you so!" grunted the new junior.

Knowles stood in the passage, lamp in hand, looking about him. All the doors were closed, and there was no sound to catch his ears. But it was obvious that the faint sounds he had caught below, from the prisoner's room, had made him uneasy. A man who was engaged in a scheme in which the penalty for failure was a long term of penal servitude could scarcely have a very easy mind.

Ulick threw himself down on a settee in the passage, with a grunt of impatience, and stretched himself comfortably there, and lighted a cigarette. The smell of the tobacco penetrated into the shadowed room where the Bounder and Redwing were hidden.

"It is all safe," said Knowles at last.

Ulick gave a jeering laugh

"Did you think that moon-faced kid could get through a door locked on the outside, with two bolts on it?" he sneered.

"I have known of an escape from a stronger prison, Ulick." Knowles placed the lamp on a bracket, and stood looking at the sallow-faced, hawk-eyed lad with a mingling of disapproval and anger in his looks. "You are smoking again, Ulick."

"Why not?" grunted Ulick.

"I have warned you to give up the habit. It was all very well in the old days; but at Greyfriars——"

"A fellow must have a smoke."

"That is nonsense!" snapped Knowles. "And it should be your game at the school to fall into line with the rest, and do nothing to mark you as being out of the ordinary run. You should try to gain the good opinion of your Form master. You cannot make too many friends."

Ulick grinned.

"Plenty of fellows there smoke. One of my study-mates—that cad Vernon-Smith—smokes."

"He is in a safer position than yours."

"I don't see it! So long as you keep the other fellow safe here, I'm safe enough at Greyfriars."

"You will not be safe if you betray yourself by bad habits and careless conduct," said Knowles, frowning. "Surely, Ulick, you have common sense enough to know that you must behave differently as a Public school boy, and that your way of life when you were a pickpocket will not do at Greyfriars."

"Oh, give us a rest, old bean!" said Ulick. "I'm getting a smoke or two here, because I have to be careful at the school."

"Better drop it entirely."

"Well, I can't," said Ulick sulkily.

The end of the settee where Ulick was sprawling was within a foot of the door behind which Redwing and the Bounder stood, almost holding their breath. The scent of strong Turkish tobacco came to them; and they heard Ulick strike another match for a fresh cigarette.

"Let us go down," said Knowles. "All is safe here, and it is near time for you to return to Greyfriars."

Ulick did not stir.

"No hurry," he answered. "I'm booked for a thundering row at the school anyhow; and I may as well make sure that that old fool, Vernon-Smith's father, is gone, before I go back."

"That is true." There was a troubled tone in Knowles' voice. "You do not think, Ulick, that Mr. Vernon-Smith was coming down to Greyfriars in connection with you?"

"The rotter wouldn't have mentioned the matter before me if he had been getting his father down specially to see me."

"I suppose that is so. You feel sure that Vernon-Smith does not suspect you?"

"He hates me like poison, and he wouldn't be likely to keep it dark if he did."

"That is so. But come——"

"Oh, give us a rest!" yawned Ulick. "Why can't you have a decent fire in the sitting-room, instead of that stuffy oil-stove? I'm half suffocated by it!"

"A few hardships do not count for much in the game we are playing," answered Knowles. "Smoke from the chimney would reveal that the house is occupied—and the less that is known the better."

"You're always so jolly cautious!" grunted Ulick.

"If you were equally cautious I should feel more secure of your success at the school," said the elder man. The two juniors behind the door heard him seat himself on the settee where the young rascal sprawled. "I fear all the time that you may give something away by your recklessness and impudence."

"Rot!" said Ulick coolly. "You can put your money on me, old bean. I tell you I never struck such a benighted set of fools as the crowd at Greyfriars. They don't know a thing."

"Naturally, they would not suspect such a game as is being played," said Knowles. "But one cannot be too careful——"

"We've had that record!" interrupted Ulick disrespectfully.

"You are asking for a thrashing, Ulick!" said Knowles, in a deep voice.

"Oh, can it!" said Ulick. "You can't come the heavy father with me, old bean, when we're in a game together that may land both of us in chokey. Give it a miss."

The hidden juniors heard the man in the horn-rimmed glasses breathing hard. There was a scratch of a match, as the young rascal lighted a third cigarette.

"It's unfortunate that the boy Vernon-Smith is at Greyfriars," said Knowles, after a long pause. "I never knew that the man had a son at the school—I knew little of Mr. Vernon-Smith, except that he was the friend of Durance's father, and concerned with him in the mine in South America. But I know that he is a very busy man, always mixed up in big business, and he cannot come to the school often."

"When he does I can dodge him."

"That would excite notice, and suspicion, if it happened often. He will naturally want to see Mr. Durance's son when he comes."

"Well, I can't prevent him from coming."

"No; but in the circumstances, as you cannot leave Greyfriars, it would be a good thing if young Vernon-Smith left. That would keep his father away."

"I can't make him leave."

"There are ways and means," said Knowles significantly. "This boy Vernon-Smith is not a good character, I think."

"A rotter! He smokes as much as I do, and I've heard fellows speaking of his breaking bounds, and backing horses, and that kind of thing."

"Then surely it should not be difficult for some of his misconduct to be brought to his master's knowledge in some way. If he were expelled from the school all would be safe."

"Something in that," agreed Ulick. "I'd like to do the rotter a bad turn. I don't think he suspects me at all; but he makes me feel uneasy, especially being in the same study. If we could get rid of him——"

"We will go into that later, and consider what measures can be taken," said Knowles quietly. "You are not going to smoke again, Ulick?"

"Why not?" There was a scratch of another match, and an impudent laugh.

"Cannot you see, you young fool," said Knowles in a suppressed voice, "that your cue at the school is to be a model character—as much unlike as possible to Ulick Stone, who was once in London as a pickpocket?"

"I can see it all right. But there's a limit, old bean," said Ulick. "You've got to allow me some rope. I can play up as a schoolboy, but I can't play up as a model character."

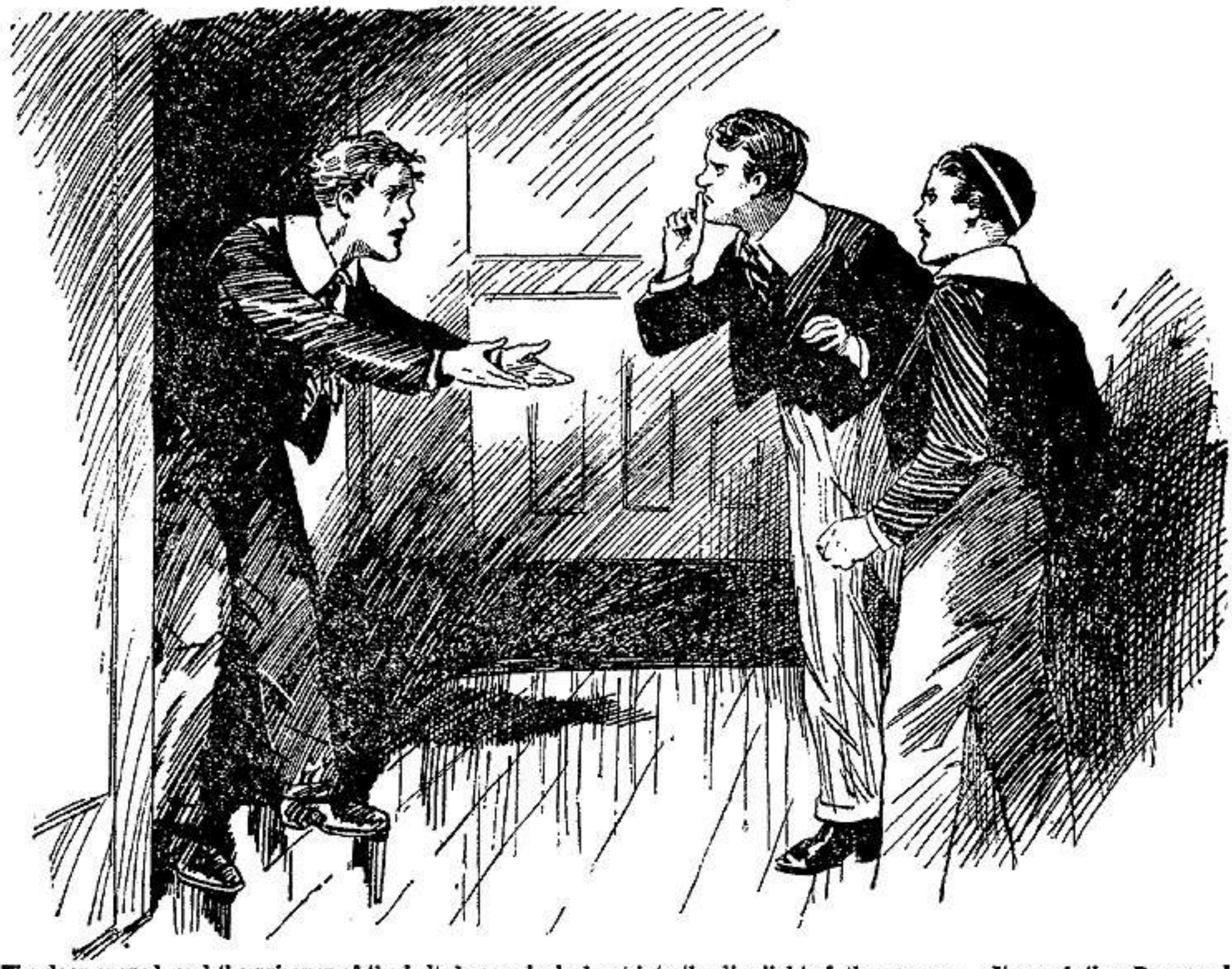
"You are running unnecessary risks."

"Bosh! The risk is at this end!" grunted Ulick. "Keeping that kid, Durance, within six or seven miles of the school——"

"There was no choice about that. He could not be nobbled on his way from Devonshire, as Mr. Vernon-Smith was expecting him in London. And Mr. Vernon-Smith placed him in the non-stop express for Courtfield. We could not get him before that. As I foresaw it I had this place ready——"

"I know all that. But now——"

"He is quite safe here," said Knowles. "He has not been allowed out of the



The door opened, and the prisoner of the bolted room looked out into the dim light of the passage. It was Arthur Durance! "Help me out of this!" said the new boy appealingly. "Keep quiet, and trust to me, Durance," muttered Vernon-Smith. "We'll get you out of this; but keep quiet where you are till the coast's clear!" (*See Chapter* 10.)

house, the window is shuttered inside and curtained—the door bolted. Hardly anyone in the neighbourhood knows that the house is occupied at all. But he will not, of course, be kept here. I am already making further arrangements—but they take time, and cost money. If you make good at Greyfriars—if your identity becomes permanently established as Arthur Durance, this boy will disappear entirely."

"You don't mean——"

"Don't be a fool!" interrupted Knowles harshly. "I have only one neck, and value it too highly to risk it, even for the great fortune that is at stake. The boy will be taken away on a steam yacht, and he will be placed in safe hands in a distant country. It is simply a question of time and money—and worth both if you make good at the school."

"I shall do that. And his father——"

"His father has gone out to Brazil as manager of the mine which he owns in partnership with Mr. Vernon-Smith. There is no question of his returning to England for many years. The boy wished to go with his father." Knowles laughed a low, unpleasant laugh. "Mr. Durance left him in England for his own good, as he imagined. More fool he! A boy who is to come into sixty thousand pounds, under his mother's will, at the age of twenty-one, could not be too carefully guarded."

"It's a lot of money!" murmured Ulick.

"And it will be ours, if you play your cards well. Mr. Durance is booked for a term of seven years in Brazil. He may, perhaps, come home on leave once in that period, for a few months. If so, we shall have to deal with the matter when it arises. There are many ways—you may develop an illness, or something of that sort—or, as you will be a young man by that time, you may go off abroad on some pretext—and avoid a meeting. The danger is not there—all we have to do to succeed is to establish the fact beyond cavil that you are Arthur Durance. Vernon-Smith must be got rid of somehow—and you will go through the school, leave at the usual age, and go on to Oxford—as Arthur Durance. I do not see how we can fail if you play your cards carefully."

"It sounds all right—there's only one drawback——"

"What is that?"

"I'm sick of the place already!" grunted Ulick. "It's too slow for me—and I want some excitement."

"You must get over that. A large fortune is not to be picked up without trouble—and you are safer at Greyfriars than you were in London, with a policeman's hand liable to drop on your shoulder at any moment."

Ulick yawned.

"That was more exciting, anyhow. But you can bank on me, old bean—I'm going through with it. Only you'll have to manage somehow to get shut of that cad, Vernon-Smith—he watches me like a cat, and he will tumble to something sooner or later."

"I shall take care that he does not trouble us long," said Knowles coldly. "Now you had better be getting back to the school, Ulick. Mr. Vernon-Smith must have left before this."

"I've got a licking waiting for me there!" growled Ulick.

"You should have managed better. You had to avoid seeing Mr. Vernon-Smith, but you should have taken measures more carefully," said Knowles. "Take your caning, and make the best of it."

There was an angry grunt from Ulick. But he rose from the settee and stretched himself.

"I suppose I'd better be going," he growled.

"Come here again on Wednesday afternoon," said Knowles. "You can always manage a visit on a half-holiday, and we must be careful to keep in touch. The car will wait in the usual place. Now let us go."

Vernon-Smith and Redwing heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Turning the Tables!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH drew a deep, hard breath.

In the darkness of the room Redwing could see the glitter of the Bounder's eyes.

Every word spoken in the passage without had come clearly to the ears of the two hidden juniors.

"What do you think now, Reddy?" asked the Bounder in a whisper.

"The scoundrels!" muttered Redwing.

"A precious pair, what? And I'm to be bunked from the school to make the game safe for them!" said the Bounder between his teeth. "By gad! I'll make them sit up."

Redwing made no reply to that. Had the plot gone on it was only by the Bounder's own questionable conduct that he could have been placed at the mercy of the plotters. But it was not for his chum to remind him of that.

The Bounder opened the door a few inches and listened. He heard the front door downstairs open and the whirr of a car on the weedy drive. Evidently the new junior of Greyfriars was about to leave the Old Red House.

Smithy closed the door again.

"Wait!" he said. "That cur's going—and the chauffeur will go with him, of course. That leaves only Knowles in the house."

"And then——"

"We're going to get Durance out of this."

"Yes, rather."

"If the man chips in we've got to handle him. We shall be two to one, anyhow—three, if Durance is with us. Wait till the other two are safe off the scene."

The two juniors waited and listened. They heard the car move away on the drive, and the buzz of the engine grew fainter in the distance. The new junior was on his way back to Greyfriars.

The front door downstairs closed, and they heard the rattle of a chain being replaced.

Then there was silence.

Not till the last distant sound of the car had died away did the Bounder step from the room. All seemed silent in the house, but they knew that the man with the horn-rimmed spectacles was still within the building.

Vernon-Smith crept along to the banisters and looked down.

At the end of a passage below was the kitchen doorway, and from the doorway streamed lamplight. Knowles, evidently, was there.

From what he had learned of the man's habits the Bounder guessed that, when the car returned, he would drive into Lantham to dine. Probably he was now preparing food for the prisoner in the upper room.

The Bounder crept back.

"Come on, Reddy," he whispered. "We've got a chance of getting clear without a row. Come on."

A moment more and he was withdrawing the bolts of the prisoner's room.

"Durance!" he whispered, as the door opened.

"Here!" came breathlessly from within. "Is that Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes! Come—and be quiet."

Arthur Durance stepped out into the passage.

In the dim light from the hall lamp, below, his haggard eyes sought the faces of the two Greyfriars juniors.

"Can we get out of this?" he breathed.

"I fancy so—but not a word—the man's downstairs," muttered the Bounder.

He closed the door, locked and bolted it again. Then he drew Durance along the passage towards the box-room by which the rescuers had entered the Old Red House.

The kidnapped boy was trembling in every limb, overcome by excitement and nervous dread at the prospect of escape. The Bounder's strong hand gripped his arm.

"Pull yourself together, Durance. You're all right now."

"Yes, yes; but—but it seems too good to be true!" faltered Durance. "I—I'd given up hope——"

"Keep a stiff upper lip, kid," said Redwing. "We'll soon have you out of this now."

"God bless you!" whispered Durance.

Redwing opened the box-room door, and the Bounder pushed Durance into the room.

The way of escape, by the window, was open now.

But footsteps were on the stairs, and the light of a lamp approaching. Knowles was coming up.

The Bounder closed the box-room door.

"Quiet!" he whispered.

The footsteps of the man in horn-rimmed glasses passed, and went along the passage towards the prisoner's room.

Smithy opened the door an inch and peered out.

Knowles had set a tray, containing a plate of sandwiches and a jug of milk, on a small table outside the prisoner's room, and was now fumbling at the bolts.

Evidently he was taking a meal to the prisoner, whom he still believed to be in the room.

The Bounder's eyes glittered.

The way of escape was open; but the Bounder was not thinking of that now. It would have been more prudent, perhaps, to let well alone, and go while the going was good; but the Bounder's reckless and audacious nature had the upper hand.

"Smithy——" whispered Redwing.

"Quiet!"

"But——"

"Wait!"

The Bounder opened the door farther.

Knowles had unlocked and unbolted the door of the prisoner's room at the other end of the passage. Taking up the small tray in one hand, he pushed open the door with the other, and stepped into the prisoner's room.

Then the Bounder acted with lightning speed.

Like a flash, he darted along the passage.

The light from the passage glimmered dimly into the prisoner's room. It was evident that the kidnapped schoolboy had not been allowed a light in the room. Knowles, standing a couple of feet within, was peering about him in the dimness.

"I have brought your supper, boy!" the Bounder heard him say. "Where are you? Asleep already?"

Vernon-Smith had reached the door.

He reached in behind the man's back, grasped the door-knob, and slammed the door shut.

In less than a second he had turned the key in the lock.

There was a shout of alarm and surprise in the prisoner's room, and the crash of a falling tray, which Knowles had dropped in his startled amazement.

The next instant he was tearing at the door-handle.

But the key was turned; the door remained fast. With rapid fingers, the Bounder shot the bolts into place.

The man in the horn-rimmed glasses was a prisoner in the room where Arthur Durance had so long been a captive.

The Bounder panted.

"Caught!"

The door-handle was rattled madly from within.

"What is that? Who is there?" came a hoarse, panting voice. "Is that you, Ulick? Is that one of your tricks? Who is there?"

"Guess!" chuckled the Bounder.

The sound of a strange voice in the house seemed to petrify the man who was trapped in his own prison.

The rattling of the door-handle ceased, and the man seemed to stand still for some seconds, as if turned to stone.

Redwing came hurrying along the passage after the Bounder, and Arthur Durance followed more slowly.

"Smithy!" gasped Tom Redwing. "You've——"

"Got him!" grinned the Bounder.

"Great pip!"

"But there are others—the boy—the chauffeur——" panted Arthur Durance.

"They're gone!" grinned the Bounder. "The boy has gone to Greyfriars——"

"Greyfriars!"

"Yes. And the chauffeur can't be back much under an hour. We've got this sportsman safe!" chuckled the Bounder. "He fixed that room up safe for a prisoner, and now he's safe in it! Ha, ha!"

"Greyfriars!" repeated Durance, in wonder. "What is the boy doing at Greyfriars?"

"Calling himself Arthur Durance, and passing himself off as you, old bean," grinned the Bounder.

Durance staggered.

"Good heavens! Is that possible?"

"It's true," said Redwing, "and I'm afraid he would have got away with it, but for Smithy here."

"Then—then that's the reason——"

"That's the reason they nipped you," said the Bounder; "but I fancy we've put paid to it, and that hawk-eyed rotter won't bag sixty thousand pounds to share with Knowles this journey!"

"Good heavens!" breathed Durance.

The voice of the man in the horn-rimmed glasses came from the prisoner's room, strangely changed in tone.

"Who is there?"

"Little me," answered the Bounder.

"Who are you?"

"Herbert Vernon-Smith."

"A thousand curses! Then you knew——" It was almost a roar of rage. "And that young fool imagined——"

"Let's get away, Smithy," muttered Redwing. "The sooner we get Durance to Greyfriars the better."

"No hurry," answered the Bounder coolly. "We're top dogs here now. Anything more to say, Mister Knowles, or Stone, or whatever your real name may happen to be?"

"Open that door at once!"

"Likely!" grinned the Bounder.

"Is the boy there—the boy who was in this room?"

"I am here," answered Arthur Durance, in a clear voice. "Free again, you villain—free, and going to Greyfriars!"

"Unlock that door instantly, or I will shoot away the lock, and you will take your chance!" hissed Knowles.

"Shoot, and be hanged!"

There was the roar of a report in the prisoner's room. The desperate man was as good as his word.

The three schoolboys stood well away from the door. The lock crashed under the bullet fired at close quarters, and they heard the man within wrenching at the door. But the two strong bolts held it fast. The kidnapper's own careful precautions were now his own undoing.

"Try again!" jeered the Bounder. "Try again, old bean! Shoot the bolts away if you can! Go it!"

The revolver roared again, and a

THREE CHEERS

for W. Jackson, of 21, Mounsey Road, Bamber Bridge, near Preston, Lancs, who carries off a handsome pocket wallet for his clever Greyfriars limerick.

A shady young rascal named Snoop
Backed horses in hopes of a "coup."
But a "bookie" one day
Gave the poor lad away,
And Snoop found himself "in the soup."

There are still plenty more wallets to be won. So pile in, you budding rhymesters!

---

bullet smashed through a panel of the door. But it was only a sign of the kidnapper's fury. He knew that he could not get the door open. Strong walls, a bolted door, and a shuttered and barred window held him a prisoner.

The Bounder chuckled.

"If we'd got at close quarters with him—with that gun——" The Bounder laughed. "Come on!"

Smithy hurried to the stairs and descended. Redwing and Arthur Durance followed him. In the sitting-room below a light was burning, and the room was stuffy with the heat of a burning oil-heater. On the wall was a telephone—Redclyffe 24—and the Bounder ran across to the instrument.

"Smithy—what——"

Without answering, the Bounder took down the receiver.

"Give me Courtfield Police Station, quick!" he said into the transmitter.

A minute more, and the Bounder was speaking to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield—an astounded Mr. Grimes!

— —

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Game's Up!

"TROUBLE for three!" remarked Skinner of the Remove, as the fellows came out of Hall after calling-over.

"The troublefulness will probably be terrific," observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Quelchy had a preposterously infuriated look."

There was no doubt that Mr. Quelch had looked wrathy when he marked three members of his Form absent at calling-over.

He had been very reluctant to grant leave of absence that afternoon to Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, and only the urgent request of Mr. Vernon-Smith had induced him to do so. And they had not only taken the fullest advantage of their leave, but they had failed to return for evening call-over—quite a serious matter, especially in a Form master's eyes.

But the misdoing of Smithy and Redwing was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine, compared with that of Durance of the Remove.

The new junior had not been given leave at all—he had taken french leave, and he had not returned for call-over.

And if Mr. Quelch was not, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh described it, preposterously infuriated, he was undoubtedly very angry indeed.

Smithy and Redwing were certain to be called severely upon the carpet, but the new junior was likely to have the time of his life.

Mr. Quelch called to Harry Wharton, when the school were dismissed after the roll had been called, and the captain of the Remove stayed behind. He was to be questioned as head boy of the Form.

"Three members of the Lower Fourth are absent from call-over, Wharton," rapped out Mr. Quelch, with a look and tone that really seemed to imply that it was Wharton's fault, though probably that was not Mr. Quelch's meaning.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Do you know what has become of them, or for what reason they are staying out of gates?"

"No, sir. I suppose Smithy is with his father——"

"With his father?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes. I understood that Mr. Vernon-Smith was coming down to Greyfriars to-day," said Harry. "So far as I know, though, he has not come to the school. I think Smithy and Redwing went to Lantham to meet him, sir."

"I have heard nothing of this," snapped Mr. Quelch. "Mr. Vernon-Smith telephoned to ask leave specially for the two boys; but I gathered that it was due to some request from his son; and certainly he gave no hint of any intention to visit the school."

"Oh!" said Harry. "I—I thought, from something Redwing said——"

The captain of the Remove broke off.

It flashed into his mind now that the Bounder had invented that intended visit of his father, to trick the new junior into betraying himself by going out of gates to avoid the millionaire. It was only one of the Bounder's rather tortuous schemes.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"I—I suppose I was mistaken, sir," stammered Wharton. "I can't say that Vernon-Smith actually said his father was coming. I—I supposed so from something Redwing said."

"You do not know where they have gone?"

"No, sir, if they did not go to Lantham."

"And the new boy—Durance? He has absented himself from the school entirely without leave, after being definitely refused leave by me," said the Remove master. "This is very serious, Wharton."

"Very, sir," agreed the captain of the Remove, without adding that, serious as it was, he really couldn't help it. It was more judicious not to utter the whole of one's thoughts, in conversation with a Beak.

"It is very remarkable that the boy should absent himself in this way, all the more if there was any suggestion that Mr. Vernon-Smith himself might be coming to the school," said Mr. Quelch.

Wharton again suppressed his thoughts. He remembered the Bounder's prediction, and how it had been fulfilled to the very letter. It was scarcely possible for him to doubt that the new junior had deliberately left the school because he believed that Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was coming there. But that was not a matter that he could explain to Mr. Quelch.

"You will tell these three boys to come to my study immediately they return, Wharton."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Quelch walked away to his study, very angry and perturbed. Harry Wharton was left in a very thoughtful mood.

It was more than an hour later that the new junior in the Remove came in. There was still no sign of Vernon-Smith and Redwing when the boy who passed at Greyfriars as Arthur Durance appeared. Half a dozen Remove fellows greeted him as he came into the House.

"I say, Durance, you're for it!" grinned Billy Bunter. "Quelchy's simply raging!"

The sallow-faced junior, with the hawkish eyes, shrugged his shoulders.

"You must have been an ass to cut class, Durance," said Bob Cherry. "You've been here long enough to know that Quelchy won't stand it."

"What have you been up to?" asked Skinner.

"Nothing!" yawned the new junior.

"You're to go to Quelch's study at once, Durance," said Harry Wharton curtly.

"Oh, all right!"

"Better mop up some eau de Cologne, or something, before you go!" chuckled Skinner.

"Eh—why?"

"I can smell the smoke, and if Quelchy niffs it, you'll get it hot and strong," grinned Skinner.

The new junior whistled.

(*Continued on next page.*)

"That's a tip," he remarked. "Thanks!"

"I say, you fellows, he's been on the razzle," giggled Billy Bunter. "Have you been out on the ran-dan with the Bounder, Durance?"

"No, you fat ass!" The new junior glanced round at the curious faces. "The fact is I went out after dinner, and walked to Courtfield; and, thinking I should be late back for class, took the train to Friardale. Unluckily, I stepped into the wrong train—the non-stop for Canterbury. That's what happened."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Do you think that will do for Quelchy?" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"It's the truth."

"Well, if that's the truth, you'd better tell a whopper," chuckled Skinner. "That sort of truth won't be any use to Quelch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you mean to say that that really happened, Durance?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Exactly. I was sorry—very sorry, as I wanted to see Mr. Vernon-Smith."

"You—you wanted to see him?"

"Of course. He was very kind to me, in London, the day I came up from Devonshire. I don't like his son, but the old gentleman is a good sort," said the new junior calmly. "I was very disappointed not to be here to see him. He's gone, I suppose?"

"He hasn't been here," said Wharton dryly.

The new junior started.

"Not been here! But Vernon-Smith said—he said plainly——" He broke off, recovering his coolness at once. "Well, if he hasn't been, that's all right. I haven't missed him, in that case."

"You haven't seen anything of Smithy and Redwing out of gates?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"No. Did they go out?"

"Yes; and they haven't come in yet."

The new junior started again.

"They're still out?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What on earth can they be up to all this time?"

"Goodness knows! Anyhow, you'd better go to Quelch now; he told me to send you in at once," said Harry.

The new junior nodded, and went to Masters' passage. He chewed some strongly-scented cachous as he went, and there was no lingering odour of cigarettes when he arrived there. Mr. Quelch fixed a pair of gimlet eyes on him.

"So you have returned, Durance?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"And what explanation have you to offer?"

The new junior gave his explanation, as he had given it to the Remove fellows, with perfect coolness. Mr. Quelch listened with a grim face, without interrupting him.

"Very well," he said, when the hawk-eyed junior had finished. "I cannot believe a single word of your statement, Durance. But I shall give you the benefit of the doubt. I shall make a strict inquiry into the matter to-morrow, and ascertain the facts; and if you have spoken untruthfully your punishment will be very severe. For the present, you may go to your study."

"Thank you, sir!" said the new junior meekly; and he went.

The Remove fellows were going to their studies for prep now. But the new junior, alone in No. 4, was not thinking of prep. He moved restlessly about the study, with a wrinkle of troubled thought in his brow.

He had been deluded—deliberately deluded—by the Bounder into believing that Mr. Vernon-Smith was coming to the school that day.

He knew that now!

Why?

What had the Bounder's object been?

There could scarcely be any answer but one to that question. Herbert Vernon-Smith suspected him, suspected that he would not dare to meet the man who knew Arthur Durance by sight, and had counted upon his betraying himself by cutting class to avoid the millionaire. For what other reason could the Bounder have elaborated that pretence that his father was coming to the school?

Ulick Stone felt a chill at his heart. That the Bounder disliked him instinctively, and regarded him with a vague distrust, he had known, and had cared little. But direct suspicion was a different matter. That spelled danger.

If the Bounder had indeed been tricking him, he had fallen into the trap. And at the same time, the Bounder was absent from the school—and had not yet returned, an hour after call-over. It was not to meet his father that he had gone, for his father had not come to Greyfriars, after all. For what had he gone, and how was he occupied?

The sense of danger, the premonition of coming evil, grew stronger in the breast of the impostor and cheat. He had not been followed—he had taken care to see that no one followed him through the wood, and the Daimler had picked him up more than a mile from the school. Even if the Bounder had been spying on him, surely he could have discovered nothing! He reasoned it out that he had nothing to fear.

But instinct, stronger than reason, warned him that he had much to fear. Where was the Bounder, and what was he doing?

He left the study, and went along the Remove passage to the stairs. If the Bounder would only come in—bitterly as he disliked him, he was eager to see him, to know that it was only some schoolboy escapade that had kept him out of gates, that he had discovered nothing—that there was, after all, no danger! He heard the sound of a car on the drive outside; it was not an uncommon sound, by any means, but somehow it added vaguely to his alarm.

There was a buzz of voices below.

The new junior, with a beating heart, descended the stairs, and peered over the lower banisters.

The great door was open, and more than a score of fellows had gathered in a crowd there, as three schoolboys came in—Vernon-Smith, Tom Redwing, and —— Ulick Stone passed his hand across his eyes, believing for a moment that they had deceived him, as he stared down into the lighted hall at Arthur Durance.

Arthur Durance—the prisoner of the Old Red House—standing in the midst of a crowd of Greyfriars fellows, in the School House of Greyfriars!

For a minute, the wretched trickster stood clutching the banisters, staring, petrified with fear and despair. The buzz below was rising in tones of astonishment. With an effort he pulled himself together. Billy Bunter's squeaky voice rang in the Remove passage.

"I say, you fellows! Something's up! I say, you fellows—Smithy's come in—I say——"

The new junior panted. He turned, and ran along the passage, and bumped into Bob Cherry, coming along from Study No. 13.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob. "What's up?"

The new junior did not answer. He ran on, and Bob stared after him in astonishment. But he forgot him the next moment as he hurried down the stairs with a crowd of Remove fellows, to learn what was "up."

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the School!

"WHO is this?"

Mr. Quelch stared blankly. Through a buzzing crowd of fellows, who swarmed even in the sacred precincts of Masters' passage, came Herbert Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, and walking between them was a boy whom Mr. Quelch had never seen before.

They marched him into Mr. Quelch's study, and outside that study an excited throng buzzed. Something of the story was already spreading through the House; a few words from the Bounder had been enough.

The Bounder's eyes were gleaming with excitement. This was his hour of triumph! Practically alone, he had defeated a kidnapping plot, and rescued the victim of the kidnappers. Any fellow who had done what Smithy had done might have felt pleased with himself, and the Bounder was never the man to belittle his own performances.

"Who is this?" repeated Mr. Quelch, his startled eyes on the stranger.

"Arthur Durance, sir!" said the Bounder.

"Arthur Durance?" repeated the Remove master. "What do you mean?"

"That is his name, sir."

"I do not understand you, Vernon-Smith! I require you to explain why you are so late—and still more, to explain why you have brought a stranger into the school——"

"This chap is Arthur Durance, sir!" repeated the Bounder. "He is the fellow my father put in the train for Greyfriars last Wednesday. He was kidnapped——"

"Wha-a-t?"

"And ever since he has been shut up in the Old Red House, between Redclyffe and Hawkscliff, and a young rogue named Ulick Stone, or Knowles, has gone under his name here, in the school."

Mr. Quelch almost staggered.

"Vernon-Smith! This fantastic story——"

"It's true, sir," said Redwing quietly. "We got this chap away from the Old Red House, where he was kept a prisoner. The fellow who calls himself Durance here is not Durance at all."

"I am Durance, sir!" said the pale-faced boy who had been a prisoner in the Old Red House. "Vernon-Smith knows me, sir—and his father would know me at once. My papers and things were taken when they got hold of me——"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "This is a most extraordinary story. Tell me at once, and briefly, what has happened.

In his keen interest in that amazing story, Mr. Quelch seemed to forget the crowd thronging round the doorway. A score of pairs of ears, at least, listened to what was told. Durance related how he had been met at the station by a chauffeur with a car, in pretence that it had been sent by the Head to bring him to the school, how he had been seized, blindfolded, and kidnapped, in the car, on a lonely country road, since which time he had been a prisoner, until Vernon-Smith and Redwing came to the Old Red House.

Then Smithy, in brief but effective sentences, told his tale. Mr. Quelch gazed at him almost dumbfounded.

"I—I—I hardly know what to say!"

he gasped at last. "You have acted in an—an extraordinary manner, Vernon-Smith—you have shown great courage and resource—but certainly you should have consulted older heads before proceeding in this way. However——"

"We got away with it, sir!" said the Bounder cheerfully.

"Wha-a-at?"

"I mean we succeeded," said Smithy. "We've got Durance—and that rascal who has taken his name can be collared at once."

"And—and the man—the person you call Knowles—and his other confederates—what——"

"I phoned the police from the Old Red House, after fastening Knowles up in the room, sir. Inspector Grimes came over with two constables in a fast car. They got Knowles easily enough, and then waited for the chauffeur to come back with the Daimler. They bagged him as he drove in. Both of them are under arrest now, and the police in possession of the Old Red House."

"I—I am amazed," said Mr. Quelch. "I presume that Mr. Grimes will come here for the—the boy——"

"We came back at once, sir, as I was anxious to get Durance here," said the Bounder. "But Mr. Grimes is not far behind us. He has taken his prisoners to Courtfield, and is coming straight on here to get hold of the impostor."

"The boy must be detained till Mr. Grimes arrives," said Mr. Quelch. "I will see to that matter personally. Wait here."

Mr. Quelch hurried through the crowd in the passage and made his way to the Remove quarters. But he found Study No. 4. in the Remove vacant. Most of the Remove were downstairs by this time, but the new junior was not among the buzzing crowd.

An order was given immediately to search for him, and in a few minutes fellows of all Forms were rioting through the House, hunting for the junior who had been known as Arthur Durance.

Meanwhile, the rescued prisoner of the Old Red House, and Herbert Vernon-Smith and Redwing, were taken to the Head, to whom their story was told again. By that time, Inspector Grimes had arrived at the school, in quest of Ulick.

Mr. Grimes found the House buzzing with excitement. Search was going on for the impostor, but it was not successful.

It was, indeed, clear that Ulick had taken the alarm, when the Bounder and Redwing arrived with Durance, and had lost no time in getting out of the House. A box-room window was found wide open, a plain enough indication of the way he had gone. At Greyfriars School he was not likely to be seen again.

. . . . . .

The Bounder was the cynosure of all eyes in the Rag that evening. He had to tell his story over and over again—which he was not unwilling to do. Smithy was enjoying his triumph.

"Well, you were right, Smithy," said Harry Wharton. "I couldn't help thinking it rather steep—but you were right. That kid Durance must be jolly glad you butted in."

"The gladfulness must be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Bounder has proved to be the stitch in time that is better than two birds in the bush, as the English proverb says."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"I say, I knew all along that that fellow was a rotter," persisted Bunter. "I told you so, Wharton——"

"I don't remember!" grinned Wharton.

"Well, I was going to, which comes to the same thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got away, though," remarked Nugent. "They've got the kidnapper, and the chauffeur—but that young rogue's got away."

"You didn't manage that bit well, Smithy," said Skinner.

The Bounder laughed.

"That was Redwing's management," he said. "Redwing's too soft for this world. He wanted me to give the rotter a chance."

"You—you see," said Redwing hesitatingly, "the fellow's a young scoundrel, but he's only a kid, after all—and it seems to me that he was put up to it by his father, that rascal Knowles—the man's responsible for what he did. His game's up here—he can't do any more harm—and I thought he ought to have a chance to cut."

"Rot!" said the Bounder. "I told Reddy it was rot, but I let him have his way. Still, we're not policemen, and it's up to Grimes to lay him by the heels. I hope he'll get him, so far as I'm concerned—but Reddy thinks the fright may do him good, and he may turn over a new leaf. That's the sort of thing Reddy would think!"

"Well, it's possible," said Redwing. "Anyhow, he was least to blame, rogue as he is—and they've got the man who was at the bottom of it. It may be a lesson to that young sweep——"

"Let us hope so, at all events," said Wharton, with a smile. "He's got his chance, anyhow."

Arthur Durance was the object of much interest, when he took his place in the Remove. But he did not remain long at Greyfriars. His own wish was to join his father in South America, and when Mr. Durance learned of what had happened, he very promptly acceded to that wish, and Durance went out to join him.

What became of the young rascal who had impersonated him, was never known at Greyfriars, but Redwing, at least, hoped that he would learn from his narrow escape that honesty was the best policy, in which case he was likely to benefit, after all, by Smithy's triumph.

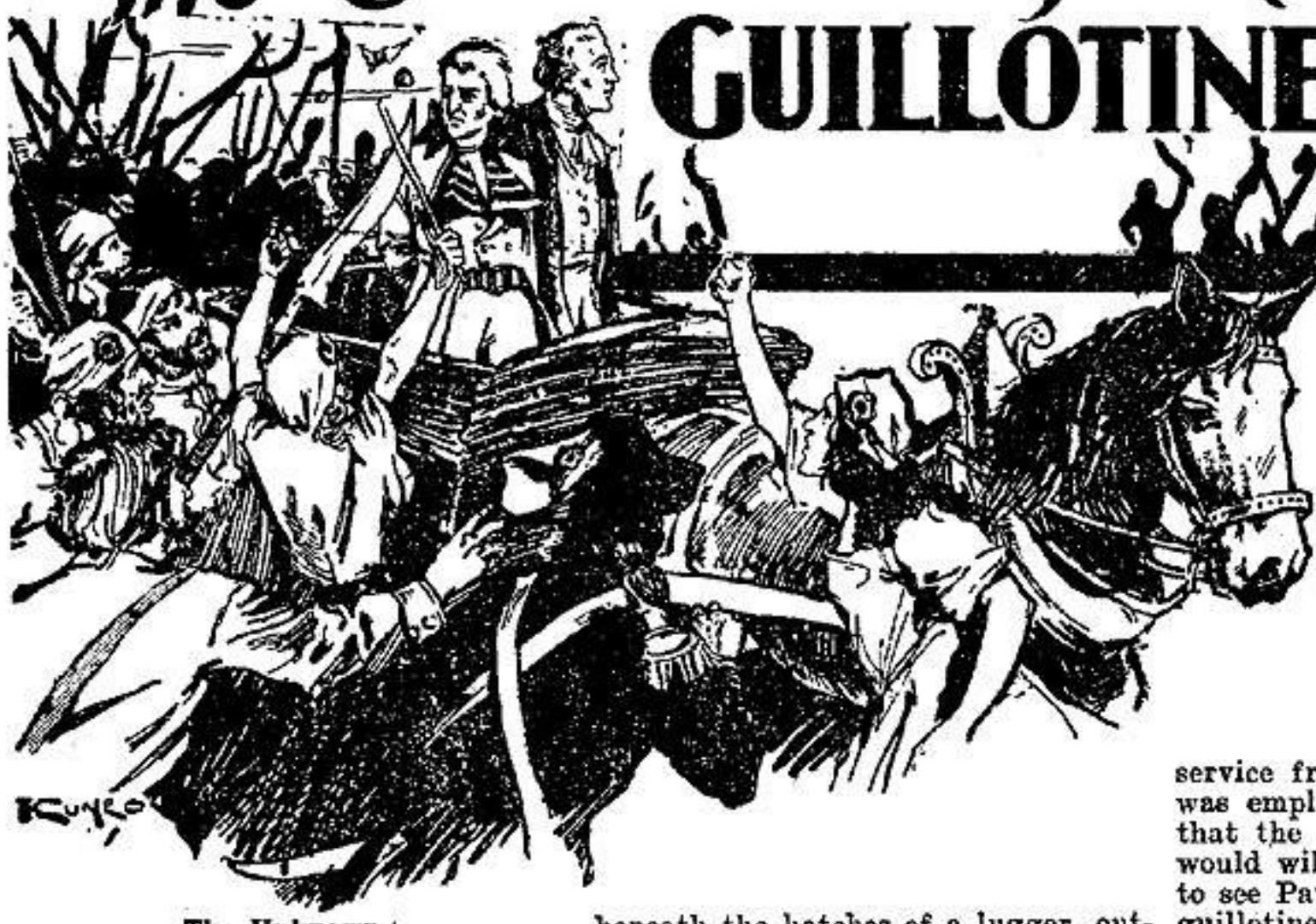
THE END.

(A wonderful wind-up to a realty good series, isn't it, chums? Rest assured the MAGNET *will never let you down. Look out, then, for another rattling fine yarn next week: "SKINNER'S SHADY SCHEME!" You'll vote it a real corker!)*

The new junior, with a beating heart, peered over the lower banisters down into the lighted hall below. A crowd had gathered there, as three schoolboys entered the door—Vernon-Smith, Redwing, and—Arthur Durance. For a minute the wretched trickster stood clutching the banisters, petrified with fear and despair. (*See Chapter* 13.)

CONTINUATION OF OUR SUPERB FRENCH REVOLUTION SERIAL!

The SHADOW of the GUILLOTINE!



By
GEO. E. ROCHESTER.

(Introduction on next page.)

The Unknown!

DAY drew slowly to a close and early dusk deepened into night. In his room Malliard sat alone, staring into the fire, with brooding, sombre eyes.

The shutters had been drawn across the solitary window, and, fearful lest some tell-tale chink of light should filter out through their many cracks, Jamaica Joe had nailed a blanket over them. Malliard had raised no objections. It was a precaution of which inwardly he approved. He could not be too careful now that his presence at the inn was suspected by Paul Hungerford.

What a startling discovery that had been. To find that the Paul Dare who had been a leader of the people—a friend of Robespierre—was none other than an English boy. An hour after landing at Dover Malliard had learned the news. For it had been the one topic of conversation along the lower waterfront.

Three days Malliard had spent at Dover, and during that time he had learned many things. None had known him for what he really was, and none had questioned the role which he had adopted—that of a French lawyer who had been forced to flee his country.

He had kept his ears open and his eyes. Ah, none so clever, so cunning as Malliard when requiring information of the right sort! A certain Lord Percy Woolerton had discovered that to his cost when, after conversing over a pleasant glass of wine one night with the harmless little French lawyer, he had come over unaccountably drowsy and had eventually awakened to find himself beneath the hatches of a lugger, outward bound for France; the self-same lugger, by the way, which had brought Malliard to England.

It had been so easy to trap that confiding fool of a talkative Englishman. As easy, almost, as had been the subsequent following of Paul Hungerford to this quiet corner of Dorset.

Malliard's star was in the ascendant. He had realised that to the full when he had clapped eyes on Jamaica Joe. For Malliard had arrived at lonely Gallows Inn with the sole intention of lying low there whilst he formulated some plan for the kidnapping of Paul Hungerford and the conveying of him to France—and the guillotine.

There's a fortune to be picked up for the capture, dead or alive, of that elusive Englishman—Will-o'-the-Wisp; yet even France's greatest spy cannot lay him by the heels!

But in Jamaica Joe he had found a man who would sell his soul for gold—and he knew it. Then Crake and Marling had been brought in by Joe—seen—and approved. Crake and Marling were each to receive one hundred guineas when they had carried out the instructions Malliard had given them. Captain Stoop—another whom Joe had selected—was to receive one hundred guineas for use of his cutter, and no questions asked. Jamaica Joe was also to receive one hundred golden guineas for the assistance he had given.

Four hundred guineas, all told, for the capture and conveying to France of Paul Hungerford. It was a large sum, maybe, but Malliard knew that it was buying him faithful service from the four men whom he was employing. And he knew, also, that the Committee of Public Safety would willingly pay double that sum to see Paul Hungerford mount to the guillotine.

There should be little difficulty in getting the boy. Almost every day he went for long rides, and was left alone. It was only a matter of waiting for an opportunity, and Crake and Marling could be depended upon to act when opportunity did eventually offer.

Thus the spy's thoughts ran on as he sat gazing into the fire. He had taken a risk in coming to England, but he had been justified in taking it, for he was winning all along the line. They would know in Paris how to make Lord Percy Woolerton divulge the name of his leader—that cursed Will-o'-the-Wisp. And once his name was known it would be a great step towards his ultimate capture.

Malliard's thin lips twitched into a fleeting smile. Morbleu, but what a triumph it would be to capture the elusive Will-o'-the-Wisp. And he would capture him. Now that he had one of the gang, Lord Percy Woolerton, in his clutches, it would not be difficult to set some trap into which Will-o'-the-Wisp would walk.

Then, without warning, Malliard froze into sudden, tense rigidity, conscious only that something sharp and pricking—a rapier point—was pressing into the skin at the back of his neck; conscious only of the cold voice behind him, which said in that same instant:

"Do not stir—if you value your life!"

A pause; then, with deadly menace, the voice went on:

"If you so much as turn your head I shall drive this blade right through your throat!"

Malliard sat motionless, a cold

sweat on his brow, and unutterable fear in his eyes.

"Who are you?" he whispered.

"Can you not guess?"

The spy's white, sensitive hands clenched spasmodically. It could not be—here in England—it could not be——

"Will-o'-the-Wisp?" he whispered.

"Yes!"

Malliard touched dry lips with the tip of his tongue. His face, in the flickering firelight towards which it was turned, was deathly pale.

"What—what do you want here?" he whispered huskily.

"You."

The point of the rapier pressed warningly as Malliard made as though to stir.

"Do not move—I have warned you!" went on the stern voice behind him. "I wear no disguise to-night, Malliard!"

The spy sat silent, motionless. In spite of his deadly fear he was bitterly conscious of the tragic irony of this moment. Long and earnestly had he worked to discover the identity of Will-o'-the-Wisp. And now Will-o'-the-Wisp stood behind him, minus any disguise. And Malliard dare not look.

He could, if he had the courage, turn his head and look once upon the face of the man for whom he and every spy in France was hunting. But next instant he would die with a foot of steel through his throat.

The price—his life—was too high.

"I have news for you, Malliard," went on the voice behind him, and ever the rapier-point pressed with deadly threat. "The Paul Hungerford whom you seek is now on his way to France. He left this evening aboard an English schooner."

A pause, and then:

"He crosses under my care, Malliard, and will aid me in the rescue of my comrade, Lord Percy Woolerton, whom you have had lodged in the Temple Prison, in Paris. The capture of Lord Percy was a clever and daring piece of work on your part, Malliard, and I would be churlish and strangely lacking in sportsmanship did I not congratulate you upon it."

"Do not mock me!" burst out Malliard hoarsely

"Nay, I do not mock you," came the reply. "You are a brave man, and you have proved your courage in coming thus to England. But you will never see France again."

"You—you are going to kill me—an unarmed man——"

"Yes, I am going to kill you," was the stern reply, "and I would be justified in giving you the death thrust where you sit, for you have many murders on your soul. But the courage of which I have spoken has earned for you a better death than that. A candle burns on the table, Malliard. I shall snuff it out, and by where it stands you will find a blade, first cousin to the one I hold. You will take it—and die on your feet like a man."

The rapier-point was withdrawn. There came the sound of a soft, backward step, the next instant the candle on the table was extinguished, plunging the room into darkness, broken only by the faint, flickering glow of the dying fire.

Slowly Malliard rose to his feet and turned. By the door, scarce discernible amidst the shadows, stood the figure of a man, the firelight glinting on the drawn steel in his hand.

"You mean, we are to fight?" demanded the spy hoarsely.

"Yes, if fight you will," was the reply. "If not, then I shall run you through. Your sword—on the table!"

Malliard stepped forward, his groping hand closing on the hilt of a rapier lying on the table. A wild hope had dawned in his heart, for he was a brilliant duellist.

"But why fight in the dark?" he asked, and with the words he tensed.

"Why?" laughed the other. "It is so that even in death you shall not see my face—a-ah!"

The words terminated in a soft exclamation, and he slid aside, his blade darting upwards and outwards to meet the sudden rush and lunge of Malliard.

There came the clash of steel on steel as the rapiers met, then Malliard leapt back, conscious that he was silhouetted against the firelight glow. His first treacherous stroke had failed. Crouched against the wall, his thin blade thrust forward, he held his breath, peering in the direction of the dark, vague shadow which was his enemy. It moved, and a coal falling on the hearth with momentary, expiring flame, afforded Malliard a glimpse of a glittering, snake-like thing darting in towards him.

He parried successfully with flick of wrist and hiss of indrawn breath. This was devil's work, this fighting in the dark. Should he shout for help? No, for the sound of his own voice upraised would unnerve him. And it seemed as though Jamaica Joe had already played him false.

Where was the other now? That shadow there? No, that was a shadow cast by the chair near the fire. Was it, though? It was moving. With lightning movement Malliard slid aside and again came the clash of steel on steel as he foiled the writhing, thrusting blade of his enemy.

And now he followed up, his rapier pressing gently in the darkness against that of Will-o'-the-Wisp's. He must win—must kill this man. Ah, what a triumph that would be! Had ever man fought for greater stakes than this? Life, honour, glory, would all be his could he but sink his blade into this enemy of France. He turned his wrist with amazing swiftness, forcing up the Englishman's blade and lengthening his own arm in sudden lunge. He felt the point of his rapier strike something soft and yielding, and there came a sharp, half-stifled exclamation.

He had drawn first blood. Filled with a wild exultation he pressed on, his flickering blade darting in and out. He could discern his man now, a dark and shadowy form in front of him; could see the white blur of his face. Again he lunged, and steel clashed on steel as the Englishman parried.

Rapier pressed on rapier then, and for a moment nothing broke the silence save the heavy breathing of the two men and the soft slither of their feet. Then with sudden amazing swiftness Malliard disengaged, and, slipping nimbly aside, lunged forward to give the death thrust. But his rapier pierced only empty air, so quick had been the Englishman to sense that deadly stroke. And before Malliard could recover, a snaking venomous blade came writhing in at him.

With a choking cry he staggered back, his rapier falling from his nerveless hand, a foot of cold steel protruding from between his shoulders.

INTRODUCTION.

It is the year 1792, when the long-threatened revolution in France has burst into flame. Paul Dare, a peasant lad, is made Commissioner of the Revolutionary Tribunal, but for saving his boyhood friend, Armande de St. Clair, from the fate which has befallen so many of the hated aristocrats, he is himself sentenced to the guillotine. In the condemned cell, Paul learns from his friend Sansarge that he is not French, but English. His real name is Paul Hungerford, and his father, Sir Crispin Hungerford, from whom he was kidnapped when only a few months old, mourns him as dead. The lad despairs of ever seeing his father again, but rescue comes at the eleventh hour. Together with the Comte D'Espany, Paul is saved from death by Will-o'-the-Wisp, a mysterious Englishman, whose daring and resource had aided many aristocrats.

The fugitives escape to England, and at Hungerford Manor, in Dorset, comes Paul's glad reunion with his father. In the happy, care-free days that follow, the lad tries to forget his grim experiences in France, but he is soon to be reminded of them. While out riding with his brother Eustace, a graceless ne'er-do-well, he catches a glimpse of a face at the window of the notorious Gallows Inn. He is convinced that it is the face of Malliard, the chief spy of the Revolutionary Committee of Public Safety, but Jamaica Joe, the innkeeper, denies that he has any guests. Had Paul only known it, Jamaica Joe is himself in the pay of Malliard. The spy has come to England on the trail of the fugitives, and he is swiftly weaving a net to trap Paul and take him back to France—to the guillotine!

(Now read on.)

In the Temple Prison!

PARIS!

Steadily the tide of blood is mounting, sweeping onwards to the roar of a maddened mob. Horror, hate, and terror ride triumphant on the crimson torrent, and man has turned brute beast, crazed with the lust to kill and destroy.

Who dare call a halt to the daily carnage—the shameful slaughter?

None. For this is Liberty. This is Equality. This is Fraternity.

Europe stands aghast at the deluge which is carrying away the fairest cities of France and swirling into oblivion the bearers of her proudest names.

But what cares Paris?

Nothing. The people are the masters; their saviour the guillotine.

Oh, glorious guillotine! Nobly, unceasingly, and untiringly have you worked to avenge the people. But there is a treat in store for you on the morrow. For below your blood-encrusted knife an Englishman is to die.

Not that cursed Will-o'-the-Wisp, but one of his band. It was Malliard

who had got him, and now he lies in the Temple Prison, condemned to death before the Bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

Excitement in Paris that night had risen to a frenzy. For it was whispered that Will-o'-the-Wisp was in the city and had sworn that his comrade would yet cheat the guillotine.

That meant a rescue.

And drawn by these tidings a surging, wolfish mob had gathered outside the grim walls of the prison. Let Will-o'-the-Wisp attempt a rescue if he dare. Let him show his face within a mile of the Temple Prison, and this time they would get him and tear him limb from limb.

Had not fifty extra soldiers of the National Guard been drafted to the prison in case a rescue should be attempted by the audacious dog? Had not two picked soldiers been placed in the cell of the condemned Englishman to watch him throughout the night hours? Yes, indeed. Name of a name, how could he be rescued then?

Pah! It was impossible!

"Yes, impossible!" Robespierre, seated at a table in a small room in the prison spoke quietly, almost soothingly. "You are alarming yourself unnecessarily, my friend."

Fouquier-Tinville paused in his pacing of the floor.

"Am I?" he replied harshly. "Read that then! It was pushed into my hand a few moments ago as I passed through the mob on my way here."

He thrust towards Robespierre a folded scrap of paper. Taking it, Robespierre unfolded it and read with narrowed eyes:

"To the Public Prosecutor,
Citizen Fouquier-Tinville.

"This is to warn you, Citizen, that your prisoner, Lord Percy Woolerton, will be taken by me from the Temple Prison to-night and returned to his home and friends in England.

"Further, I regret to inform you that Malliard is dead. He died by my hand in an English inn six nights ago.

"Unpleasant tidings, Citizen; but these are unpleasant times.

"WILL-O'-THE-WISP."

With fingers which trembled in spite of himself, Robespierre laid the missive on the table.

"Malliard dead!" he muttered. "Malliard dead!"

"Yes, Malliard dead!" snarled Fouquier-Tinville. "Slain by this accursed Englishman. And you see what else the dog has written. Do you wonder now why I say that I shall know no ease of mind until I see Woolerton mount to the guillotine at noon to-morrow?"

"But rescue is impossible, I tell you!" said Robespierre sharply. "There are ten soldiers on guard in the corridor where Woolerton's cell is situated, and there are two picked men of the National Guard inside the cell with him. Unless this Will-o'-the-Wisp is possessed of magic powers he cannot get him away."

He took up the missive again, turning it over curiously in his hand.

"You say this was thrust into your hand as you passed through the crowd on your way to the prison?" he said. "You did not see the man who gave it you?"

"How could I? demanded Fouquier-Tinville angrily. "It was dark, and there was a score of the rabble pushing and jostling about me at the moment. It might have been any one of them."

Robespierre was silent, and when next he spoke his voice was quiet and wholly unperturbed.

"It may be that we but waste our time in talking thus of rescue," he said. "For the need of rescue will not arise if, at this eleventh hour, Lord Percy Woolerton will divulge to us the name of his leader—this Will-o'-the-Wisp."

"He will not divulge it!" growled the other. "He is stubborn, like all these English pigs!"

"Nevertheless, we will see," replied Robespierre. "Have him brought here, Citizen."

Fouquier-Tinville strode to the door, and, opening it, growled an order to the soldier on duty outside. Then, closing the door again, he retraced his steps to where Robespierre was seated.

"Suppose now," he said roughly, "that this cursed Woolerton agrees to answer your questions."

"Well?"

"Well, are you going to let him go free?" demanded Fouquier-Tinville truculently.

Robespierre nodded.

"Certainly!" he replied.

"But it is madness!" snarled the Public Prosecutor. "Why should you let him go free?"

"Because I am a man of my word," replied Robespierre sternly. "We have discussed this before, Citizen, and I am adamant. My terms to Lord Percy Woolerton are the same as they have always been since we captured him. His life in exchange for the name of his leader."

"And if he tells us what we want to know," pressed Fouquier-Tinville, "you intend to keep to your bargain and let him go free?"

"Yes. He will be provided with safe conduct as far as the coast."

Fouquier-Tinville laughed harshly.

"You are too honest for Paris, my friend," he sneered

Robespierre eyed him steadily, without any trace of anger in his pale, sallow features. But when he spoke his voice was icy.

"Have a care on your tongue, Citizen," he said. "It would be unwise to allow your zeal on behalf of Madame Guillotine to outstrip your discretion."

"But—but I thought the offer of his life was to be naught but a bait with which to tempt him into divulging the name of his leader——" began Fouquier-Tinville weakly.

"I shall keep my bargain," reiterated Robespierre sternly. "If he speaks—then he goes free."

He broke off as there came the tramp of heavily-booted feet in the corridor outside, and a knock on the door.

"Enter!" he called.

In response, the door was thrown open, and in the midst of four soldiers of the National Guard, Lord Percy Woolerton was marched into the room.

He was in sorry pass, with clothes torn and frayed, but in his eyes was still the same old hint of carefree laughter.

"Good-evening, monsieur!" he said with a bow. "Ah, and is that the worthy Fouquier-Tinville? Good-evening to you, Citizen! We have not met, I think, since you rallied against me so ably and so well before the Bar of the Tribunal. A masterly performance, Citizen!"

Fouquier-Tinville scowled. These English aristocrats, it seemed, were no different from those of France. You could break their bodies, but you could not break their spirit.

"Attend to me, please!" said Robespierre coldly, his eyes on the prisoner. "We have decided to give you one last chance. Tell us the name of your leader, Will-o'-the-Wisp, and you leave Paris within the hour a free man. Refuse—and you die to-morrow on the guillotine!"

"Oh, gad!" sighed Lord Percy wearily. "What a persistent fellow you are! I've said I will not, and I mean I will not!"

"That is your final word?" demanded Robespierre sternly.

"Oh, yes, absolutely the final one!" drawled Lord Percy.

"Very good!" rapped Robespierre. Then to the soldiers: "Take him away!"

He rose to his feet as the door closed on the retreating form of Lord Percy and his escort.

"Well, Citizen," he said, turning to Fouquier-Tinville, and his voice was that of tired man, "we can do no more here to-night, so let us be going."

"A touch of the hot iron might bring the stubborn dog to a more reasonable frame of mind——" began the Public Prosecutor roughly.

"Let me hear no talk of that!" cut in Robespierre sharply. "Whilst I rule the prisons of Paris I will have no man tortured."

"Yes—whilst you rule them!" sneered Fouquier-Tinville. "Be warned, my friend. Already the people are muttering against these squeamish scruples which you display."

Robespierre made no reply. Perhaps he realised more clearly than Fouquier-Tinville ever guessed, how day by day the shadow of the guillotine was lengthening slowly but inexorably towards him; perhaps even then there was some grim presentiment in his heart as to what his fate was to be at the hands of the bestial mob who, in the early days of that reign of terror, had acclaimed him as their inspired leader.

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A few minutes later, having given strict orders that the closest watch was to be kept on the prisoner in case there was an attempt at rescue, he quitted the prison, accompanied by Fouquier-Tinville. Entering his cabriolet, he drove slowly away through the surging crowd, which opened to afford passage for the coach and its escort of mounted soldiers.

At the Apartments of the Public Prosecutor!

FOUQUIER-TINVILLE was uneasy—extremely uneasy. And he made no effort to disguise that fact from himself as, with hands clasped behind his back, he restlessly paced the floor of his apartment in the Rue Pont Neuf.

On the table lay the crumpled missive which had been thrust into his hand earlier in the evening; the warning from Will o' the Wisp that the Englishman, Lord Percy Woolerton, would be spirited away from the Temple Prison that night.

More than once the Public Prosecutor halted in his pacing to stare with sombre eyes at that scrap of paper, or else to take it in his hand in order to read again the message which by now he could have repeated word for word.

"It is impossible!" he muttered once. "He can do nothing—dare attempt nothing!"

The prison was full of soldiers. Double the number of guards were on duty in every corridor. Outside the walls of the prison were armed patrols consisting of picked officers and men. Le Valle, governor of the prison, had been instructed to visit the prisoner in person at least once every hour throughout the night. And with the prisoner in his cell were two picked men of the National Guard.

Could any further precautions have been taken to ensure the safe custody of Lord Percy Woolerton? No, all was being done which could be done. Why, then, worry?

Why, indeed? Savagely, Fouquier-Tinville asked himself that question. But he was worrying, and—as he had told Robespierre—he would know no ease of mind until Lord Percy was safely pinioned beneath the knife of the guillotine.

There was tension in the air that night. It seemed as though he—the whole of Paris—was waiting with bated breath for what was about to happen at any moment. But what could happen? Nothing—nothing at all.

Perhaps it would have been better Fouquier-Tinville told himself, if he had remained at the prison overnight with LeValle. Then he would have been on the spot should this hated Will-o'-the-Wisp have dared to attempt a rescue——

A sudden step on the stairs outside his room brought him alert, with fists clenched.

"You?" he snarled, as the door opened and the bearded Sansarge entered the room.

"Yes, me!" growled Sansarge, staring. "Why, what ails you, Citizen? One would think I was a ghost!"

"If you turn so much as your head I shall drive this blade right through your throat!" Malliard sat motionless, a cold sweat on his brow, and unutterable fear in his eyes. "Who are you?" he whispered. "Will-o'-the-Wisp!" came the faint reply. (*See page* 25.)

Fouquier-Tinville relaxed.

"You startled me," he growled sullenly. "I thought—I scarce know what I thought——"

He broke off, throwing himself into a chair and resting his chin on trembling hand.

"What do you want here, anyway, at this time of night?" he demanded querulously.

"News!" grunted Sansarge, slouching forward and propping himself against the table.

There was a grin on his bearded lips as he stood there looking down on the scowling Fouquier-Tinville.

"Yes, Citizen," he replied, "I seek news. Tell me, did the English aristocrat speak?"

"No!" rapped the Public Prosecutor angrily.

"Ah, that is a pity!" commented Sansarge. "So we do not yet know the identity of this Will-o'-the-Wisp?"

Fouquier-Tinville made no reply. Sansarge's grin broadened

"Where is Malliard?" he demanded.

Fouquier-Tinville looked at him sharply.

"Why do you ask that?" he snapped.

"Because," replied Sansarge, with a slow and obvious relish, "wherever he is he is wasting his time. We have need of him here in Paris."

Something in his tone brought Fouquier-Tinville upright in his chair.

"What do you mean, you grinning fool?" he snarled.

"I mean this," responded Sansarge.

From his trouser pocket he produced a dirty scrap of paper, which he carefully unfolded before proffering it to the Public Prosecutor.

"Read!" he invited.

Leaning forward, Fouquier-Tinville snatched the paper and read, written in a fine, boyish hand:

"Sansarge,—There is much that I could write to you; much that I could find to tell which would, I think, interest you vastly. But time is very limited, and I must

(Continued from previous page.)

confine myself to saying that I am safe and well.

"To-night I am in Paris, and knowing that these few brief words will be delivered safe into your hand, I pen them in the hope that they will bring to you an understanding that there is naught of bitterness in my heart towards you who were my friend, but only kindly memories.

"The past is dead for me, and a new life has begun. You are too staunch a patriot, I fear, to allow of us ever meeting again on common ground. But in spite of that, Sansarge, I am presumptuous enough in this last farewell to sign myself as

"Always your friend,

"PAUL DARC."

Crumpling the letter in his clenched hand, Fouquier-Tinville hurled it to the floor in a paroxysm of fury, and sprang to his feet.

"In Paris!" he shouted. "That traitor—in Paris!"

Wheeling on Sansarge, he clutched him by the breast of his filthy red shirt.

"How did you come by that letter?" he blazed. "Who gave it you?"

Sansarge shrugged his shoulders, disengaging the gripping hand of the Public Prosecutor.

"It was awaiting me at my lodgings in the Rue Couteau when I returned there an hour ago," he said lazily. "It had been delivered by hand sometime during the evening."

(Next week's issue of the MAGNET *will contain the concluding chapters of this moving story of the French Revolution. But don't let this worry you, chums! As in the past, so in the future, your favourite weekly will continue to lead the way with tip-top serials. You'd like to know what's coming along next, wouldn't you? Look out, then, for full particulars next week!)*

'GAINST FEARFUL ODDS!

(Continued from page 15.)

Half an hour later he entered the gates of St. Sam's, still carrying his fair burden.

Dr. Birchemall was waiting for him with a birch-rod grasped in his hand. But at the site of Miss Molly, the Head hastily dropped the birch-rod and rushed forward, as eggscited as a two-year-old.

"What the merry dickens!" he gasped. "Why, you are dressed up as a young lady, Jolly! And—and you have brought back my dawter! Well, well! Who ever would have thought it? This is a plezzant surprise, and no mistake."

Just then Molly Birchemall came round again.

"Pop," she said, "Jolly is my brave reskewer. He reskewed me from my crool kaptors in the face of fearful odds!"

"Good old Jack Jolly!" cried Dr. Birchemall hartily. "I may as well admit now that it was my intention to flog you black and blue on your return. But circumstances alter cases. Instead of doing that, I shall now invite you to tea and shrimps with me this afternoon, Jolly. And, while I remember it, bring Fearless along with you."

And when the two heroes of the Fourth tea'd with the Head and Miss Molly that afternoon, they had to konfess that it was not altogether without reward that Jack Jolly had fought 'gainst fearful odds.

THE END.

(Another mirth-making yarn by Dicky Nugent will appear in next week's MAGNET, *chums! You really must not miss: "FOOTBAWL FEVER AT ST. SAM'S!" It will make you roar with laughter!)*

'GAINST FEARFUL ODDS!

By DICKY NUGENT

Sherlock Holmes and Ferrers Locke are simply not in it when it comes to tracking down criminals, says Jack Jolly. Be that as it may, Jack certainly pulls off a great coup when he tracks down the rascally kidnappers of Molly Birchemall, the pretty daughter of the Head of St. Sam's.

I.

"ANYBODY here seen Jolly?"

Mr. I. Jolliwell Lickham, the Form master of the Fourth at St. Sam's, yelled out that question as he trotter into the Form-room.

"Yes, sir," answered Joaker, the japer of the Fourth, "I have."

"Where?"

"In the jimmynasium, sir."

Mr. Lickham looked slitely surprised.

"Surely he is not in the jimmynasium at this hour of the morning?" he ejackulated.

"Well, perhaps he has gone now, sir."

"When eggsactly did you see him?" asked Mr. Lickham.

"About a cupple of days ago," replied Joaker innosently, and there was a roar from the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lickham nashed his teeth with rage.

"Silence!" he barked. "And take fifty lines for the heenous offence of pulling your Form master's leg, Joaker! Let me now repeet my question. Has anybody here seen Jolly? Be careful how you answer, boys. The inkwiry comes from the Head, and you know what he's like when he gets his rag out."

For a minnit there was no reply from the class. As a matter of fact, nobody had seen the kaptin of the Fourth since his misterious disappearance the previous afternoon, though a good many of the fellows had a shrewd suspishun where he was.

Evenchually Frank Fearless stood up.

"Ah, you have seen the missing junior, Fearless?" cried Mr. Lickham.

"No, sir; not since he disappeared."

"Then why the thump are you standing up?"

"Becawse I know where he is, sir."

Mr. Lickham ellevated his eyebrows slitely.

"Oh, you do, do you?" he remarked grimly. "In that case, Fearless, you had better accompany me to the Head."

So saying, the master of the Fourth fixed his thumb and forefinger over Frank's ear and led him to the most dredded apartment at St. Sam's—the sanktum of Dr. Birchemall, the revered and majestick headmaster of the skool.

The Head looked up as the newcomers burst into his study. He frowned seveerly as he notissed the manner in which Mr. Lickham was leading in his kaptive.

"Tutt-tutt, Lickham! This is not done!" he eggsclaimed sharply. "You should never subject a boy to the indignity of being led through the skool by his ear. Either lead him by the nose, or else grasp him firmly by the scruff of the neck and the seat of the trowsis and propel him along in that way. Savvy?"

"I savvy, sir," mermered Mr. Lickham humbly. "I beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure."

"Granted," yawned the Head. "And now, what's the trubble, Lickham?"

"I have brought Fearless along to you becawse he says he knows where Jolly is, sir."

At the mention of Jack Jolly's name the eggspression on Dr. Birchemall's face became thunderous.

"Ha! So you are in that wretched boy's konfidence, are you, Fearless?" he snorted. "In that case, kindly tell me at once why he has had the impudinence, not to say the ordassity, to absent himself from skool without leave?"

"With plezzure, sir. He has gone fourth in search of your missing dawter," replied Frank Fearless.

Dr. Birchemall's face hardened.

"That, Fearless, is meerly a piffling and paltry eggscuse!" he sneered. "The fact of the matter is, I eggspect, that Jolly is having a cupple of days out on the spree, visiting 'talkie' shows and feeding his face at frekwent intervals. Prate not to me of searches for my missing dawter, for I shall refuse to beleeve such yarns."

"They're not yarns!" said Frank Fearless stoutly.

"Eh?"

"I say they're not yarns!" repeeted Frank Fearless fearlessly. "Jolly set out yesterday, disguysed as a girl, with the intention of being kaptured by jipsies."

"My hat!" eggsclaimed the Head, with a stare.

"Rightly or wrongly, he is konvinced that Miss Molly is a prisoner in the hands of the jipsies encamped on Muggleton Moor——"

"Stuff and nonsense! Likewise bosh and tosh!" snorted Dr. Birchemall. "Where my missing dawter can have got to"—he pawsed to wipe his tear-stained eyes with the corner of Mr. Lickham's academmick gown—"is a deep mistery. But it's as sure as eggs that she hasn't been kaptured by jipsies. Inspector Sloothound, of the Muggleton Perlice, made certain of that."

"Jolly wasn't sattisfied with Inspector Sloothound's word, though. And nor am I," said Fearless.

"Ratts! Inspector Sloothound is a most brilliant detective. Even Herlock Sholmes and Blexton Steak would find it difficult to beat him at the game," retorted Dr. Birchemall konfidently. "But, in any case, I do not beleeve for an instant that Jolly has done what you say he has."

"Nevertheless, sir, he has," insisted Fearless firmly.

"But I say he hasn't!"

"He has!"

"He hasn't!"

"Has!"

"Hasn't!"

"He jolly well has!"

"He jolly well hasn't!"

"Eggscuse me, sir, but time is getting on!" remarked Mr. Lickham, insulting his gold hunter.

Dr. Birchemall nodded.

"I am glad you reminded me, Lickham. I have an important appointment with one of my creditors in the skoll tuckshop in five minnits' time. Now, Fearless, kindly inform me of the prezzent whereabouts of your friend, or face the unplezzant consekwences!"

"I've already told you that he is a prisoner of the jipsies, sir, and I sujjest that a reskew party be organised immejately."

"And is that all you have to say?" asked the Head sarkastically.

"That's all, sir. What about you?"

"Pass me that birch, Lickham!" was Dr. Birchemall's only reply. "What I have to say about it is going to be said without words. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" sniggered Mr. Lickham dutifully, as he passed over the instrument of torcher. "Touch your toes, Fearless, and wait for the Head's opinion—eggspressed without words!"

Frank Fearless was almost tempted into nocking their two wooden heads together. But dissiplin was dissiplin, and the hero of the Fourth didn't feel like setting orthority altogether at defiance. So he touched his toes.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Yarooooo!" roared Frank Fearless, biting his lipps to prevent himself yelling aloud.

Thwack, thwack, thwack!

"Yow-ow-wow!"

Swish, swish, swish!

"Wooooooop!"

For sevveral minnits Dr. Birchemall continued to eggspress his opinion with the aid of his birch in very forcible langwidge. But though Frank Fearless yelled and roared in aggerny, he didn't utter a cry throughout his seveer ordeal.

"That'll do!" gasped the Head at last. "I hope this will be a lesson to you, Fearless. I don't know quite what sort of a lesson, but let it be a lesson, anyway. Now buzz off, both of you!"

"Do you wish me to make any more inkwiries conserning the absence of Jolly?" asked Mr. Lickham in tones of respect.

"No, Lickham. I feel sure that he will return some time to-day, and as soon as I have finished interviewing my creditor in the tuckshop, I intend trotting down to the gates, armed with a brand new birch to await his arrival," replied the Head.

With that he opened the door, and Mr. Lickham and Fearless departed, the latter manfully repressing his frekwent cries of:

"Ow! Yow-ow! Groooo! Wow!"

II.

MEANWHILE, in a lonely field on the banks of the River Ripple, some strange and eggsiting events were happening. Early in the morning, Jack Jolly, still wearing the disguys with which he had deceeved the skoundrels who had kidnapped him, was taken before the chief of the jipsy tribe.

This swarthy-faced skoundrel demanded the name of his kaptive's parents, informing Jack, with a leer, that it was his intention to demand ransum. Our hero, assuming a high-pitched, girlish voice for the occasion, gave a fiktishus name and answered all the questions put to him. It was not his plan to quarrel with his kaptors yet. First, he wanted to find out where Molly Birchemall had been consealed.

After a froogal breakfast of bread-crusts and water, Jack Jolly was taken back to his caravan and flung into the corner, bound hand and foot again.

While he was lying there, wondering what was the best thing to do, he suddenly herd a sound that sent a thrill running down his spine. It was the tinklin, mewsical voice of Miss Molly Birchemall herself!

That welcome sound inspired Jack to superhuman efforts. Struggling to his feet, he looked out of the little winder of the caravan.

His hart beat fast as he saw the Head's pretty dawter, bound hand and foot like himself. Seemingly, Miss Molly was argewing the toss with her erool kaptors, and by straining his ears Jack Jolly was able to catch the drift of the conversation.

Miss Molly was indignantly refusing the few paltry crusts which had been offered her as a breakfast, and Jack's blud farely boiled as he looked on and listened. Miss Molly, as he knew, had been brought up in the lap of luxury all her life. Breakfasts of eggs and bacon and haddocks and kippers were a matter of corse to her, and the meer thought of such a refined young lady being offered dry crusts was enuff to make any fellow's blud boil.

Jack Jolly gritted his teeth. It was maddening to have to watch helplessly while such indignities were being heaped on his girl chum, and he came to the concloosion that the time had now arrived for acheeving the reskew of the Head's fair dawter.

"The hour has struck!" mermered Jack Jolly dramatically, speaking with difficulty behind his gag. "Now is the time to go fourth and do or die!"

With these words the hero of the Fourth made a coopreem effort and burst his bonds.

Another glarnse through the little window showed him that Miss Molly was being led back to the fowl caravan where she was being held kaptive.

Jack Jolly made up his mind to reskew her before her swarthy kaptors could put her back in durance vile.

Tearing away his gag, he hurled open the door of the caravan and sprang down the steps.

With a cry of "Unhand that young lady!" he farely rushed to the reskew.

For a moment the jipsies were too surprised to act. They stared at the hero of the Fourth, who was, of corse, still disguysed as a girl, as though he was a speckter.

Then one of them made a rush.

Crash!

It was the sound of Jack Jolly's fist meeting the jipsy's jaw.

"Yarooooooo!"

Without a single cry the skoundrel fell, nocked senseless by the pile-driving punch of the champion boxer of the Lower Skool at St. Sam's.

Cries of amazement rang out on all sides. The spectacle of a burly ruffian of a jipsy being nocked out by a young lady was one that had never been seen before in the encampment, and the swarthy ruffians simply couldn't understand it.

But Jack Jolly wasn't content to rest on his lorrels. In the next few minnits he gave those jipsies a lot more to feel amazed about.

Making a B-line for the surprised Miss Molly, he hit out right and left, flooring everybody who happened to be in his way. The camp was soon echoing with the sound of his terrifick punches and the yells of angwish of his viktims.

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

"Ow-wow!"

"Yoooooooop!"

"Groooooooo!"

Straight as a die rushed Jack Jolly, his head held erect, his eyes flashing, and his fists lashing out furiously on both sides as he went.

Powerful grate jipsies toppled over like ninepins as he sped to the reskew of the Head's dawter. It was amazing, it was unpresidented; but it was true! One St. Sam's junior, single-handed, though dubble-fisted, was conkering a whole tribe of jipsies!

At last the brave junior reached his objective, where Molly Birchemall was struggling in the hands of two hulking, grate raskals, who were trying to rush her into kaptivity again.

"Take that, you broot!" roared Jack Jolly feercely. "And that!"

"That" and "that" were two litening-like punches that sent the two ruffians bowling away like catherine-wheels. They were fearful blows—blows that would have felled an ox, and after they had sampled them the two jipsies felt much too cowed to sample them again.

"Who—who are you?" gasped Molly Birchemall, as Jack swiftly cut her erool bonds. "Surely no young lady could scrap like you have done? You must be a boy disguysed."

"Right first time!" grinned Jack Jolly, pulling off the wig he had worn, and reveeling to Miss Molly's astonished gaze his own curly napper.

"Jack Jolly!" cried Molly Birchemall. "My brave reskewer!"

With those words the Head's dawter feinted. Jack Jolly, realising that time was valluable, did not trubble to bring her round. He simply threw her over his shoulder and strode out of the camp, nocking out the remainder of the jipsies as he went.

(*Continued on page 28.*)