

"HARRY WHARTON'S ENEMY!" Sensational School Story of the
Chums of Greyfriars—inside.

The **MAGNET** 2^D





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., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

YOUR old friend, "Mr. X" has just shown me quite a clever card trick which is well worth passing on to you. Here it is:

He produced twenty-one cards and dealt them out in three piles on the table. He told me to think of one card, and I did so. He asked which pile it was in, and gathered up the cards again. Then he dealt them out in three piles once more. I pointed out the pile in which the chosen card was, and he gathered the piles up a second time. He repeated the business a third time, and then dealt out the cards, stopping when he reached the one which I had previously chosen. It's quite a good little trick, and one that you might like to try on your chums. Here is the explanation:

Pick up the three piles of cards in such a manner that the pile containing the chosen card is in the middle. Don't disarrange the cards, and you will find that when you have dealt them out and picked them up three times (always keeping the pile containing the chosen card in the middle) the chosen card will be the *eleventh* which you deal out at the end of the trick.

But don't tell your chums how you do it! *Keep them guessing!*

Limerick forward! This one comes from E. Preston, of 66, Rosington Road, Sneyton Dale, Nottingham, and he gets a topping leather pocket wallet for it.

A Removite, named Bunter, once said: "I've got a good scheme in my head. I'll pop in at 'break' And pinch Wharton's cake"— But he found Harry's boot there instead!

A BIRMINGHAM chum writes to me and asks
HOW TO BECOME A WIRE-LESS OFFICER,

and if I can give him some idea of the duties of such an officer. He must first

of all go to a training school, either in London or the provinces. A special course lasts from about thirty to forty weeks, and costs roughly a guinea a week. Some technical institutions do not charge as much, and, therefore, my chum must make inquiries at all such institutions in his neighbourhood.

Once a boy has passed his examination and obtained his certificate, there is little difficulty in getting an appointment aboard ship. The pay varies according to the size and class of the ship, and the grade of the operator. A third grade operator gets £7 per month; a second grade from £8 10s. to £10 10s.; and a first grade from £13 to £19 per month.

In addition to this, of course, an operator gets his food and cabin. On a passenger boat he usually dines with the passengers, and on a cargo boat with the officers. In port he has not very much to do, and this, naturally, gives him an opportunity to see something of the world.

Some time ago I gave you some particulars of men who had attained great ages. Now I have come across a reference to a man who claims to be

THE OLDEST MAN IN THE WORLD!

You would hardly believe it, but this man claims to be no less than two hundred and fifty-two years of age! He lives in China, and a Chinese professor who has made the necessary investigations is satisfied that the claim is genuine.

This long-lived Chinaman rejoices in the name of Li Ching-Yung, and his longevity is said to be due to certain medicinal herbs which grow in the district where he lives. Just think of it—if his claim is correct, he must have been born when Charles II was King of England!

SHOULD you see a bottle floating in the water the next time you are at the seaside do your best to get hold of it. It might be a "dud," of course, but, on the other hand you might be helping science.

Most people don't realise how much scientific data is discovered by means of bottles which have been set floating in the ocean. A little while ago a bottle was picked up in the Pacific which had travelled no less than 8,300 miles! This is a record for long-distance bottle travelling in that particular ocean. Yet some years ago a bottle which was dropped in the South Indian Ocean covered 11,820 miles before it finished up at Cape Horn. It took three years on the journey!

The object of dropping bottles into the sea is to discover as much as possible regarding the set and drift of the tides, for even nowadays we don't know as much about them as we would like to.

Now for a few

REPLIES IN BRIEF

to various readers' letters.
T. Norfolk (Ely).—The Quad stands in front of Greyfriars. The Close is surrounded by school buildings. A covered passageway leads from the Quad to the Close. With regard to the card trick you mention, cutting the cards does not disarrange the manner in which the cards are placed (*shuffling* does, of course!) It would be impossible to explain this trick without first seeing it done.

"A Regular Reader" (Harrogate).—For information as to how to join the Customs Service, you should write to the Board of Customs and Excise, Lower Thames Street, E.C.3. Examinations are held periodically, and you could study the required subjects at an evening school. Your local postmaster will give you any information regarding examinations for various departments of the post office, or you could write to the Secretary of the Post Office, St. Martins-le-Grand, London, E.C.1.

Tom B. (Wolverhampton).—Twenty-two carat gold means that there are 22 parts of pure gold to 2 parts of alloy. Therefore 9 carat gold is composed of 15 parts of alloy to 9 parts of pure gold.

I THINK there is just enough room to get in another prize-winning effort this week. This joke has been sent in by H. Best, of 70, New North Road, Hoxton, N.1, and he gets a fine Sheffield steel penknife for it:

Motorist (looking very much knocked about): "Yes, it took me about six weeks learning how to drive my machine."

Pedestrian: "And what have you for your pains?"

Motorist: "Liniment!"

Don't miss next week's issue, chums! Frank Richards has excelled himself in the special long complete yarn of the Greyfriars chums, which is entitled:

"THE FOOL OF THE SCHOOL!"

The title gives you some idea of what you can expect. I won't spoil your enjoyment by telling you too much about the story, but you'll find exciting situations galore, and lots of fun, too!

If you want thrills, you'll get them in next week's instalment of Hedley Scott's top-notch serial: "Wings of War!" Don't forget I would like to have your opinions of this great yarn, so let me know what you think of it when next you write.

There'll be the usual shorter features to round off a really sparkling issue—so don't miss it!

YOUR EDITOR.

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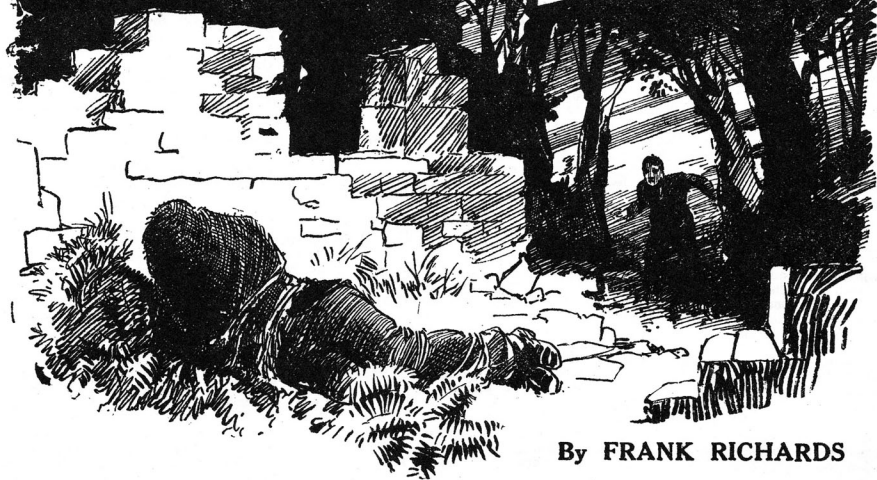
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HARRY WHARTON'S ENEMY!



By FRANK RICHARDS

The bitter feud between the Bounder of Greyfriars and Harry Wharton reaches an astonishing climax, which is as unexpected as it is overwhelming to the Bounder and his plotting friends.

THE FIRST CHAPTER:

Help for Bunter!

YOU coming, Bunter?"
 "No!"
 "Better come, old bean!"
 said Harry Wharton.

"Rats!"
 Billy Bunter seemed disinclined to move.

His fat figure was extended in a hammock swung under a shady tree on the lawn at Wharton Lodge.

It was a bright April afternoon. Billy Bunter had lunched—as usual, on an extensive scale. After lunch Bunter required a rest.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not seem to need a rest. The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove were full of energy, and bent on making the most of their Easter holiday. Five cheery faces surrounded the fat junior sprawling in the hammock.

"We're just starting, Bunter," said Frank Nugent.

"That's all right—start!" said Bunter.

"We're getting a boat out on the river!" said Bob Cherry.

"Blow the river!"

"We shan't be back till late," said Johnny Bull.

"The later the better."

"What?"

"I shan't miss you an awful lot, you know."

"What I like about Bunter," remarked Bob Cherry, "is his polished manners. Chesterfield wasn't in it with Bunter."

Johnny Bull grunted.

"Look here, let's get off! If Bunter doesn't want to come, all the better."

"Yah!"

"My esteemed and idiotic Bunter——"

began Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, give a fellow a rest!" said Bunter.

Harry Wharton hesitated.

Really, it required an effort to urge Bunter to come. The fat Owl's company was not likely to make the trip down the river more enjoyable. It was rather likely to have the reverse effect.

But Billy Bunter was a guest at Wharton Lodge for the Easter holidays, so Wharton felt that it was up to him. He did not want to go out for the afternoon with his friends and leave the Owl of the Remove on his lonely own. Or, to put it more exactly, he did want to, but felt that he oughtn't.

"We won't make you row, Bunter," he said. "You can just sit in the boat and take it easy. We're going to pull as far as the island—there's a jolly old ruin there——"

"Blow the island, and blow the ruin!" said Bunter. "For goodness' sake give a fellow a rest."

"Make an effort, old fat bean," said Bob. "I'll help you out of the hammock, if you like."

"Now, look here, you fellows." Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles with a blink of great severity. "I'm not coming! You will have to manage without me this afternoon."

"Oh, my hat!"
 "You can't expect to take up all a fellow's time!" argued Bunter. "Be reasonable! You've had my company all the morning! Now give a fellow a rest!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The Famous Five gazed at the fat Owl in the hammock. Evidently Billy Bunter was under the impression that it was his delightful and fascinating company that was wanted. That impression was quite unfounded. In fact, there never had been an impression so absolutely without foundation.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Look here——"

"Oh, let's get off!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, if you don't mind being left on your own, Bunter——" said Harry Wharton.

Bunter sniffed.

"That's the sort of thing I expect here," he answered. "It's not the way we treat guests at Bunter Court. But I don't expect much in the way of manners from you, Wharton."

"You silly owl!" hooted Johnny Bull. "Do you want us all to sit round and watch you snoring in a hammock?"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Look here, Bunter, you'd better come," said Harry restively. "Roll out of that hammock and get a move on."
 "Shan't!"

¶ Bunter feels tired after his lunch," said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "He feels that he can't make a move. Let's help him."

Bob swung the hammock. He swung it with vigour.

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter, in alarm. "Let that hammock alone, you dummy! You'll roll me out in a minute——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—— Yaroooooh!"
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"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "Hold on, Bunter!"

"Whoooooop!"

Bunter tried to hold on. But he failed. Bob Cherry was swinging the hammock not wisely but too well.

There was a terrific roar as the hammock suddenly deposited its fat contents on the grass.

"Bump!"

"Oh crikey! Oh crumbs! I say, you fellows—yooooop! Ow! I'm killed! I mean, nearly killed! Yarooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter sat up and roared.

"Ow! My neck's broken——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five roared. Perhaps it was rather heartless to roar, when Billy Bunter's neck was broken. But possibly the chums of the Remove thought that Bunter exaggerated.

"Ow! Beasts! Wow! I jolly well won't come!" howled Bunter. "You can get on the beet you can without me! Beasts! Yarooooop! Help me back into that hammock, you rotters!"

"Sure, you won't come, now I've helped you out of the hammock?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yes, you beast! Yah, you rotter! Help a fellow back into that hammock, and leave a fellow alone!" howled Bunter.

"Right-ho, old fat bean. Lend a hand to help Bunter back," said Bob Cherry. "He's not a light weight."

Johnny Bull, grinning, lent a hand. Between Johnny and Bob, Bunter was heaved back into the hammock. Perhaps by accident, they heaved him rather too far.

"Bump!"

"Yecoop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, blessed if he hasn't rolled out on the other side now!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotters, you did that on purpose!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's help you again, Bunter——"

"Keep off, you beast!"

"We'll land you in the hammock sooner or later, if we drop you a dozen times first——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter dodged round the tree. He did not want to be helped into the hammock again.

"Oh, come on, you fellows," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Leave Bunter to roost, if he wants to. Let's get going."

And the Famous Five got going. Not till they were safely gone did Billy Bunter clamber back into the hammock and venture to close his little round eyes behind his big round spectacles, and snore.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Highlife cads!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had left the gates of Wharton Lodge behind them, and were walking down to the river, when a car came whizzing along the road at a reckless speed, in a cloud of dust.

They jumped quickly out of the way. The car, a handsome and expensive Rolls, tore past them, and they gave it a glare as it passed. Greatly to their surprise, they recognised four familiar faces in the car. The fellow who was driving so recklessly was Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School, and the three fellows

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with him were Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour, of the same Form.

At Greyfriars the chums of the Remove often came across Ponsonby & Co., Highcliffe being only a few miles from Greyfriars. But at Wharton Lodge, in Surrey, they were many a long mile from both schools; so they were rather surprised to see the Highcliffians.

"Road-hog!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Pon all over!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! They're stopping!" said Bob.

Ponsonby's car raced past the Famous Five, leaving them a cloud of dust. Now it slowed, stopped, reversed, and came plugging back. It seemed that the party had seen the Greyfriars fellows, and wanted to speak.

"Let's get on!" growled Johnny Bull. "We don't want to speak to those rotters! We see enough of them at Greyfriars."

"They may want to ask the way, or something," said Harry. "Better be civil. No good keeping up rags in holiday-time."

The car backed to where the Greyfriars fellows were standing. Ponsonby released one hand from the wheel and waved it; and Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour grinned from the car.

To judge by Pon & Co.'s manners, they might have been on the friendliest terms with the Removites of Greyfriars, instead of terms of warfare. But if Pon & Co. wanted to forget school rows in the holidays, Harry Wharton & Co. were quite ready to play up.

"Fancy seen' you men here!" said Ponsonby agreeably. "I thought it was you, as I passed. Stayin' about here?"

"My home's here," said Harry. "These fellows are staying with me."

"How good! I may see something of you in the 'hols, then!" said Ponsonby. "That will be rather rippin'!"

From which the Famous Five gathered that Pon & Co were going to stay in the vicinity; which they could not regard by any means as "rippin'."

"We're lookin' for a place," went on Ponsonby. "Don't seem to find it, in this benighted region. Perhaps you've heard of it."

"Most likely," said Harry. "I know all the country about here. What's the place?"

"It's called Riverside Bungalow." "Oh!" ejaculated the Famous Five together.

They guessed now why the Highcliffians were there. Riverside Bungalow, a mile from Wharton Lodge, had been taken by Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire, for his son, Smithy of the Remove. Smithy and his chum, Tom Redwing, were there for Easter, and trouble had already accrued between the Famous Five and the Bounder of Greyfriars. Since then Harry Wharton & Co. had given Smithy's bungalow a very wide berth, hoping to keep clear of him for the remainder of the vacation. Apparently the Highcliffe party were going to the Bounder's riverside "bung."

"Heard of the place?" asked Ponsonby. "Greyfriars man stayin' there. Man you know—Vernon-Smith. He's in your Form at Greyfriars, I believe."

"I know the place," said Harry. "It's only a mile away, but you've missed the turning, and you're coming away from it."

"Lucky we met you, then," said Pon. "How does a man find it in this benighted wilderness?"

"Turn round, keep on about a mile, and take the turning near the old

barn," said Harry. "It's called Willow Lane, but there's no signpost."

"I told you you'd missed the turnin'," Pon!" said Gadsby.

"And I told you you were an ass, Gaddy!" answered Pon. "We've passed fifty turnin's without signposts."

"Isn't it on the river?" asked Monson, with a glance at the water glimmering through the trees.

"Yes; but the Wyne winds a good deal," answered Wharton. "Willow Lane is about half a mile long. It's the only way to the bung for a car. There's a footpath through the wood, but a car can't go that way."

"Nothin' for it, but goin' back," said Ponsonby. "Thanks, Wharton; it's awfully good of you!"

"No, at all," said Harry, quite surprised by the politeness of the dandy of Highcliffe. Pon seemed to have left his usual manners and customs behind him at school.

"Well, get goin', Pon," said Monson. "We've wasted enough time."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour. Ponsonby whirled the car round, rapidly and recklessly. But he did not start immediately. He called across to the Greyfriars group at the roadside.

"Wharton! I say, Wharton! Just a minute——"

"Yes," said Harry. He ran out into the road, to hear what Pon had to say, supposing that it was some further question about Willow Lane. That lane, being one of a dozen or so unprovided with signposts, was not easy for a stranger to find.

"Just one more thing I want to say," said Ponsonby, with a cheery smile at the Greyfriars junior.

"Fire away!" said Harry.

"Just dis—it strikes me as rather disgustin' to find a crew of Greyfriars cads hangin' about the place where we're goin' to stay!" said Ponsonby. "Bit of a shock for a fellow, what?"

Wharton stared at him blankly. This sudden and complete change, on Pon's part, took him quite by surprise. Apparently the cheery Pon had not, after all, left his manners and customs behind him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Highcliffe fellows in the car, greatly entertained by Wharton's expression.

"Putrid, isn't it?" said Pon pleasantly. "That's all, Wharton, old bean—except this——"

He reached out suddenly, snatched Wharton's cap from his head, and whizzed it away into the trees by the road. The next instant the car shot away like a bullet.

"Why, you—you—you——" stammered Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came back in a roar from the departing car.

Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour were grinning back at the exasperated Greyfriars junior.

Wharton, red with rage, made a rush after the car; but he stopped at once. Pon & Co. were vanishing in the distance, in a cloud of dust.

"Why, the cheeky cad——" gasped Wharton.

"On, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Might have expected something of that sort from that Highcliffe cad!"

Wharton's eyes were blazing.

"I've a jolly good mind to go along and see that cad at Smithy's bung!" he exclaimed. "I've a jolly good mind——"

"Here's your cap, old fellow." Frank Nugent had seen where the cap fell and fielded it. "Come on!"

"I've a jolly good mind——"

"It means another row with Smithy, and we don't want that, Pon will keep

till next term at Greyfriars," said Frank.

"If I happen on him—" said Wharton wrathfully.

"Pon won't set you!" grinned Bob. "Come on; let's get the boat out—it's a long pull down to Monk's Island."

"Yes, but if only I could get my hands on that rotter, Ponsoy, I'd make him grin on the other side of his face!"

"Your chance will come, if only you wait," said Bob Cherry consolingly.

Harry Wharton nodded, and the chums of the Remove went on their way to the river. Wharton was frowning as they went; but the frown faded from his face as the juniors pushed the boat out, and pulled away along the sunny river, and Cecil Ponsoy and all his works were dismissed from his mind.

which Colonel Wharton had very recently purchased for his nephew. It was likely to lose a considerable amount of its newness in Bunter's care.

"I'm going out," explained Bunter. "I am going to call on a friend. I may not be coming back, Wells."

"Indeed, sir!" said Wells.

He did not look grieved.

"It all depends," said Bunter. "Look here, where's Wharton's bike? I know he's got a new bike. He sold his jigger at Greyfriars last term. Hard up, you know He, he, he!"

Wells did not smile. His face was like unto that of a graven image.

"But I hear that the old fossil has given him a new one," went on Bunter.

"Well, where is it?"

Wells breathed hard. It was Colonel

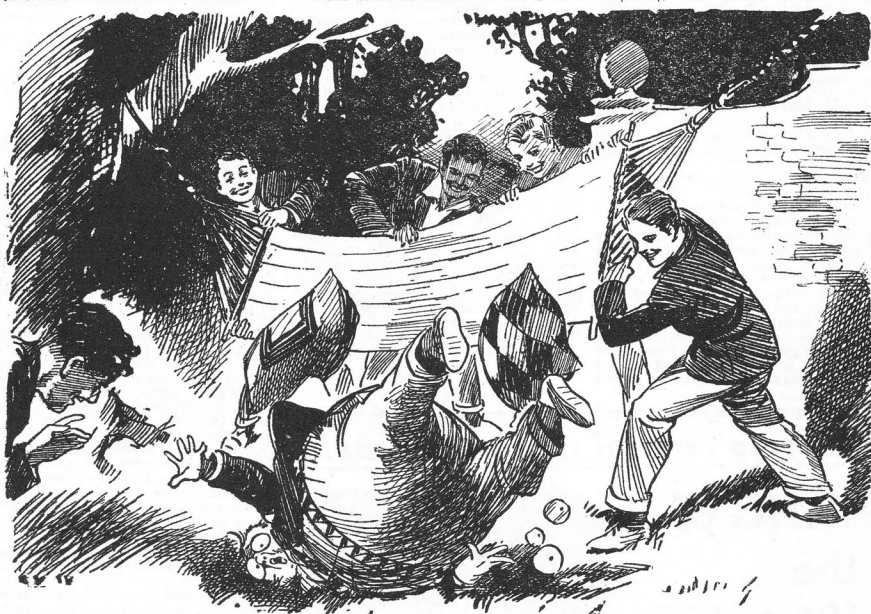
Bunter's ears. Bunter did not even dream what a narrow escape his fat ears had had.

Billy Bunter rolled out to get the bicycle himself.

He found it in the garage. It was a very handsome bike, new and shining and spotless. Bunter wheeled it out.

It was rather high for Bunter. He was, of course, too lazy to take out the tools and lower the saddle. There was no servant at hand to do it for him; so he clambered on the machine as it was, and careered away down the drive to the gate.

He turned into the road and careered away. With only the tips of his toes reaching the pedals, it was not comfortable. Still, it was better than walking. Anything was better than walking.



"Come on, Bunter, out of it!" said Bob Cherry, swinging the hammock. "Whooop!" Bunter tried to hold on, but failed. There was a terrific roar, as the hammock deposited its fat contents on the grass. Bump! "Oh crikey!" roared Bunter. "Yarooop!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter on a Bike!

"WELLS!"

"Sir!" said Wells.

"Where's Wharton's bike?"

The portly butler of Wharton Lodge paused a moment before he replied.

Billy Bunter blinked at him impatiently.

Bunter had detached himself from the hammock and rolled into the house. It was not Bunter's intention, as the Famous Five had supposed, to snore in the hammock under the tree all the afternoon. The fat Owl had his plans cut and dried for that afternoon, and his after-lunch nap had been uncommonly short.

Possibly Wells surmised that Harry Wharton might not be keen on the fat Owl borrowing his bike during his absence. It was a brand-new bike,

Wharton to whom the fat Owl cheerily referred as an "old fossil." In his long and respectable career as a butler, Wells had learned self-restraint, which he needed in dealing with so peculiar a guest as Billy Bunter. His face did not betray his intense desire to box Bunter's fat ears.

"Master Harry keeps his bicycle in the garage, sir," said Wells, at last. "Go and fetch it."

Wells did not seem to hear that command. He moved away, slowly and stately, towards the door on the hall that led to the service department.

Bunter blinked after him.

"Wells!" he hooted.

Still deaf, Wells vanished by the

service door.

"Cheek!" gasped Bunter.

It was cheeky. There was no doubt about that. Wells, a mere butler, had treated Bunter as if he did not matter. Still, he had refrained from boxing

With his fat little legs plunging wildly, Bunter pedalled along the road in the direction of Willow Lane.

Bunter was dropping in on Smithy that afternoon.

As Smithy was on fighting terms with the party at Wharton Lodge, the fat Owl had considered it wisest not to mention his plans to the Famous Five. He had been glad to see them clear off for the afternoon, leaving him free to do as he liked.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, at the "bung" by the river, was having an uproarious time, from what Bunter had heard. Safe from masters and prefects, the Bounder of Greyfriars was the fellow to spread himself. His father's careless indulgence left Smithy completely his own master, much as he needed a tight rein. Money flowed like water at the bung. There was card-playing and "smokes": rums up to London in the

car, returning with the milk in the morning.

There was nothing of that sort at Wharton Lodge, which seemed to the fat Owl a frightfully dull place in comparison. Billy Bunter was going to give the Bounder a friendly call, and wangle, if he could, an invitation to stay at the bung with Smithy, in which happy case he was prepared to turn Harry Wharton & Co. down promptly. Still, it was possible that Vernon-Smith might resist his fascinations and fail to realise that Bunter was the one thing needful to make his Easter holiday a success. It was even possible that he might kick Bunter out if he was in one of his tantrums. So Bunter had sagely kept his intention dark. He did not want the gates of Wharton Lodge to shut on him until he was sure of landing himself safely on Smithy.

Plunging at the pedals, Billy Bunter rocked along the road till he reached the turning that led down to the river where the holiday bungalow stood. A car, with four fellows in it, came hooting along the road towards him, but Bunter did not glance at it. He turned the corner and plugged along Willow Lane.

A minute later the car turned the corner behind him.

It was Ponsonby's car, and Pon, at the wheel, was looking rather cross.

Since his chance meeting with Harry Wharton & Co., Pon had been looking for Willow Lane without finding it. He had overshot the mark for a good distance; then he had followed the wrong lane and very nearly lost himself, and had been greatly relieved to get back to the high road again. At long last an obliging native of those rural regions had set him right, and he had found his way. And now he turned

into Willow Lane, in the wake of a fat cyclist whom he recognised at once.

"Another dashed Greycliffers cad!" growled Pon, staring over the wheel at the fat figure plugging ahead.

"It's raining!" remarked Monson, "Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"Give him a lift behind, Pon!" grinned Gadsby.

Ponsonby chuckled. "Honk, honk, honk!"

The car raced on after Bunter, as if Pon's intention really was to run the fat Owl down and give him a lift behind.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Willow Lane was narrow. There was no room for a car to pass another car. If two cars met, one had to back till a wider space was reached. But a car could have passed a cyclist if the driver wanted to pass him. Ponsonby did not seem to want to do so. He roared behind Bunter, slowing just sufficiently to keep from busting the bonnet into the fat Owl's back. The roar of the engine just behind him, and a succession of terrific klaxon hoots, made Bunter's fat heart jump almost into his mouth.

"Honk, honk, honk! Buzzzzzz!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Bunter plunged frantically at the pedals. He was in momentary expectation of being run down from behind. Every instant the car seemed to be fairly upon him. Indeed, only a little more carelessness on Pon's part was needed to cause a very serious accident.

The Highcliffe party, who had been in a state of snapping irritation during Pon's long and vain search for his destination, were quite merry now. They yelled with laughter as they watched Bunter's antics on the bike ahead.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear the way there, you fat tramp!"

"Get into the hedge, you dummy!"

"We shall be over you in a minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Honk, honk, honk, honk!

Billy Bunter gasped and spluttered wildly. On either side of the lane was a high bank of earth, crowned by a thick hedge. It was like a tunnel. And behind the fat Owl roared the car. Bunter dared not attempt to dismount. In his mind's eye he could see the car rushing him down if he did. He laboured on frantically.

"Keep off!" he yelled. "Stop! Slow down, you idiot! Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pon roared on. He was hardly three feet behind the bike, but it seemed to Bunter that he was less than three inches.

"Run him down if he doesn't get out of the way!" shouted Gadsby.

"I'm goin' to!" chortled Pon. "Bunter, you fat idiot, I hope you're insured!"

"On lor!"

Honk, honk, honk!

"We're just on you, Bunter!" yelled Monson.

"Absolutely!" chortled Vavasour.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Highcliffe fellows were standing up in the car now, watching the terrified Owl with great glee. The hapless fat cyclist plunged and rocked wildly. Never had Bunter put on such speed on a bike. He longed to see a turning into which he could dodge. But there was no turning, and the car still thundered behind.

A plunging foot missed a whirling pedal, the bike rocked on a ridge of dried mud, and there was a crash and a clang and a bump.

"Oh gad!" gasped Ponsonby.

Bunter and the bike sprawled in the lane. Ponsonby jammed on his brakes so suddenly that the car almost left the ground and Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour were flung together and hurled into the bottom of the car in a sprawling, gasping heap. The car rocked and skidded and bumped on the grassy bank beside the lane. Ponsonby's face suddenly as white as chalk.

"Ow! Help! Keep off! Murder! Fire! Help!" roared Bunter, as he sprawled.

Ponsonby shut his teeth hard. The car had been within an ace of overturning, but, fortunately, it righted. Gadsby & Co. scrambled up, red with rage.

"Pon, you idiot—"

"Pon, you fool—"

"Pon, you dummy—"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Ponsonby.

"You're all right. Get down, some of you, and kick that fat fool out of the way!"

"You silly ass—"

"Shut up, I tell you!"

"Ow! Yaroooh! Help! Help! Help!"

roared Bunter. He was sitting dazedly in the middle of the lane, clutching at the spectacles that had slid down his fat, little nose. "I say, you fellows— Yaroooh!"

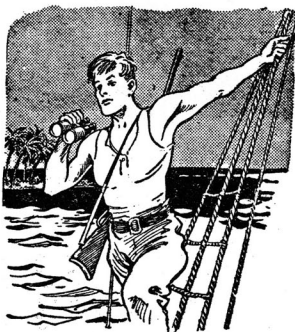
Gadsby and Monson jumped out of the halted car. Gadsby picked up the bicycle, and jammed it out of the way at the roadside. Monson kicked Bunter.

"Whoop!" Bunter had been under the impression that he was hurt too severely to get up. Now he found that he could get up. And he got up quite suddenly. "Ow! Stop kicking me! Yaroooh! Beast! Oh, you rotten Highcliffe cads! Yaroooh!"

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"Give him a few more!" yelled Ponsonby.

Monson gave Bunter more than a few. Gadsby, having got rid of the bike, came to his aid, and also gave Bunter a few. The hapless fat Owl sprawled on the grassy bank beside the lane, yelling.

Then Gadsby and Monson got into the car again, and Ponsonby drove on. Billy Bunter sprawled and yelled, long after it was out of sight along the winding lane. It was quite a long time before the fat Owl picked himself up and mopped the perspiration from his streaming brow and clambered, gasping, on the bike again, to continue on his way to Smithy's bung. It had not occurred to his fat brain that that was Ponsonby and Co.'s destination. He was to discover that later.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Foes of the Remove!

"**T**HOSE cads!" grunted Herbert Vernon-Smith. "Wharton's lot!"

Tom Redwing glanced round at his chum.

His brow clouded.

A boat came in sight on the sunny river with five fellows in it, four of them pulling.

On their way to Monk's Island down the river, Harry Wharton & Co. had to pass Riverside Bungalow. It was the first time they had come near the place since a rather hostile visit a week ago. They were not, however, very near. The boat was well out on the river. There was a wide towpath and a Hawthorn-hedge, and a long garden between them and the bungalow. Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, as it happened, were on the towpath when the boat came pulling along.

The Bounder's eyes fastened on it with a black scowl.

He had left Greyfriars on the worst of terms with Harry Wharton, whose place he had captured as captain of the Remove. The rivals of the Remove had rather unexpectedly found themselves neighbours for the Easter holidays in that quiet corner of the Surrey Downs. And there had been trouble, chiefly caused by the Bounder's unforgetting rancour. Worst of all, a racing man whom Smithy had asked to his bungalow, had turned out to be a bank raider, wanted for a hold-up at Wimford. And Harry Wharton & Co. had collared him and handed him over to the police.

That incident left the Bounder in an extremely uncomfortable position. His sporting pal had been arrested actually in his bungalow with stolen money on him. With all his hard-faced nerve the Bounder of Greyfriars felt the disgrace and humiliation deeply—all the more because it was his own reckless folly that had brought it upon him. He had known nothing of the man, except that he was a hanger-on at the races, and certainly never dreamed that he was a crook. In a way he was glad that the rascal had been taken: assuredly glad to get shut of him when he knew what he was. But the episode had embittered his feelings, already bitter enough, towards the Famous Five.

He scowled blackly at the boat, and the five cheery faces in it. Tom Redwing suppressed a sigh.

Since Smithy's sporting pal had been

gone, Tom had quite liked his stay at the riverside "bung." Cards and smoking, reckless night trips in the car to London had ceased, after Mr. Freddy Paget had departed with the police, and with the handcuffs on his wrists. Even Smithy, wild and reckless as he was, was not likely to risk another such happening. And without blackguardly associations, and in Tom's healthy and wholesome company, he had shown the better side of his nature. The vicious, young blackguard had disappeared, leaving a cheery schoolboy in his place, a change that was an immense relief to Redwing. Smithy was all the better for it. And he was, as a matter of fact, enjoying his holiday more, if he had only realised it.

But at sight of Harry Wharton & Co. on the river, all the bitterness and evil in Smithy's nature came with a

Co. were going down the river, they had to pass the bungalow. But it was of no use arguing with an obstinate fellow, who was determined to find offence.

"Hadm't we better get back into the house, Smithy? Your friends from Highfield may be along any minute."

"Anxious to see Pon & Co. all of a sudden?" sneered the Bounder. "You haven't been very enthusiastic about them so far."

"Well, you'd better be at home to meet your visitors."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith could hardly have failed to see that his chum wanted to get him away before the boat came abreast of the spot where they were standing.

He had no intention of letting Redwing get him away. He was more than ready for trouble with his rival at Greyfriars.

"Look here, Smithy, we don't want another row," said Redwing impatiently.

"Looks as if those fellows do."

"I tell you they're only passing, going down the river."

"Let them keep clear, if they don't want trouble I've kept clear of them," said the Bounder. "After the scene they made here, I was jolly inclined to look for them and give them what they'd asked for, the rotters!"

His eyes glinted at the approaching boat.

"That's rot!" said Tom. "If you had any sense, Smithy, you'd be jolly glad they spotted that man Paget. He was making a fool of you, using your bung as his headquarters, and he had stolen money in his pockets when he was arrested. If it had gone on—"

"I'd rather the man had got clear, than have had all the disgrace it has brought on me," muttered the Bounder. "You wouldn't, Smithy! Don't be an ass!"

"Nice state of affairs for me," snarled the Bounder. "By gad, I might have got mixed up in it—suspected of being hand in glove with the scoundrel. That fool of an inspector from Wimford questioned me as if I'd been a pick-pocket. I've had a savage letter from the pater. I can't go into Wimford without being pointed out as the fellow who had the bank robber stayin' with him." Smithy gritted his teeth.

Redwing opened his lips, and closed them again. It was futile to point out to Smithy that he owed it all to his own folly, and that people could hardly be expected to let a thief escape with his plunder to spare his feelings. Smithy knew it as well as Tom could have told him, but he chose to lay the blame on the fellows who had spotted the hold-up man. The shame and humiliation of it all rankled deeply in Smithy's breast, and there was no satisfaction in blaming himself. He wanted to lay the blame on others. Argument was useless with a fellow who was determined to be unreasonable.

"No end of a catch for those cads," muttered the Bounder. "A regular triumph for them."

"I don't think they looked at it like that. For goodness' sake let them rip, and let's go if you like."

The Bounder moved nearer to the water's edge. Tom Redwing, worried and uneasy, followed him. The boat was quite near now.

"Smithy, old man—"

"Do you remember Bob Cherry

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jump to the surface. His eyes glinted savagely at the boat as it came gliding along in the April sunshine.

"They can't keep clear of us, it seems," he growled.

But for the Bounder's feud, Redwing would have been glad to find himself near the cheery Co. in holiday time. He liked them all, and was on friendly terms with them all at school. But as the Bounder's pal he had to keep clear of them, and he hoped that they would keep their distance and avoid more trouble.

"They're not coming here, Smithy," he said.

"Looks as if they are," muttered the Bounder. "They came here once and kicked up a row."

"They're going down the river."

"Why can't they keep their distance?"

Redwing did not answer that. Wharton Lodge was a long way up the winding stream, and if Harry Wharton &

knocking me over with a turf, when I was in a boat with you last week?" grunted the Bounder.

"You asked for it. Don't rake that up now."

"Why not?" jeered the Bounder. "Sauce for the goose 's sauce for the gander. This is where I get my own back."

He stooped and dragged a chunk of turf loose from the rugged bank. He rose with his right hand behind him, holding the missile ready, and watched the boat drawing abreast.

Harry Wharton & Co. had seen the two figures on the bank. They would have greeted Redwing with a cheery shout and a wave of the hand. But as he was with Smithy, and Smithy was scowling at them with obvious hostility, they considered it wiser to pass on without a greeting. So they pulled on without appearing to see either of them, keeping the boat well out from the bank.

The Bounder, keen as he was for trouble, had to admit that the chums of the Remove were not coming to the bungalow, or anywhere near it. It was plain that they were passing on. But he was not in the mood to let them pass in peace.

"Wharton!"

He shouted as the boat came almost abreast.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Smithy wants to tell us how glad he is to see us again."

"He looks it!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"He looks jolly friendly."

"The friendliness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, who was steering. "Better pull onfully."

"Wharton!" shouted the Bounder again.

"Hold on a minute, if he wants to speak," said Harry.

"Perhaps he's going to thank us for getting his jolly old pal snaffled by the bobbies!" grinned Nugent. "He hasn't thanked us yet."

The juniors rested on their oars, and Harry Wharton looked across at the Bounder.

"Well, what is it?" he called back.

"What are you doin' here?"

"We're going down to Monk's Island, if you want to know."

"You can't keep your distance?"

"Have you bought the river, Smithy?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically. "Does all this part of Surrey belong to you?"

"Smithy, old man—" whispered Redwing.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Is that all you wanted to say, Vernon-Smith?" asked Wharton contemptuously. "Do you expect us to go by the road, and carry the boat on our shoulders, because you've got a bung on the river?"

"I expect you to keep clear of me, if you don't want trouble!" retorted the Bounder. "You've chosen to come along here, where you're not wanted. I owe you something—and here it is!"

His right arm shot up, the chunk of turf in his hand. It was aimed at Bob Cherry, though the Bounder did not care much where it landed so long as it landed on a fellow in the boat. Tom Redwing caught at his arm as he hurled the missile.

"Stop it, Smithy, you dummy!" he panted.

But his grasp at Smithy's arm did not stop him. The missile flew, hard and fast, and Tom's grasp only changed the Bounder's aim. The heavy lump of turf missed Bob by a couple of feet, and

crashed full in the face of Harry Wharton, sending him over with a crash into the bottom of the boat.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Scrap!

"O H, my hat!"

"Look out!"

"Great pip!"

The boat rocked violently and shipped water.

Wharton sprawled, dazed and dizzy, half-stunned by the crash in his face.

There was a roar of voices in the rocking boat.

The Bounder grinned savagely.

"Your fault, Reddy! You should have left me alone. You've made me spoil Wharton's beauty. I meant to get Cherry in the neck—"

"You fool!" gasped Redwing.

"Your fault, old man!" chuckled the Bounder.

Harry Wharton scrambled up. His face was crimson with rage, and it was scratched and muddy. The Bounder, malicious as he was, had not intended the missile for any fellow's face. It had been aimed, as he said, to catch Bob Cherry "in the neck, and bowl him over. But it was Wharton's face that had received it, and that face was considerably damaged. His nose and lip bled, and there was mud in his eyes and nose and mouth.

"Pull in!" he panted. "Pull in, quick, before he gets away!"

The boat shot to the bank.

"Come away, Smithy!" Redwing was dragging at his chum's arm in utter dismay. "For goodness' sake—"

"You silly ass! Do you think I'd run from him, or a dozen of him?" sneered the Bounder. "Don't be a fool!"

The boat bumped into the rushes, and Harry Wharton scrambled ashore. Like the prophet of old, he was angry, and considered that he did well to be angry. His only thought was to get at the Bounder and punch him, and punch him hard. And the Bounder cool and reckless as ever, was quite ready. Twice in the last term at Greyfriars he had tackled Wharton, and each time he had been defeated. That made no difference at all to the Bounder. Anything like funk had been quite left out of his composition. He was always ready to try his luck again.

"You rotter!" panted Wharton.

He came at Vernon-Smith with his hands up and his eyes blazing.

The Bounder faced him, with perfect coolness.

But, good man as he was with his hands, Vernon-Smith was no match for Wharton, and at the present moment the attack came so furiously that Smithy was simply swept away by it.

Fighting fiercely, he was driven back under blow after blow. Wharton following him up, hitting all the time, and hitting hard.

Redwing stared on in dismay. He could not help his chum. It was man to man, and Smithy had brought it on himself. But it gave him a pang to see the Bounder, who prided himself on his quality as a fighting man, handled almost as if he had been an infant.

Vernon-Smith fought fiercely, savagely, desperately, but he went back and back. Twice he went down, and jumped up again, fighting like a tiger; but blow on blow crashed on him, and

he went reeling back to the gate of the bungalow garden.

He crashed on the gate, and it flew open, and Vernon-Smith staggered backwards into the garden still fighting. Wharton still followed him up, with crashing fists and blazing eyes.

The other fellows had not landed. They watched the scene, standing up in the boat, in silence.

Redwing followed the panting combatants into the garden.

"For goodness' sake, you fellows, chuck it!" he exclaimed. "Smithy, old man—Wharton—"

"Get away, you fool!" snarled the Bounder.

He was driven back on the bungalow lawn. There he rallied, and attacked in his turn, with desperate determination. In the distance a gardener stared at the scene. A chauffeur came out of the garage and stared and grinned. Two or three faces appeared at the bungalow windows. There was a honking from a car on the road on the other side of the building. A car had arrived at the front of the bungalow, and Redwing, hearing it, guessed that the Bounder's Highcliffe visitors had come. He called anxiously to the Bounder.

"Smithy, chuck it! It's the Highcliffe fellows!"

Vernon-Smith did not heed, if he heard.

He had pulled himself together now, and was, for the moment, holding his ground. Heedless of the heavy punishment he was receiving he fought furiously, holding Wharton in check.

A man came out of the bungalow. It was Smithy's man, Perkins, and he had come to inform his master that the visitors had arrived. He stopped and stared blankly at the desperate fight that was going on on the lawn.

"Master Herbert—" he stuttered.

Master Herbert did not even hear.

Four very elegant fellows appeared at the french window, or the bungalow. Ponsonby, Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour stared out on the lawn.

"Oh gad!" grinned Ponsonby.

"That's Smithy! Fightin' with another Greyfriars cad! Oh gad!"

"New way of receivin' visitors!" drawled Gadsby. "Fancy findin' a dog-fight goin' on!"

"What frightfully polished manners!" chortled Monson.

"Absolutely!" cackled Vavasour.

"We're not missin' this," said Ponsonby. "Come on let's cheer our man! That cad he's scrappin' with is Wharton. I hope he'll lick him—though, by gad, he doesn't look like gettin' away with it!"

"He won't like us seein' him licked!" murmured Gadsby.

"Let him lump it, then," said Ponsonby.

And Ponsonby strolled out on the lawn, followed by his grinning comrades. Certainly it was unlikely that Vernon-Smith would be pleased to let his visitors find him in such a state and thus occupied; but the cheery Pon was quite indifferent on that point. He and his friends had been glad to accept Smithy's invitation for the holidays; but that did not prevent them from regarding him with their usual Highcliffe loftiness, as a bounder and an outsider. The knuts of Highcliffe were, in their own estimation, the salt of the earth, and superbly contemptuous of common mortals. There was supercilious amusement in their faces as they strolled along to the scene of the fight.

"Hallo, you here, Redwing?" drawled Ponsonby. "We seem to have dropped in at an excitin' moment! What's the jolly old row?"

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"These Greyfriars chaps are the men for rows!" remarked Gadsby. "They've always got some row goin' on."

"Absolutely."

Crash!
Herbert Vernon-Smith went down on his back in the grass. Harry Wharton stood over him, panting.

Redwing ran forward.

"Smithy, old man—"

The Bounder made a fierce effort to rise. He fell back again with a gasp that was almost a groan. He was utterly spent; too exhausted to get on his feet; more thoroughly licked than he had ever been before in a quarrelsome life marked by many a scrap.

"Get out, Wharton, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Redwing. "You've done me enough—more than enough, I think."

Wharton panted for breath.

"I'm sorry for this, Redwing—but—you saw—"

"Yes, yes, I know; but get out, for goodness' sake, before there's more trouble," said Redwing, hurriedly. "I'm not blaming you—but get out!"

Harry Wharton nodded, and turned towards the gate. He gave the four Highcliffians a glance and met

dizzily at Pon & Co. through half-closed eyelids.

"You fellows—" he muttered.

"So glad to see you, Smithy," said Pon, affably. "We're rather late—lost our way a bit in your jolly old lanes here. Glad we trickled in in time to see the show, old bean!"

"Absolutely," sniggered Vavasour.

"Quite entertainin'," yawned Gadsby.

"Unexpected, but amusin'" remarked Monson.

The Bounder gave them a glare. At the best of times, Smithy's manners were scarcely polished. In his present state, he was in no mood for supercilious cheek from the Highcliffians.

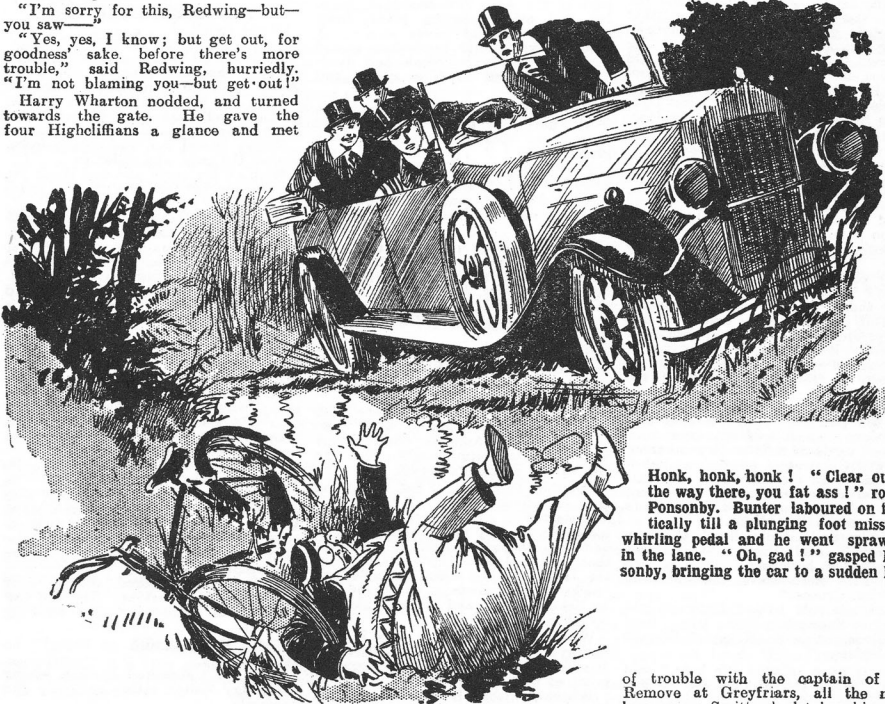
"Go and eat coke, the lot of you!" he snarled, and leaning heavily on Redwing's arm, he tottered away towards the house.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

On Monk's Island!

HARRY WHARTON bathed his burning face in the cool water as the boat glided along the Wyme. He was not feeling happy. The Bounder had been utterly knocked out, but he was not the man to go down without doing some damage first. The damage on Wharton's handsome face was only too visible. His nose persisted in dripping red; it was swollen, there were dark marks on his cheeks and his chin, and one of his eyes winked and the other did not. And—when he cooled down—it was no great satisfaction to him to recall that he had given Herbert Vernon-Smith the thrashing of his life.

He had been anxious to steer clear



Honk, honk, honk! "Clear out of the way there, you fat ass!" roared Ponsonby. Bunter laboured on frantically till a plunging foot missed a whirling pedal and he went sprawling in the lane. "Oh, gad!" gasped Ponsonby, bringing the car to a sudden halt.

of trouble with the captain of the Remove at Greyfriars, all the more because, as Smithy had taken his place in the Form, he did not want to appear to be nursing a grudge on that account. But the provocation had been too great; and it was not surprising that he had lost his temper, though he began to wish now that he had not done so.

His chums pulled on in silence. The disagreeable episode had cast a cloud over the cheery party. Monk's Island, a little wooded island in the river, half a mile past Smithy's bungalow, was in sight before the dismal silence was broken. Wharton dabbed his face dry, glancing at his comrades rather conspicuously.

"I—I suppose I ought not to have got my rag out so much, you fellows?" he said. "But—it really was too thick—bunging a lump of turf in a fellow's face—a chap couldn't take that quietly—"

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their supercilious, sneering smiles. But taking no heed of Ponsonby & Co., he moved away, a little unsteadily. That fierce fight had told on him, as well as on Smithy.

The Bounder dragged himself up on his elbow

"Don't let him go!" he panted.

"Don't—"

"Let me help you into the house, Smithy," said Tom gently

"Hang you! I don't want any help! Don't let that cad get clear—"

"Don't be an ass, Smithy!"

Harry Wharton went across the towpath to the boat. Bob Cherry helped him in. The boat pulled away down the river.

Vernon-Smith staggered up, with Redwing's assistance. Even with the help of Tom's strong arm, he could hardly keep his feet. He blinked

Ponsonby & Co. exchanged glances.

"My only hat!" murmured Gadsby.

"That's our jolly old host! What sort of manners do they teach 'em at Greyfriars?"

"None, I imagine!" said Pon.

"Look here, let's get back to the car, and clear," said Vavasour. "I'm not standin' Smithy, absolutely."

"My dear ass, we knew what Smithy's manners were like," said Pon. "We haven't come here because we love him too much to lose him. The fellow's a rank outsider, but he's reekin' with money, and money, my beloved 'earers, makes the mare go."

"Who wants his dashed money?" said Vavasour.

"You, and I, and all of us!" sang Pon, cheerily, and the knuts of Highcliff chuckled as they followed into the bungalow.

"I should jolly well think not!" growled Johnny Bull. "You gave the rotter what he asked for, and I'm jolly glad you did."

"Smithy fairly sitting up and begging for trouble," said Bob. "Last week he scrapped with me, now he's scrapped with you. He seems to be taking us all in turn."

"He's wild about that affair with the man he had staying at the bung," said Nugent. "No wonder—it was rotten for him, and makes him look a fool, and worse. But that was his own fault."

"My esteemed chum," said Hurree Jamset Ran Singh, "the thrashfulness of the cheeky Smithy was the proper caper. It is all right."

"Well, I—I don't think I was really to blame for punching him," said Harry slowly. "It was a bit rotten, though, his guests arriving while the scrap was going on—you saw that Higcliffe crew? And—and—Smithy's acting like a rotter, but—but—" He coloured. "He's keeping up old grudges, he hasn't a forgiving nature. But I was partly to blame for the trouble we had at Greyfriars last term—I've thought it over, and know that I—I—I wish it hadn't happened!"

He rubbed his damaged nose. "It's rotten for Redwing, too, as he's friendly with us—and he can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. It's rotten all round. I wish Smithy would be a bit more reasonable. Still, it's no good wishing that."

"Both the fellow!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He was hunting for trouble—why couldn't he let us pass without a row? Redwing tried to stop him—I saw that. He's got what he wanted."

"Well, it can't be helped!" said Harry, and the matter was dismissed. Evidently, it could not be helped.

"Here we are!" said Bob, as the boat bumped on the grassy bank of the little island.

The juniors jumped ashore, and Bob tied the painter. They rambled over the island, which was not more than a dozen yards in extent. Several trees, and great masses of hawthorn, clothed it thickly. In the middle of the little island was the remnant of an ancient stone cell, where in the old days a solitary monk had dwelt.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's the jolly old ruin!" said Bob, as they came through the hawthorns. "Chap who lives here must have felt like old Robinson Crusoe!"

"Saxon monk, named Leofric," said Harry, "according to the local traditions, anyhow. Reign of Edward the Confessor."

"Must have enjoyed life here," said Bob. "What the dickens did he live on?"

"People brought him gifts of food and things, from the country round about," said Harry. "But he had a thin time," said Harry. "But he had a thin time," said Harry.

"Did he smoke?" asked Bob. "Smoke, you ass? How could he have smoked?" said Nugent. "Haven't you had it from Quelch that bacey was first brought to England by Sir Walter Raleigh, in the reign of Queen Bess?"

"Sir Walter might have found something better to do!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Well, if the jolly old monk didn't smoke, somebody's been here since his time!" grinned Bob. "Look!"

Probably during the past thousand years a good many people had been there. But evidently somebody had been there quite recently, for burnt matches and cigarette-ends were scattered

tered on the old flagged floor of the cell, here and there on the cracked old flags with the moss growing in the cracks.

Bob picked up a half-smoked cigarette.

"Smithy!" he grinned. "That's the kind of smoke that Smithy goes in for; I've seen them in his study at Greyfriars. Smithy's been here, and left his trade-mark!"

"Lucky he's not here now!" said Nugent.

"I suppose it would be Smithy!" said Wharton. "Very few people come here; it's a long pull from anywhere. We may as well keep clear of this quarter after this—we don't want to chance running into Smithy again."

The juniors explored the old cell. There was not much of it; the ancient roof had fallen in centuries ago, and part of the walls had crumbled down. Ivy and other creeping plants hung thickly on the old mossy stones. A thousand years and more had passed since the old Saxon monk had dwelt there, telling his beads in silence and solitude.

"Bit creepy," said Bob. "Old Leofric would have felt better if they'd had wireless in those days. What about grub?"

The juniors walked back to the boat. They had brought a bag of tuck, and it was lifted ashore; and they sat down in a chery ring on the grass to dispose of it.

The rushing water rippled and sang at their feet, and the sun, sinking in the west over the downs, cast a flood of light on the river, on the island, and on their cheery boyish faces.

Wharton's face was not so cheery as the rest.

He was feeling the effects of that fierce scrap with the Bounder, for one thing. And, for another, he was feeling troubled in his mind.

He could hardly blame himself for having "punched" Smithy, after what he had done. And he could hardly understand the bitter rancour that ran riot in the Bounder's breast.

But they had been, if not friends, at least on friendly terms, till the trouble had started in the Remove, and Wharton could not help remembering that he had been, in part at least, to blame for that. He had been "up against it" at the time; he had been irritable and touchy, and the Bounder was never slow to take offence and never quick to forget it.

With all the evil that was in him Smithy had his good qualities—his friendship for Tom Redwing was a proof of that.

Wharton wished from the bottom of his heart that the trouble had never started at school; and, still more, that the Bounder had located anywhere but in Surrey for his Easter holidays. But for that unlucky chance the trouble might have blown over by the time the new term began at school. Now it had been intensified and embittered.

"Penny for 'em, old bean!" said Bob, with a grin.

And Wharton started out of a reverie and coloured.

"I—I was thinking of Smithy," he said. "I—I wish he'd chuck up his grudges and act as a sensible chap. He's not a bad sort in his own way. Redwing wouldn't stick to him as he does if he was. No reason why we shouldn't have a jolly time together these hols, if only Smithy—"

"Oh, blow Smithy!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I'm fed-up with Smithy."

"Well, if he'd come round I'd be

jolly glad!" said Harry. "But I suppose it's no use thinking of it."

"The usefulness is not terrific, my esteemed Wharton! The excellent and obnoxious Smithy will not come round fully!"

But Wharton was still thinking of it when the juniors boarded the boat for the row home. There had been bitterness on both sides; and what had happened that afternoon made matters worse; but Wharton would have welcomed a sign of the olive-branch from his enemy. But it was extremely unlikely that the Bounder was thinking of extending the olive-branch; and if it takes two to make a quarrel, it also takes two to keep the peace. Wharton could only make up his mind that, if the feud went on, it should not be by his fault.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Calling on Smithy!

BILLY BUNTER dismounted from Wharton's bike, at the front gate of Riverside Bungalow.

The bungalow stood in its own grounds, well back from the road, and a drive circled round it to the garage. Bunter leaned the bike on the fence, opened the gate, and rolled in.

With all his nerve and cool cheek the fat Owl was not feeling quite easy in his fat mind.

He was very keen to land his fascinating company on Herbert Vernon-Smith for the remainder of the Easter vacation; very keen indeed to lend a podgy hand at painting the town red.

He had hoped that he would find Smithy in a good temper—Smithy's temper was not very reliable. He was at warfare with the party at Wharton Lodge, and Bunter was a member of that party. Bunter was ready to explain that he was with them, but not of them, so to speak; that he was wholly in sympathy with dear old Smithy. But if dear old Smithy was in one of his tempers, Bunter might not be given time to explain all that.

The fat Owl realised that it was quite possible—indeed, probable—that he might quit the bungalow suddenly, with a boot behind him to give him a start. While prepared to turn on his most ingratiating grin, the fat Owl was also extremely wary as he rolled up to the green-painted porch.

He rang and knocked, and the door was opened by Perkins. The fat Owl blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith at home?" he asked affably.

"Yes, sir," answered Perkins, eyeing the podgy visitor rather curiously and dubiously.

He had seen Bunter before, with Harry Wharton & Co., and he was fully aware of the feelings of Vernon-Smith towards the party at Wharton Lodge.

As it was only a very short time since he had seen his master scrapping with one member of that party in the back garden, he was naturally rather surprised to see another member of that party arrive by the front garden.

Bunter, of course, was happily unaware of what had happened by the river that afternoon, and blissfully unconscious of the Bounder's present wrecked and infuriated condition.

"Well, tell him a friend from Greyfriars has called," said Bunter, and as Perkins held the door rather uncertainly Billy Bunter pushed it farther open, and stepped into the hall.

"Very well, sir," said Perkins, still

(Continued on page 12.)

FOOTBALL FAVOURITES!

No. 24.
Willis Edwards,
 skipper of
LEEDS UNITED F.C.,
 and one of the finest half-backs of the day.



A Proud Record!

RIGHT at the end of last season, when it was inevitable that the Leeds United Football Club would suffer the dreaded fate of descent to the Second Division, I ran into Willis Edwards, the skipper of the side. He was most obviously downhearted, but after a little while he threw back his shoulders in a characteristic way, and said: "Never mind, some club has to go down, but at the end of next season some club will be taking our place in the Second Division, and we shall be back in the First."

I liked the fighting speech made by Edwards. It showed the real sportsman. And because of those words I have been specially interested, right through the season, in watching the progress of Leeds United in their fight back to the top class.

At the moment of writing it is not absolutely certain that the prophecy of Edwards will be fulfilled, but there is every indication that it will be. Leeds United have put up the fine fight which Edwards predicted, and although they cannot command success, Leeds have done the next best thing—deserved it.

You may remember how, particularly early in the season, Leeds just won match after match away from home. And the man who did much to inspire those away victories was Captain Edwards. "Come on, lads!" This was his method of address to his boys. "Championships are won on the ground of opponents!" This is not literally true, but there is a lot in it. Win the games away from home, and the home games will look after themselves. Football matches are not lost on opponents' grounds because those grounds are different. They are lost because they are tackled without confidence. And the man who is largely responsible for the confidence, or otherwise, of a football team is the captain.

Let me now go back to a much earlier stage in the career of a player who has rightly been described as the best right-half-back of our time. He was born at Alfreton, which, as you know, is in Derbyshire, and this county, as you may not know, has produced as many first-class footballers as many counties twice the size and with twice the population.

"Good-bye to the Pit!"

THERE is a very good reason why Derbyshire holds this record—the lads play football on every possible occasion.

"My earliest recollection of football?" said Willis, in answer to my question. "Certainly. A small bundle of old rags, tied together with string. On the way to school, and on the way back as well, myself and a schoolboy companion used to play. He was at one side of the road and I was at the other. We passed the ball backwards and forwards across the road as we ran. The later we started for school the faster we ran—but always with the ball."

It may well be argued that this is not an ideal sort of practice, but, at any rate, the lads weren't risking much, even if the local policeman, frowning on such frivolous use being made of the King highway, confiscated the ball. They could always collect more rags and make another one. When you get right down to it, though, doesn't it strike you as more than likely that a lad who could make accurate passes to a pal across the road would find the making of good passes, with a real ball on a perfect pitch, comparatively easy? That was the way of it with Willis.

Although Willis played football as much and as often as he could while growing up, there was no idea in his mind that he should make a living out of the game. Like so many lads in his district, he started his money-earning in the pit. Isn't it amazing the number of footballers of the present time

who have started in the pit? I think I know the explanation.

They are so anxious to get a job on top that they train and practise all the harder.

It was some time before Willis Edwards made real progress in football. But the real player does not lack opportunities to make progress in the game. While Edwards—already a right-half—was playing with Newton Rovers in the Nottingham Sunday School League he attracted attention.

One day in February, 1922, the trainer of Chesterfield was ordered to take a look at the lad. And, to quote the words of the Chesterfield trainer: "I took one look at him and then dashed off to the nearest telegraph office to ask the manager if I could sign him on." As the boy was quite prepared to sign as an amateur—which costs nothing to the club concerned—he was duly signed, and in a couple of weeks, after only one trial, Edwards became a "pro." "Good-bye, pit!"

An Efficient Workman!

Edwards jumped into the Chesterfield first team almost immediately, and assisted the club for a couple of full seasons. Then came one of those little incidents which have a big effect. Edwards is not really small—he stands five-feet-eight. In civilian attire he looks less than that. Offers began to be made to Chesterfield for this young half-back, and Leeds United became very interested. The story goes that a director of the Leeds United Club thought Edwards too small. The manager of the side immediately said: "He is as tall as I am," and to prove it stood side by side with the wanted player.

The director was duly convinced, a transfer of £1,500 was paid by Leeds for Edwards, and he became their player. This was in the 1924-25 season, and the director who thought him too little has always been thankful that the manager made that gesture to prove that the size of Edwards was deceptive.

In 1926 this most efficient workman of Leeds United—that is the best way to describe Edwards—realised a dream when he was picked to play for England. And between that time and 1930 he was a regular first choice. Indeed, as a member of the selection committee said to me: "We never spent any time thinking who should be the right-half. The minute that position was mentioned there was a chorus of 'Edwards,' and that was that!"

Edwards has seen Leeds United drop into the Second Division twice, and has helped to get them back once. As I mentioned at the outset of these notes, he is now full of hopes that he will again see Leeds United in the First Division.

It was stated some time ago that Arsenal had offered as much as £10,000 for Edwards, but Leeds know his worth to the club—the difficulty of replacing him as player or captain.

Both off the field and on, Edwards is a quiet fellow, and that is perhaps why, when I asked him what he remembered most about his first game for England in Scotland, he replied: "The bagpipes which they played before the match."

Hampden Park, where the match was played, is the most wonderful football arena in the world. And it was no wonder that Edwards remembered the noise; that he recalled its crowd-covered mountainous banks; the parade of the policemen throughout the game; the chasing of the small boys who will get over the rails before the match starts.

"It was all really marvellous," Edwards told me, "and when I went on to the field my heart went pitter-patter, just a bit. Once the game started, however, it was my feet, not my heart, which did the pittering and the pattering, for I had opposed to me that 'little blue streak' of an outside-left, Alan Morton, the greatest outside-left I have ever played against."

Yet I can tell you that Edwards did his bit. Morton scored a goal, but England won by two goals to one.

HARRY WHARTON'S ENEMY!

(Continued from page 10.)

very dubious. "If you will wait a few moments, sir—"

"Oh, I'll go right in!" said Bunter airily. "Smithy's my old pal at school, you know."

"Please wait, sir!" said Perkins. "Mr. Vernon-Smith is—is—is in his room now; I doubt whether he can see anyone, sir."

Perkins had ample reason for that doubt. Herbert Vernon-Smith was in his room, attending to his innumerable damages with Tom Redwing's assistance, and in a state of rage and fury that made Perkins very unwilling to go near him.

"Oh, he'll see me all right!" said Bunter. "I'll wait here."

Perkins retired to see his master. Billy Bunter blinked round him.

The bungalow had a large, well-furnished lounge hall, from which a number of doors opened. Windows looked out on green lawns and flower-beds. The place was not only comfortable, but luxuriously furnished; there were ample signs that money was spent with careless profusion.

There was nobody in the lounge at the moment, but from a half-open door at the farther end came a murmur of voices. A number of fellows, apparently, were in the room that looked out on the river at the back. Smithy appeared to have a party of some sort at the bungalow. Bunter wondered whether they were Greystriars fellows.

Perkins had gone down a passage on the left, and Bunter debated in his fat mind whether to follow him, and butt in on Smithy in the unceremonious manner of an old pal who did not need to stand on ceremony. He had not quite made up his mind when Perkins came back. Perkins had been gone only a few moments, and he returned with a lurking grin on his face.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith says, sir—" he began.

"Right-ho!" said Bunter. "Take me to him, my man!"

"Mr. Vernon-Smith says—"

Bunter blinked at him. Perkins had set the front door wide open.

"Well, what?" snapped Bunter uneasily.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith says I'm to show you out, sir—"

"Eh?"

"And kick you as you go, sir—"

"Wh-a-at?"

"Those are my master's instructions, sir," said Perkins urbanely.

"Why, you cheeky beast!" gasped Bunter. "Look here—"

"If you will kindly step out of the door, sir, I am waiting to carry out my master's instructions!" said Perkins.

Bunter gave him a glare that might have cracked his spectacles.

He had considered Wells cheeky. But Wells' cheek, compared with the impudence of this cheeky manservant, was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine.

Perkins was actually grinning, and apparently prepared to carry out his master's instructions, even to the extent of landing his low-class foot on Bunter's aristocratic trousers as he departed.

Bunter had had his doubts as to his possible reception at Smithy's bung. But he had not expected anything quite so bad as this!

It was only too clear that the Bounder was in "one of his tempers"—indeed, in a specially bad one!

"Look here!" gasped Bunter. "I'm going to see Smithy—see? Don't give

me any of your dashed impudence, my man!"

"I am waiting, sir!" said Perkins. Bunter was giving him a withering glare; but the manservant did not seem withered. He seemed amused.

The voices in the hall had apparently reached the fellows in the room at the back. An elegant figure stepped into the open doorway from the room and glanced into the hall. Billy Bunter blinked at Ponsonby, of Highcliffe. He started.

"Oh, you're here!" he ejaculated. It dawned on him that Ponsonby & Co. had been bound for Smithy's bung, when they had nearly run him down in their car.

Ponsonby stared at him. "Oh gad! It's Bunter again!" he said. "What are you doin' here, fatty?" "I'm calling on my pal Smithy!" said Bunter with dignity.

Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour appeared behind Pon, staring at Bunter. They were all smoking; having already helped themselves to Smithy's unlimited supply of cigarettes.

"That fat freak!" said Gadsby.

"Oh gad! Is Bunter stayin' here?" said Monson. "Smithy never told us that! Dash it all—I call this thick!"

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"I say, you fellows—"

"This young gentleman is not staying here, sir," said Perkins smoothly. "Mr. Vernon-Smith has given me instructions to show him out, sir, and kick him as far as the gate—"

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

"We'll help!" grinned Ponsonby. "The fat cad's buttin' in on Smithy, it seems; he's not wanted here. Kick him out!"

"I—I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

He broke off, and made a jump for the door. The four Highcliffe juniors ran towards him across the hall, and Bunter realised that he had no time to waste. It was only too plain that he was not going to see his dear old pal Smithy.

The fat Owl went through the doorway at bound.

Perkins—perhaps feeling bound to carry out his master's instructions, or perhaps finding it entertaining—shot out his foot and caught him as he went.

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter staggered, recovered himself, and ran.

"After him!" yelled Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crickey!" gasped Bunter. He raced down the drive to the gate. After him raced the four Highcliffians, roaring with laughter. This was the kind of "rag" that appealed to Ponsonby & Co.

Bunter ran desperately. He really wished he hadn't called. But it was too late to wish that. He fled at top speed; but, fast as he ran, the Highcliffians ran faster. Pon was the first to reach him, and there was a fearful yell from Bunter as Pon's foot landed.

"Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, give a fellow a chance!" yelled Gadsby.

"Whooop!"

Spluttering and gasping and gurgling, the hapless Owl got to the gate. There was no time to open it, with boots landing on him behind. He clambered frantically over and landed in the road outside with a bump and a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ponsonby & Co.

"Yaroooh! I say, you fellows—yaroooh! Oh crickey! Ow!"

"Give him some more!" shouted Monson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter made a wild jump for the bike. Pon was already dragging the gate open. Frantically the hapless Owl clambered on the bike, plunged at the pedals, and careered away. The Highcliffians came whooping out into the road, and the fat Owl barely escaped their grasp as he fled. Panting and perspiring, Billy Bunter drove at the pedals and careered away along the road, leaving Pon & Co. roaring with laughter. From the bottom of his fat heart, William Bunter wished that he had never thought of calling on Smithy!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Vengeance!

"COMIN' out in the car, Smithy?" Ponsonby barely suppressed a grin as he asked the question.

Smithy, in his present deplorable state, was not likely to be keen on showing himself in public.

It was the following morning; a bright April morning.

Fleecy clouds sailed across a sunny blue sky; the wind whispered in the trees; the sunshine glowed on the river and on the green, sloping downs. Everything was bright and cheerful and sunny—excepting Smithy! The Bounder of Greystriars was down and out.

He lay stretched in a garden-chair under a shady beech, when Pon came sauntering along. The Bounder's face was shocking to look at. His nose was crimson and swollen; one of his eyes was shady. He was feeling utterly rotten, from head to foot. With his usual obstinate determination he had kept on the fight long after he was beaten; and now he was feeling the result. He was an utter wreck.

He scowled at the Highcliffe junior.

Pon smiled.

Smithy, as a host, evoked the contemptuous amusement of his knotty visitors. A fellow who was engaged in a fierce and desperate scrap when his guests came, and who had been in a savage temper ever since, was altogether the limit, in the opinion of the Highcliffians. Vavasour had proposed, several times, to clear off and leave him to it; but Pon & Co. had no intention of doing that. They had come to Smithy's bung for a high old time; and they were staying for a high old time, regardless of Smithy's awful manners. Smithy's unlimited supplies of cash were to pay for the high old time; that was the only reason why Smithy was honoured by such distinguished company.

Still, even Pon had to admit that it was rather a frost, so far.

They had hardly seen Smithy the previous evening; he had remained in his room most of the time, nursing his injuries; and most of the time Redwing had kept him company. Pon & Co. had played bridge, and smoked, from dinner to bed-time. Still, the dinner had been good; the smokes were expensive; Perkins and his myrtydons were all that could be desired, and there was wireless and a gramophone. Pon & Co. were fairly satisfied, though, as Smithy had not joined in the game, they had had no chance so far of annexing any of his abundant cash.

But so long as Smithy was in this wrecked and havoocked state, the "high old time" had to be postponed. Banker and nap and bridge did not appeal to him now; joy-trips to London, returning

with the milk in the morning, were off, for the present. Until Smithy got over it a bit and became his own bonny self again, as Pon happily expressed it, the Highlife knuts rather wanted to leave him alone, and a day out in the car seemed a good idea. It was in a glibbing mood that Pon asked Smithy to accompany them. He knew that Smithy wouldn't. Not that Pon would have gone out in the car with a fellow who had a black eye.

"Do I look like comin' out, you fool?" growled the Bounder.

Ponsonby coughed.

"Well, I thought I'd ask you, old bean," he said amicably. "You don't mind if we clear off for a run?"

"Pleased!" snarled the Bounder.

Pon coughed again.

Really, this blighter's manners were

he said. "Not much good tryin' to lick him, Smithy."

"Think I don't know that?" snarled the Bounder. "I tried him twice at Greyfriars last term—and now I've tried him again. I'll find some other way, though. I'll make him feel worse than he's made me—somehow."

Evidently the Bounder was brooding on vengeance, as he lay with aching head and throbbing nerves.

"Wish you luck," said Ponsonby, "I like the cad no more than you do, and if I can help, you've only to say the word. Well, I'll be staggerin'."

And Ponsonby strolled away to rejoin his friends, and a few minutes later the car roared off.

The Bounder was left alone, till Tom Redwing came down the garden. He did not look up as Redwing joined him.

him sit up—somehow! But how?" He gave Redwing a scowl. "No good asking you to pitch into the rotter—I believe you could handle him, if you liked."

Redwing compressed his lips.

"No good at all!" he answered curtly.

"You call yourself a pal—and you see the state I'm in—knocked out to the wide—"

"Why couldn't you let the chap alone, Smithy?" said Redwing. "He never wanted trouble—he was trying to steer clear of it—"

"Oh, shut up!"

There was silence again. Redwing looked at the sunny river, and the sunlit downs. It was a glorious spring day; and there was everything to make



Vernon-Smith fought fiercely, but blow after blow crashed on him, and he fell backwards into the garden gate. Wharton followed him up, with crashing fists and blazing eyes. "For goodness' sake, chuck it, you fellows!" exclaimed Redwing.

the absolute limit. If the fellow hadn't been stacked with money— But he was stacked with money, and that was that; and Pon, after coughing, smiled. "Feelin' pretty sore, what?" he asked. "By gad! That man Wharton is a hard hitter. Rather over your weight, old chap."

Perhaps Pon did not know that that was the very sorest point with Smithy. Or perhaps he did!

The Bounder's half-shut eyes glittered at him.

"Yes, he's over my weight," he said thickly. "Not so much as he's over yours, though. He thrashed you a week before we broke up for Easter, I remember; and you ran for it. I didn't run, at all events."

Ponsonby breathed hard. But he was not there to quarrel with the Bounder; though he had never felt more like quarrelling with any fellow.

"The fellow's a dashed prize-fighter,"

His face was black with a savage scowl. All the good that was in the Bounder's nature—and there was much—seemed to have disappeared now. Bitterness, hatred, sheer evil, rioted in his breast. His thoughts ran on vengeance—black and bitter vengeance—but his mind brooded on that subject in vain. There was no vengeance to be had—it was useless to think of trying his luck again, and getting another terrific lashing. Indeed, for some days to come, he was not likely to be in a state to make the attempt, even if it were feasible. At the present moment, even one of the Highlife slackers could have knocked him out with ease.

"Feelin' better, Smithy?" Redwing broke the dismal silence at last. "No!"

Redwing was silent again.

"I'll make him suffer for this!" muttered the Bounder at last. "I'll make

a fellow happy and contented. Only that bitter feud, the implacable remembering of old grudges, spoiled everything else.

"You're a fool, Reddy. They came along hunting for trouble," snarled Vernon-Smith, at last.

"They didn't, Smithy! Don't be an ass—you know they didn't! I believe even now they'd be glad to patch it up, if you would."

"Yes—I'm likely to!" sneered the Bounder bitterly. "And Wharton's likely—when I've turned him out as captain of the Remove. That's at the bottom of it all."

"Oh, rot!" said Redwing. "I'm jolly certain that if you'd make up your mind to be civil, Wharton would do the same. And if you can't do that, for

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(Continued from page 13.)

goodness' sake let them alone, and keep clear."

Smithy gritted his teeth. "Let them alone! Yes, when I've made Wharton feel worse than he's made me—not before that! You won't help."

"Certainly I won't, when you know you're in the wrong all along the line," said Redwing sharply.

"Pon's not so particular," sneered Smithy. "That Highcliffe gang would go all out to help me. They'd jump at a chance of downing Wharton, if it was easy and safe."

"For goodness' sake put such rotten thoughts out of your head, Smithy," said Tom earnestly. "You'll feel quite different when you've got over this."

"Possibly; but I haven't got over it yet. Leave me alone—get the boat out, and clear—I want to be left alone. I've got to think."

"Let me help you down to the boat—"

"Oh, leave me alone, I tell you!" Redwing left him at last, and the Bounder heard him pulling away on the river.

He wanted to be left alone—alone with his bitter, black, revengeful thoughts.

He had told Redwing that he had to think, and it was of revenge that he thought—turning over miserable scheme after scheme in his throbbing brain, till at last, from the depths of bitterness and hatred, a scheme was evolved. It was a scheme that, in any other mood, the Bounder would have flung from him like an adder; but now he nursed it, pondered over it, gloated over it, and made up his mind—ruthlessly, implacably. Wharton, his rival at school, his enemy at all times, had done this to him, and Wharton was going to pay the price. A savage grin came over the Bounder's disfigured face as he brooded.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Playing "Poker!"

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Aren't you asleep, Bunter?"

"Eh? No."

"Go to sleep then, old fat bean!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The snorefulness is the proper caper!" said Hurree Jameset Ram Singh solemnly. "The snorefulness will be terrific; but it will be an esteemed rest from the jawfulness."

"Look here, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter sat up in the armchair and blinked at the Famous Five. They were gathered round a log fire in the hall at Wharton Lodge.

The day had been fine, and the juniors had spent almost every minute of it out of doors. Now they were pleasantly tired, and enjoying a rest and a chat

round the fire in the evening. Billy Bunter, as usual, had slacked about, and was, as a result, bored and rather peevish. While the chums of the Remove chatted, Bunter had been stretched in the armchair, blinking discontentedly, and the juniors had supposed that he had fallen asleep, instead of which, Bunter was thinking—a proceeding of which, naturally, they never suspected him.

Bunter blinked at five cheery faces, and then cast a blink round the hall. Then he blinked at the Famous Five again. They politely gave him their attention. Apparently something was working in Bunter's powerful brain. Bob Cherry picked up the poker, and stirred the logs on the fire, and there was a leaping of ruddy flame and sparks.

"We're on our own now, you men!" said Bunter. "The old fossil has gone out, you know—"

"Who?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I mean Colonel Wharton—"
"If you mean Colonel Wharton, you'd better say Colonel Wharton, Bunter," said Harry quietly.

"Don't jaw, old chap—you're interrupting me. Your aunt's gone with him for the evening."

"What about it, ass?" asked Bob. "They won't be home till late," said Bunter. "We're on our own, without any of the old fossils. Well, while the cat's away the mice will play, you know."

"Good!" said Bob. "Let's ask Wells for the key of the wine-cellar, and have a high old time, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said Bunter. "What I mean is, we're on holiday, and the fossils haven't got their eyes on us now. Why shouldn't we stretch a point, what? It's pretty slow here—nothing on—nothing like what's going on at Smithy's bung, I mean—"

"You fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You shut up, Bull! You're soft, you know," said Bunter. "I don't suppose you know how to play poker."

"Poker!" repeated Nugent.

"It's a great game," said Bunter. "American game really; but good all the same. You can win tons of money at poker—if you win, you know. I suppose you've got a pack of cards in the house, Wharton?"

"Yes, certainly," said Harry, staring at the fat junior. "We might have a game of cards, if you fellows like. I'll get a bag of nuts."

"Nuts!" yelled Bunter. "Oh, my hat! He, he, he! Do you think Smithy plays for nuts?"

"I imagine not. But we're not taking Smithy as an example."

"Oh, don't be a soft ass, Wharton! What are you afraid of? Think Wells would tell your uncle? You can tip him to keep quiet."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The fat fellow, I like a bit of a giddy time on holiday," argued Bunter. "I'm rather a dog, you know."

"Rather a dog, do you mean?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No, I don't!" roared Bunter. "You shut up! You're a nincompoop. I was jolly well thinking of staying with Smithy instead of you, Wharton—"

"Go it!"

"But I wouldn't turn you down. I told you I called on him yesterday, and he was frightfully civil—begging a chap to stay, and all that. But I told him it couldn't be done—I was sticking to my

pals. Those Highcliffe chaps were very keen, too—they actually followed me down to the gate when I left; seemed to hate parting with me. I felt bound to stick to you, Wharton. Still, one good turn deserves another. I might be having a high old time with Smithy and his friends. I'm sticking to you. Well—"

"He's wound up!" said Nugent, with a sigh.

"Oh, really, Nugent! Well, what about it?" asked Bunter. "Let's have a game of poker. I'll teach you how to play. You have a hand of five cards each, you know, then you put something in the pot and draw fresh cards. Then you back your cards in turn, raising the stakes. Fellows pass out when they've had enough—chap with the best hand wins the pot. I've seen Smithy playing, and I know all about it."

"For nuts?" asked Wharton, with a smile.

"Oh, crickey! Nuts! For goodness' sake don't be such an ass! We'll begin with half-crowns—"

"Whose half-crowns will you begin with?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The wholesomeness is terrific."

"That sort of remark is simply rotten, Bull. I happen to be short of ready money, but I suppose Wharton can lend me a few pounds," said Bunter. "I do more than that for a guest at Bunter Court. I'll settle to-morrow, Wharton—I told you I was expecting a postal order. I think—"

"Ye gods!"

"Well is it a go?" asked Bunter. "Any number of fellows can play—we can leave Bull out, as he's soft. You'll play, Wharton?"

"For nuts!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Don't talk to me about nuts! You'll play, Nugent?"

"Fo nuts!" grinned Nugent.

"Oh, shut up! Will you play, Inky?"
"Only if the nutfulness is the caper."

"Well, of all the silly, soft noodles!" said Bunter, in disgust. "Look here, Bob, you're not soft like these chaps. Play poker, old man!"

"Pleased," said Bob affably.

"Not for nuts, you know," added Bunter hastily.

"Certainly not. No nuts for me!"

"Look here, Bob—" growled Johnny Bull.

"You shut up, Bull! Cherry's a man—like me," said Bunter, with a blink of contempt at Johnny. "Get the cards, Bob, old bean. We'll jolly well enjoy ourselves—like Smithy."

Bob Cherry rose. He had the poker in his hand with which he had stirred the logs.

"We shan't want any cards, Bunter," he said cheerfully. "I'm going to play poker with you, but not with cards, old man!"

"You can't play poker without cards, fathead!"

"I can," said Bob. "There's two ways of playing poker—Smithy's way, with cards and currency notes, and my way—and this is my way!"

"What the thump—yaroooh! Keep that poker away, you beast! Yarooop!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter wanted to play poker; so, apparently, did Bob—in his own way. Bob's way was to lunge a poker in Bunter's fat ribs. No doubt, that was one way of playing poker, but it certainly was not the way Bunter wanted.

He bounded out of the armchair.

"Beast! Keep off!"

Bob lunged again. "Yaroooh! Beast! Stoppit!" shrieked Bunter. "Put that poker down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear chap, I'm playing poker!" "Yaroooh!" Bunter roared, and dodged wildly round the armchair. "Keep off! I say, you fellows, keep him off! You beast! Yaroooh!"

"I fancy Bunter would rather play for nuts!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You, beast! You rotter! You practical joking blighter! Keep off! Keep that poker away! Whoooooop!"

"Are you tired of poker already, Bunter?" asked Bob.

"Ow! Beast! Stoppit!" shrieked the fat Owl. "Wow! Yow! Stoppit!"

"Oh, all right! You're not much of a sportsman to chuck a game of poker so soon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The poker clanged down in the grate, much to Bunter's relief. There was no doubt that the fat Owl had tired of that game of poker.

Wells, with a sedate grin on his face, came across the hall.

"Master Harry is wanted on the telephone," he said.

Harry Wharton went to the telephone, leaving his chums chucking, and Billy Bunter glaring with a devastating glare. Bunter was still feeling the urge to be a rorty dog, and follow the sportive example of Smithy. But he did not suggest playing poker again. He had had enough poker.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Pon is Game!

TOM REDWING stepped ashore, tied up the boat, and crossed the towpath to the gate of the bungalow garden. The April dusk had fallen, and the long garden was deep in shadows save where light fell into it from the french windows at the back of the building. Redwing, a little tired, but cheerful, after a long pull on the river, came up the path across the lawns to the house, and his cheerful face clouded at the sight that met his view as he approached.

He had come back hoping to find his chum in a better temper, and prepared to be as civil as possible to the Highcliffe guests, much as he disliked their company. But his heart sank as he stood at the open french windows and looked in.

The room was brightly lighted. There was a haze of cigarette smoke in the air. Ponsoby & Co. were in evening clothes, looking very elegant and natty in them. The Bouncer had not changed, and his disfigured face was a striking contrast to those of the Highcliffe knuts. The five of them were gathered round a card table, playing poker. Little stacks of silver were on the table; but the young rascals were not playing for mere half-crowns. Currency notes were flicked into the pool. As Redwing looked in he saw the Bouncer toss in a pound-note with a careless hand.

In his present state of aches and pains, darkened eyes and vengeful thoughts, Smithy could scarcely have been enjoying the game. He was hardly in a state to enjoy anything, unless it was a ruthless vengeance on the fellow who had knocked him out. Possibly he had realised that it was time to give some attention to his guests, or possibly he was merely killing time. But if Smithy was not enjoying that game of poker Pon & Co. were. Their looks showed that they were winning, and expressed

considerable satisfaction at having at last got down to what really was their business at Smithy's bung. Pon's handsome face was hard and greedy, Gadsby and Mouson were grinning, Vavasour almost crowing with vacant satisfaction. The Bouncer was losing money to all of them, and obviously did not care. Money was not much to the millionaire's son.

Redwing's face hardened as he looked. This was a scene which would have made Billy Bunter feel that it was ever so much better at Smithy's bung than at Wharton's ledge. It did not have that effect on Tom. He was pained and grieved, and he was worried, too.

Pon & Co., with all their elegant manners and customs, were very little better than a gang of sharpers. Bridge in the stud was one of their favourite amusements at Highcliffe—a slack school where a fellow could indulge in a pastime which he would have been expelled for doing at Greyfriars. They prided themselves on their knowledge of the "wicked pasteboards," and their skill with the same. They had had no doubt about making a good thing out of the Bouncer while honouring him with their distinguished company.

But Redwing knew only too well that the Bouncer was a hard nut to crack, and he knew that Smithy could have played their heads off at poker as easily as at football or cricket had he chosen so to do. Indeed the Bouncer had made sardonic jests about making Pon & Co. "pay for their keep," when they inveigled him into a card game. Yet they were evidently winning all round—and that meant, in Redwing's belief, that the Bouncer was letting them win his money.

Redwing wondered why. It was not a compensation for his bad manners and his previous neglect of his guests. He did not care a straw what they thought of him, having a much deeper contempt for the vicious young sleekers than they had for him.

The Bouncer, when the evil kink in his peculiar nature was uppermost, smoked and gambled and "played the goat" generally, but at other times, at most times, he was a good man at good games—as good a footballer as any junior at Greyfriars, a good oarsman, a good man with the gloves, and, when he chose, a good man in classes. Pon & Co. were slack all the time, rabbits at games, dunces in class, funks in the many quarrels they provoked by their insolence. The Bouncer despised them from the bottom of his heart. That was the real reason why he did not trouble to be civil to them when his temper was surly.

Redwing stood looking on, none of the young rascals at the card-table observing him for a time. His face was clouded and his heart heavy. Smithy had urged him, pressed him, to pass the Easter holidays with him, and Tom liked his chum too well to refuse. They had had some good days, too when they were left alone. But, uncontrolled now by masters or pretexts left to his own sweet will by an over-indulgent father, the Bouncer had not been satisfied with the simple pleasures that satisfied Tom. That was why he had picked up Freddy Paget at the races—a reckless proceeding that had covered him with disgrace and humiliation as with a garment, and given a keener edge to his feud with the Famous Five. That was why he had asked Pon & Co. to come. Yet, whenever Redwing gave a hint that he had better leave, that it was useless for him to stay where he was only a wet blanket, the Bouncer refused to listen to a word,

But Tom, as he looked in now on the knotty party, felt that the strain was getting rather too intolerable. This sort of thing was altogether too thick, and Smithy could not expect him to stand it. He could not help wondering what Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, thoughtlessly indulgent as he was, would have thought, could he have looked in on this scene as Redwing was looking.

The Bouncer looked up suddenly. He waved his cigarette at Redwing in greeting, and then gave his attention to the cards again.

"Trickle in, old bean!" said Ponsoby with a cheery smile. "We're rather goin' it! Take a hand, old thing. You play poker?"

"No, I don't play poker," answered Redwing curtly.

"It's a good game, y'know," said Gadsby. "You ought to pick it up."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour, with his vacant grin.

"Kickin' a dashed muddy ball about is more in your line, Redwing, what?" said Mouson, with a sneer.

"Yes," said Tom quietly. "Much more in my line. Smithy—"

"You've missed dinner, Reddy," said the Bouncer. "I've told Perkins to lay supper for you in the next room."

"I was going to say—"

"Leave it till after you've fed, old chap. I'm rather busy now."

Tom said no more. He crossed the room, and went out by the door on the hall. Ponsoby's lip curled as the door closed behind him.

"Jolly old kill-joy!" he said. "What the dooce have you got Redwing here for, Smithy?"

"Not to play poker!" answered the Bouncer, with a sneer. "Redwing would no more join in this game than he would pick a pocket."

The Highcliffe knuts exchanged glances. Smithy's manners had not improved, evidently.

There was a show-down, and Ponsoby captured the "pot." There were ten or twelve pounds in the pot, and Pon grinned over it. Smithy's bad manners did not matter very much, really.

Vernon-Smith yawned and rose from the table.

"Not chuckin' it, old man?" asked Ponsoby anxiously. "Dash it all, you've been losin' all along the line! Let's give you your revenge, at least."

"I want to talk to you, old bean," said the Bouncer. "These chaps can go on without us for a while."

"Any old thing!" yawned Gadsby.

"Absolutely!"

Cecil Ponsoby allowed a flash of irritation to pass over his face. But it was only momentary. The Bouncer's word was law, and he evidently knew it and meant it. He had not been losing money for nothing. It was Pon's game to play up to the fellow who could afford to chuck pound-notes about as if they were scraps of valueless paper.

He lighted a fresh cigarette and joined the Bouncer on a settee near the window. The other three went on with the cards.

Smithy gave him a dark, morose look. "It's about Wharton," he said, in a low voice. "I've thought it out. I want you and your friends to help. You can fix it with them after I've explained. I'm not fit to handle the cad now, and I've got to keep an eye on Redwing—he would butt in and spoil it all, if he knew."

"Why not get rid of the fellow?"

"I'm talkin', not you!" said the Bouncer gruffly, and Ponsoby

breathed hard. He needed all his aplomb to keep genial with a fellow like this. "I'm no good handling Wharton—and you're less. But the four of you together—"

"A raggin'!" said Ponsoby, rather uneasily. "I'm willin', of course—I owe the cad a lot of things. But—but there's a gang of them, you know, and they always stick together. We can't handle that crew."

"I can fix it for you to get hold of Wharton alone—"

"How on earth—"

"Never mind that. I tell you I've thought it out!" snarled the Bounder impatiently. "I can fix it for Wharton to come along the footpath near the river to-night. It will be dark—there's no moon. The four of you will be waiting for him."

Pon stirred uneasily. Four to one was quite in his line, when it came to a scrap. But even against four to one, Wharton of Greyfriars was such a hefty fighting-man, such an extremely hard hitter, that Pon did not like the prospect. Even four to one, and taking a fellow by surprise in the dark, it was only too probable that Pon's beauty would be spoiled.

"I'm not askin' you to scrap with him," said the Bounder, with his gibing sneer. "I know you don't pine for a scrap, unless it's some fat funk like Bunter, who can't put up with his hands. That's not the idea at all."

"Well, what is it, then?" asked Pon. "Of course, the four of us could have put paid to the cad, hefty as he is; but—but we don't want that gang of hooligans trackin' us down for the rest of the hols. They'd think nothin' of walkin' into the place and moppin' us up in this very room, if we ragged their pal in a gang."

"I'm not askin' you to take risks—I know you too well!" answered the Bounder.

"What are you askin' me, then?" snapped Ponsoby. "I suppose we're not to meet the fellow and tell him it's a fine evenin'! If it's a raggin', we shall have that crew after us to-morrow—and I tell you it's not good enough. And if it isn't, what the dooce is it?"

"They won't know," said Wharton would tell 'em, I suppose."

"What the jolly old dooce do you mean, Smitty?"

"I'll tell you what I mean, if you'll shut up. You'll wait at the end of the footpath, in the dark. When you see Wharton—or, rather, when you hear him—you'll jump on him and shove a sack over his head—"

"Oh gad!"

"He won't know who's got him. You'll tie him in the sack."

"Great gad! And what the thump are we goin' to do with the fellow, when we've got him tied in a jolly old sack? Not suggestin' drownin' him

in the river, like a giddy puppy-dog, are you?"

"Don't be an ass! You'll run him down to the boat, and chuck him into it."

"Go on," said Ponsoby. "You're gettin' interestin', Smitty."

"There's a little island about half a mile down the river—Monk's Island. It's about the loneliest spot in all Surrey—nobody ever goes there, or hardly ever. You'll land the cad there."

"Robinson Crusoe up to date!" grinned Pon. "Go on!"

"In the middle of the island there's an old ruin—what's left of a monk's cell. You'll dump the rotter down in it—and leave him."

"Leave him to stew in his own juice, what?" grinned Pon.

Pon, evidently, was getting interested now. Paying off old scores, without danger to himself, appealed to Pon.

"That's it!" said the Bounder. "He can stay there till he's found—and enjoy himself. He can wriggle out of the sack by mornin'—and howl for help till somebody comes to take him off the island. If he's missin' for a few days, perhaps his dear pals will enjoy themselves huntin' for him! I dare say he will get off the island by the time I get over this black eye."

Ponsoby chuckled.

"Nothin' to connect you with the affair—if you're careful. I don't suppose he'll even suspect you. Why should he? Mind, not a whisper for Redwing to hear—he would butt in and spoil the whole game."

"Right as rain," said Ponsoby. "It's a jolly rag—you're the man for ideas, Smitty. You're a real cad, and no mistake! But how the jolly old dooce are you goin' to get Wharton where we want him?"

"I can fix that. Leave that to me. You're game?"

"What-ho! Keen as mustard! Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Ponsoby.

Gadsby looked round from the cards. "You fellows got some frightfully rippin' joke?" he asked.

"The jest of the season, old bean," answered Ponsoby. "Chuck those wicked pasteboards, and come over here, and I'll tell you."

The Bounder left the Highlife knuts chuckling over the plot, and went into the room where Tom Redwing was finishing his supper.

Redwing's face was clouded and sad. But it cleared and brightened wonderfully as the Bounder dropped into a chair by his side and began to speak. What the Bounder had to say banished black care from Tom's honest face, and from his honest, unsuspecting heart.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Olive Branch!

HARRY WHARTON left his chums chuckling round the fire, and Billy Bunter glaring with wrath after his exciting game of poker with Bob Cherry, and went to take the telephone call.

"Who is calling, Wells?" he asked.

"The young gentleman gave the name of Redwing, sir," answered Wells.

"Redwing?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, sir."

Wharton hurried to the telephone. He was surprised,

or rather, astonished. He was on the best of terms with Tom Redwing at school, and would have been glad at any time to hear from him.

But in the present circumstances he had certainly not expected to hear from him. The Bounder was at bitter feud with the Wharton Lodge party, and Redwing was the Bounder's pal staying with him. And though he steadily refused to be drawn into the quarrel, it was scarcely possible for him to keep on a friendly footing with Smitty's foes. Wharton picked up the receiver in a wondering state of mind.

"Hallo! Is that Redwing?" he asked.

"Yes. That Wharton?"

"Little me," answered Harry.

"I'm speaking from Riverside Bungalow," said Redwing. There was a cheerful note in his voice. "I dare say you're rather surprised, old fellow."

"Glad to hear your toot at any time," said Harry.

"I shouldn't be speaking, of course, only I've had a talk with Smitty, and—"

—and"—Redwing seemed rather at a loss how to put it—"there's been a lot of trouble, Wharton—unnecessary trouble. I'm not saying that Smitty wasn't to blame for most of it, though I think you weren't quite blameless when it started at school."

"I've owned up to that," said Harry.

"You heard me tell Smitty so before we broke up for Easter. But what—"

"Well, are you willing to chuck the whole thing, and let bygones be bygones?" asked Redwing. "Smitty is, if you are."

"Oh, my hat!"

This was utterly unexpected.

"It's no good denying that Smitty has a bit of a temper, and that he's rather reckless when it gets the upper hand," said Redwing. "But a man can't be more than sorry for playing the goat, can he?"

"That's all right, old bean," said Wharton, in amazement. "If Smitty's ready to chuck the feud, I'm more than ready. I think it's all rot. The fact is I've been feeling rather rotten about it, and I'd made up my mind to meet Smitty half-way, if he thought better of it."

"I'm jolly glad to hear that, Wharton," said Tom; and Harry could hear the relief in his voice. "Smitty's rather a wreck after that scrap, but he seems to have been doing some thinking, and he realises that he provoked it. The truth is that he never meant to catch you with that lump of turf. He was chucking it at Bob, and I caught his arm, and so it really was more an accident than anything else."

"I'm sorry," said Harry. "I lost my temper. I dare say I was rather hasty. Anyhow, I'd be jolly glad to chuck the whole thing, and let bygones be bygones, as you say. We've both been to blame."

Wharton spoke with deep sincerity. Ever since the feud had started the Bounder had been recklessly and unscrupulously in the wrong. But Wharton had to remember that it was his own hasty temper that had started it. He was ready to jump at any chance to bury the hatchet.

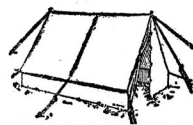
"I say, I'm jolly glad to hear this, Reddy!" said Wharton. "I'll take care to keep clear of Smitty these hols. But I hope we may meet as friends next term at Greyfriars."

"Smitty would like to see you."

"Oh!"

"That's why I've rung up," said Tom.

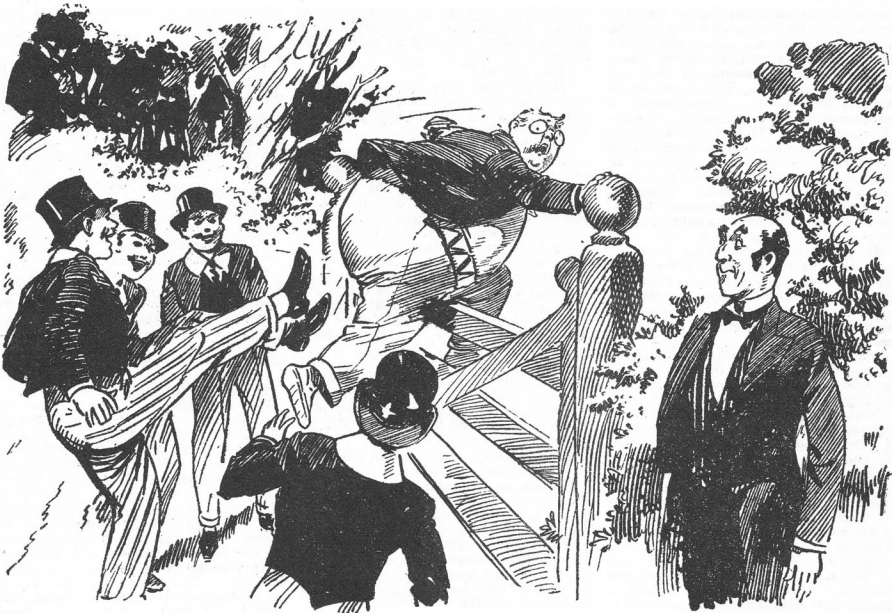
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Bunter fled at top speed, but as fast as he ran, the Higheliffians ran faster. Spluttering and gasping, the Owl reached the gate and clambered over, Ponsonby & Co. assisting him from behind with their boots!

"I—I hope you'll take it as Smithy means it, old chap. He's a good fellow—a thoroughly good fellow. You don't know him as I do, you know. There never was a better chap really, though, of course, he's got his faults. I wish you could have heard him speaking to me a few minutes ago. His idea is to wash out the whole thing, and forget all about it."

"Jolly glad to," said Wharton cordially.

"Well, will you walk over?" asked Tom.

"Oh!"

"It's not a long walk by the foot-path."

"I don't mind the walk, but—"

"Smithy would be glad to see you. He—he's quite changed from what he was like when you saw him last. I—I'd like you to see him while he's feeling friendly." Wharton guessed that Redwing had a doubt that Smithy's repentant mood might change, if given time. It would be like him to catch at straws to take fresh offence. "He's asked me to ask you, and—and if you refuse—well, I hope you won't."

Wharton paused a moment. Knowing the Bounder as he did, he might have suspected some trickery had that call come from Smithy himself. But it was impossible to doubt Redwing's good faith, and the thought of it never crossed his mind. But he felt that he had to think a little before going over to Smithy's bung, after all that had happened.

"You needn't bother about the High-cliffe fellows," said Redwing. "They're going out. You won't see them."

"Well, I should be civil if I did see them," said Harry. "Still I certainly don't want to see them. If—if you're

sure Smithy really would like me to walk over—"

He paused again. This change in the Bounder was very welcome, but it was very surprising. Redwing had said that Wharton did not know Smithy as he did, but Wharton fancied he knew him rather better.

"I hope you'll come," said Redwing earnestly. "I'd be so jolly glad to see the end of this rotten feud."

"Same here," said Harry. "But—Well, look here, Redwing, if you think it will do any good I'll come over. It seems to me it would be better to keep clear. But if Smithy makes a point of it—"

"He does. And—and if you refuse, I'm afraid he may take it to mean that you've made up your mind to bar him for good. And if he gets that into his head—"

"I'll come," said Harry, at once.

"That's good," said Tom, in great relief. "You'll find Smithy all right. You can take my word for that."

"I'll come at once, then. I shall be along under half an hour, by the short cut through the wood."

"Good!"

"See you soon, then, old chap."

Wharton replaced the receiver, and went back to his friends. He told them in a few words of the talk on the telephone, and they stared. The Co. were as surprised as he was himself.

"Blessed if I expected that," said Bob Cherry. "But I'm glad. After all, the Bounder isn't a bad chap, when he gets over his tantrums."

"I'm glad," said Nugent.

"The gladfulness is terrific," concurred Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "It is preposterously joyful for the frown of ridiculous enmity to be replaced by the idiotic smile of friendship."

"I suppose it's square," said Johnny Bull slowly.

"Square!" repeated Wharton. "What do you mean?"

"If that call had come from Smithy, I should think it was a trick to get you over there alone to be ragged by that Higheliffe gang," answered Johnny Bull deliberately.

"Well, I'm afraid I might have suspected that, too," said Harry. "But Redwing—"

"Oh, Redwing's all right! Must be square!" agreed Johnny.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Well, I'll get off," said Harry. "Sooner the quicker."

"I'll come," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Now Smithy's so jolly friendly, I don't mind giving him a look in," said the fat Owl. "He was rather a beast yesterday, but—"

"Was that when he begged you to stay?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean—the fact is, I'll come," said Bunter. "Smithy may ask us to join in a game of poker."

"You can play poker with Bob, old fat bean," said Harry, laughing, and he went away for his coat and cap.

A few minutes later he left Wharton Lodge and set out on his walk, swinging cheerily along by the dark, shadowed footpath through the wood, and little dreaming of what was awaiting him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Black Treachery!

TOM REDWING stood in the lighted doorway of the bungalow with a cheery smile on his face. Outside on the drive stood the car, with headlights gleaming

into the darkness of the night. Vernon-Smith stood by the car waiting for the Highcliff fellows. Ponsonby and Gadsby, Monson and Vavasour, came out in a bunch, grinning at Redwing as they passed him. There was something to Pon & Co. highly amusing in the unsuspecting innocence of the sailorman's son. They could not help grinning at the idea of what poor Tom was as unscrupulous use he had been put by the plotting Bounder. Tom was not likely to guess that such a suspicion of black treachery could not possibly cross his honest mind.

He gave the Highcliffians a cheery smile as they passed him. He did not like them; but he was feeling kind and tolerant towards everybody at present, happy and relieved to think that the bitter feud was to be ended, and by the desire of his chum.

Pon sat in the driving seat, and his friends packed into the car. The Bounder whispered to Pon.

"You've got it all clear?"

"Cut and dried, old tulip!" grinned Ponsonby. "We run the car a quarter of a mile or so, leave it with the lights off, and trek back to the footpath and wait for his nibs. Cut and dried."

"It's rather thick, absolutely," murmured Vavasour. The vacant youth was not wholly satisfied in his mind, though he was too thoroughly under Ponsonby's influence to raise objections.

"Shut up, Vav!" said Gadsby.

"There's no risk," muttered the Bounder. "Safe as houses! Who's to connect you with what happens—your joy-ridin' in the car at the time—miles away—safe as houses."

"If it wasn't, old bean," said Pon, "we shouldn't be in it. I'm glad of the chance to snaffle that rotter, Wharton; but this isn't a thing I should like shouted from the house-tops."

"Not exactly," grinned Monson. "We'll take jolly good care that dear old Wharton doesn't know who bunkered him. I've got the sack in the car ready—and a rope! He won't know anythin'."

"Shockin' outrage by some unknown gang!" said Gadsby. "Retired officer's nephew snaffled in a bag by persons unknown."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If his friends come this way inquirin' to-morrow, we don't know a thing," smiled Ponsonby. "Bein' out joy-ridin' at the time, how could we?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The car rolled away down the drive and turned into the road. Vernon-Smith stood looking after it as the brilliant headlights flashed away into the darkness of the moonless night.

His face was hard and bitter; his heart hard and implacable.

The whole thing was cut and dried, as Pon had said; and the pretence of a joy-ride was a complete alibi for the Highcliff gang, if anyone should suspect them of having had a hand in the outrage. The Bounder would not have cared about the risk; but Pon & Co. cared very much about it. Risk had been eliminated by cunning scheming. Wharton would fall unsuspecting into the ambush, and would never know into whose hands he had fallen. Probably he would not even suspect.

The Bounder turned back to the doorway, where Redwing stood.

He felt an inward twinge as he met Tom Redwing's cheery, confident glance. Bitter as he was, implacable as he was, the unscrupulous use he had made of Redwing to entrap his enemy was to Smithy's conscience. He did not like meeting Tom's honest eyes.

"Pon & Co. seem in jolly spirits," said Tom smiling.

Smithy nodded without speaking.

"It's rather tactful of them to clear off for a joy-ride, as they know Wharton's coming over," said Tom. "I hardly expected Pon to think of it."

The Bounder muttered something indistinctly. Little did Tom dream that what he took for tact on the part of Pon & Co. was part of a miserable, treacherous plot.

"Wharton's started by this time," said Tom cheerfully. "He'll be here under the half-hour—it's not a long walk." His

eyes were on his chum's averted face, "Coming in?"

"I—I think I'll take a turn in the garden," muttered Smithy.

Hard as he was, implacable as he was, he felt that he could not keep up the pretence for half an hour under Tom's eyes. To sit in the bungalow, listening to Tom's cheery talk, pretending to be expecting Wharton—when all the time he knew that the entrapped junior was falling into the hands of treacherous enemies, was too much even for the hard-hearted Bounder. "My—my head's aching a bit—the fresh air will do me good."

"Like me to come?"

"No, that's all right."

The Bounder wanted anything but Tom's company, just then. He turned hastily away and disappeared into the shadows among the shrubberies. Tom heard his footsteps die away round the building. The Bounder had walked down towards the river.

Redwing went back into the house.

His face was bright.

He had been surprised when the Bounder had told him of his change of mind and heart. But he had been intensely relieved and pleased. Only too gladly, only too readily, he had called Wharton on the telephone and told him. The cheery willingness with which Wharton had received the olive-branch, had banished the last doubt from his mind. Tom was feeling happier than he had felt any time since he had come to stay at Smithy's bung for the Easter holidays. The bitter quarrel was to be patched up; the hatchet buried, they would start the new term at Greyfriars on friendly terms. It was a happy prospect—to Tom.

He strolled about the bungalow for a few minutes, humming a tune.

The Bounder did not come in. Apart from his fear of meeting Tom's honest eyes, his fear that Redwing might read something in his face, the Bounder had to see that the boat was ready for Pon & Co. when they wanted it.

Wharton, by this time, would be well on his way, and Redwing, left to himself, thought of going down the footpath to meet him. It was a natural thought to occur to him in the circumstances; though, natural as it was, the Bounder, with his mind concentrated on his own black thoughts, had not thought of it. Redwing took his cap, let himself out of the bungalow and strolled away in the direction of the wood.

The night was dark; under the heavy branches that stretched over the footpath in the wood, it showed black. Redwing, sauntering in a leisurely way with his hands in his pockets, approached the wood, which was only a few minutes' walk from the bungalow. He heard a sound of footsteps on the road behind him, but did not heed it.

He turned into the grassy path.

"Look out! Black as a dashed hat!" came a muttering voice from the darkness behind him.

Redwing stopped dead.

It was Gadsby's voice; and Gadsby, with the rest of the Highcliff gang, had gone off in the car, and should have been miles away by that time.

Yet here he was, and evidently his friends were with him. The grass deepened the footsteps, but Tom could hear.

"Darker the better!" came Pon's voice.

"Absolutely."

"Ow!"

"What's the row, Monson, you ass?"

"Cw!" Bitted into a dashed tree!

Ow!"

"Don't kick up a row, anyhow. Do

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you want to let all Surrey know that we're here, fathad?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! Wharton won't be along for a good twenty minutes yet," growled Monson. "I've barked my nose."

"Well, take care, you ass! It's dashed dark, and no mistake!" grunted Ponsonby. "Look where you're goin'! Smithy might have come and guided us, dash him; he knows this dashed place better than we do."

"Smithy's been pullin' the wool over that fool Redwing's eyes!" chuckled Gadsby.

"Absolutely! But I say, don't you men think it's rather thick?"

"Shut up, Vav, you fool."

"Oh, dash it!" This time, apparently, it was Pon who had butted into a tree in the dense darkness. "Dash the thing! Ow! I've a dashed good mind to chuck the whole thing up, and let that dashed outsider Smithy do his own dirty work, confound him."

Redwing, not a dozen paces away, unseen in the blackness, stood quite still, his heart almost turned to ice.

He knew now!

This was it, then—it was a rag, and Smithy had tricked him into tricking his enemy into the trap. This was the meaning of the "steep-ride"; it was planned to throw dust in his eyes, while this gang of young rascals waylaid Wharton in the darkness of the wood. He stood, sick with horror and disgust.

But he pulled himself together very quickly.

Wharton was coming—coming along the footpath unsuspecting. There was plenty of time to warn him, and head him off, now that Redwing knew. While the four Highcliffians were muttering and growling, Tom Redwing moved on up the footpath, breaking into a run.

"Hallo, is that somebody?" exclaimed Ponsonby, peering into the darkness ahead. Tom's running feet made little sound on the grassy path, but some faint echo reached Pon's ears.

"Eh, I didn't hear—" said Gadsby.

"I heard something—"

"Can't be Wharton yet!"

The Highcliffians listened intently. But Tom was out of hearing, and they heard nothing but the whispering of the wind in the trees.

"All serene," said Ponsonby. "The brute'll be a quarter of an hour yet most likely. Keep the sack ready, Gaddy! We've got to wait."

And the Highcliffians under the trees near the end of the footpath waited and watched.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Done in the Dark!

HARRY WHARTON came swinging cheerily along the dark footpath in the wood. It was intensely dark under the trees, but Wharton knew every inch of the way; it was a familiar place to him. He was almost half-way through the wood, when he heard a sound of lightly running feet ahead approaching him. He had a glimpse of a white face in the deep shadows, and stopped.

"Wharton, is that you?"

"Redwing!"

"Yes," Tom panted. "I thought it was you—"

"Not likely to be anybody else, old bean," said Harry, smiling. "Hardly anybody uses this path after dark. Did you come to meet me?"

"Yes. I—I—" Redwing stammered. He had come to meet Wharton—to warn him to turn back. But it was not

easy to tell him why he had come. He could not tell him of the Bounder's black treachery, of the ambush that was prepared for him, of the Highcliffians on the watch.

Wharton peered at him in the gloom. He could make out Redwing's face only very indistinctly, but he could see that it was white and strained. He realised that something was amiss.

"Anything up, old fellow?" he asked quietly and amiably.

"Yes! No—I mean—"

"My dear old bean," said Harry, "you needn't mind telling me if you've rather mistaken Redwing. If he's not quite so jolly friendly as you supposed he is—"

Wharton had little doubt that it was that—that Redwing had told him on the telephone rather what he hoped and believed than what he was sure of. He had been mistaken, misled by his own wishes, and had found out his mistake. So it seemed to Harry; and Tom Redwing was only too glad to leave it at that. Not for worlds would he have revealed the treachery of his chum that sickened his heart with disgust.

"I—I—I'm sorry," stammered Redwing. "But it's not as I thought—I

LEATHER POCKET WALLETS FOR BUDDING POETS!

Walter Green, of Church Lane, Upper Mytholm, Hebden Bridge, Yorks, has caught the judge's eye with the following Greycrifiers limerick:

Said Temple to Capper one day:
"Fry's not written Wright right,
I say."

And the master replied,
As the blunder he spied:
"Right! Fry, write Wright right,
right away!"

Note: All jokes and limericks should be sent to: c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

mean, I was mistaken. I never knew. I—I—"

"That's all right," said Harry. "Don't let it worry you. I'm glad you came along to tell me, though, before I got to the bung." He laughed. "I shouldn't like to walk in for another row with Smithy."

"It's rotten!" muttered Redwing. "I—I've brought you out for nothing, but—but, you see—"

"A trot won't do me any harm," said Harry. "No harm done, old bean. The fact is I was jolly surprised by what you told me on the phone, but I'm not very surprised at this. I'll get back."

"I'm sorry," said Redwing miserably. "All serene, old chap! Good-night!" "Good-night!"

Redwing stood in the path breathing hard as Harry Wharton turned back the way he had come and disappeared.

Wharton's footsteps died away towards the Wimford road.

He was gone.

Tom's heart was heavy as lead. But it was a relief that he had stopped Wharton in time, that he had saved him from the ambush that had been laid for him, that he had gone back to Wharton Lodge unharmed and knowing nothing of the wretched treachery that had been intended.

Slowly at last Tom moved and walked

back the dark path towards the distant bungalow.

What was he to say to Smithy when he saw him? What could he say? How was he to deal with the chum who had deceived him, deluded him, made use of him with utter unscrupulousness in a treacherous plot? He hardly knew; but he felt that, at least, this must be the finish. He had to see Smithy, but he would leave the place that very night. He would try to forgive and forget, to meet Smithy on the old friendly terms when they joined up at Greycrifiers next term; but that very night he would quit the riverside bungalow. He had borne enough, and he was at the end of his tether now.

He gave hardly a thought to the Highcliffe fellows. He had only the vaguest idea of what was planned by them. They were watching on the footpath for Wharton, he knew that; it was a "rag" of some sort—a beating for Wharton. Four to one; it was certain to be a brutal rag when Pon & Co. had a hand in it. Well, that was stopped now. They could wait and watch as long as they liked, but Wharton would not come. If he came on them as he returned to the bungalow he would tell them that their treacherous trickery was known, that their intended victim had been turned back—and he would not mind his words.

But he gave little thought to them. This sort of thing was what might be expected from Pon & Co. It was his chum's treachery that weighed on his mind and his heart.

He saw nothing, heard nothing, of the Highcliffians as he tramped along in the darkness.

With a heavy heart and a deeply troubled mind he tramped on and reached the end of the footpath.

There was a sudden stir in the blackness, and an unseen figure dropped from a branch above his head. Before Redwing knew what was happening, a thick, heavy sack was thrown over his head and drawn down.

Bump!

Taken utterly by surprise, Redwing went down heavily on his back in the grass, enveloped in the thick sack.

A knee was planted on him, pinning him down. Hands grasped him on all sides.

He panted and struggled.

In those wild and amazing moments he hardly realised what was happening. The thick sack over his face half-choked him.

It was drawn tight, a cord run round it, and tightened over his legs, and swiftly knotted.

He could hear through the thickness of the sack a sound of panting breath and scuffling movements, but that was all—not a word was spoken by his assailants.

He struggled fiercely after the first moment of utter amazement, but he was held securely by many hands.

His arms were held as if in a grip of steel, and a cord was knotted around him, rendering him helpless.

He strove hard to cry out.

But the assailants had taken care of that. The cord round his head fastened the sack tightly over his mouth, gagging him. He could breathe only through his nose and with difficulty, half-suffocated.

Helpless, with his hands and feet tied, he was utterly at the mercy of his unseen assailants.

He felt himself lifted from the ground.

Three or four pairs of hands were

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carrying him, still in silence. He was half-carried, half-dragged away.

His brain was in a whirl.

He did not even guess at the moment that his assailants were the High-cliffians.

He had taken it for granted that it was a ragg that Pon & Co. intended; that they had meant to set on Wharton four to one and "beat him up." That was all he had guessed. But this was kidnapping; this was not a rag. This was so amazing that it seemed like a dream to him; he could hardly believe that it was real as he was borne away, muffled in the sack, bound hand and foot.

Who were they? Where were they taking him? Into what hands had he fallen? His brain seemed to spin.

He was carried on, he could not guess where. He could hear nothing through the suffocating thickness of the heavy sack except a faint sound of shuffling and shuffling from his captors as they moved.

He was dumped down at last—not on the ground, but on hard wood. There was movement under him, and he realised in blank amazement that it was a boat into which he had been dumped. They had taken him down to the river and dumped him into a boat.

He lay in the bottom of the boat trying to breathe, lost in astonishment. Through the thick sack he heard the sound of oars jammed in the rowlocks. He felt the boat in motion.

He stirred in the sack and tried hard to cry out, but only the faintest gurgle escaped his lips under the pressure of the sack-tied down over his mouth.

What did it mean? He was kidnaped. Who could want to kidnap him? Had they, whoever they were, mistaken him for somebody else?

The boat glided on.

What, in heaven's name, could it all mean? And then in a flash it came to him, and he knew it was not a "rag" that had been planned. This was what had been planned; this was what had been waiting for Harry Wharton. It was the Highcliffe gang that had seized him. They had taken him for Wharton in the darkness as he came along the footpath, where they lay in ambush for Wharton. They could only have had the merest glimpse of him in the darkness. He was about Wharton's size, and wore a Greyfriars cap. The mistake had been natural enough—indeed, inevitable, as they knew nothing of Redwing being in the wood.

He had thought that he might meet Ponsoby & Co. on his way back, waiting for Wharton. But he had never dreamed of anything like this. Even if he had guessed that they might mistake him for Wharton in the darkness he would only have expected them to rush on him, and as soon as he spoke they would have discovered their mistake.

But that was not the game. This was the game. The use of the sack showed that Wharton was not intended to know who had attacked him. It was something more serious than a rag that was planned—something in which Pon & Co. dared not let their participation become known; something in which even the reckless Bounder did not care to have it known that he had taken a hand.

What were they going to do?

He felt the boat bump on a shore.

He was lifted out and half carried, half dragged again through clinging hawthorn bushes.

Once more he was dumped down on hard, cold stone.

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He could hear the breathless panting of the fellows who had carried him. Still not a word was spoken, not even a whisper. They were very careful not to give their victim a chance to guess their identity. Had it been Wharton, as they believed, he could hardly have guessed. Tom Redwing knew!

The cord round his head that bit into his mouth, gagging him with the sack, was loosened. Someone had loosened it—not to let him speak, but to give him more freedom in breathing. The sound of retreating footsteps immediately followed.

Redwing found his voice. The sack was still close over his face, but he could cry out now. He shouted, but it was only a muffled sound that penetrated through the thickness of the sack.

If they heard it told them nothing. They were already hurrying back to the boat. He heard no further sound from them. The sack muffled his hearing, and he did not hear the boat depart, but he knew that it was gone. He was left alone—where, he could not begin to guess only he knew that it must be some lonely spot close beside the river. Lonely enough for no cry to be heard. There was no doubt of that. Still he shouted and shouted again, his voice coming faint and muffled from the interior of the sack. But no reply came, and at last, in sheer exhaustion, he desisted.

They were gone—gone to tell Smithy of their success. And it was Smithy's clum who lay helpless, abandoned on the lonely island in the river, the victim of Smithy's treachery!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Is Uneasy!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH came in at the french windows at the back of the bungalow, with his hands in his pockets, his manner careless. Casual as he tried to look, his face was unquiet, his eyes furtive. He almost dreaded to meet Tom Redwing's eyes. He had stayed out as long as he could, but anxious as he was to avoid Redwing, he was still more anxious not to excite his doubts. He had to keep up the pretence of expecting Wharton to arrive at the bungalow, and it was time now, if he was coming at all. Redwing would be expecting him every moment, and the Bounder had to appear to be expecting him also. Hypocrisy was not much in Smithy's line, with all his faults. But he had left himself no choice.

The Bounder picked a cigarette from the box on the table and lighted it, with a hand that shook a little.

Redwing was not in the room, and the Bounder went through into the hall. He half expected to see Tom at the front door, waiting for Wharton. But the door was shut, and no one was in the hall.

The Bounder called Perkins.

"Do you know where Mr. Redwing is?" he asked.

"I think he went into the garden, sir. I heard the door close a little while ago," answered Perkins.

The Bounder was glad of it.

He shrank more and more from meeting Redwing. He did not repent—yet at all events—that he had done. But the hypocritical part he had to play in Redwing's presence was irksome to him. He had to affect to be expecting Wharton—to be surprised at his non-arrival—all the time dreading that Tom, unsuspecting as he was, would read something in his face, would guess

something from his furtive eyes. He was glad to be spared that ordeal.

He moved about restlessly, smoking the cigarette.

Pon & Co. by this time must have finished—if they had got away with it. They must have got away with it, or Wharton would have arrived. Smithy did not anticipate seeing them again for some time. After they were finished with their prisoner they were to go back to the car and resume their interrupted joy-ride, returning later to the bungalow. It was necessary to keep up appearances before the servants as well as Redwing.

What had been done was far beyond the limits of the most lawless rag; it was an outrage that might cause Colonel Wharton to invoke the law. It was possible—indeed, probable—that the police would be set looking for Wharton when he was missed.

Pon & Co. had to be careful. They were going to let themselves be seen in the streets of Wimford in the car before they drove back to the bungalow. An alibi might be needed if anyone thought of connecting them with the affair.

But where was Redwing?

The Bounder was glad not to see him—*anxious to avoid seeing him*. But it was not that he should stay out of the house when he, at least, was expecting Wharton to come. Waiting at the gate, perhaps. The Bounder grinned sardonically at the thought of Tom leaning on the gate, watching the dark road for the fellow who was not coming. He would realise sooner or later that Wharton was not coming, and would come in.

But he did not come in.

The Bounder smoked cigarette after cigarette, growing vaguely uneasy. He opened the front door at last and walked down the drive to the gate to see whether Redwing was there.

No one was there.

Herbert Vernon-Smith leaned on the gate, uneasy, wondering. Where on earth was Redwing? He could hardly have gone out, when Wharton was expected. He must know by this time that Wharton was not coming. He was more than half an hour overdue. Possibly, after waiting at the gate, he had walked out to see whether Wharton was on his way. Yes, that was it, the Bounder concluded. He leaned on the gate and lighted a fresh cigarette, waiting for Tom to appear.

Long minute followed minute. No one passed on the dark, lonely road. The evening was growing old. Where the dickens was Redwing? Even if he had gone along the footpath to meet Wharton he should have been back by this time. He had had time to reach Wharton Lodge, if he thought of going so far. Had he done so? Had he learned that Wharton had started and had not arrived—guessing, therefore, that something must have happened to him on the way? The Bounder wondered uneasily. He was glad of Redwing's absence, but he wished he knew.

There was a glare of headlights on the road, the roar of a car. Pon & Co. were returning.

The car dashed up and stopped at the gate. The Bounder stepped quickly out into the road. Pon grinned at him from the wheel. Gadsby and Monson grinned from the interior of the car. Only Vavasour was looking rather serious. Vav was not quite easy in his vacant mind.

"All serene, old bean!" said Pon cheerfully.

"You got away with it?" breathed the Bounder.



"Quick, you fellows!" said Ponsonby. "Wharton will be along soon and we'll collar him. Smithy pulled the wool over that fool Redwing's eyes all right—what?" Not far away, unseen in the blackness, Redwing stood quite still, listening to every word.

"Naturally!"
"You got Wharton?"

"Of course!"

"And you left him—"

"On the jolly old island."

The Bounder breathed hard and deep. His eyes glistened on the gloom. All had gone well, then! Redwing's strange absence had given him an unquiet feeling that something might have gone wrong. But all had gone well!

"Good!" he said.

"And Redwing hasn't tumbled?" grinned Gadsby. "Does he think the dear man changed his mind about walkin' over, or what?"

"He's gone out," said Vernon-Smith. "He hasn't tumbled, of course—he's not likely to. Mind, not a syllable before him."

"Not a syllable before anybody," answered Ponsonby. "It would be jolly serious if this got out."

"I think it was too thick, absolutely!" came from Vavasour.

"Shut up, Vav."

The Bounder held the gate open, and Pon tooted the car into the garage. They went into the bungalow together.

"Eleven o'clock," said Pon cheerily. "The night's yet young, my beloved 'earsers. Bridge or poker?"

They sat down to cards and cigarettes. Pon & Co. were in great spirits. In wisps—though the door was carefully closed—they gave Smithy a description of how they had "bagged" the "dear man" in the wood and left him on the island. Only Vavasour did not rejoice with his comrades, feeling rather scared at what had been done. The Bounder listened, with gloating satisfaction; passing his hand over his discoloured eye. The fellow who had

given him that eye was paying for it now.

"You saw nothing of Redwing?" he asked.

"Nothin' of anybody, old bean."

"He can't have seen anythin' of it."

"No fear! Not a soul about."

"He would have chipped in, if he had! He can't know anythin'." But—

it's queer that he doesn't come in," said the Bounder.

"Let him rip!" said Pon carelessly.

"Deal, old bean."

But the Bounder's mind was not in the cards. Redwing's prolonged absence was strange and mysterious. Why did he not come in? Was it possible—could it be possible—that he had discovered something—or suspected something—and had left? More than once, he had said that he had better leave, irked and distressed by his surroundings at the bungalow. If he had an inkling of the Bounder's treachery, it was quite certain that he would go. Was that it?

If that was not it, what was it? He had gone out, and had not returned. No accident could have happened to him—that was absurd. He opened to him Wharton Lodge—he would have rung up to tell the Bounder so. Why was he not here? What could it mean?

It was midnight when the Bounder rose from the card-table. He went to Redwing's room and looked in. Tom's suitcase was there—his things were about the room. If he had gone, he had not taken his belongings. He could hardly have gone without packing his bag. But if he had not gone, where was he? Some accident on the dark country road—

He could know nothing! If he knew,

he certainly would not have gone and left Wharton in the hands of the Highcliffe rascals. If he suspected, he could only suspect a "rag"—too late to intervene. That would be enough for him—likely enough, he would go, without coming back to see his friend who had betrayed his confidence, deceived and deluded him—leaving his things to be sent on after him. Was that likely? If that was not the explanation, the Bounder could not think of one.

He rejoined the Highcliffians.

"Redwing's makin' a night of it," yawned Ponsonby. "Who says bed?"

"Bed!" yawned Monson.

"Nighy-nighty, Smithy, old bean!"

The Highcliffians dispersed to their rooms. The Bounder was left alone. He stood at the open french windows, staring out into the black night. Rain was beginning to fall. The fine day was followed by a wet night. The drops dashed unheeded in the Bounder's face.

Rain! That fellow on the island—he was lying there, in the rain. The Bounder felt a pang. He had not thought of that. He had thought of nothing but vengeance. But his thoughts did not linger on Wharton. Redwing had not come back and he did not expect that he would come back now. Redwing could know nothing—assuredly he could not know that Harry Wharton was lying bound on the lonely island in the rain—but he must have suspected something and gone. The Bounder had lost his chum—he had his vengeance, but it left a bitter taste in his mouth. And he did not know—he could not know and could not guess—that it was his chum who lay, where he believed that his enemy was lying, in the darkness and the falling rain.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Looks In!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter's up!" exclaimed Bub Cherry.

"And it's only half-past ten! What are you doing out of bed, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

It was a sunny morning after the rain. Harry Wharton & Co. had returned from a ramble, when Billy Bunter rolled out on the terrace at Wharton Lodge.

"I say, you fellows, I thought you were gone out!" said the fat Owl, blinking at them. "Still, if you're going out again, it's all right."

"Bunter isn't glad to see us!" said Bob Cherry sorrowfully.

"The gladfulness does not seem to be terrific!" grinned Hurrree Jamset Ram Singh.

"The fact is, I've got something on this morning," said Bunter.

"I can see that," agreed Bob. "You've got Wharton's best trousers on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Wharton is going to make a fuss about lending a fellow a pair of trousers——"

"Don't burst them, old fat bean, if you can help it!" said Harry.

"If you fellows are going out you'd better start," said Bunter. "I don't mean that I want to get rid of you, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got something on, and I shan't want you," said Bunter. "You needn't fancy that I'm going to call on Smithy, or anything like that."

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

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. You don't seem to have seen Smithy, after all, last night, Wharton. Why didn't you?"

"I came back instead," answered Harry briefly.

"I heard you saying that you'd met Redwing——"

"You hear too much, old fat man."

"I think it's rather rotten to keep things from a pal, especially a guest. It's rather rotten, too, not to go and see Smithy, when he's turned friendly and asked you. If you got on Smithy's right side he might ask the lot of us over to the bung. Look here, you haven't been rowing again, I hope?"

"No, ass!"

"Well, that's all right, then. If Smithy's civil, there's no reason why a pal from school shouldn't give him a look-in."

"Better keep clear," said Wharton dryly. "Leek here, Bunter, don't be an ass! Come out on the river."

"Blow the river!" answered Bunter. And he rolled away.

Harry Wharton set his lips a little. It was obvious, after what Tom Redwing had said on the footpath the previous night, that the Bounder was still hostile, and it was up to the Wharton Lodge party to keep clear of him. Still, Billy Bunter was his own master; and if he chose to butt in at Smithy's bung, and get kicked out for his pains, he was welcome to what he asked for. The Famous Five went down to the river, leaving the fat Owl to his own devices.

Billy Bunter's own devices led him in the direction of Riverside Bungdow. The result of his first call on Smithy had not been encouraging. But after that friendly message over the telephone, Bunter hoped that it would be all right. He rolled away along the towpath down the river. This time Bunter did not mean to knock at the front door and see that cheekey man—

servant, Perkins. He was going to drop in by the garden gate from the river, in an informal sort of way, hoping to find the Bounder himself, and to find him in a good temper. He hoped, too, that Redwing would be on the spot. Redwing, of course, was a beast; but he would not let the Highcliffe beasts kick a Greystriars chap.

The fat Owl arrived at the gate on the towpath, and blinked over it rather cautiously through his spectacles. He saw nothing of Redwing; neither were Pon & Co. visible. Probably they had not breakfasted yet. But the bungalow garden was not untenanted. A fellow with a black, frowning brow, and his hands thrust deep in his pockets was pacing there, alone. Billy Bunter blinked warily at the Bounder.

Smithy did not look in the good temper Bunter had hoped to find him in. He looked very far from that. On second thoughts—proverbially the best—Bunter decided to remain on the far side of the gate, till he saw how the cat was going to jump, as it were.

"I say, Smithy!"

The Bounder started, and stared round. Bunter's fat squeak drew him from the depths of a gloomy reverie. His eyes fell on the fat face over the gate.

"You! You fat fool!" snapped the Bounder. "What do you want?"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

Vernon-Smith swung impatiently away. But he turned back the next moment. He had been thinking about his chum, who had left him, as he believed, without a word. But he had been wondering, too, what was happening at Wharton Lodge. Wharton's friends, and the old colonel, and Miss Wharton—all the household must have been surprised and alarmed, by his disappearance.

Vernon-Smith had expected to hear from some of them. As Wharton had started for the bungalow, surely it was at the bungalow that they would inquire, when he failed to return? The Bounder could hardly understand why there had been no inquiry already; the falsehoods he had been prepared to tell had not been needed yet, but he was puzzled to know why. Bunter could tell him what was going on at the Lodge; and the Bounder came down to the gate, to learn what he could from the fat Owl.

Billy Bunter eyed him warily through his big spectacles.

He was anxious—awfully anxious—to establish friendly relations with the Bounder—he was still more anxious to keep out of reach of Smithy's boot till those friendly relations had been safely established. In the circumstances, a fellow had to be wary.

"I rather expected to see Wharton last night." The Bounder was careful to speak casually. "He seems to have changed his mind about coming over."

"Silly ass, you know," said Bunter. "I told him it was rotten not to come, after you asked him, old chap." The Bounder looked at the fat Owl.

He had expected, as a matter of course, that Bunter would answer that Wharton had started, and that he was missing from home. Bunter's reply made him wonder whether he was dreaming.

"You—you told him——" he stammered.

"Yes, I jolly well did!" said Bunter. "Silly rot, keeping up school rage in hols. What! Not a thing I would do! You see——"

"What do you mean?" asked the Bounder, in a husky voice. "Do—do

you mean you've seen Wharton since—since he started last night, or—or what?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh! Yes! Of course! I saw him when he came back——"

"When—he—came—back?"

"Yes, last night——"

"Last night?" breathed the Bounder dazedly.

"Yes, and this morning, of course. Why shouldn't I see him, when I'm staying in his house?" asked Bunter, in astonishment.

The Bounder stood quite still. Unless he was dreaming, or out of his senses, what did this mean? Had Pon & Co. blundered—had the fellow got away—or what?

"Did—did Wharton get back last night?" The Bounder found his voice.

"Eh! Yes! Of course he did!" said the astonished Owl.

"Did—did he say what had happened—I mean, did he say that anything had happened——"

Even in his amazement and confusion the Bounder realised that he had to take care not to betray himself.

"Not that I know of. I heard him tell the other fellows that he had met Redwing on the footpath——"

The Bounder started convulsively.

"Redwing! He met Redwing?"

"So he said."

The Bounder pressed a hand to his throbbing brow. What did it all mean?

Bunter blinked at him in amazement. What was the matter with Smithy was a mystery to the fat junior. It was clear that something was the matter with him.

"I fancy Redwing butted in," prattled on Bunter. "Anyhow, Wharton came back after meeting him on the footpath——"

"You fool! You lying fool!" the Bounder broke out furiously. "By gad, I'll——"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He gave one startled blink at the Bounder's furious face, jumped back from the gate, and ran.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH made one stride after the fleeing Owl, and stopped. He stared after Bunter, as the terrified fat junior vanished, with a haggard face.

He realised—he needed only a moment to realise—that Bunter had told him the facts. It was obvious enough. He knew—now—that Harry Wharton, on his way to the bungalow the previous night, had met Redwing and turned back. Nothing had happened to Wharton. Redwing must have found out something and warned him; that was pretty clear.

And then—Redwing had gone! That was why he had gone! Yet Pon & Co. had come back bragging of their success—they had told him, with gleeful details, how they had bagged Wharton in the wood, and taken him to the island and left him there! They could not have done so—they had lied—but why?

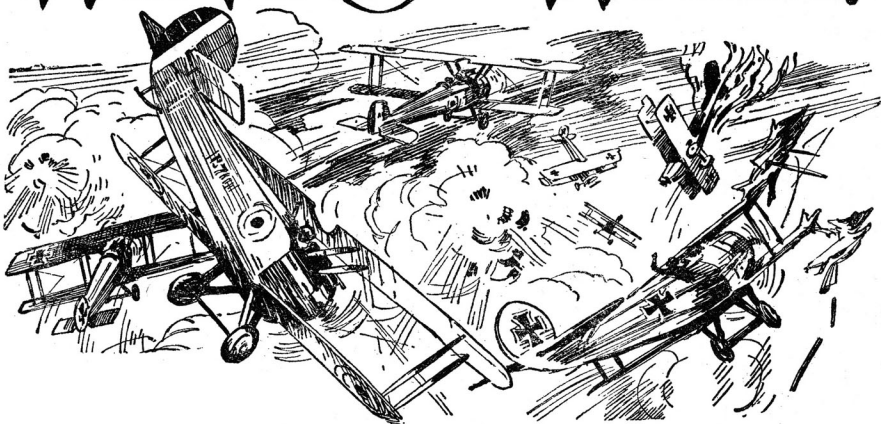
The Bounder strode up the garden path and tramped into the bungalow. His face was set and savage.

Ponsonby & Co. were at breakfast—a late breakfast. They were looking quite merry and bright, when the Bounder burst in, with a face like thunder.

"Hallo, Smithy!" drawled Ponsonby. "What——"

(Continued on page 23.)

WINGS OF WAR!



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.
 SHOT DOWN OVER GERMAN TERRITORY BRUCE THORBURN, A YOUNG BRITISH FLYING OFFICER OF 256 SQUADRON, FINDS HIMSELF BENEFILENDED BY FERRERS LOCKE, A BRITISH SECRET SERVICE AGENT. IN LOCKE'S FARMHOUSE THE YOUNGSTER OVERHEARS TWO GERMAN FLYING OFFICERS PLANNING TO FLY A CAPTURED PLANE OVER THE BRITISH LINES AND BLOW UP THE BRITISH HEADQUARTERS. THEIR PLANS ARE FRUSTRATED, HOWEVER, AND LOCKE AND THORBURN, IN THE GUISE OF THE TWO GERMANS, SET OFF IN THE BRITISH PLANE. A DOG-FIGHT WITH THE ENEMY ENSUES, AND THORBURN IS BADLY WOUNDED. TAKING CHARGE OF THE CONTROLS, LOCKE AVERTS DISASTER AND LANDS THE PLANE SAFE AND SOUND ON THE AERODROME OF 256. LATER, DURING A RAID BY A PLAYFUL FLYING OFFICER FROM A RIVAL SQUADRON, GENERAL CARTWRIGHT, WHO IS ON HIS WAY TO MAKE AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT TO LOCKE, IS DRENCHED WITH WATER. "BRUMMMMPH!" HE BOOMS, AFTER ACCEPTING AN APOLOGY FROM THE GULPHIT. "BOYS WILL BE BOYS, EVEN IN WAR-TIME!"

(Now read on.)

Tell-tale Footprints!

FERRERS LOCKE was spared a reply, for at that moment the orderly returned with a change of clothing for the general.

In a short space of time the general was comfortably clothed again. Then he motioned to the two majors to be seated.

"Both of you know," he began, in a businesslike way, "that H.Q. want a certain gentleman who has done much Secret Service work for them to remain in this sector. It happens well that you, Major Pedant, should be due for leave, and that you, Major Locke, should be a gentleman fully capable of taking over his command. Both of you gentlemen know that there is a leakage of plans from this Army front, and it will be—among other things—Major Locke's task to find out and stop that leakage as quickly as possible."

He looked up suddenly as there came a soft sound from outside, and to satisfy himself, strode to the doorway and looked out. But beyond a certain amount of activity in the region of the distant hangars there was no sign of anyone near.

"Gentlemen," resumed General Cartwright, "someone—a particularly bright specimen at that—has managed to scotch our plans time and time again. His activities are not confined to any one area; he is a regular will-o'-the-wisp. It is my firm belief that he has a chain of confederates. But, until we catch him, the Allied cause will linger in the balance and the War drag on." He drew a bundle of documents from his dispatch-case and handed them to

Ferrers Locke. "These I am instructed to give you, sir. When you have made yourself fully acquainted with their contents, my instructions to you are to burn them."

Locke took the documents and pocketed them.

"Very good, sir!"

"Your official posting to this squadron will be confirmed in to-night's Orders," went on the general, speaking to Ferrers Locke. "In the meantime, Major Pedant will hand over to you and make you familiar with your duties as commanding officer of 256 Squadron." He shook Major Pedant warmly by the hand.

"I'll bid you au revoir, my dear major," he said. "You have done well, and earned a rest. To your successor"—here he took Ferrers Locke by the hand—"I wish all the luck one soldier can wish another."

General Cartwright stood up, and was about to depart, when a loud knock came at the orderly-room door.

"Come in!"

In response to the order a tall, coarse-faced giant of a man in khaki, whose jacket-sleeves bore the stripes of a sergeant, strode in, with military precision, and slammed a terrific salute.

"Who are you?" barked the general. "And what is your business?"

"Sergeant Wilkins, sir! Ordered to proceed this morning to 256 Squadron and report for duty."

Locke and Pedant eyed the newcomer, with knitted brows.

"Know anything about aerodromes, planes, or engines?" queried Locke.

"Yes, sir!" snapped back Sergeant

Wilkins. "Had two years in charge of cadets at Ingleson Aerodrome, sir."

Again Locke's brows knitted. Then they eased as he remembered Thorburn, Daniels, and Glynn had "finished off" at that training school.

"Have you come straight here, sergeant?" asked Locke, for reasons of his own.

"This very moment, sir," said Sergeant Wilkins. Then slammed another salute and retired, as he was motioned to go.

"He looks a pretty capable fellow," said the general, pulling on his gloves. "Hope you find him useful, major. So long!"

"Good-bye, sir!" The two majors saluted General Cartwright, and watched him go.

Then Locke strolled over to the small window set fairly high up in the orderly-room, and stared after the bulky form of the new arrival, Sergeant Wilkins.

"Something I don't like about that new man, Pedant," said Locke. "Do you remember when the general got up—thought he heard someone outside while we were talking?"

Major Pedant nodded. "I thought someone was outside myself," he remarked.

"I'm sure of it!" said Locke grimly. "See those footmarks in the soft mould, just by the window, Pedant?"

"Sure!"

"Well, they were not there when we entered this office," said Locke. "Moreover, I was quick to notice stray particles of mould on the estimable Sergeant Wilkins' highly polished boots."

"You mean he was listening to what the general was saying?"

"I don't know," returned Locke. "But if I can manage to get hold of his boots and fit them to my own satisfaction in those footprints, I shall know. Come!" They returned to the table and busied themselves with official papers for the next quarter of an hour or so, until it was time for lunch. Then they locked the squadron office door and started for the mess.

It was an instinctive glance Locke threw to that spot beneath the office window, and, as his grip suddenly tightened on Major Pedant's arm, that worthy looked, too.

"Well, of all the queer things—" he began.

For there was no sign of those incriminating footprints now; the earth had been smoothed over them, completely obliterating all trace.

Suspicion I

WELL— Jim Daniels fairly gasped, and in his excitement grabbed his chum, Ron Glynn, by the arm.

"What's biting you, old warrior?" ventured Ron. Then, following Jim's gaze, he, too, started.

Coming towards the hangars, outside which the two were inspecting their planes, tramped a familiar figure, "It's Wilkins—" began Ron.

"It is—it am—it are!" agreed Jim, and frowned.

Back into his mind returned a memory of those strenuous days at Ingleshon; of a certain sergeant's tyranny. Yet here in France was the last place Jim reckoned ever to see that particular sergeant.

The same thought must have been in the mind of Sergeant Wilkins himself, for as he caught sight of the two chums he paused in his stride, gulped, and then strode on again. By the time he drew level with Jim and Ron, Sergeant Wilkins had himself in hand. There was nothing wrong with the slamming salute he gave the two youngsters as he halted exactly two paces in front of them.

"Sergeant Wilkins," said Jim, for want of something better to say.

"Correct, sir," said Wilkins, with a strained attempt at friendliness. "Quite like old times to see you young gentlemen."

"Not quite," returned Ron. "You should know that, sergeant."

Sergeant Wilkins smiled a sickly smile.

"I trust, sir, you do not harbour any ill feelings—" He looked, or tried to look, reproachful. "Duty, sir—is duty, sir."

"Quite," chimed in Jim, eyeing the tyrant shrewdly. "Have you been posted to 256?"

"This morning, sir," replied Wilkins. "And I feel highly honoured. Next to Baldy's Angels they say 256 has the best reputation in France. If you will allow me to say so, gentlemen, it is a pleasure to see you both again, and to be attached to your squadron."

There was an air of sincerity about Wilkins' last remark that dissipated the instinctive feeling of suspicion that crept into Jim's mind. He had never liked the sergeant; had always felt there was something wrong with him. But now

he mentally censured himself for being a prejudiced ass.

The sergeant saluted again and strode off briskly in the direction of the armoury. Once within the shadow which the building cast, Wilkins turned and looked back at Jim and Ron. The vindictive expression that crossed his face would have alarmed the two if they could have seen it.

"The pups!" Wilkins voiced his thoughts aloud. "By heavens, I'll get even with them—"

He broke off and wheeled sharply as Ferrers Locke appeared from behind the corner of the armoury.

"Is it a habit of yours to voice your thoughts aloud, sergeant?"

Sergeant Wilkins stood as stiff as a ramrod as Locke bore down upon him.

"And might your commanding officer inquire who it is you intend to get even with?" added Ferrers Locke.

Sergeant Wilkins forced a smile.

"I had just heard, sir, from Mr. Daniels and Mr. Glynn, that a chum of theirs—Mr. Thorburn—had a rough passage with the Huns. You see, sir, Mr. Thorburn was a cadet at Ingleshon, and I was sergeant in charge—"

"Oh, I see!" smiled Locke. "You feel rather for your old pupil, what? Well, he is mending rapidly. Expect him back at the squadron very soon."

"I'm mighty glad to hear it, sir," said Wilkins. "Those three young gentlemen were among my best pupils—"

He saluted as Locke moved off, and, biting his lip, entered the armoury. From one of the windows he watched the tall, soldierly figure, apparently anxious to see whether Locke would join Daniels and Glynn, and a spasm of relief flickered across his coarse features when he saw the major strike off at a tangent from the hangars and enter the squadron office.

"Might have guessed that where Thorburn was, so the other two would be," Wilkins told himself. "Well, perhaps it's just as well."

After this somewhat enigmatical remark he fell to checking the store of bombs and drums of ammunition in the armoury. While he was thus engaged Jim and Ron found themselves summoned to the orderly-room.

Ferrers Locke motioned them to take a seat.

"Just met an old friend of yours—Sergeant Wilkins," he began.

Jim and Ron grimaced.

"Old friend—" ejaculated the former, then blushed in embarrassment.

"Not exactly a friend, what?" said Locke. "Still, he was upset to hear about Thorburn's wound from you two men."

"What?" exclaimed Jim. "We never said a word about Thorburn to him, sir."

And Ron backed up his chum's statement.

A peculiar expression shadowed Locke's finely chiselled face for a moment, then he shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps I misunderstood the sergeant. However, it is of no moment. What I wanted to say to you two was that there's a tender going into town in half an hour's time. Thought perhaps you would care to hop along and see Thorburn."

Jim's and Ron's face lit up.

"Oh, rather, sir! Thanks!" "Don't mention it," said Locke, with a wave of the hand. "And in case you two should wonder how it is I am giving

you this leave of absence I had better explain that I am now your commanding officer. I see you have heard something about that already?"

"Rumour, sir—" began Jim.

"Well, Major Pedant leaves us this afternoon officially, so you two had better say your good-byes to him before you go. My regards to Thorburn."

The chums retired.

"Thundering good fellow," was Jim's opinion of Locke when, a quarter of an hour later, he and Ron climbed into the tender. "Pedant was good, but he was getting irritable."

Ron nodded.

"Been out here too long," he added. "This chap will be popular with the boys. He's human."

.....

In less than an hour the two were deposited outside the door of a military hospital, and one of the first persons they saw was Bruce Thorburn.

"Scots wa hae!" roared Jim.

A moment later the pair of them were shaking their old chum by the hand.

"How are you feeling, Bruce?"

"Tip-top," smiled Thorburn. "I've got a gammy foot, but except for a slight limp I'm all right. Fed-up with being kept here. They're letting me go to-morrow."

"His chums' faces fell.

"Blighty?" said Jim.

"Shan't see you ugly mug for some time then, Bruce," said Ron. "That's why old Locke let us come and see you this afternoon, I suppose?"

"Not so bad as that," laughed Thorburn. "They'd got it all cut and dried that I was to go home to Blighty like a good little boy and forget all about the War for a few months. But I've wangled it with the giddy old brass hats. I'm coming back to 256 in a couple of days' time. How's that?"

"Hurrah!" There was a spontaneous roar from Jim and Ron. The thought of another separation had dimmed the pleasure of seeing Bruce again, but their spirits revived with his titbit of news.

"That's one in the eye for old Locke," chuckled Thorburn. "What do you think of him?"

"Great!"

"Thought you would. I've heard he's going to be C.O. of 256—Pedant going home on leave, and all that—"

"We've got later news than that, old son," said Jim. "Locke—Major Locke, D.S.O. to be strictly correct—is now commanding 256 Squadron."

"That's good news," said Thorburn. "Got any more?"

"We've got Sergeant Wilkins," said Jim thoughtfully. "Arrived to-day."

"Sergeant Wilkins!" exclaimed Thorburn. "That old tyrant! Well, that's bad news. Why the dickens didn't they send him somewhere else?"

"Echo answers why!" shrugged Jim. "Never mind. Things are different from the Ingleshon days. Wilkins is a back number now."

But that's where the three youngsters were wrong. Sergeant Wilkins was anything but a back number, as they were destined to learn before many days had passed. Even at that moment Ferrers Locke was busily hunting up the sergeant's records. At first sight Locke had known him to be a wrong 'un. Since then two things had happened which convinced him more than ever that his judgment was right. In the

first place, the footprints outside the window; the second, Wilkins' knowledge of Thorburn's "rough passage with the Huns," and the deliberate lie he had told in attributing his knowledge of that affair to his conversation with Jim and Ron.

"That man will pay for watching," Ferrers Locke told himself. "I must be on my guard!"

Behind Locked Doors!

AND so gentlemen, there must be no talking—not even among yourselves."

Major Locke smiled at the gathering of youthful flying officers before him, and intimated that they could smoke if they wished.

It was three days since he had taken over the command of the squadron, and without exception, the members of 256 voted him "one of the best." Bruce Thorburn was back with his pals, although so far he had not been allowed to fly a machine—a circumstance that puzzled and somewhat irritated him. He forgot that slight grievance, however, as he looked upon the face of the man he hero-worshipped.

Locke's features were firm, but kindly, as he addressed his squadron. The mess-room door was locked—the windows were closed; only the flying officers of the squadron were present.

"As you are doubtless aware there has been a severe leakage of our plans on this battle-front," Locke continued. "Even raids by this squadron on certain positions held by the enemy have ended in failure, because of this leakage. Enemy positions have been fortified, and heavy odds have been thrown against us in the air. I cannot impress upon you too strongly, therefore, the importance of keeping this afternoon's raid to yourselves. We take the air at three o'clock. That will be all, gentlemen, except that I wish you all a safe landing."

The squadron broke up, and filed out of the mess-room with surprising orderliness, but an outstretched foot, which looked uncommonly like Jim Daniel's, somehow got entangled in the legs of Lieutenant Wallace, with the result that that luckless individual measured his length on the floor, and half a dozen of his colleagues promptly joined him. That spelled disorderliness with a vengeance. In a few moments a free fight was raging.

"Take your elephant's hoof out of my mouth," wailed Wallace, as Captain Oakley's shapely foot jammed in his face. "Gerrup!"

"Beat it, boys," chirruped Daniels, "Wallace is getting wrathful!"

"You pie-faced goomph!" gasped Wallace, struggling vainly under a crowd of heaving forms.

Jim and his chums playfully emptied a dustpan of ashes over the indignant Wallace, which stopped his protests for the time being at any rate, as certain of the ashes found their way into his mouth, and then retreated for their own hut.

"Lucky dogs—you two," said Thorburn, throwing himself on his camp-bed. "Wish I were going with you on this stunt."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the hut door opened and Major Locke entered.

"Oh, Thorburn," he said casually, "I shall want you in the back seat this afternoon—"

Thorburn sprang off the bed like a coiled spring.

"Me, sir?"

The major nodded.

GREYFRIARS HEROES.

No. 24.

This week our Greyfriars Rhymester rattles off a few verses characterising the hero worshipped by the pompous Paul Pontifex Prout, the sporting master of the Fifth.



THE deeds of Paul Pontifex Prout Long ago, in the land of the Rockies,

Have won him great fame
As a hunter of game,
And his hero, without any doubt,
A member of this gallant flock is;
No dangerous trifle of hunting would puzzle
The terrible rifle of Marmaduke Muzzle.

Sir Marmaduke Muzzle is hot
At winning the prizes at Bisley;
And we must relate
That he's equally great
At putting a bear on the spot,
Or taking a pot at a grizzly:
He flounders in water and chances the fever
For hours, just to slaughter an innocent beaver.

And any old thing that's alive
He swiftly turns into a body;
With a rifle or two
In his little canoe,
He sets out in spring to derive
Some sport on the great Irawadi;



"Doctor's orders are that you mustn't fly a machine for a month at least," he said. "But there's nothing against you showing your skill with a Lewis gun in the back seat."

Before Thorburn could recover from his astonishment the major had gone. "Hurrah!" chirruped the youngster. "You hear that, you guys—little me in the back seat of the major's bus? Better than moping about down here, what?"

"His chums agreed."
"Going over to the armoury toot-sweet," continued Thorburn. "Want to see that my Lewis is behaving itself. See you anon!"

He hastened out of the hut, limping slightly, and made for the armoury store.

Sergeant Wilkins was there with an array of bombs before him, prior to superintending the loading of them on the machines.

Wilkins scowled as he saw Thorburn limp in, but his face, when turned upon the youngster, showed nothing but good-natured concern.

"Mornin', sir. Can I do anything for you?"

Then comes the sharp crackle of Muzzle's repeater
While potting a jackal or bagging a cheetah.

The animals Muzzle has pinked
Have reached an amount that's surprising,
The yak and thegnu
By the thousand he slew,
He made the wild polecat extinct
And practically finished the bison;
The cobra and viper are crouching in cover
While this expert sniper is knocking them over.

The cattle that thoughtfully browse
In the pastures, he'd use for instruction
On game-hunting joys
To intelligent boys;
He looks at the sheep and the cows
And yearns to spread death and destruction;
But knows to his sorrow a terrible fracas
Would certainly follow each miserable carcase.

Now Prout has been heard to proclaim
For Muzzle a great admiration;
But while he agrees
That in matters like these
The hunter has won a great name,
He can't rival Prout's reputation;
When this sporting master a bear was pursuing,
His gun spelt disaster—
—but NOT to the Bruin!

"Nothing, thanks, sergeant," said Thorburn, and crossed to the corporal who was attending to the Lewis gun belonging to Major Locke's machine.

Thorburn, in his keenness, was busy until lunch. Every working portion of the gun was minutely examined, for he knew the danger of a stoppage in the air, perhaps in the thick of a dog-fight.

Satisfied at last that the Lewis was working perfectly, Thorburn gave instructions for it to be fixed upon the gun mounting, and then limped away to the mess.

He would have been alarmed if he could have seen Sergeant Wilkins about three minutes after the armoury door had closed, for the sergeant made it his special job to attend to that Lewis gun, and the nature of his attention was suspicious, to say the least.

(Sergeant Wilkins will have to proceed very warily with the eagle eye of Ferrers Locke on him—what? Look out for another feast of thrills in next week's chapters of this thrilling flying story, chums!)

HARRY WHARTON'S ENEMY!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Pon—you hound—" The Bouncer

knocked.

"What the dickens—"

Perkins was in the room, waiting on the Highcliffians. The Bouncer dismissed him with a savage gesture. He kicked the door shut after the startled manservant, and turned to the Highcliffians with a furious face.

"Ponsonby, you liar—you cheat—you hound! You told me"—he panted with rage—"you told me you got Wharton last night, and stranded him on Monk's Island—"

"So we did!" said Pon blankly.

"Don't shout it out—"

"I've just heard that Wharton met Redwing, and went back—he's at Wharton Lodge now!" hissed the Bouncer. "You never touched him!"

"—You're mad!" said Ponsonby. "I

tell you we got him—just as we told you. He's on the island now."

"You—you fools!" The Bouncer's voice cracked. "If you got anybody, it wasn't Wharton! I tell you he's at home. I've just heard—"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

stuttered Pon, aghast. "But—but—who else could have been coming along the path, then? You told us it was safe—you made us collar him in the dark, and shove the sack over him—"

"Did you see him?" hissed the Bouncer.

"We're not cats to see in the dark, ass! He was about Wharton's size. I know he had a Greyfriars cap—I could make that out!"

"We had the sack over him in a jiffy," said Gadsby. "But I'm sure of the cap. If it wasn't Wharton it was some Greyfriars cad—"

"Redwing was on the footpath. He met Wharton and turned him back—"

The Bouncer's voice was husky.

"Oh gad! Redwing—" stuttered Gadsby.

The truth dawned on them all at once.

"Redwing!" said Ponsonby. "If he was there—you say he was there—Oh gad! Well, serve the meddlin' fool right for butting in! Here, keep off, Vernon-Smith, you hound! By gad—oh!"

The Bouncer's fist crashed into Ponsonby's face, sending him spinning backwards.

The Bouncer did not give him a look. He darted from the room.

He knew now! Redwing—it was his own chum that had fallen into his snare. He tore down to the boathouse like a madman.

He dragged out a skiff, hurred himself into it, and the sculls flashed in the April sunlight. He rowed like one possessed.

In the breakfast-room at the bungalow Cecil Ponsonby staggered to his feet, clasping his nose, the crimson running between his fingers.

"By gad! That's the limit!" said Monson.

"Absolutely!"

"Let's get out of this," muttered Ponsonby thickly. "We're chukkin' that cad! Let's get out of it!"

And Ponsonby & Co. lost no time in "getting out of it."

Tom Redwing felt his heart beat at the sound of a footstep in the silence and solitude.

All through the weary night he had lain there, struggling to loosen his bonds. The rain had beaten down on him soaking the sack that enveloped him, soaking him to the skin.

Morning had come, the rain was gone, and he felt the bright sunshine over him as he lay on the mossy, cracked flags in the roofless cell.

He had loosened the cords, but he was not free yet. The sack was still round him, tied by knotted cords. Many weary hours of struggling were before him before he could get free. Weary, exhausted, spent, he was still keeping up his efforts when the sound of a footstep came gladly to his ears.

"Reddy!"

It was the Bouncer's voice.

He felt the hands of the Bouncer on his sack, on the ropes. Ropes and sack were torn away—he was free!

He sat up dizzily.

His face was white as chalk. A shiver ran through his limbs. Hardy as the sailorman's son was, that night of exposure had told severely on him.

"Smithy!" he muttered faintly.

The Bouncer's face was haggard. Remorse would have followed that ruthless act of vengeance even had the victim been the Bouncer's enemy. And the victim was his own friend—his only friend—

"Reddy," the Bouncer panted hoarsely, "I never knew! Those fools made a mistake in the dark! Oh, Reddy!"

"I know! It was meant for Wharton,"

said Tom quietly.

"You—you knew—"

"I found it out. Thank goodness I warned him in time. Smithy, you madman, this would have meant—it might have meant—prison!"

The Bouncer stared at him. Redwing

was thinking not of his own sufferings, not of the illness that was only too clearly coming upon him, but of the danger the reckless Bouncer had brought on himself by his lawless scheme of vengeance.

"Reddy!" said the Bouncer brokenly.

"You must have been out of your senses, Smithy—"

"I—I think I was! Reddy, if I'd known—if I'd only dreamed—"

He groaned. "They—they blundered—"

"I'm glad they blundered."

"Let me help you into the boat, old bean," said the Bouncer.

In silence he helped Redwing through the thickets, his heart aching as he felt how heavily his chum leaned on him. In silence Vernon Smith rowed back to the bungalow.

Pon & Co. were gone when they arrived there. The Bouncer hardly noticed it. Pon & Co. cards and horses, the "high old time" he had planned for the holidays were not in Smithy's thoughts now. Bitter remorse, anxiety for his chum, filled the Bouncer's mind.

Redwing uttered no word of reproach—but no reproach was needed to add to the tormenting stings of the Bouncer's conscience. He had done evil, and he was punished for it, and, like Cain of old, he felt that his punishment was greater than he could bear.

Harry Wharton & Co. saw no more of the Bouncer during the remainder of the Easter holidays. Even Billy Bunter did not feel disposed to butt in again at Smithy's bung.

Of what had happened that wild night they knew nothing. They did not even know that Redwing was ill, and that Smithy was watching him, tending him nursing him caring for him—a changed Smithy, whom they would hardly have known. They did not know that Redwing would not be well in time to join up at Greyfriars for the new term, and that the Bouncer had obtained leave to remain with him till he could come back to school.

They were glad to have done with the Bouncer, and soon almost forgot him. And the Bouncer had quite forgotten them—the feud, for the present at least, was dead. Whether it would revive again when they met once more at Greyfriars, remained to be seen.

THE END.

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