

“THE SPY OF THE SIXTH!”

Frank Richards' Super
Cover-to-Cover School Yarn of

Harry Wharton & Co.

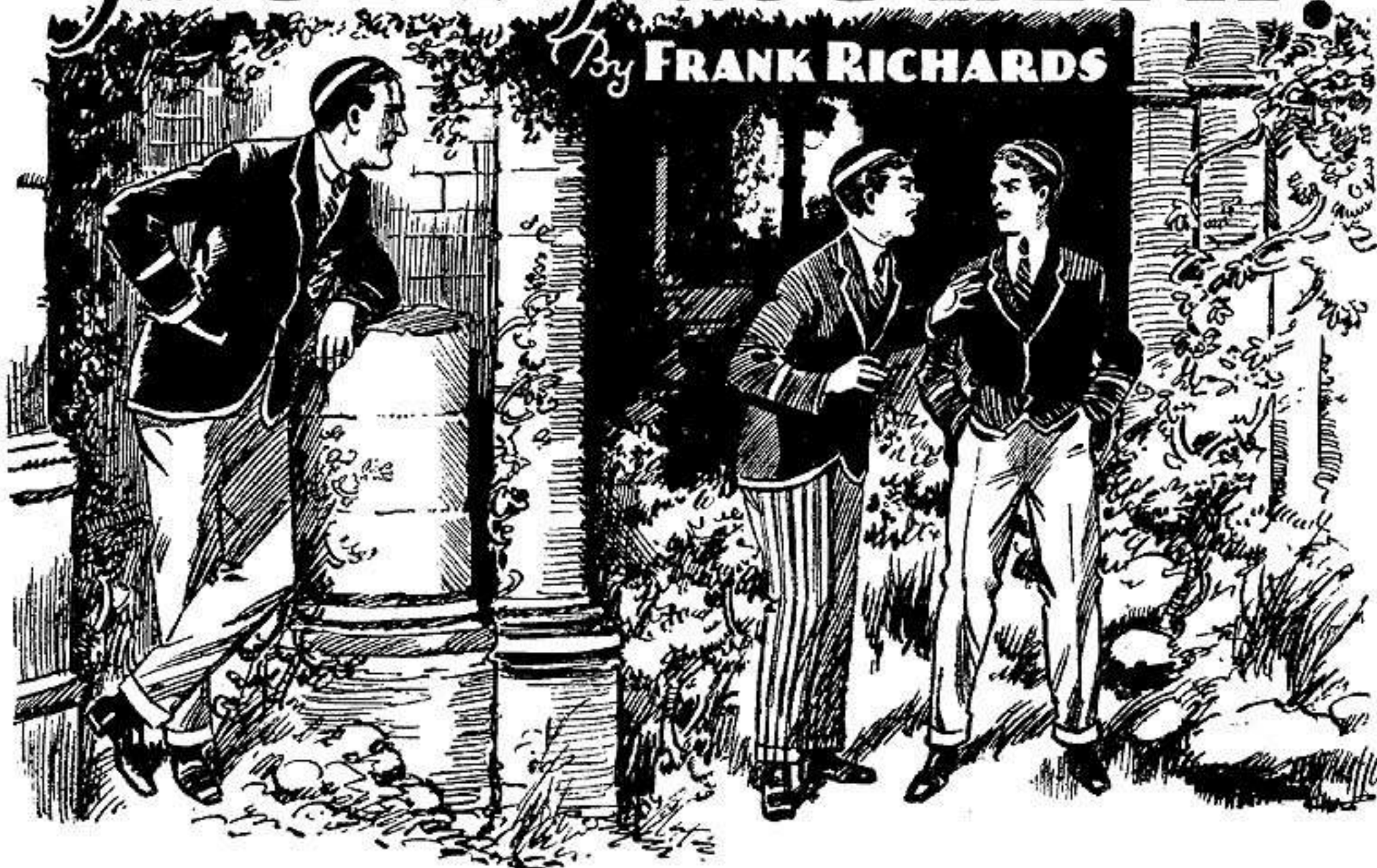
The Magnet ^{2^D}



**WAT-ER
SPLASH!**

The SPY of the SIXTH!

By FRANK RICHARDS



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Smithy's Goal!

BETTER not!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Smithy—"

"Mind your own business!"

"You cheeky ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I tell you—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was evidently not to be reasoned with.

It was Smithy's custom to follow his own obstinate way whithersoever it might lead him. Often it led him into trouble. Now it looked like leading him into trouble once more.

There was a crowd of fellows in the Remove passage. Nearly all the Form were there. All eyes were on Vernon-Smith.

Some of the fellows were grinning. Some looked very serious, some rather alarmed. Smithy had placed a football on the floor near the end of the passage. He was standing by it, watching and waiting, his eyes on the Remove landing. Obviously, he was waiting for someone to come up the Remove staircase, intending to kick the ball as soon as the newcomer's head rose above the level of the landing.

It was a reckless trick—rather a dangerous trick. The Bounder cared nothing for that. It was a Sixth Form prefect who was to get the footer—and Smithy cared nothing for that, either. When the Bounder's temper was roused, he gave no thought to consequences.

Five or six fellows remonstrated, as well as Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. Smithy gave them no heed.

Not that they had any objection, in principle, to Loder of the Sixth getting knocked over by a footer. They were

thinking of what Smithy had forgotten—the consequences.

"You're a mad ass, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry.

"Cheese it!"

"The madfulness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Smithy!" urged Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Loder will be preposterously infuriated!"

"Rats!"

"It will mean a flogging," said Frank Nugent.

Smithy shrugged his shoulders.

"Let it!" he answered.

"Smithy, old man—" said Tom Redwing.

"Shut up, Redwing!"

"What about collaring the silly ass and sitting on his silly head till Loder's been up?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Let's!" agreed Nugent.

"Keep clear, you silly dummies!" snapped the Bounder. "Loder will be up in a minute! Is he coming, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter, on the landing, was blinking down the Remove staircase through his big spectacles. He was keeping watch for Loder.

Smithy wanted to get Loder with that footer when he came, but he did not want to get anybody else.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, might have come up to the studies, and it would have been an awful catastrophe to get Quelch by mistake. Even the reckless Bounder did not want to risk that.

"I say, Loder's coming!" squeaked Bunter, as he spotted the bully of the Sixth on the lower staircase.

"Good!"

Billy Bunter backed safely out of the line of fire, grinning. Bunter, at least, was very keen to see that footer catch Loder as he came, and drop him back down the Remove staircase. So long as some other fellow took all the risk,

Billy Bunter thought it a jolly good idea.

"Smithy—" urged Harry Wharton.

"Oh, give a fellow a rest!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "Loder's coming up to give me the ashplant. He told me he would if I didn't go to his study. He won't feel like giving anybody the ashplant after he's caught this footer with his face!"

"Carry on, Smithy!" said Skinner encouragingly.

But Skinner prudently backed into his study, all the same. He did not want to be on the scene when Smithy "carried on."

"Look here, Smithy—" said Peter Todd.

"Can't you shut up?"

"Oh gum! Here's Loder!" breathed Wbley.

There was a sudden hush in the Remove passage. Most of the fellows could see the Sixth Form man's head as it came into view on the Remove staircase across the landing.

There was a frown on Gerald Loder's face, an ashplant under his arm. The bully of the Sixth, always unpleasant, had been more unpleasant than ever that term. Plenty of juniors would have been glad enough to bowl him over with a Soccer ball, so far as that went. But only the Bounder was reckless enough to think of doing it.

Smithy was not only thinking of it—he did it! As Loder's shoulders followed his head into view, the Bounder of Greyfriars deliberately kicked the ball. Smithy was as good a man at getting goals as any fellow in the Remove. He got that one easily.

The footer whizzed!

Crash!

"Oh!" gasped all the Removites in the passage, as they heard the crash of the Soccer ball right in Loder's face, (Copyright in the United States of America. All rights reserved, and reproduction without permission strictly forbidden.)

followed by another crash as the Sixth Form man went backwards.

Loder was taken completely by surprise. Before he knew what was happening, the Soccer ball was smiting his features, and he was rolling down the stairs.

Bump, bump, bump!

Wild yells rose from Loder as he bumped from stair to stair.

The Remove staircase was a short one, but it was quite long enough for Loder, descending it in that unexpected manner.

He rolled and bumped from stair to stair, roaring.

"Goal!" grinned the Bounder.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of the Removites scuttled into the studies. Others waited breathlessly, wondering what on earth was going to happen next. Loder, sprawling at the foot of the Remove staircase, yelled wildly, his yells ringing through the House. It sounded as if Loder was damaged.

There was a buzz of startled voices. Fifth Form men came out of the games study, Fourth Formers came out of their passage. All of them stared at Loder, sprawling and bawling, on the middle landing.

"What the dickens——"

"Fallen downstairs!" said Coker of the Fifth. "Clumsy ass, you know, falling downstairs!"

"Oh! Ow! Ooooh!" Loder roared.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Ooooooooooh!"

"Hallo! There's a footer!" exclaimed Temple of the Fourth: The Soccer ball had rolled down after Loder. "Oh gad! Those fags playing passage football—and Loder's got the ball!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Ow! Wow! Ooooh! Yooooooooh!" roared Loder, sitting up dizzily. "Oh crumbs! Oh gad! Ow!"

He dabbed his nose, which spurted red. Perhaps he wished to make sure that it was still there. It felt as if it wasn't.

"What is all this?" An angular figure and a severe face came into view on the lower stairs. Mr. Quelch had been drawn to the scene by the uproar. "What has happened? Loder——"

"Ow! Oh! Ow!" roared Loder. "I've been knocked over by a footer! Those young rascals in your Form—— Ow!"

Mr. Quelch started up the Remove staircase. There was a warning squeak above.

"I say, you fellows, cave! Here comes Quelch!"

There was a scampering of feet in the Remove passage—and sudden silence. It took Mr. Quelch only a few moments to reach the passage tenanted by his Form. But a few moments were enough for the Remove. When Henry Samuel Quelch reached that passage, it was as deserted as Robinson Crusoe's island!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Blow for the Bounder!

"WHARTON!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" murmured the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were in their study—No. 1 in the Remove—when the door opened and their Form-master looked in.

Both of them were busy—very busy. It was probable that every fellow in the Form was busy in his study at the moment.

It was judicious to be busily occupied

when a beak came along to inquire who had knocked over a Sixth Form prefect with a Soccer ball!

Harry Wharton was writing lines—he had some on hand for Loder. Frank Nugent was scanning the columns of Dr. Smith's Smaller Latin Dictionary, with a keen interest that juniors seldom displayed in that attractive volume.

However, busy as they were, the chums of the Remove had to suspend those important occupations, as Quelch glared in.

"Wharton! Are you aware of what has happened?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Has—has anything happened, sir?"

"Have you heard nothing of it, Wharton?"

"I—I heard a noise, sir——"

"I think you did!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You are well aware, Wharton, that passage football is strictly forbidden, owing to the accidents it may cause. I expect my head boy to see that such rules are observed, Wharton."

"Has—has anybody been playing passage football, sir?"

"If you are not aware of it, Wharton, you should have been, as you are here in your study. You will take two hundred lines, Wharton!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Harry, making a mental resolve to punch Smithy's head at their next meeting.

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**Greyfriars School is a haven of peace and refuge to the escaped convict from Blackmoor Prison . . . until the rascally Gerald Loder, unaware of the fact that the man is his own cousin, starts prying into the private affairs of the temporary games master!**

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"And now," said Mr. Quelch, "I require to know what boys were engaged in this game, and who kicked the football that struck Loder, of the Sixth Form. Wharton, you will call all the boys into the passage."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch stepped back from the doorway of Study No. 1. He stood like a grim statue, while his head boy went up the passage, calling into study after study.

Loder did not appear on the scene. Loder was limping away down the lower stairs. The matter was now in the hands of the Remove master. And, as the Bounder had foretold, Loder was not feeling inclined to carry on, after his painful experience with the Soccer ball. Loder was limping away to doctor his damages, which were many and various.

The Remove studies poured forth their occupants. They gathered under the gimlet-eyes of their Form-master.

Wharton had passed the word that it was supposed that passage football had been going on. That little misapprehension was rather fortunate, in the circumstances.

Passage football was severely forbidden; but it was not nearly so serious a matter as deliberately bowling over a prefect of the Sixth. Even the Bounder, reckless as he was, was rather glad that Quelch did not know that a Remove man had deliberately "got" Loder with the Soccer ball.

"I conclude!" said Mr. Quelch grimly, when all the juniors were gathered under his gimlet eye, "that you were all concerned in this."

"It—it wasn't me, sir!" squeaked Billy Bunter, in alarm.

"You were concerned in it, Bunter."

"Oh, no, sir! I—I never even knew what was going on, sir! I—I——"

"I heard your voice as I came up the stairs, Bunter. You called out a warning to the others."

"Oh crikey! I—I wasn't there, sir——"

"What?"

"I—I really wasn't, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I was in my study when—when you heard me on the landing, sir."

"That will do, Bunter. Now, as you were all——"

"I guess not, sir!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll tell a man, sir, I was in my study, and wasn't wise to it till I heard the rookus."

"Can you speak English, Fish?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Aw! Yep!" answered the American junior, in surprise. "I'll sure say so."

"Then kindly speak that language when you are addressing your Form-master. All the boys who were not concerned in this reckless riot may go back into their studies," said Mr. Quelch.

No fellow in the Remove had been concerned in it, excepting the Bounder. But only a few went back into the studies. If Quelch supposed that passage football had been going on, he was welcome to remain in that little error. Quite a number of the juniors were feeling strongly inclined to kick Smithy; but nobody wanted to land him with a Head's flogging.

Fisher T. Fish scuttled back into Study No. 14. Skinner and Snoop went into Study No. 11. Billy Bunter made a move towards Study No. 7; but a warning glare from Peter Todd stopped him, and he stood his ground. There were few fellows in the Form who were not ready to face the music.

"Every boy here will take a hundred lines!" said Mr. Quelch.

Silence!

"And the boy who kicked the football will stand forward!" went on the Remove master. "As the one responsible for the accident, he will be severely punished. I shall make an example of him."

Nobody stood forward. Nobody, it was clear, was anxious to be made an example of.

"I am waiting," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

He continued to wait.

A long minute passed—in silence. Then the Remove master, with compressed lips, spoke again.

"Very well. The whole Form will be detained for the next half-holiday."

"Oh!" gasped the Removites.

Every eye turned on Smithy.

The next half-holiday was Wednesday. Wednesday was the date of the fixture with St. Jim's. On Wednesday afternoon Tom Merry & Co. were coming over from St. Jim's to play football. It was quite impossible for the Remove to be under detention on that day; though Mr. Quelch seemed unaware of it.

The Bounder drew a deep breath, and stepped forward.

"I kicked the footer, sir!" he said quietly.

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch. "I am glad, Vernon-Smith, to hear you admit it. The Form will not be detained."

There was a gasp of relief from the Remove footballers.

"You, Vernon-Smith, will be detained on Wednesday," said Mr. Quelch. "And you will write five hundred lines of Virgil, in the Form-room."

The Bounder breathed hard.

He knew that he was getting off cheaply, for had Quelch been aware of the facts, he would have been taken before the headmaster for a flogging, with detentions thrown in. But it was a severe punishment, all the same.

The loss of the half-holiday did not matter very much in itself; if it had not been the date of one of the most prominent of the Remove football fixtures. But it did happen so—and detention meant that the Bounder had to stand out of the football match. Which was a heavy blow, not only to Smithy himself, but to the team, for he was a man who could not be spared.

"Oh, you fathead, Smithy!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"If—if you please, sir——" began the Bounder.

"You need say no more, Vernon-Smith!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Quelch turned, and rustled down the Remove staircase. When he was gone the Remove fellows glared at the Bounder.

"You silly ass!" said Harry Wharton. "You potty chump! You ought to be jolly well kicked!"

"You fathead, Smithy——"

"I had to own up, I suppose!" snarled the Bounder.

"Yes, you ass—but you hadn't to kick that footer at Loder!" exclaimed Harry Wharton angrily. "Now I've got to find a new man for the eleven, and have we got as good a man to take your place, you silly idiot?"

"Thanks!" said the Bounder sarcastically.

"You fathead——"

"You ass——"

"You dummy——"

All the Remove footballers had something to say to Smithy, and nothing that they had to say was complimentary. The Bounder went into Study No. 4 and slammed the door.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Rag on the Phone!

"L ODER!" called out Wingate. It was after tea, and a number of the great men of the Sixth Form were gathered in the Prefects'-room. In that apartment a telephone was installed, for the use of those great men, the prefects of Greyfriars. The bell rang, and Wingate of the Sixth stepped to the instrument. With the receiver in his hand, he glanced round the room and called to Loder.

Most of the senior men in the room were discussing football. Loder was taking no part in that discussion. For one thing, he was definitely out of the first eleven. For another, he was keen on some news he was reading in a newspaper, as he sat by the window.

That news was a paragraph referring to a convict, No. 22, of Blackmoor, who had recently been recaptured near the school.

As No. 22 of Blackmoor was named James Loder, and as all Greyfriars had learned that James Loder was a cousin of Loder of the Sixth, any news on that subject was of deep, if unpleasant, interest to Gerald Loder.

Loder had never seen that cousin of

his, so far as he knew, at least; but he had a deep antipathy towards the relative who had disgraced his family name, and made him the talk of the school. He had been glad to hear that the man had been caught, and not sorry to hear that his capture had been caused by a motor accident—the captured man having been knocked down by a car, which had driven on and left him senseless by the roadside.

Loder had no compassion to waste on him. He deserved all that came to him, in Loder's opinion. Why couldn't the brute have stayed quietly at Blackmoor, where he was out of sight, and in no danger of disgracing Loder?

Nobody at Greyfriars had ever heard of him until his escape from prison. Now everybody at the school had heard of him; and Loder's enemies, who were numerous, made it a point to keep the topic going.

His accident, Loder had no doubt, served him jolly well right. But it was rather unfortunate, from Loder's point of view. For the wretched man had been so severely injured that he could not be taken back to Blackmoor yet, and in consequence, was still in the prison hospital at Courtfield, only a few miles from the school.

The paragraph Loder was now reading stated that the man was suffering from severe concussion, that he had not yet recovered his senses, and that it was very doubtful when he would recover them. It added that he had been so disfigured by his accident that it was only by the convict garb that he had been known to be No. 22 of Blackmoor at all. Apparently, he was going to remain where he was for some time; and Loder reflected savagely that he was not going to be rid of the brute, even now that he was caught.

He looked up from the newspaper as Wingate called to him. He caught a smile on the face of Gwynne of the Sixth, and scowled—nothing doubting that Gwynne had noticed that he was reading news of the convict. As a matter of fact, Patrick Gwynne had caught sight of Billy Bunter in the quad, bolting jam tarts from a paper bag at great speed, and growing stickier and stickier. Hence Gwynne's smile. But Loder was very touchy these days; and he fancied that Convict No. 22 was in every other mind as constantly as in his own.

"It's for you, Loder!" said the Greyfriars captain; and Loder, scowling at Gwynne as he passed him, went to the telephone and took the receiver.

He snapped into the transmitter.

"Hallo!"

"Loder wanted! Is that Loder?" came a voice he did not recognise.

"Gerald Loder speaking!"

"Oh, good! Do you want to see your relation?" came the voice.

Loder started.

"What?" he ejaculated.

"Your Cousin James!" went on the voice. "I suppose you know that your cousin, the convict, has been caught, and is at Courtfield. He's in rather a bad way, and if you'd like to see him——"

Gerald Loder's face whitened with rage. Two or three fellows in the room glanced at him.

All Greyfriars knew that No. 22 was Loder's Cousin James. But it had not occurred to him that anyone outside the school knew.

But this telephone call looked as if the relationship was known in Courtfield, too. Otherwise, why was Loder rung up on the subject? He gritted his teeth with helpless rage. Was this

going to become the talk of the whole neighbourhood as well as of the school?

"Who's speaking?" he hissed. "Where are you speaking from?"

"What did you say?"

"Where are you speaking from?" hissed Loder. He dreaded to hear that his interlocutor was speaking from Courtfield Police Station.

"Is that the kind of grammar you learn in the Sixth Form, Loder?" asked the voice.

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Loder. That was a very unexpected question.

"What would your headmaster say if he heard it? Does your beak allow you to end a sentence with a preposition?"

Loder gasped.

Such a question as that, obviously, could not come from Inspector Grimes at Courtfield Police Station! It dawned on Loder that this call was a "spoof" call, and came from some young rascal pulling his leg on one of the school telephones.

Some fellow he had lately whopped, no doubt, was getting his own back by talking to Loder about his convict relation—from the safe end of a wire.

"You should say 'From where are you speaking,' Loder!" went on the voice, in a tone of admonition.

Clearly this came from some cheeky junior. It was a relief to find that the call did not come from outside Greyfriars. But it was deeply exasperating all the same.

Loder strained his ears in an attempt to recognise the voice. But he realised that the fellow on the wire was speaking in carefully disguised tones.

Some master, evidently, was out, and this cheeky young villain was borrowing his phone—to cheek Loder!

"You ought to be whopped for that, Loder!" went on the voice. "But to come back to our mutton, dear man, are you going to call on your broad-arrow relation? It's a chance now, you know, if you feel very affectionate towards your relation, as I'm sure you do. You can't call on your other relations who may happen to be convicts."

Loder very nearly foamed over the telephone.

"How many relations have you got in quod, Loder?" continued the voice. "A good many, I suppose! If your people are anything like you, a good many of them must have gone to chokey. What?"

"Who's speaking?" almost shrieked Loder. Every fellow in the Prefects'-room stared at him.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" asked the voice pleasantly. "Look here, Loder, take a tip from me. Go and see your convict cousin while you've got a chance. He will be able to put you wise about what it's like at Blackmoor. That will be useful to you in the future, when you get there yourself. See the point?"

Gerald Loder jammed the receiver back on the hooks with a jam that made the instrument rock. He had had enough of that chat on the telephone.

"What's the row, old man?" asked Walker of the Sixth.

"It's some young scoundrel, ragging on the phone!" hissed Loder. "I suppose you knew that, Wingate, when you took the call."

The Greyfriars captain gave him a quiet glance.

"I knew nothing of the kind," he answered curtly. "Your name was asked for, and that was all I heard. If it's some kid ragging, who was it? I'll give him six fast enough for ragging on our phone."

"Do you think he'd let me know his voice?" snarled Loder. "One of those

young rotters in the Remove. I've no doubt. If I knew where to lay hands on him—"

"If he's got one of the school phones you can spot him easily enough," said Carno. "Some beak must be out—"

Loder nodded, grabbed up his ashplant, and stamped out of the Prefects' room. There was little doubt that the ragger had cleared off as soon as that telephone talk was over. But if there was a chance of catching him, Loder was not going to lose that chance.

Ashplant in hand, and with a deadly glint in his eyes, he strode away towards Masters' Studies. If he found a junior in any master's study it was going to be extremely unpleasant for that junior!

fallen back into his old way of life with remarkable ease.

Sometimes, indeed, the convict life at Blackmoor and the desperate days and nights when he had been a hunted man seemed to him like an unreal and evil dream.

Greyfriars School was a haven of peace and refuge; all the more because he was generally liked—the fellows who liked him, little dreaming that he was the same man whom many of them had seen in tattered convict garb, fleeing from the police. They were not likely to suspect that the wrong man had been captured, and that No. 22 was at Greyfriars in his name and his place. That change of identity was, so far, a secret locked in No. 22's own breast.

the door while he used the Remove master's phone. He had not expected to be spotted from the window.

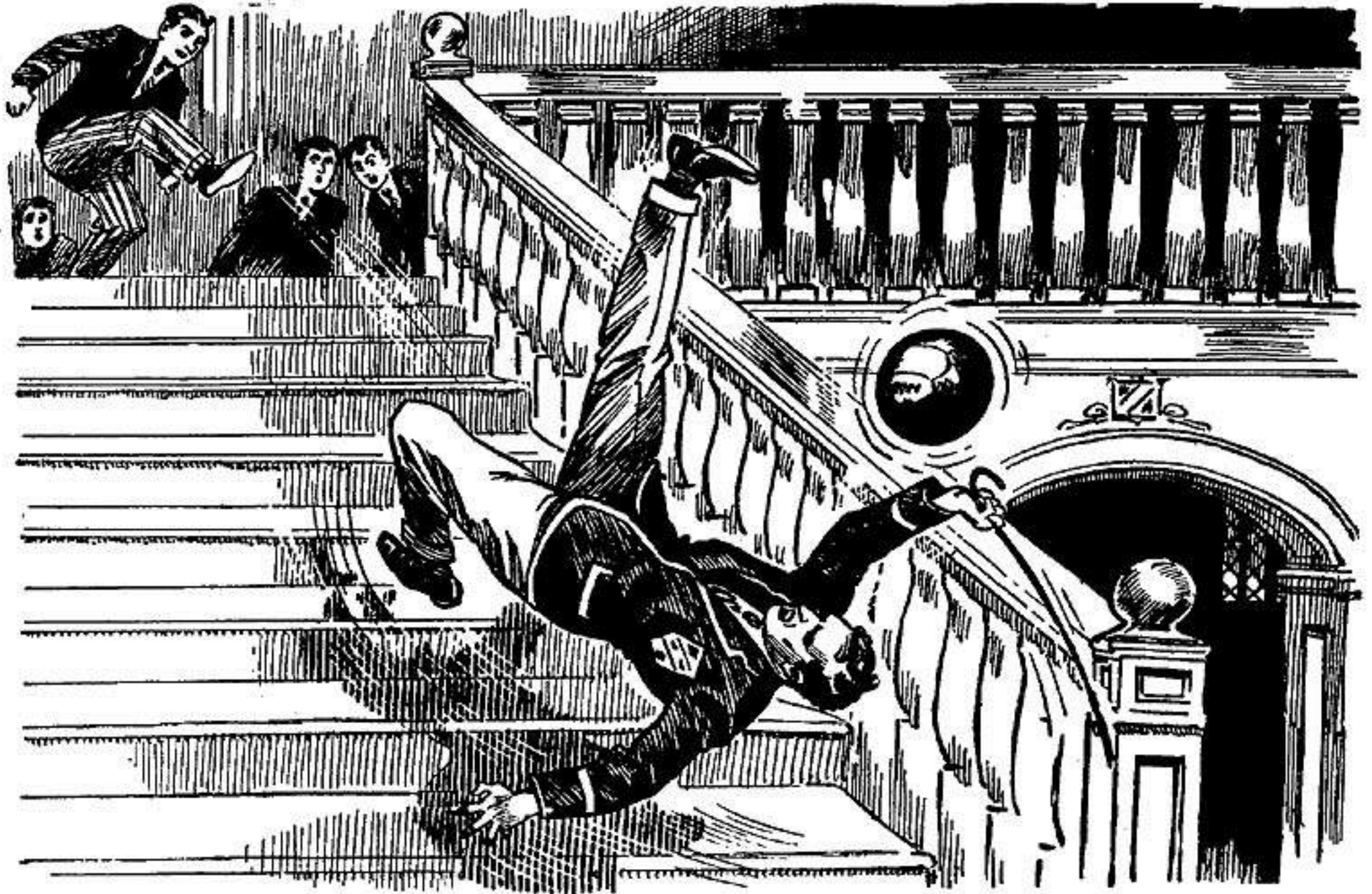
He was relieved to see that it was the kind, good-natured face of the games master that was looking in. That face never lost its expression of good nature, though it was now frowning.

"Oh!" ejaculated Smithy. "Yes, sir?"

"What are you doing here in your Form-master's study in his absence?" said the games master severely. "I think I saw you at the telephone, Vernon-Smith."

"Keep it dark, sir!" said the Bounder.

"What??"



Vernon-Smith's foot shot out and the footer whizzed. Crash! Loder, coming up the stairs, was taken completely by surprise. Before he knew what was happening, the Soccer ball was smiting his features, and he was rolling down the stairs. "Ooooh!" he roared, as he rolled. "Oh! Ah! Ow!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

MR. STEPHEN LAGDEN, the new games master at Greyfriars School, frowned.

He was walking in the quadrangle, after tea in Common-room with the other beaks.

The handsome young man who was called "Mr. Lagden" at Greyfriars, but who had until recently been known by a very different name—and number—strolled on the path by the windows of Masters' Studies.

He had been a week in the school, as a temporary master, taking the place of Larry Lascelles. Every day, every hour, of that week, had been sheer satisfaction to the man whose real name was James Loder, whose number at Blackmoor had been 22, and who counted on absolute safety so long as the captured man at Courtfield was unable to speak.

Only a year ago, before disaster came, he had been games master at Okeham School, in Devonshire: and he had

The frown that clouded the games master's cheery face was caused by the sight of a junior in Mr. Quelch's study.

The window of that study was wide open; and, catching a movement within, the young master stopped there to speak to Mr. Quelch.

Then, as he looked in, he saw that Mr. Quelch was not in the study; but a member of Mr. Quelch's Form was just turning away from the telephone. And he frowned at Herbert Vernon-Smith of the Remove.

Smithy, grinning, turned from the instrument. He had a detention, due to Loder; and he had had "six" from that unpleasant and unpopular prefect. But he rather considered that that talk on the telephone had made matters even. Now he was in a hurry to get clear. But, as he stepped quickly towards the door, a voice called his name from the window.

"Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder gave a sudden jump and spun round towards the window. He was aware that Mr. Quelch was with the Head, but he had had a wary eye on

"I—I mean, don't give me away. I should get into a fearful row," said Smithy. "No harm done, sir. Only a rag on a fellow."

"I shall not mention this to your Form-master," said the young man at the window. "But you had better leave that study at once."

"Oh, yes, sir, certainly," said Vernon-Smith.

He was only too glad to leave the study at once. If Loder of the Sixth suspected, as very likely he would, that he had been talked to on one of the school telephones, he was pretty certain to come along. Smithy certainly did not want to be spotted as the fellow who had phoned.

The games master watched him through the window till he had gone out and shut the door of the study. Then he turned away, his expression rather a mixture between frowning and smiling. He was a young man, hardly more than ten years older than some of the fellows in the Sixth Form, and there

was a spot of boyishness about him. It was not his duty to report Vernon-Smith to his Form-master, and he was glad that it was not. Possibly he could remember the surreptitious bagging of a master's phone from his own schooldays. Boys will be boys, and it was not so very, very long since the games master of Greyfriars had been a boy.

Herbert Vernon-Smith walked quickly down the passage after leaving the study. He went so quickly that he almost walked into a fat figure at the corner, coming hurriedly from the other direction.

Bunter grabbed his arm with a jammy hand.

"I say, Smithy—"

"Let go, you fat ass!"

"I say, been to Quelch's study? I say, is he there?" asked Bunter. "I saw him go to the Head—"

"He's not there!" snapped the Bounder. "Let go!" He jerked at his arm.

"Oh, good!" said the fat Owl of the Remove. "I say, Smithy, if you see Ogilvy, don't mention you saw me here. If he asks you, tell him you saw me go out of gates, will you?"

"Fathead!" Smithy jerked his arm away, hurried on, and vanished.

"Beast!" grunted Bunter.

He rolled on to his Form-master's study.

Remove men were not generally anxious to visit that study, if they could help it. But Billy Bunter had his reasons.

If Quelch was not there, it was all right. He could wait there till Quelch came in, and then he had an excuse for his presence—he could ask Quelch whether he could leave his lines over till the morrow. Bunter, as usual, had lines on hand.

Not that he really wanted to remind Quelch of those lines. He had other reasons for locating in Quelch's study—three reasons!

Bunter had been negotiating a bag containing six jam tarts, when Gwynne saw him from the window of the Prefects'-room. Three yet remained in the paper bag—and these were his reasons for seeking seclusion. The sight of Robert Donald Ogilvy in the quad had driven Bunter to cover. He did not know whether Ogilvy had yet missed a bag of tarts from Study No. 3 in the Remove. But he could not afford to take risks until the tarts were safely parked. Once Bunter's fat circumference was wrapped round them, it was all right.

Quelch being with the Head, Quelch's study was safe cover until he had finished the tarts. If the Remove master came in, his excuse was ready; if he didn't, all the better.

Bunter rolled into Mr. Quelch's study and shut the door.

He sat down in his Form-master's armchair, prepared to bound out of it at the sound of a footstep.

For the next two or three minutes William George Bunter enjoyed life. The tarts were good; they were rich and juicy and jammy, and they followed one another on the downward path like oysters.

Happy and jammy and sticky, Bunter sat, breathing rather hard. He would have been glad to take a little rest while the tarts settled down. But the sound of tramping footsteps in the passage made him jump.

He jumped out of the armchair.

There was a knock at the door, which apprised him that it was not Mr.

Quelch coming. The door flew open, and Loder of the Sixth stared in.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles warily. Loder had no reason, so far as he knew, for "going" for him. But with a bully like Loder, a fellow never could tell. And the glare that Loder fixed on him as soon as he saw him was not reassuring.

"I—I—I say, Loder, I'm waiting for Quelch!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've got to ask him about my lines. I—I never came here for anything else."

"So it was you!" said Loder, with glinting eyes, and he strode into the study.

"Oh! No!" gasped Bunter. "It wasn't me, Loder!"

He did not know to what Loder was alluding, but he was in haste to protest his innocence. He did not like the look in Loder's eye—still less the ash-plant in his hand. The fat Owl knew that Smithy had been in the study, but he had not the slightest knowledge of what Smithy had been doing there.

"Wasn't it!" said Loder grimly. "You haven't been on Quelch's telephone, you young scoundrel?"

"Oh, no!"

"You don't expect me to believe that?" sneered Loder. "I've caught you, you young rascal! I'll teach you to cheek a prefect! Bend over that chair!"

"I—I—I say— Oh crikey—"

"Bend over!" hooted Loder.

"But I—I—I never—"

Loder did not waste time in further words. He had no doubt, not the slightest doubt, that he had caught the delinquent. He was looking for a junior in a study where there was a telephone and the master was out. He had found a junior in a study where there was a telephone and the master was out. It was proof enough for Loder.

He grabbed Bunter by his fat neck, twisted him over, and swiped.

Whack, whack, whack!

Dust rose from Billy Bunter's trousers, and fearful yells from Billy Bunter.

"Ow! Oh! Yow! Leggo! Leave off! Beast! It wasn't me! I haven't touched the telephone—yaroooooh! Ow! Wow! Yooop!"

A shadow darkened the sunny window.

"Loder! Stop!"

A sharp voice rapped, and Loder of the Sixth, with the cane lifted, paused, and glared at the handsome face of the new games master, framed in the study window.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Handling a Bully!

LODER'S eyes blazed at the face in the window.

Although the new games master had been hardly more than a week in the school, Loder had already had trouble with him, and disliked him intensely.

Not the faintest suspicion ever crossed his mind that the man was, in reality, James Loder, the cousin whom he had never seen, but loathed bitterly as a disgrace to his family.

To his eyes, as to all others, the young man was Stephen Lagden, once a master at Okeham School, who had known James in the days before his disgrace, and who, as Loder believed, had let out the truth regarding his relationship to the Blackmoor convict.

Loder was quite unaware that it was Skinner of the Remove who had rooted out that little secret and spread it through the school. His suspicious mind

fixed on the games master as the culprit. "Mr. Lagden" knew, and Loder believed that he had given away what he knew.

Now, as the young man looked in at Mr. Quelch's window, and ordered him to stop, Loder's temper flamed out furiously.

"You! Did you say stop?" he exclaimed.

"I did!"

"Then mind your own business!" shouted Loder.

"Loder!"

"Who the dickens are you, to meddle with a Sixth Form prefect!" roared Loder. "You're games master here so long as Lascelles is laid up. Do you think the Head has engaged you to boss his prefects. Stick to your Soccer, and mind your own business!"

"You forget yourself, I think, Loder!" said the games master quietly. "I have no intention of meddling, as you are pleased to call it, with a Sixth Form prefect. You are punishing Bunter in error; that is why I spoke."

"That's for me to judge!" retorted Loder.

"You appear to be under the impression that Bunter telephoned from this study—"

"I know he did!"

"He did not," said the games master. "I have been walking by this window for some time, and I saw the boy who was at the telephone. Bunter was not in the room when I saw him, and can only have entered a few minutes ago."

"It's not more than five minutes since I was called to the phone in the Prefects'-room—"

"No doubt! In that time the boy who telephoned has gone, and Bunter has come to the study. I did not see him come, but I am assured that he was not here when the other junior was present."

Loder paused.

He did not intend to take orders from the games master, and he was strongly inclined to go on thrashing Bunter, just to make that clear to Mr. Lagden. But if this was the truth, he wanted very much to get hold of the cheeky junior, who really had talked to him over the wires. He wanted to give that cheeky junior what he had started to give Bunter, and some more—a lot more—of the same!

"You say you saw him?" he said.

"I saw him, and ordered him out of the study—and he went!" answered the games master. "It was not Bunter."

"I say, I told you, Loder!" wailed the fat Owl. "I say, leggo my neck! I say, I told you it wasn't me—"

"Shut up, you fat fool! If it was not Bunter, Mr. Lagden, who was it?" demanded Loder. "If you saw him, you know who it was."

"I certainly know who it was!"

"Well, who was it, then?" snarled Loder.

The young man at the window paused. Loder, as a prefect, had a right to administer punishment for the unauthorised use of a master's phone. Why he was so excited about it, however, the games master could not understand. It certainly was not zeal for doing his duty. He had seen enough of Gerald Loder to learn that he was not an over-dutiful prefect.

"Well," rapped Loder, "I've asked you his name."

"Unfortunately," said the games master, "I told the boy that I would not report him, if he left the study at once. He did so."

"Who was it?" booted Loder. "Are you backing up a cheeky young

blackguard in cheeking and insulting a prefect?"

"I had no idea that you were the person he had rung up, or that there was any insulting in the matter—"

"You know it now I've told you."

"Well, yes; but in the circumstances, you see that I cannot very well give you the name."

"You're bound to give me his name!"

"Not at all! It is not one of my duties, and you have already asked me not to meddle!" said the games master coolly.

Loder gave him a glare of concentrated rage.

"Well, then, I don't believe a word of it!" he snarled. "I got here and found Bunter here, and that's enough for me. It was Bunter—"

"I have told you that, to my knowledge, it was not Bunter."

"You can mind your own business, Mr. Meddling Lagden! I know what your word is worth!" sneered Loder. "You told me the day you came that you'd say nothing about my family affairs here; but they were all over the school before you'd been here a few days—"

"I said no word on that subject, Loder."

"Rot!"

Loder twisted Bunter over again in his left hand, and the ashplant rose in his right. Whether Bunter was the offender or not, Loder was in a mood to "whop" somebody, and he was still

keener to show Lagden that he did not care a straw for him or what he thought.

The hapless fat Owl gave a squeal of apprehension.

"I say, Loder, I never—"

Yaroooooh!"

Whack!

"Loder!" shouted the man at the window

Whack!

The games master's face set grimly. Whether he had, or had not, the right to intervene between a Sixth Form prefect and a junior whom that prefect was whopping, he was going to intervene!

He placed a hand on the sill, and with a light activity remarkable in so stalwart a man, vaulted into the study.

Loder's cane was up for another whack, when his arm was grasped and forced backwards, and the lash stopped in time.

Spluttering with rage, the bully of the Sixth turned on the games master.

"You cheeky rotter!" he bawled.

"Let go my arm!"

"You shall not touch Bunter again, Loder!" said the games master quietly.

"I have told you that he has done nothing—"

"I don't believe you!"

"That is as you choose! You shall not cane the boy for nothing! Put down that cane!"

"I will not—I—"

"Then I shall take it from you!"

Loder released the quaking fat Owl. He resisted fiercely, as the games master grasped the ashplant in his hand. But it was wrenched away in a moment and tossed out of the open window.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Will you let me go?" shrieked Loder.

"I will not allow you to cane Bunter!"

"I'll report this to the Head!" bawled Loder. "We'll see whether you can meddle with Greyfriars prefects."

"You may report the matter to the Head, if you please. It will, at all events, be reported to this boy's Form-master," said the games master quietly. He released Loder, and pushed him back. "Now, sir, control your temper! I shall not allow you to touch that junior, and you had better leave this study."

"I refuse to do anything of the kind!" roared Loder. "And you shan't make me, you meddling cad!"

"Either you will walk out of this study, Loder, or I shall drop you from the window after your cane."

"You dare—"

"Are you going?"

"No!" yelled Loder.

Billy Bunter's little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles at what followed.

Loder, struggling frantically in a grasp that was twice or thrice too

(Continued on next page.)

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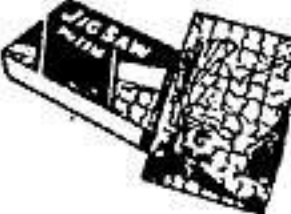
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strong for him, was lifted to the open window, and dropped over the low sill to the ground outside.

He sat there, on his cane, with a bump. A calm, handsome face looked down on him from within, as he panted and glared.

"I shall explain this matter to Mr. Quelch when he returns, Loder!" said the games master quietly. "I am sorry to have had to handle you, but you left me no choice. I recommend you to learn a better control of your temper."

The window closed. Loder staggered to his feet. Half a dozen fellows, who had seen him drop, stared at him. Unheeding, he stamped away to the door of the House.

His intention was to go straight to the Head and lay his complaint before that majestic gentleman. But half-way to the headmaster's study, he paused. He was exasperated and infuriated by the games master's interference; but it dawned upon him, angry as he was, that what he had to report to the Head was that he had persisted in punishing a junior, after a member of the staff had assured him that, to his knowledge, that junior was not the offender.

That was not exactly the kind of report that a prefect could make to his headmaster.

Loder did not get more than half-way to Dr. Locke's study. At that point he turned, and walked away to his own.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

HARRY WHARTON stopped when the Remove were dismissed for break the following morning—hesitated, and then, as the rest of the Remove went out, stepped to his Form-master's desk.

Mr. Quelch, busy with papers there, gave him an inquiring look.

"What is it, Wharton?" he asked.

"It's about Smithy, sir," said the

captain of the Remove. "I mean, Vernon-Smith. About—about his detention to-morrow afternoon."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows expressively.

"What can you possibly have to say on that subject, Wharton?" he asked.

"We play St. Jim's at Soccer to-morrow, sir," said Wharton, colouring uncomfortably under his Form-master's steady eyes.

"I am aware of it, Wharton." "Vernon-Smith is in the team, sir—"

"Is?" repeated Mr. Quelch firmly. "I I mean, of course, sir, he—he was!" stammered Wharton. "Of course, he can't play if he's in detention."

"Perfectly so, Wharton!" Mr. Quelch drummed on his desk with his fingers. "I am sorry, but I cannot alter my decision. Was not Vernon-Smith aware, before what happened yesterday, that he was to be a member of the football eleven?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" "Then he knew perfectly well what he was risking, I presume. Vernon-Smith did not, I imagine, suppose that he could play a reckless prank on a Sixth Form prefect, unpunished, because he was a member of the football eleven?"

"Oh, no, sir!" Harry Wharton could not very well explain that the Bounder, with his angry temper roused, had forgotten all about the Soccer match, and everything else. Not that such an explanation would have improved matters.

"Yesterday," went on Mr. Quelch grimly, "I had the impression that a reckless game had been played in the Remove passage, and that what happened to Loder was more or less of an accident. Otherwise, Vernon-Smith's punishment would have been much more severe. Loder, however, states that he believes that it was no accident, but a deliberate attack on him."

Wharton was silent. "I shall not reopen a matter now closed," said Mr. Quelch. "But Vernon-Smith has deserved a much more severe punishment, as you must

be aware. I have reason, too, to believe that he has offended since."

"Oh!" "Some hours after that incident, yesterday, someone called up Loder on the telephone, and taunted him with his relationship to a—a—a certain person," said Mr. Quelch. "Loder believes that it was a boy in my Form. I have very little doubt that his belief is well-founded."

Wharton could say nothing. Smithy's rag on the phone had been talked of in every study in the Remove.

"The result was most unfortunate," continued Mr. Quelch. "Loder punished Bunter, by mistake—a very serious error for a prefect to make. Mr. Lagden felt impelled to intervene, very justly; but it was a very unfortunate occurrence. I had to speak severely to Loder on the subject, after what Mr. Lagden stated to me, and he retorted by a complaint that some boy in my Form had insulted him on the telephone, whether Bunter or not."

The captain of the Remove saw his hopes of getting Smithy back into the eleven diminish rapidly.

"Of the offender's identity, nothing is known, and I should not dream of administering punishment without proof," said Mr. Quelch. "At the same time, I cannot help being aware of the very probable identity of the offender. You need say nothing further on the subject of Vernon-Smith, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove made a last effort.

"It's a rather tough match, with St. Jim's, sir! Vernon-Smith is one of our very best men."

"I shall not give you advice in the matter of games, Wharton. That is Mr. Lagden's province, which I shall not over-step. Nevertheless, I think it would be wise of you, as a junior football captain, to select men who are not liable to break the rules of the school in the most reckless manner, and thus to fail you when they are required."

With that piece of agreeable advice, Mr. Quelch made a gesture of dismissal.

There was nothing more to be said, and Harry Wharton left the Form-room. His face was clouded as he went.

He could hardly blame Mr. Quelch for maintaining discipline. The Bounder was to blame. The fact that Loder was a bully, and asked for what he received, and more, made no difference. Any fellow in the Remove would have been glad enough to bowl Loder over with a Soccer ball, but no other fellow had done it, on the eve of an important football match. A fellow who was wanted in a match was expected not to get himself detained on the date. In any trifling matter, the Remove master would have made a concession. But knocking over a Sixth Form prefect was no trifling matter—from the point of view of a schoolmaster, at least. Smithy ought to have been more careful. Who the dickens was Smithy, anyhow, that he couldn't stand what other fellows stood?

The Co. were waiting for their leader in the passage, with rather anxious faces.

Wharton shook his head, as he joined them.

"Nothing doing?" asked Bob Cherry. "Nothing! Quelch has got his rag out!" granted the captain of the Remove. "He knows now that Smithy bowled Loder over on purpose, and I fancy he's sorry for having let him off so lightly. And he jolly well more than suspects that Smithy did that trick on the phone. He's feeling more

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Loder was about to deliver another whack with his cane, when his arm was grasped and forced backwards. Spluttering with rage, the bully of the Sixth turned on the games master. "You cheeky rotter!" he bawled. "Let go my arm!" "You shall not touch Bunter again, Loder!" said the games master.

inclined to chew Smithy up than to let him off.

"The chewfulness would serve the absurd Smithy right!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But we want the esteemed and preposterous ass in the footer."

"What about Lagden?" asked Johnny Bull. "He might put in a word, as games master. He has a right to."

"And Quelch seems to like him!" said Bob hopefully.

"Might try it on!" said Harry dubiously. "Quelch likes him, I know, but he's jolly touchy about other beaks barging in. Look how he snaps at Prout!"

"Well, dash it all, we want Smithy, if we can get him!" said Johnny Bull. "I say, Lagden's in the quad now. Why not ask him?"

The Famous Five went out of the House. Vernon-Smith was loafing outside, his hands in his pockets, and a gloomy frown on his brow. Now that the result of his recklessness had come home to him, the Bounder wished that he had let Loder of the Sixth alone—until after the St. Jim's match, at all events.

He gave the Co. a glum look. "Asked Quelch?" he grunted. "Yes! Nothing doing."

"Lagden will have to work it, then!" grunted the Bounder. "Put it up to him as games master. He may be able to make Quelch see sense."

"I'll speak to him," said Wharton curtly. "I don't suppose it will be much use, but I'll try."

The Bounder's eyes gleamed.

"He can work it, if he likes. He will have to. If he doesn't do it for you, I'll jolly well speak to him myself."

The Famous Five stared at Smithy. "And what good would that do?"

demanded Bob. "Think you're going to do any good by cheeking Lagden, like you do everybody else?"

"Has Lagden come here under your orders, Smithy?" inquired Johnny Bull sarcastically. "I thought it was the Head sent for a man to take Larry's place."

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "Lagden's over there by the elms. Wharton—go and put it to him."

"I'll try."

Not very hopefully, the captain of the Remove approached the games master.

That good-natured young man greeted him with a pleasant smile and nod.

But his face grew very grave when he heard what Wharton had to say.

"I would willingly do anything I could, Wharton," he said, "but I think it would be better for you, as captain of your Form, to speak to your Form-master on this subject."

Wharton coloured.

"I've spoken to him, sir!"

"Wharton! Do you mean to say that you have asked Mr. Quelch to release Vernon-Smith from detention to-morrow, and that he has refused?"

"Yes, sir! I thought perhaps you—"

"I can certainly not intervene, if your Form-master has already refused to reconsider the matter!" said the games master sharply. "I am really surprised that you should ask me to do so, Wharton."

He walked on, leaving the captain of the Remove standing with a burning face.

Wharton turned, at a touch on his arm. It was the Bounder.

"Well?" rapped Smithy.

"He won't chip in, and he's as good as told me I'm a cheeky young ass to

ask him!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "The worst of it is that he's right. I oughtn't to have asked him, after Quelch refused. You're out of the football to-morrow, Vernon-Smith, and it's nobody's fault but your own."

"That's not settled yet!" muttered the Bounder.

"It's settled and done with! You've asked for it and got it!" said Harry, and he went to rejoin his friends.

Vernon-Smith stood still, his hands jammed in his pockets, his eyes fixed on the athletic figure of the games master in the distance. There were strange thoughts working in the Bounder's mind. To the other fellows, the matter was settled and done with. To the Bounder's mind, it was not.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had, or believed that he had, a card yet to play. It would have astonished the Removites to learn what it was!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

What the Bounder Knew!

"COME in!"

"Mr. Lagden" was sitting by his window, after tea.

The October day was fine and sunny, and he had his window open, looking out into the quad. The old green quad, the ancient trees in their autumnal brown, the grey old buildings, the cheery faces of school-boys, made a scene that was very pleasant to the eyes of the man whose view had once been bounded by prison walls.

He turned his head, as a tap came at his door.

It was Vernon-Smith of the Remove who entered.

The Bounder shut the door after him, and came across to the sunny window

where the games master sat. The latter's eyes were on him rather keenly.

Smithy's manner was respectful. But there was a touch of sullenness about him, and of something else that the games master could not quite define.

"Well, what is it, Vernon-Smith?" he asked quietly. Probably he was able to guess what was coming.

"I'm sorry to bother you, sir! I believe you know that I'm under detention for to-morrow afternoon—the date of our match with St. Jim's."

"Yes, I know that, Vernon-Smith."

"As games master, sir, you might be able to put in a word! There's no reason why my detention should not be postponed till Saturday."

"That is for your Form-master to decide, Vernon-Smith. I cannot interfere in the matter, as Mr. Quelch has already refused to reconsider it."

"It's rather an urgent matter to us, sir."

"Surely, Vernon-Smith, you should have thought of that a little earlier."

"I suppose so, sir, and I dare say I was rather an ass; but we want to beat St. Jim's, if we can. I don't mean that I'm making out that I'm a fearfully valuable man—all the fellows agree that I'm wanted in the match. I'm keen to play, of course; but I'd stand down all right if there was a better man to take my place, or one as good. But my skipper will tell you, if you ask him, that I'm wanted."

"He has told me so, Vernon-Smith."

"Then, sir, if you could—"

"I have said that I cannot!" said the games master briefly, and he turned to the window again as an intimation that the interview was ended.

Vernon-Smith remained where he was. His manner was still respectful, but his sullen look deepened, and that peculiar "something" about him seemed to have intensified. It was as if he had come there, not as a schoolboy to speak to a master, but as a fellow who was not prepared to take "no" for an answer.

"You won't speak to Mr. Quelch, then, sir?" he asked.

"I cannot."

"I think you might, sir!"

The games master turned from the window and fixed his eyes on the Bounder's face.

He had sensed something unusual in the junior's manner when he came in. It was more pronounced now.

Any other master at Greyfriars would doubtless have ordered him from the room at once. But the man who was at Greyfriars in another man's name could not act exactly like any other master.

His face betrayed nothing, but swift and wary suspicion was in his mind. So far as he knew no one at Greyfriars suspected, or dreamed of suspecting, that he was other than what he seemed. Nobody at Greyfriars had ever seen Stephen Lagden, whose last post had been at a school in Devonshire, and who had been sent to Greyfriars, in a temporary post, by the firm of Leggett & Teggars, in London.

Had the escaped convict been still at large there might have been a spot of danger. But the man who lay in the prison hospital at Courtfield was believed to be the escaped convict. The police believed that they had got their man.

So how could suspicion arise? Yet the man who had been hunted knew that there was danger in the air as he read the Bounder's sullen face.

Vernon-Smith, he knew, was one of the juniors who had seen him, as a hunted convict, in tattered broad-arrow garb with stubbly, unshaven face. But

his appearance was so utterly changed that it seemed impossible that anyone could connect the games master of Greyfriars with that haggard outcast. Harry Wharton & Co. had also seen him at that time—so had Coker of the Fifth and Temple of the Fourth and other fellows. Not one of them had the remotest doubt or suspicion about "Mr. Lagden." But this sullen-faced fellow—

"You think I might?" said the games master, after a pause. "What do you mean, Vernon-Smith? I have told you that I cannot intervene."

"I mean—" Even the hardy Bounder hesitated.

"Well?" rapped the games master.

"I mean that one good turn deserves another, sir!"

It was out now!

Herbert Vernon-Smith looked the young master full in the face. His hardy gaze did not falter, and he was reading the face before him.

There was little to read there. No. 22 had learned to master his features.

But the mere fact that he sat patient, instead of ordering the junior from the room, was a spot of weakness in his armour. Smithy could not imagine Mr. Quelch or any other master at Greyfriars allowing the talk to continue after such a remark.

"Please explain yourself, Vernon-Smith!" The games master's answer came, after quite a pause. "Speak plainly."

The Bounder drew a deep breath.

"If you want me to explain, sir—"

"I order you to do so."

"I shall have to tell you something that happened before you came to the school, then."

"You seem to speak in riddles, Vernon-Smith! How can anything that happened before I came to this school concern you?"

"You're the best judge of that, sir!"

There was a glint of mockery in the Bounder's eyes which did not escape the keen eyes in front of him. "Something happened the day before you came. Some of us were on the river—"

"Well?"

"You've heard of the convict who was being hunted, sir, at that time. The hunt has stopped now—it stopped after you came here."

"You mean that the man was captured, Vernon-Smith!"

"A man seems to have been captured certainly, sir. A man who is still unconscious after a motor accident, and whose face was so disfigured that he could not be recognised except by his convict clothes."

No. 22 breathed very quickly.

"But to tell you what happened the day before you came, sir!" went on the Bounder in quiet, cool tones. "The convict was rooted out of Sir Hilton Popper's woods by a constable and some keepers, and he got away by jumping into a Greyfriars boat."

"I have heard of that!"

"I thought you had, sir!" Again the Bounder's eyes glinted mockery. "I've no doubt you know all I can tell you about it, sir. Some of us got after him on the river. The policeman's boat capsized, and Wharton and his friends, in their old tub, couldn't gain on the man—but I ran him down in my skiff, and jumped on board his boat."

"A very wild and reckless action, Vernon-Smith."

"Very likely, sir; but that's what I did. He knocked me into the water with an oar, and I was too dazed to swim, and should have gone down, only—"

"Only what?"

"Only he stopped and pulled me out of the water, sir! It wasn't the thing

one would have expected of a hunted convict—it gave the other fellows time to come up. His game was up when they came."

"But he escaped, after all, I think?"

"After what he'd done we weren't going to touch him," said Vernon-Smith. "He swam to the bank, and we let him take his chance. A whole crowd of fellows were after him on the tow-path, but he got away all right."

"Well?"

"Well, sir," said the Bounder quietly, "when the convict pulled me out of the water his face was bending over me, and it was rather fixed on my mind, sir. When I saw that face again it was clean and shaved and looked very different; so different that it seemed hardly possible that it was the same man's face. But—it was!"

There was a tense silence.

No. 22 of Blackmoor felt his heart miss a beat. In spite of his self-control the colour wavered in his face.

This was his security, that had seemed impregnable, so long as the man at Courtfield was silent. This!

The pause was long. It was the Bounder who spoke first. He spoke in quite a casual tone.

"I say, sir, if you'd speak a word to my Form-master and try to get me off detention to-morrow we'd all feel ever so much obliged to you, sir!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Turned Out!

NO. 22 of Blackmoor drew a deep, deep breath. He understood only too clearly.

The Bounder was speaking now as a schoolboy asking a favour. He did not want to rub it in. But his meaning was very clear. He had said enough to make it unmistakably clear.

Had No. 22 been a guilty man no doubt his way would have been easy. But James Loder was not a guilty man; he was an innocent man who had been the victim of a terrible mistake; the guilty man was the man who now lay senseless at Courtfield, though no one knew it but James Loder. Not to save his liberty, or to save his life, would a schoolmaster with a sense of duty have allowed himself to be dictated to by an insolent schoolboy. And the games master of Greyfriars, whatever he had been, was a master with a sense of duty.

For a long, long minute he was silent, his brain almost in a whirl with the shock he had received—the utter shattering of his supposed security. But when he answered it was not as a hunted man in fear of a policeman's hand on his shoulder, but as a Greyfriars master.

"You have made a very extraordinary statement, Vernon-Smith!" he said, with a calmness that astonished the Bounder and almost made him doubt whether he had not made an egregious ass of himself. "Am I to understand that you have seen, or fancy you have seen, the Blackmoor convict?"

"I fancy I have, sir!"

"And why have you not communicated with the proper authorities, in that case, Vernon-Smith?"

"I'll tell you, sir!" said the Bounder coolly. "I got after the man that day, and would have caught him if I could. He fished me out of the river. I should most likely have been drowned if he hadn't. I hardly think that Wharton's boat would have come up in time to save me. Ten to one I should have gone down, and never come up again, if the convict hadn't pulled me out."

"Well?"

"Well, as I said a little while ago, one good turn deserves another, sir. The man was on the run, and stopped to save a fellow who was trying to catch him. I thought that pretty decent."

"No doubt. But—"

"I made up my mind that I, at least, would never try to bother him any more after that. If he'd walked under my nose, I wouldn't have laid a hand on him," said the Bounder. "Not that I ever expected to see him again. When I did see him, it was no end of a surprise to me. I thought it out, and decided that I would not give him away."

"Because he pulled you out of the river?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure that the man you saw was the convict?"

"Quite."

"Yet you are aware that a man now lies at Courtfield, who has been identified as the convict?"

"A man who was senseless by the roadside, and with whom a convict might have changed clothes, and nobody the wiser, sir!"

"You are aware, Vernon-Smith, that I was master at Okeham at the time that the robbery was committed there?"

"Quite aware of it, sir," said the Bounder, with a faint grin.

"I am acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, Vernon-Smith, and to my knowledge the man who lies at Courtfield now, is the man who committed the robbery at Okeham, for which James Loder was sentenced to three years at Blackmoor."

"You mean they got the wrong man, sir?" said Vernon-Smith coolly. "And that No. 22 had the luck to change clothes with the right man?"

"I mean exactly what I say, Vernon-Smith! I do not care to discuss the matter further," said the games master. "You may go."

Smithy raised his eyebrows.

"You haven't told me yet, sir, whether you will arrange the matter with my Form-master—about my detention—"

"I have told you quite distinctly that I will do nothing of the kind, Vernon-Smith! I shall not speak to Mr. Quelch on the subject."

The Bounder's face set.

"I want to get off detention to-morrow, sir. I believe that Mr. Quelch would let me off if you made a point of it."

"That may be or may not be. But I certainly have no intention whatever of raising the matter with Mr. Quelch. Leave this room!"

Vernon-Smith's eyes glittered.

"Look here, sir—"

"Another word, Vernon-Smith," said the games master quietly, "and I shall punish you for your insolence. Leave this room at once!"

The Bounder looked at him with gleaming eyes. He knew—he was certain that he knew—who and what this man was! He owed him too much to think of giving him away; he had never once thought of uttering his suspicion aloud. But the man who was at his mercy refused to do this little thing for him!

"If I go," said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth. "I go straight to my Form-master and tell him just what I've told you."

The games master rose and took the Bounder by the collar. Angry and amazed, Smithy found himself marched across the room to the door.

With his left hand the games master opened the door. With his right, he swung the Bounder out into the passage. Then he shut the door on him.

Herbert Vernon-Smith stood in the passage, amazed and enraged, glaring at the shut door.

He set his collar straight and stood panting.

"By gum!" he breathed.

He had been turned out for his insolence, as a man with nothing to fear would have turned him out.

Had this man nothing to fear?

Had the Bounder, after all, been mistaken in believing that he recognised "Mr. Lagden's" face as the face that had bent over him from the convict's boat?

He tramped down the passage, a doubt in his mind.

Right or wrong, he was going to tell what he knew! If the games master was Lagden, no doubt he would look a fool, and worse, for having made so wild an accusation. If the man was James Loder, he could take what was coming to him for having laid hands on the Bounder!

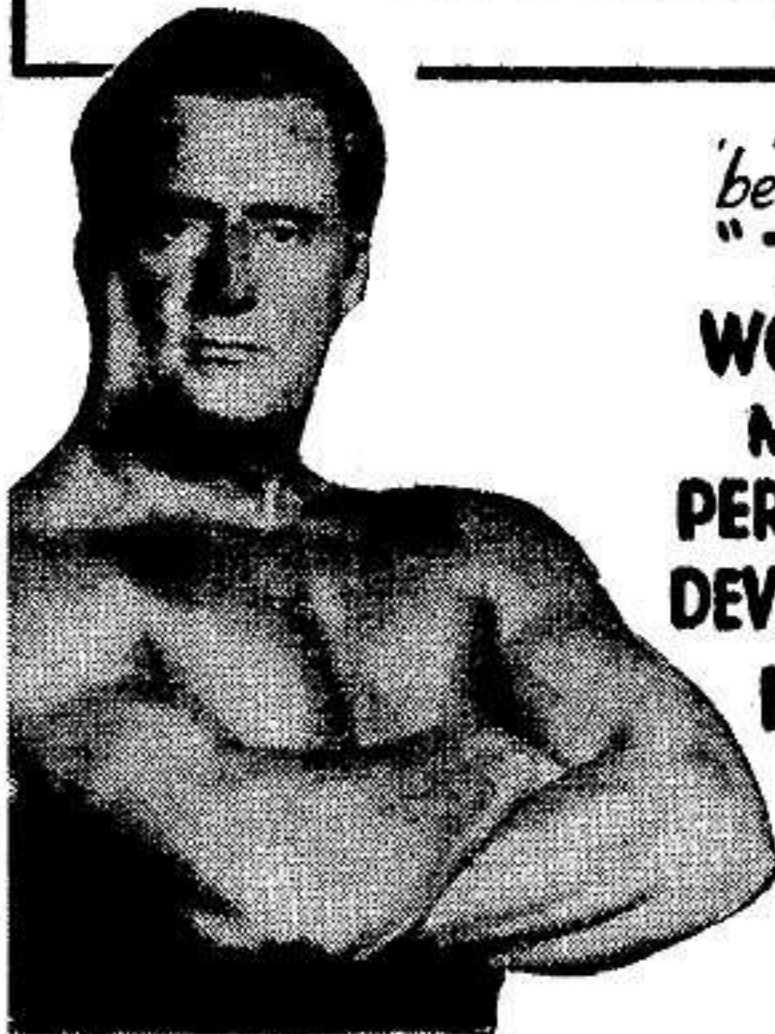
But that fierce determination did not last.

The Bounder was sure—or was he sure? He hardly knew! And even if he was sure, the man had pulled him out of the river, and even in his bitterness and resentment, Vernon-Smith could not forget that.

He tramped away with a black brow; but he did not go to Mr. Quelch's study.

(Continued on next page.)

The 7-Stone Weakling



... who became
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MOST
PERFECTLY
DEVELOPED
MAN"

—Charles Atlas

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THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Gas!

"BLESSED if I can make it out!" said Bob Cherry. Bob made that remark in the Rag, after tea.

He was puzzled; and so were his friends.

"The blessedness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Only Smithy's gas!" said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

"Well, Smithy isn't the man to blow off steam with nothing in it," he said. "I hope it will be all right."

The Famous Five could not help feeling puzzled—but they were feeling hopeful, too. So far as they could see, it was settled and done with, that Smithy was out of the football match on the morrow. Smithy had taken the opposite view, and seemed absolutely positive about it.

There was no doubt that he was wanted in the team. Fellows who liked him least, admitted that freely.

To play Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, the Remove had to put their very best men in the field, if they were going to have a chance. And the Bounder, with all his faults, was one of their very best. Even the fellow who was going to take his place if he was dropped, was keen to see the Bounder play. Every man in the team wanted to kick him for getting himself out of the game; and if he contrived somehow to get back into it, everybody was going to be relieved and pleased.

But Quelch was adamant. He had refused a request from his head boy, and certainly he would not have listened to one from Smithy himself. The only chance was in the games master's intervention.

It was possible, though perhaps not probable, that such an intervention might be successful. But the games master had refused to intervene.

So that was that!

According to Smithy, however, that was not that! Smithy had told the captain of the Form not to take his name out of the list, because it would be all right.

He seemed to be absolutely certain that Mr. Lagden would not only intervene in his favour, but intervene so earnestly that Mr. Quelch would concede the point.

On what Smithy founded that belief, nobody knew. But he was so assured about it, that the Remove fellows began to believe that there was something in it. Wharton, at all events, had not yet scratched out Smithy's name: hoping for the best.

"Where's Smithy now?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Anybody seen Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton, looking round.

"I say, you fellows, he's gone to see Lagden!" said Billy Bunter. "I saw him going to his rooms."

"Lagden won't butt in, after refusing," said Tom Brown. "Smithy's an ass!"

"He seems to think he can twist Lagden round his finger," remarked Peter Todd. "Blessed if I know why."

"Gas!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, I can't make it out," said Bob. "Smithy isn't the man to gas, really. He must have some reason for thinking that Lagden will see him through."

"Well, what?" asked Hazeldene.

"Blessed if I know," confessed Bob. "But if he's gone to see Lagden now, I suppose we shall soon know whether there's anything in it."

All the footballing fraternity were anxious to see Smithy and learn whether he had, after all, succeeded in inducing Mr. Lagden to intervene on his behalf.

So, when the door of the Rag opened, and the Bounder came in, there was a general movement of interest, and all eyes turned on Smithy.

He did not look as if he had had a lot of luck. His brow was knitted, and his eyes glinting.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Here's Smithy! What's the verdict, old bean?"

"You've seen Lagden?" called out Harry Wharton.

"Is it all right, Smithy?"

"Cough it up!"

The Bounder started, looking round at the many faces turned towards him. The colour came deep into his cheeks.

In his certainty that a hint to the games master would be enough, he had talked a little too confidently.

Now, he realised, he had to admit that he had been, so to speak, talking out of his hat; and that there was nothing in it.

He crimsoned with mortification and discomfort.

His feelings towards the games master at that moment were exceedingly bitter. To do Smithy justice, it had not been his intention to use power that was in his hands. His view was, that he was doing the man who called himself Stephen Lagden a big service, by holding his tongue, and that the man was called upon to do him a little service in return.

He did not realise that what he had said to the games master amounted to a threat. Yet, unless it was taken as a threat, there was no reason for the man to submit to his dictation—for that was what it came to, whether Smithy saw it or not.

Now he had the pleasure, or otherwise, of looking like a swanking ass to all his Form; a fellow who had confidently announced that he could handle the difficulty—and who, obviously, couldn't!

"Have you seen Lagden?" asked the captain of the Remove directly, as Vernon-Smith hesitated to reply.

"Yes!" snarled the Bounder.

"Is he going to put it to Quelch?"

"He says not."

"Well, if he says not, he means not, I suppose!" said the captain of the Remove tartly. "What the dickens did you mean by making out that you could make him change his mind, you ass?"

"Swank!" said Hazel.

The Bounder set his lips. Harry Wharton crossed over to the door of the Rag, on which the Remove football list was posted; he took a pencil from his pocket as he went.

"Hold on!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth. "I've told you not to take my name out, Wharton!"

Harry glanced round at him.

"I've got to take it out, haven't I, fat-head? You made me believe you might be able to wangle it, somehow, with your gas. Now you own up that there's nothing in it, as we all jolly well knew."

"And what name are you putting in?" sneered Smithy.

"Nugent's!" answered Wharton briefly.

The Bounder gave a sneering laugh.

"You're leaving me out, to put your pal in? Is that what you mean?"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Smithy!" exclaimed Frank Nugent hotly. "I'd rather stand out and see you play, and you know it!"

"Stand out, then, and see me play!"

said the Bounder sullenly. "I've said that I'm going to play, haven't I?"

Harry Wharton paused. He was fed-up with the Bounder and his temper, to the back teeth. But he was very keen to get that good forward into the Remove eleven for the St. Jim's match, if he could.

"Look here, Smithy, talk sense!" he exclaimed. "You can't play without leave from Quelch. Is there any chance of—"

"I've said so!" snarled the Bounder. "You fancy you can get off?"

"I've said so!" repeated Smithy.

"I don't see—"

"I don't think it's necessary for you to see, so long as I turn up for the game to-morrow afternoon," answered the Bounder, with cool insolence. "I've said that it can be fixed with Quelch, and that's enough."

"Gas!" said Johnny Bull. "You've told us already that you could make Lagden chip in. Are you going to order the Head to bullyrag Quelch into letting you off?"

Some of the juniors laughed. The Bounder gave Johnny a fierce look—which Johnny Bull met with calm equanimity.

Harry Wharton hesitated, but he slipped the pencil back into his pocket. He was trying to keep as patient as he could, with that valued, but extremely exasperating, member of the Remove eleven.

"You're leaving my name there?" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, I'll leave it there!" answered Harry. "I suppose you're only gassing, and Nugent will have to play; but if there's a chance, I'm glad to hear it. Anyhow, your name can be scratched to-morrow as easily as to-day. I suppose the truth is that you fancied that you could talk Lagden over, and found out that you made a mistake, as any fellow here could have told you."

Herbert Vernon-Smith made no answer to that; which was, in point of fact, a precise statement of the case. He went out of the Rag, slammed the door after him, and tramped out of the House.

Seldom, or never, had the Bounder of Greyfriars been in so black and bitter a temper. And seldom, or never, had he landed himself in such a difficulty.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

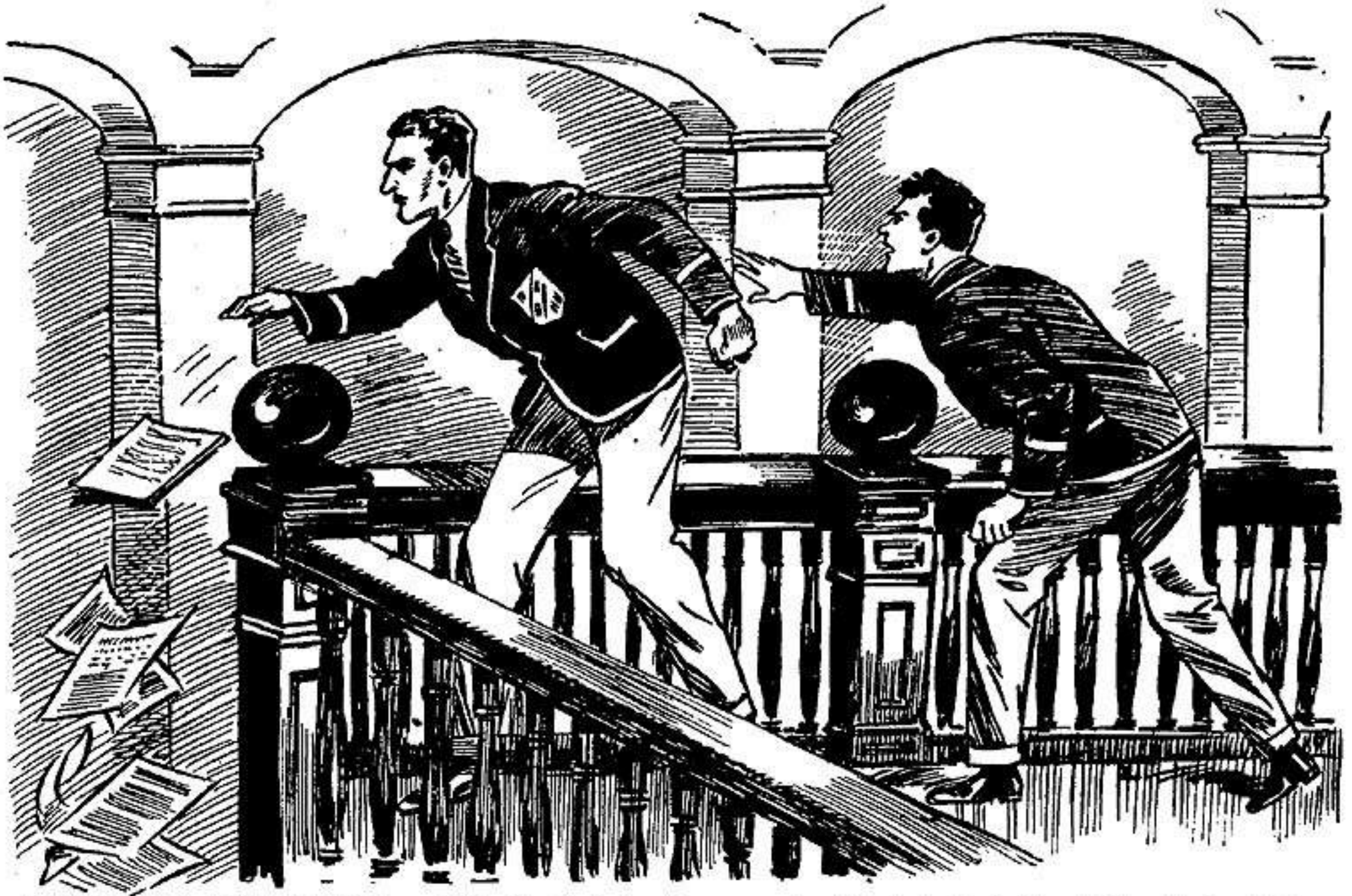
What Loder Overheard!

L ODER of the Sixth took the cigarette from his mouth, concealed it in the palm of his hand, and put his hand behind him.

It was very quiet and secluded in the old Cloisters, especially as the autumn dusk was falling, and it was near lock-up. The black sheep of the Sixth had to be careful, however. And the sound of a footstep on the old, cracked flagstones, a murmur of voices, warned him to put his "smoke" out of sight. He scowled in the direction of the approaching footsteps.

Some fellow or other was taking a stroll along the deserted Cloisters, and interrupting Loder's smoke. Or, rather, two fellows, for the murmur of voices reached him, as he stood leaning on an old stone pillar, thick with ivy. And suddenly one of the murmuring voices came sharply, angrily, loudly, and he recognised the rather strident tones of Vernon-Smith of the Remove.

"The rotter! He might have done it for me! Why couldn't he? A word



"Gimme my play!" yelled Wibley. "You beastly bully, gimme my play!" Instead of giving Wibley his play, Loder pitched the writing-pad over the banisters. Detached sheets went floating in various directions. "You rotter!" roared Wibley, forgetting the respect due to a prefect. "Oh, you cad, Loder!"

from him to Quelch would have done it. He's games master!"

Loder started a little as those words reached him; then he grinned. He knew, of course, all about Vernon-Smith's detention, which had been imposed on account of what had happened to Loder on the Remove staircase the day before.

Loder took no interest whatever in junior games; but he was aware that a junior match was fixed for Wednesday afternoon, and that the junior under detention would have to stand out of it. Which, as he knew that Smithy was a keen footballer, was very satisfactory to Loder. It was little enough, in his opinion, for bowling a prefect over with a Soccer ball.

So he had no doubt to what Smithy's angry words alluded. He had tried to get Lagden to chip in, and failed.

A lower voice answered the Bounder, and Loder did not hear what the other fellow said. But Smithy's angry voice came again:

"He ought to have done it! I've done enough for him! By gad, it would serve him right if I shouted out, in the middle of the quad, all I know about him. He would be sorry for himself, if I did!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Smithy!"

It was Redwing's quiet voice. Tom Redwing, the Bounder's chum, was walking in the Cloisters with him.

No doubt, Redwing, in his quiet way, was trying to calm the Bounder, and soothe his angry and irritated temper. Probably that was why he had walked him off to that deserted spot.

"My dear chap," went on Redwing. "Wharton asked Lagden to chip in, and he really couldn't, after he knew that Quelch had refused Wharton already. Having said 'No' to Wharton, the cap-

tain of the Form, how could he say 'Yes' to you?"

"He could have—and should have! I've done more than as much for him!" snarled the Bounder.

"Blessed if I see——"

"Of course you don't, and nobody else does! I haven't said a word about the man—and I'm not going to, either! But, by gad, I've a jolly good mind to make him sorry for letting me down like this! And I could! If other fellows knew what I know about that man who calls himself Lagden——"

"Calls himself Lagden?" repeated Redwing blankly. "What the dickens do you mean, Smithy? What could he call himself, except his own name?"

"Is it his name?" sneered the Bounder.

"You know it is."

"I know it isn't!"

"Smithy!"

"Now I've told you!" snarled Vernon-Smith. "And I will tell you this, too. I've a jolly good mind to tell all Greyfriars!"

Loder of the Sixth, leaning on the stone pillar, was quite still. Neither of the Remove juniors knew that he was there. They did not see him, and he did not see them—the pillar was between.

But he heard every word clearly.

He was utterly astonished. He disliked "Mr. Lagden" intensely. He longed for a chance of getting even with the man who had handled him. But it had never crossed his mind that there was anything secret or shady about the new games master.

How could there be, about a man who had been sent to Greyfriars to take up a temporary post, by the firm of Leggett & Teggers, the agency that always supplied a temporary beak when required.

But what did Smithy mean?

He was evidently angry, savage, resentful; but he was not a fellow to talk wildly simply because of that.

Was it possible that there was something to Lagden's disadvantage, and that the Bounder had found it out?

Loder's eyes gleamed at that thought. If that was so, Gerald Loder was going to know. If there was any sort of a stick with which Lagden could be beaten, Loder was going to handle that stick.

He remained quite still and silent—and listened. His cigarette went out unregarded. Loder's methods as a prefect were not always such as would have won the approval of his headmaster. Often and often had Loder stepped quietly and stealthily to hear words that were not intended for his ears. Now he had not the slightest scruple in overhearing the talk of these two juniors. He was only glad that he was on the spot to overhear.

There was a short silence; the two Removites passed the old stone pillar that hid Loder, but at a little distance farther on he heard them stop.

"Look here, Smithy"—Tom Redwing's voice was quiet, but Loder strained his ears to catch every word—"you're talking out of your hat, old chap! You're wild with Lagden. For goodness' sake, don't say anything of that kind where other fellows can hear you!"

"I'm not going to!" snarled the Bounder. "The man's as good as asked me to give him away, but I'm not going to."

"There can't be anything to give away, Smithy. It's utter rot! The man came here from Leggett & Teggers and——"

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"So he says!" sneered the Bounder. "He's named Lagden—"

"So he says!" repeated the Bounder in the same sneering tones.

"Even if he wasn't, you couldn't know anything about it, Smithy. How the dickens could you?"

"I might have seen him before he came here," jeered Vernon-Smith. "He's supposed to have come down straight from London by train last week. Suppose I saw him hanging about the day before?"

"You didn't!"

"Well, I did!"

"Rot, old chap!"

"And so did other fellows," sneered Smithy. "Wharton had an idea that he'd seen him before when he first came—"

"Yes, I remember Wharton said so; he was like some man he had seen in the hols, most likely—"

"Wharton never knew him again. I did. I had a closer view of him than Wharton had. Wharton hasn't the faintest idea that he's a spoofer, and not named Lagden at all. I know he is."

"But, Smithy—"

"I tell you there's no doubt about it," snarled the Bounder. "And, knowing that I could give him away, he's got the nerve to carry on as if he were above board and above suspicion, and refuses to do a fellow a good turn. By gad, I tell you I've a jolly good mind to give him away right now! Look at the position I'm in. I banked on him seeing me through, and told Wharton to keep my name up for to-morrow. Now I'm let down, and I'm going to look a swanking fool to all the Remove! By gum, he's asking for it!"

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

From a distance came the sound of a bell.

"That's lock-up," said Redwing. "Come on!"

The two juniors tramped away, and Loder of the Sixth heard nothing more. He remained where he was, his thoughts in a whirl.

Was the Bounder talking idly—or was he talking out of his hat, like Billy Bunter?

Was he mistaken? He was no fool; he was keen and wary and anything but a fool, but his angry temper might mislead him.

There was something in it; Loder was assured that there was something in it. The wish, perhaps, was father to the thought, to some extent. He was intensely keen to get a "handle" against the man who had humiliated him, laid hands on him, and treated him with contempt.

When Loder of the Sixth at last walked out of the Cloisters his mind was made up on one point—whatever Vernon-Smith knew, he was going to know. And if it gave him a chance against the games master he was going to use it to the very uttermost.

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Surprise!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, Loder?"

Calling-over was finished, and the Greyfriars fellows had left Hall. Loder of the Sixth called to the junior "skipper" as he was going along to the Rag with his friends.

The Famous Five came to a halt; they expected trouble, as a matter of course, when the bully of the Sixth butted in, and only wondered what it was this time.

For once, however, Gerald Loder's bullying proclivities seemed under restraint; he gave the captain of the Remove quite an agreeable glance.

He seemed, in fact, in a very good humour—which was unusual in Loder at any time, and very unusual indeed since the talk about his Cousin James in the school.

"Look here, kid," said Loder, "I hear that you're rather in trouble about one of your men being under detention to-morrow—young Vernon-Smith."

Wharton gazed at him blankly.

"Yes, that's so, Loder," he answered. "Smithy's in the football team, and it's a bit of rotten bad luck for us."

"You want him in your team to-morrow?"

"Can't do without him, if it can be helped," said Harry. He was amazed at this unusual geniality from Gerald Loder, but it gave him a glimpse of hope.

Loder certainly was the man to get Smithy off—if he liked.

The games master might, or might not, have succeeded in influencing Quelch; but there was little doubt that Loder could, as the offended party—the prefect who had been knocked down the Remove staircase by that Soccer ball.

Nobody, of course, would have dreamed of asking Loder; he was the very last man at Greyfriars to let a fellow off. Now, however, the thought came into Wharton's mind—in this very unusual, genial mood of Loder's.

"I say, Loder," murmured Bob Cherry, "Smithy was an awful ass to play the goat yesterday; we all know that. But it comes hard on the rest of us when we want him to play in the eleven, doesn't it?"

"That's what I was thinking," said Loder, with a nod.

The chums of the Remove could only gaze at the Sixth Form prefect.

Such a view of the matter from Wingate, or Gwynne, would not have surprised them, but from Loder it was very surprising indeed—but it was as welcome as it was surprising.

"Well, look here," said Loder, "you know what he did. I thought at the time that he buzzed that ball at me on purpose. Still, if it was an accident, and—"

The Famous Five were silent and uncomfortable.

But Loder, though he paused, went on without waiting for an answer, much to their relief.

"He's a reckless young rascal; he ought to be jolly well flogged—and you know that as well as I do! But I admit it's rather rotten for you, having one of your men taken out of the team just before a match. I think I might be able to put it to your Form-master and get him let off."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"I say, that's fearfully decent of you, Loder!" said Harry. "I say, we'd all be no end obliged if you'd do that! You see, we've got a pretty tough match on hand, and Smithy's one of our best—"

"Well, I'll see what can be done," said Loder. "If Vernon-Smith likes to come to me and ask me civilly, I dare say I can wangle it."

With a nod to the juniors, Loder of the Sixth walked away to his study.

The Famous five gazed at one another.

"Is—is—is that Loder—the Loder we know," murmured Bob Cherry, "or is he a jolly old changeling?"

Wharton rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"They say that a leopard can't change his spots," he remarked; "but that's a change in Loder, and no mistake. Look here, this is too good to be missed. Loder could get Smithy off if he liked."

"Of course he could!" said Nugent. "Smithy's only got it because he japed Loder. Quelch couldn't refuse if Loder asked him."

"It's jolly decent of Loder if he does!" said Bob. "After all, it's no joke to be knocked over by a Soccer ball in the chivvy. Loder isn't such a rotter as he's always tried so hard to make fellows believe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked into the Rag in very cheerful spirits. Smithy's name was still in the football list, and it looked now as if there was a chance that it might remain there.

Vernon-Smith was in the Rag with a scowling face. Redwing was with him, silent and uneasy. Redwing could make nothing of what his chum had told him in the Cloisters, but it worried him deeply. When the Bounder's vindictive temper was roused it was likely to lead him into all sorts of reckless trouble—and it was undoubtedly roused now. The prospect of having to eat his own words, and of looking a "swanking ass" before all the Remove, evoked all the bitterness in the Bounder's nature—and there was a good deal of it.

As Harry Wharton approached Smithy he was greeted by a black look.

The junior captain of Greyfriars smiled.

"Looks like a chance, after all, Smithy!" he said amicably. "Loder's just spoken to me—"

"Hang Loder!"

"He's as good as promised to get you off to-morrow."

"What utter rot! Catch Loder doing anything of the kind!" sneered Smithy.

"Well, it's a bit of a surprise!" admitted Wharton. "If I'd thought there was the ghost of a chance, I'd have spoken to him about it; but, of course, I never did. But he says—"

"Rubbish!"

"Do listen to a fellow, Smithy! He says he's been thinking it over—"

"And jolly glad that I'm dished!" snarled Smithy. "Don't I know the cad?"

"And if you ask him civilly, he says he thinks he can wangle it!" said Harry.

"What about that?"

"Loder said that?" exclaimed the Bounder, in astonishment.

"His jolly old words!"

"Blessed if I understand it, then! He was as mad as a hatter about getting that Soccer ball on his nose, and he wanted me to get it worse, not to let me off. And he jolly well guessed that it was me who phoned him from the Prefects'-room, though he can't prove it. There's a catch in it somewhere!"

"Well, you can ask him, anyhow! Look here, Smithy, if Loder's going to do the decent thing for once, for goodness' sake don't check him, and make a fool of yourself! I suppose you want to play in the match to-morrow if it can be fixed?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently.

"Yes, rather!" The Bounder laughed. "Loder's got somethin' up his

sleeve! He can't mean it! Still, if asking him civilly will work the oracle, I'll speak to him as if butter wouldn't melt in my mouth. Civility costs nothin'!"

"Trot along to his study, then, and strike the iron while it's hot!" said Bob Cherry. "Catch him before he gets into another of his jolly old tempers! If he hears somebody whisper the name of James, all the fat will be in the fire again!"

"The stitch in time is the ninepence that saves the cracked pitcher from going longest to the well, my esteemed Smithy!" said Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

The Bounder chuckled.

"If there's a chance, you bet I shall jump at it with both feet!" he said.

He went out of the Rag at once, to head for Loder's study.

Harry Wharton & Co. were left in a very hopeful mood, and thinking that Loder of the Sixth was not, after all, such a tick and a swob as they had always believed him to be.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Loder Wants to Know!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH tapped at the door of Loder's study, in the Sixth, and entered.

His mind was in a state of mingled surprise and suspicion; but he was prepared, at least, to turn on any amount of civility that might be required. He was, indeed, prepared to be grateful, if Loder really meant to do the decent thing. But, as he had said, it was more probable that there was a "catch" in it somewhere. Loder's was not a forgiving or genial nature.

He looked genial enough as he nodded to the Bounder.

"Shut the door after you, kid," he said.

Smithy shut the door.

"You can squat down!" added Loder.

Smithy sat down.

"I suppose Wharton's spoken to you," said Loder.

"Yes."

"I find that you're rather dished over your football arrangements by that detention to-morrow," said Loder. "I don't quite like the idea of that. I think I could square it with Quelch."

The Bounder almost wondered whether he was dreaming. Wingate might have talked like this—but Loder!

Indeed, a dizzy idea crossed his mind for a moment that Loder had had bad luck in his "gee-gees" or on the "dogs," and wanted to borrow money off him. That was improbable; even Loder drew the line somewhere. But it would have explained what otherwise seemed inexplicable.

"If you tell me that it was an accident about that Soccer ball on your staircase yesterday—"

The Bounder made a grimace.

He could not tell Loder that.

Smithy had his own peculiar views on the subject of veracity. School life was, from Smithy's point of view, something like a state of war between the schoolboys and the schoolmasters and prefects; and he took the view that all was fair in war. He would have lied to a beak or a prefect, if questioned, with brazen effrontery. Among his fellows he would have scorned to lie. And put on his honour, he would not have lied to save his life.

Had Loder questioned him as a prefect, Smithy would have made any answer that suited his purpose, regardless of the truth. But the way Loder

put it, put him on his honour. The Bounder's code was a peculiar one; but such as it was he stood by it.

"Well?" said Loder, staring at him.

"I'm not going to tell you lies, Loder," said the Bounder quietly. "I'm willing to say that I'm sorry I did it—and so I am, jolly sorry, as you're taking it so decently! But I'm not going to get off a detention by lying!"

Loder stared at him harder, and then burst into a laugh.

"You've never struck me as a particularly truthful fellow, Vernon-Smith," he said.

"I'm not!" answered Smithy coolly. "If you ask me questions as a prefect, I'll tell you as many lies as Bunter would. But you've asked me as one fellow to another, and that's the difference."

"Well, never mind," said Loder. "If you're sorry, that's all right. You're a young ass and a hot-headed young rascal, but I'm not going to muck up your football match because of that. I'll speak to Quelch."

The Bounder drew a deep breath.

"I say, Loder, that's awfully decent of you!" he said. "Quelch is bound to listen to you, in the circumstances, of course. I never dreamed—"

"Well, that's that!" said Loder. "Leave it at that. By the way, Vernon-Smith, there's another matter I want to mention, as you're here."

Smithy was on his guard at once. He knew now, what he had already suspected, that there was a "catch" in it. But he answered meekly:

"Yes, Loder!"

"You've seen something of that new man here—Lagden—"

The Bounder's eyes smouldered. He would not have needed to ask favours of Loder if Lagden had not let him down, as he regarded it.

"You don't like him much?" smiled Loder.

"Not a fearful lot!" answered Smithy.

"He seems to be pretty popular."

"Oh, yes, the fellows like him all right. He's as popular as Larry Lascelles was, or jolly nearly!" There was a sneer in the Bounder's tone. "They think he's as good a man as Lascelles."

"But you don't?"

"You're not going to blame me for that, Loder! From what I've heard, you like the man less than I do."

"I don't blame you," said Loder. "As you say, I don't like the man! The fact is, I don't trust him."

The Bounder gave a start.

Was it possible that Loder had a suspicion of what the Bounder knew, or was convinced that he knew? If the Bounder's belief was well founded, the new games master of Greyfriars was, in reality, Loder's convict cousin, James, and the man who lay insensible at Courtfield was Stephen Lagden. Could Loder have guessed?

Smithy was very wary now.

Bitter as he felt against the games master, savagely as he resented that unceremonious grasp of his collar, he was not going to give away the man who had pulled him out of the river.

"I don't trust him!" repeated Loder, watching the Bounder's face narrowly, and not failing to notice his start. "Lagden's a complete stranger here, and nothing's known of him, except that he was sent from Leggett & Teggers. He's said to have been a master at Okeham, in Devonshire—that's a long way from here. I've got my doubts about him, and I'm going to look into the matter. That's my duty, of course, as a prefect, if my headmaster is being taken in."

"Oh!"

"If you can help me in any way, Vernon-Smith, you're bound to do so," went on Loder. "You can see that?"

Smithy did not answer. Loder, it was clear, knew that he knew something about the games master, and he was cudgelling his brains, trying to guess how Loder could have found that out. He had never opened his lips on the subject, except that day to Redwing, in the Cloisters.

"Now, just tell me what you know about the man," said Loder.

"How should I know anything more than the other fellows know?" parried the Bounder.

Loder's brow darkened.

"You saw him before he came here!" he said.

"How—how the thump do you know that?" stuttered the Bounder.

"Well, I do know it," said Loder. "Isn't it true?"

"Yes, it's true," admitted Vernon-Smith.

"He was supposed to come down here by train, straight from London. It's plain that he didn't, if you saw him hanging about the day before he got here."

Smithy drew a quick breath. He saw light now. Those were almost the very words he had used, speaking to Redwing in the Cloisters.

Smithy was quick on the uptake. He guessed that Loder had been on hand and had heard what he said to Tom Redwing. Loder's knowledge was accounted for now.

Swiftly he ran over in his mind what he had said to Redwing. He was glad that he had not mentioned the convict, or the name of James Loder.

Loder had no suspicion of the real facts. He saw that. All he knew, was that the Bounder somehow knew that the games master was not really named Lagden.

"Cough it up!" said Loder. "Never mind how I know—I do know! You saw the man the day before you came to the school?"

"Yes!"

"Hanging about the neighbourhood?"

"Yes!"

"Other fellows saw him, too?"

"Yes!"

"Their names?"

"Wharton was one."

"But Wharton did not know him again when he turned up here?"

"No! He only fancied he had seen a man like him somewhere."

"You're rather sharper than Wharton, Vernon-Smith."

"I hope so."

"But Wharton's no fool, all the same. If he didn't recognise Lagden as a man he had seen the day before, the man must have changed his appearance rather considerably. Otherwise Wharton would have known him at once."

"Well, rather."

"Was he dressed differently?"

"Quite differently."

"Did he call himself by the name of Lagden, or some other name?"

"I never heard him mention any name at all. He was dressed differently—very differently." Smithy did not add how very differently the man had been dressed. He had no intention of mentioning the broad arrows.

"So it comes to this," said Loder, slowly. "He was about the place the day before he was supposed to arrive here for the first time from London. He was got up so differently, that Wharton, who saw him, did not know him as the same man when he saw him again here."

"That's how it stands!"

"Has he mentioned, since he's been here, the fact that he saw any of you before he came?"

"Not a word."

"To cut it short, he's keeping it dark, that he's the man you and others saw, the day before we got our new games master?"

"Quite!"

"Lagden—the real Lagden—must have been in London the day before he was due to arrive here!" said Loder. "If you saw this man in the vicinity, he can't possibly be the real Lagden."

"No!"

"I remember he was late—very late—getting here!" said Loder. "He explained it with a story of being mixed up in catching that convict. I never thought of doubting it, till now. But, if he isn't Lagden, where the dooce is Lagden all this time?"

Vernon-Smith offered no suggestion to solve that problem.

"He can't have made away with the man, to bag his job here," said Loder. "He must have fixed it up with Lagden to carry on here in his place, somehow. If he's not Lagden, that's a certainty. They're friends, perhaps, and Lagden did him a good turn."

Smithy remained silent.

"But if that's so, it means that he's a man who can't get a job in his own name—something fishy there!" said Loder. "And anyhow, he's here in a false name, whether the real Lagden's a party to it, or not. I'd like to see the Head's face when he hears that his new games master has come here in a false name." Loder's eyes glittered. "You've not told this about the school Vernon-Smith?"

"Only my pal, Redwing; and I never mentioned it to him till to-day," said the Bounder, demurely. "It's not my bizney to get mixed up in it."

"You can leave it in my hands!" said Loder. "You can depend on it, that if the man's an impostor, as it jolly well looks, I shall bowl him out all right. No need to put him on his guard, and any tattle about the school would reach his ears fast enough. You'd better say nothing, Vernon-Smith."

"Not a syllable, Loder, if you think it best," said the Bounder, meekly.

"Well, I do!" said Loder. "Leave it to me to fix the rotter! I can find out something from Leggett and Teggers and that will do the trick. There's no doubt, of course, from what you've told me, but there's got to be proof, before I go to Dr. Locke about it. By gum, I'll show the beggar up. Leave it to me, Vernon-Smith, and keep mum."

"Just as you say, Loder."

"That's all right, then; you can cut!"

"And it's all right about to-morrow?" asked Smithy as he rose from his chair.

"Eh, oh, yes! I'll speak to Quelch! You can rely on that!" said Loder. "If you should remember anything more that will help, come at once and tell me. I'll make it all right with Quelch!"

"Many thanks!" said the Bounder, and he left Loder's study.

Loder of the Sixth rose from his chair as the door closed on Herbert Vernon-Smith. He paced about his study, his brows knitted in thought, his eyes gleaming.

There could be no doubt—no doubt at all. How the man had fixed it with the genuine Lagden, he could not guess—whether they were acting in collusion, or whether this impostor had borrowed Lagden's name, without his knowledge. It mattered little—in either case, the man was an impostor, at Greyfriars in a false name! It would surely be easy

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to obtain proof—and once Loder had proof, he had his enemy in the hollow of his hand! And he would have no mercy on him—the man who handled him, humiliated him, treated him with contempt.

The man who called himself Stephen Lagden, would not even know that he was suspected, till Loder had proof—and then he would learn, from a policeman's tap on his shoulder, before all Greyfriars!

Loder gloated at the thought! He little guessed the name of the man who was to be tapped on the shoulder before all Greyfriars!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Serene for Smithy!

"WELL?"

Harry Wharton & Co. asked that question with one voice, as the Bounder came back into the Rag.

Smithy was looking thoughtful, and not wholly satisfied.

He gave a curt nod.

"I think it's all right," he said. "Loder says that he will speak to Quelch; and I expect that will fix it."

"Jolly decent of him!" said Bob.

"Oh, frightfully!" drawled the Bounder.

He threw himself into a chair, and picked up a book. But he did not read. He wanted to be left alone to think it over.

He was feeling a twinge of remorse. Angry and resentful as he had been, he had never meant to give the games master away. Neither had he intentionally done so, now. Loder, obviously, had been in the Cloisters and had overheard what he had said to Redwing; Smithy could not help that. He had told Loder no more, in his study, than Loder had already overheard, or very little more.

Not a word about the Blackmoor convict had passed his lips. After all, what did it matter, if he admitted as much as Loder already knew?

He could have refused to answer, and left Loder in a state of doubt. In that case, Loder would have done nothing for him in the matter that was most important to him. If the games master had done as he had asked, the present circumstances would never have arisen at all. No. 22 should have realised that one good turn deserves another!

The man had pulled him out of the river. For that reason he had kept the secret, and would have gone on keeping it. Still, there were plenty of people who would have taken the view that he ought not to keep such a secret, whatever No. 22 had done for him.

Indeed, it could not be kept for ever. So long as the other man lay unconscious at Courtfield, it did not hurt him, perhaps, to be supposed to be the Blackmoor convict. The man who had borrowed his name, was only getting a breathing space. When the man at Courtfield could speak, his game would be up. Loder meddling in the matter only hastened the end.

After all, the man was a convict. He had no right to expect a Greyfriars man to screen him. Let him take his chance!

But the Bounder could not feel satisfied in his mind. Still, he could not wish that Loder had not butted in. Loder was going to do for him, what the games master had refused to do, and that came first.

When the Remove fellows went up to their studies for prep, Smithy noted the games master standing near the stair-

case in conversation with Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch.

He eyed "Stephen Lagden" curiously as he passed him.

The games master did not glance at him; seemed, in fact, to have forgotten his existence. Smithy could not help wondering at his nerve. After what the Bounder had said to him, he must know that he was not so secure as he had deemed himself to be. But he was still at Greyfriars; carrying on with unperurbed calm.

Did he think that he had bluffed the Bounder into believing that he was mistaken? Or was he, under that calm exterior, in momentary fear of learning that his secret had been told? Or—Smithy had to admit the possibility—was the Bounder, after all, mistaken, and had he put Loder on a false scent—set him to track down a mare's-nest? With all his keenness, Smithy could find no clear answer to those questions.

Loder of the Sixth, at all events, did not think that he was on the track of a mare's-nest. It was Loder's duty to see lights out for the Remove that night, and when the juniors went into their dormitory he called to Wharton. The captain of the Remove stopped in the doorway, wondering what was wanted.

"Oh, I think it will be all right about Vernon-Smith to-morrow, Wharton!" said Loder. "I've spoken to Quelch, and he says he will consider the matter."

"That's jolly good of you, Loder!" said Harry, sincerely enough. He was feeling very amiable towards Loder just then.

"By the way, I was going to speak to you about Lagden," said Loder casually. "He came here as a stranger to most of us, but I think I've heard that you knew him before he came?"

Wharton looked astonished, as he felt. "Not at all," he answered. "I never even heard his name till I heard that he was coming here in Larry's place."

"But you'd seen him before?"

"Not that I know of."

"Are you making a secret of it, or what?" asked Loder.

"Nothing to make a secret of, is there?" asked Harry blankly. "If I'd ever seen Mr. Lagden before, I should say so, I suppose. He was as much a stranger to me as to anybody else."

"I've heard it mentioned that you thought you knew him the day he came."

"Oh, that!" said Harry, with a smile. "I'd forgotten about that! Yes, when I first saw him I fancied I knew his face for a minute. I think he must be like somebody I'd seen somewhere, most likely in the hols."

"You can't remember whom?"

"No. I haven't thought about it," answered Harry, astonished by the prefect's interest in so trivial a matter.

"You don't think you saw him about this neighbourhood before he came here?"

"Well, I couldn't have. He came down from London by train that day—so far as I'm aware, at least." Wharton was more and more surprised. "What does it matter, anyhow, Loder?"

"Oh, nothing much!" answered Loder carelessly. "It would be rather odd if you'd seen him about here before the day he was supposed to arrive for the first time."

"Jolly odd, I should think!" said Harry. "But I can't have, of course. If I'd seen him, I should know him again at once—he's not a common-looking man. I think I've seen somebody like him, that's all."

Loder nodded, and turned away.

He paced in the passage while the Remove turned in. What he had heard

from Wharton pore out what he had learned from Vernon-Smith. The man's appearance was different now; that was why Wharton did not remember him. But he had seen him, as Vernon-Smith had.

If all were above-board, the man would not have been anywhere near Greyfriars the day before his official arrival. Neither would his appearance have been changed to any great extent.

"Stephen Lagden" was not what he appeared to be; that was a fixed certainty in Loder's mind. Wharton's words had not only confirmed that, but made it clear that the man must have taken deliberate trouble to change his appearance. Loder was feeling very satisfied when he turned out the lights in the Remove dormitory and went down.

"What was Loder jawing about, Harry?" asked Frank Nugent, when the prefect was gone.

"Lagden!" answered Harry. "He's heard somewhere—goodness knows how—that I thought I'd seen somebody like the games master, and he asked me about it."

"What the dickens does it matter?"

"Blessed if I know! But Loder asked me."

The Bounder grinned in the dark. He, at least, knew why Loder had asked, though Wharton himself was perplexed.

The following morning Smithy would not have been surprised to learn that Mr. Lagden was no longer at Greyfriars. But when the Remove came down, one of the first persons to meet their eyes was the games master, taking his usual early trot in the quadrangle. And again the Bounder wondered at his nerve.

In the Remove Form Room that morning, the fellow who usually gave Mr. Quelch the most trouble was the meekest and mildest member of the Form. The Bounder's "con" was excellent, and during first and second school he hung on his Form-master's words as if they were pearls of wisdom falling from Mr. Quelch's august lips. If Quelch had not yet made up his mind to accede to Loder's request, exemplary behaviour in the Form-room might help him to do so—and perhaps it did! At all events, the Remove master called Vernon-Smith to his desk when the Form were dismissed in break.

"You are under detention this afternoon, Vernon-Smith!" he began. "Loder, however, has spoken to me on the subject. It was for your conduct towards Loder that you were given this detention, and, as Loder has asked me to take a lenient view of the matter, I do not feel that I can refuse to do so."

"That is very kind of Loder, sir!" said Vernon-Smith meekly. "I've told him I'm sorry for what happened."

"It is undoubtedly very kind of Loder," said Mr. Quelch. "He seems very concerned that a junior football fixture should be interfered with on his account. I cannot feel, Vernon-Smith, that you deserve much leniency; nevertheless, I was very glad to hear Loder speak as he did, and I have decided to accede. Your detention will be deferred till Saturday, so that you may be free to play football for the school to-day."

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"Very well; you may go, Vernon-Smith."

The Bounder went, with a cheery grin on his face. When he came out into the quadrangle, he found Wharton with the games master, who was speaking about the match due that afternoon.

"I am sorry, Wharton, that I was unable to do anything in the matter," the games master was saying, as Smithy came along. "But, as I told you, it was quite impossible, in the circumstances. What man are you putting in Vernon-Smith's place?"

"Nugent, sir, if Smithy has to be left out," said Harry.

"Smithy won't have to be left out!" cut in the Bounder.

"That's all right, Wharton. I think I told you it would be all right if you left my name in the list. Well, it's all right, as I told you it would be."

The games master glanced at him.

"Are you not under detention, Vernon-Smith?"

"No, sir. My Form-master has been kind enough to defer it till Saturday, and let me off to-day," said the Bounder. "Sorry I bothered you about it; there was no need, after all."

There was a faint sneer in his tone.

Wharton's face brightened.

"Has Quelch said—"

"Yes; that was why he called me back in the Form-room," said Vernon-Smith. "Right as rain!"

"Oh, good!"

"I am very glad to hear it!" said the games master, so cordially that Smithy felt a twinge. "I wish you the best of luck to-day!"

He nodded to the juniors and walked away. The Bounder stared after him as he went. Was it possible that this man,

(Continued on next page.)

QUAKER OATS—

THE
BREAKFAST
THAT
MAKES

CHAMPIONS

so cool and calm and casual, was a hunted man whose liberty was at the mercy of the fellow he had taken by the collar and unceremoniously turned out of his room? If he was, he clearly had a nerve of iron. If he was not, Loder, by playing the eavesdropper in the Cloisters, had got on the trail of a mare's nest. Smithy hardly knew what to think, and he settled the matter by dismissing it from his mind and concentrating his thoughts on the St. Jim's match.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wibley on the Warpath!

WILLIAM WIBLEY of the Remove glanced up impatiently.

That afternoon Wibley was almost the only fellow in the Remove who was not thinking about Soccer.

The St. Jim's match was an event in Remove records. Even Lord Mauleverer was going to saunter down to Little Side to see Greysfriars play Tom Merry & Co. when they came; even Skinner and Snoop intended to give the game a look-in; even Billy Bunter developed a faint interest.

But other matters were on the mind of William Wibley—matters which, in Wibley's opinion, were rather more important. The great chief of the Remove Dramatic Society was deep in his new play which the dramatic society were going to perform that term—though, to Wibley's disgust, the keenest members of that society seemed less keen on it than on Soccer matches.

"Football jaw" worried Wibley when he was in the throes of composition. The Remove passage echoed with football jaw.

In his own study Micky Desmond and David Morgan talked football. Every Remove man he met talked football. Even Fisher T. Fish guessed that he was going to give the game that afternoon the once-over.

It was rather hard on a dramatist who was busy on a thrilling play, and who had not quite been able to make up his mind where the countess' diamonds were to be found!

So Wibley had fled from football and football jaw. He had found a quiet spot in a deep window-seat at the end of an upper passage.

Squatted in that window-seat, with a fountain-pen in his hand, and his writing-pad on his knee, Wibley plunged deep into drama.

Once plunged into drama, Wibley was lost to time and space.

Masterly lines ran from his fountain-pen. A hiding-place for the countess' diamonds flashed into his mind. Wibley, in his own way, was enjoying that half-holiday, as much as any fellow in the Remove.

Football jaw, had he only known it, was no longer echoing in the Remove studies. Hardly a fellow was left in those studies, as the time drew near for the match on Little Side. But Wibley did not shift. He sat where he was, deep in drama, till a footstep came to his ears, and he glanced up, irritated and impatient. He had no doubt that it was some unfeeling ass coming along to jaw football; perhaps Desmond or Morgan looking for him, to drag him down to the football ground. Wild horses would not have dragged Wibley there when he was deep in drama.

But it was not a junior who appeared in view.

It was a Sixth Form man who came quietly into the passage—very quietly. Wibley, from the window-seat, stared at Loder of the Sixth.

What the dickens Loder wanted there was a mystery to him. Loder had no business there—any more than Wibley had, as a matter of fact. Only masters' rooms opened off that passage: the two rooms that had once been occupied by Mr. Lascelles, and which were now assigned to his successor, Mr. Lagden.

Loder had rather a way of stepping quietly about, when he was on the trail of fellows he disliked or suspected. But there was no reason, so far as Wibley could see, why Loder should come up to that passage in such a stealthy way.

However, it did not matter to Wibley—and his drama did. Seeing that it was only Loder, he dropped his eyes to his writing-pad again, and his fountain-pen slid on, manufacturing masterly dramatic lines.

Then he was interrupted by a startled exclamation. Loder, no doubt, had not expected to see anybody there—any more than Wibley had.

He came striding up the passage, with a scowling brow. Wibley, exasperated, looked up again.

"What the thump are you doing here, Wibley?" snapped Loder.

"Writing my play," answered Wibley. "Don't interrupt, Loder! I'm getting on to a rather knotty point—"

"You silly young ass!" rapped Loder. "Get out of it at once!"

"Look here—"

"Clear off!" snapped Loder. "Juniors are not allowed in the masters' quarters, you know that. Get out!"

Wibley glared. "Look here, Loder, I've come here to be quiet! I'm doing no harm here, I suppose! Let a chap alone!"

Wibley was angry and indignant. Loder was a bully, and had a bad temper, and liked to find fault; but this, really, was the limit. Really, it was outside the limit, even for a bully like Loder of the Sixth. There was no reason why Loder should have come there, and no reason why he should order Wibley off—so far as Wibley could see.

But Loder, whether there was a reason or not, meant business. He reached at the writing-pad on Wibley's knee and grabbed it. Wibley gave a yell of alarm as it was jerked away.

"I say, mind what you're up to!" howled Wibley. "That's my play! Mind what you're at, you silly fat-head!"

Prefects of the Sixth Form were

not supposed to be addressed as "silly fatheads." But an exasperated and alarmed author could not be expected to think of that.

"Gimme my play!" yelled Wibley. "You beastly bully, gimme my play!"

Instead of giving Wibley his play, Loder stepped along the passage, and pitched the writing-pad over the banisters.

It landed on the stairs far below, and detached sheets went floating in various directions.

"Oh, you rotter!" roared Wibley, utterly forgetful of the respect due to a prefect of the Sixth. "Oh, you cad, Loder!"

Smack, smack! Had Loder had his ashplant with him, no doubt he would have given Wibley six. But he was, for once, without the official ash. So he smacked Wibley's head instead; and Wibley howled, as he scuttled down the passage and bolted down the stairs.

During the next quarter of an hour William Wibley forgot Loder of the Sixth, and even the smacks on his head. He was hunting for detached leaves that had escaped from the writing-pad and fluttered away.

Fortunately, he succeeded in recapturing them all. He bore them away to his study in the Remove, breathing fury. But it was useless to attempt to resume the flow of composition. Authors have to be good-tempered. Nobody can write in a bad temper. And Wibley was in a fearfully bad temper. Moreover, his head was singing from Loder's hefty smacks.

"The beast! The bully! The blighter! The tick! The swob!" Wibley ran through quite an extensive list of compliments. "The rotter! The worm! What did it matter to him if I sat there? The rotter! The outsider—the—"

Wibley broke off. It occurred to him that he had not heard Loder come down. It occurred to him, also, that it must have mattered, somehow, to Loder if he sat there, or even the bully of the Sixth would not have barged in. What had Loder driven him off for?

"Oh, the cad!" breathed Wibley, as a new idea came into his mind.

Loder's enmity towards the games master was well known. Lagden's rooms were on that passage, Lagden was out—everybody knew that he was going to referee in the junior match that afternoon. Was it possible that Loder was going to play some trick in his rooms—some jape like a disgruntled fag?

It seemed unlikely enough. A Sixth Form prefect was above japes. Yet why had Loder come there at all, and why had he cleared Wibley off? Wibley's eyes gleamed.

He left his study and went back to the upper passage, stepping as softly as Loder himself might have done.

The passage was empty. Quietly Wibley stepped along to the games master's door. It was shut; but he could hear a movement in the room.

"The awful rotter!" breathed Wibley.

He knew that the games master was not there. He knew that Loder was. Whatever might be Loder's game, he was secretly and surreptitiously in the games master's rooms, while Mr. Lagden was occupied on Little Side and could not possibly come in and interrupt him.

There were two doors, not far from one another—the sitting-room door and the bed-room door. Wibley would have been glad to turn the keys in those doors and imprison Loder there, for the games master to find when he came in. That

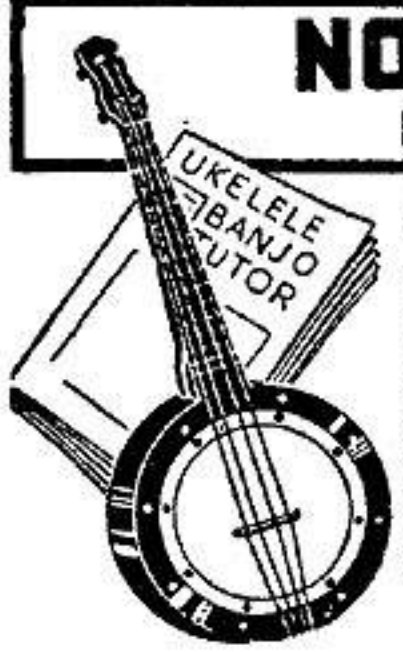
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“Shoot!” roared a dozen fellows, as Vernon-Smith raced down the wing with the ball at his feet. The Bounder did not attempt to bring off that difficult shot. At the psychological moment, he centred neatly to Wharton, and the captain of the Remove slammed the leather into the net, well out of Fatty Wynn’s reach. “Goal!” roared the crowd.

was impossible, as the keys were on the inside of the locks.

But something else was possible. Wibley was fairly on the warpath now. He scudded away to the Remove box-room. He came back with a box-rope in his hand. Quietly but effectually he knotted the rope on one door-handle, carried it along to the other door-handle, and knotted it there. The rope, drawn taut, and safely knotted at both ends, prevented either door opening when pulled from inside. Loder of the Sixth was a prisoner!

Wibley strolled away grinning. He went back to his study, and, feeling better now, sat down to his drama there. And, busy on the countess’ diamonds, he forgot all about Loder of the Sixth once more.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The St. Jim’s Match!

“I SAY, you fellows! Play up!” squeaked Billy Bunter. “Call that Soccer!”

Billy Bunter was not, perhaps, a great judge of Soccer! The fat Owl of the Remove was, in fact, more like a football than a footballer! Still, if Billy Bunter couldn’t play footer for nuts, he could criticise—and he did! And the footballers who heard his criticisms could not step off the field of play and kick him, which was rather fortunate for Bunter.

There was a throng round Little Side to watch the St. Jim’s match.

Nearly all the Remove were there, and fellows of others Forms had come along. Temple of the Fourth told Dabney and Fry of that Form, that the fag game was hardly worth watchin’; still, he honoured the Remove by watching it. Even so great a man as Coker of the Fifth condescended to give it a glance.

It was, in point of fact, a great game. Tom Merry & Co. had come over from St. Jim’s in great form. Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, of the St. Jim’s Fourth, who looked almost too elegant to live, had come over in his shooting-boots, so to speak; and he had captured the first goal for his side—the only score in the first half.

In the second half Harry Wharton & Co. were waging an uphill battle. After the change of ends they had the wind against them, as well as being a goal in arrears.

They had, at least, one thing to be thankful for: that the Bounder was, after all, in the eleven. Frank Nugent, looking on, was as glad of it as any other fellow, keen as he had been to play himself. Smithy was at the top of his form, and playing a first-class game. Twice the Bounder had shot for goal, only to find Fatty Wynn, in the visitors’ goal, bring off a wonderful save.

Squiff, in the home goal, had had less luck; he had been beaten once. Now he was all hands and feet, determined not to be beaten a second time.

But it booted not, for Tom Merry & Co. came rushing on with the wind behind them. Accepting a neat pass from D’Arcy, Tom Merry slammed the ball in, Squiff just missing it by inches.

“Goal!”

“Two up!” said Hazeldene, with a shrug of the shoulders. “Looks like a win for Greyfriars, I don’t think!”

Hazel was rather sore at seeing Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, of New South Wales, “keeping goal.” Hazel fancied he could have filled the place better—a fancy that he had all to himself!

“The backs aren’t much good!” remarked Bolsover major. “Now, if Wharton has put me in instead of Bull, I shouldn’t have let them get by that time.”

“I shouldn’t have let them pot the pill if I’d been between the sticks,” said Hazel.

“Oh, that’s rot!” said Bolsover. “My dear chap, they’d have had it in five or six times. But if I’d been at back—”

“They’d have had it in fifty or sixty times!” said Hazel.

“I say, you fellows, Wharton’s chucking the match away!” said Billy Bunter. “Our chaps can’t play Soccer for toffee! I offered to play when Smithy was left out, and what do you think—that silly ass Wharton only sniggered—just sniggered—”

“Play up, Greyfriars!”

“On the ball!”

Frank Nugent glanced up at the clock tower anxiously.

“Twenty minutes to go!” he said. “Hallo, there goes Smithy! Good man. Smithy! Bravo!”

All eyes were on the Bounder, and there was a murmur, swelling to a roar. Herbert Vernon-Smith was away with the ball, streaking like lightning. Of the home forwards, only Harry Wharton kept pace, ready to accept a pass.

“Shoot!” yelled Bolsover major.

“Shoot!” roared a dozen fellows. “Shoot!”

But the Bounder did not shoot. Fatty Wynn, in the St. Jim’s goal, was watching him like a cat—and two backs were speeding at him. It would have been rather like the Bounder to attempt to bring off that difficult shot from the wing, in the hope of scoring a surprising goal; but, luckily for the side, Smithy remembered that Soccer was not a one-man game. At the psychological moment, he centred neatly to Wharton, and the captain of the Remove slammed the leather in well out of reach of the St. Jim’s goalie.

Then there was a roar.

"Goal!"

"Bravo! Goal!"

"I say, you fellows, that was rather a fluke, wasn't it?" remarked Billy Bunter. "That fat chap in goal ought to have stopped that! He can't keep goal—he's too jolly fat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sides lined up again, and Greyfriars attacked once more, and once more fortune smiled on them. It was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh who potted the leather this time, amid a roar of cheering.

"It'll be a draw, anyhow!" remarked Bolsover major.

"What's a draw?" sniffed Billy Bunter. "It jolly well wouldn't be a draw if I were playing for Greyfriars."

"Hardly!" chuckled Bolsover.

And there was a chortle from the fellows near Bunter. They fully agreed that it would not be a draw—or anything like it—with Bunter in the team!

"Five minutes more!" said Nugent.

"Oh, play up, you men!" squeaked Bunter. "Put a bit of life into it! Get a move on! You ain't playing croquet, you know! What are you sitting down for, Bob Cherry? Taking a rest? I say, Wharton, are you going to sleep? I say, you fellows, that's going to be a goal! Bet you ten to one in doughnuts that Tom Merry scores again!"

Nobody heeded Billy Bunter's offer, or he certainly would have owed somebody ten doughnuts which never would have materialised! For Squiff fisted out the ball, Johnny Bull cleared to midfield, and the game swayed away towards the St. Jim's goal.

Ding-dong it went, in midfield, and neither side seemed able to get away. And the last minutes were passing. Eyes turned anxiously on the referee. The whistle might go any moment now. Suddenly there was a roar.

"Smithy! Smithy!"

"Good old Bounder!"

"Go it, Smithy!"

The Bounder seemed to shoot out of the melee, like a pip from an orange.

Three men got in his way, and how Smithy eluded them they never knew—but he did—and with a St. Jim's back fairly jumping on him, Smithy kicked for goal.

Fatty Wynn grabbed a second too late—and Smithy rolled over a split second after the leather had left his foot, Herries of St. Jim's sprawling over his legs. But the ball was in the net—the pill was in the pot—and all the Greyfriars crowd were roaring:

"Goal! Goal! Goal!"

"Greyfriars wins!"

Vernon-Smith sat up, panting. A strong hand on his shoulder helped him to his feet, and the games master gave him a smile.

"Good man, Vernon-Smith!" he said. "That was a splendid shot—ripping! Good man!"

Smithy nodded and grinned. Harry Wharton ran up and clapped him on the back. The Remove captain's eyes were dancing.

"Good man, Smithy! Our win—or yours, rather!"

"Goal! Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

Greyfriars had beaten St. Jim's right on the stroke of time. The crowd roared and cheered. Hazel forgot that he ought to have been in goal; Bolsover major that he ought to have played back; and both of them roared with the rest.

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"Bai Jove, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the footballers went off. "I wathah thought that it was our game, you know; but Soccah is a feahfully uncertain game, and it's weally nevah won till it's lost!"

"And never lost till it's won!"

grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bravo, Smithy! Good old Bounder!"

The Remove fellows were yelling. Only Billy Bunter—from the lofty heights of his great knowledge of the game—was still critical.

"Bit of a fluke, you know!" said Bunter. "The fat chap ought to have stopped it—lucky for us he didn't, but he ought to have! Jolly poor show—poor show all round—it's not what I call Soccer! I can jolly well say—Yaroooh! Ow! Wow! Leave off kicking me, will you? Yow-ow-yoop!"

Several fellows kicked Bunter all at once; and the voice of the critic was heard no more.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wet!

GERALD LODER stared from a window, keeping out of sight behind the curtain. He did not want his face to be seen at Mr. Lagden's window.

He scowled as he stared.

For quite a long time Loder of the Sixth had been busy in Mr. Lagden's rooms. As soon as he had heard that the games master was to referee in the football match that afternoon, Loder had seen his opportunity.

For an hour and a half, at the least, the games master would be safe off the scene, and that was ample time for Loder to search his room and discover anything that was to be discovered among his belongings, which would indicate that he was not what he claimed to be.

Having locked both doors, to make sure against interruption, Loder pursued his search, little dreaming that the doors, soon afterwards, were secured on the outside as well as the inside. He had cleared Wibley of the Remove off—as, naturally, he could not allow a junior to see him entering a master's room and remaining there in the master's absence. Of Wibley's subsequent proceedings he knew nothing—yet!

But his search, careful as it was, met with no reward. It seemed fairly certain, to Loder, that if the games master was a man passing under a false name, there would surely be some clue among his personal belongings—if only a handkerchief or a collar, with different initials on it.

But there was nothing!

Neither was he prevented by locks from making a thorough search. Nothing was locked up. There was a suitcase with a quite a good lock on it; but it was unfastened. Everything was where it might have been expected to be found, in the rooms of a man who had no secrets to keep.

Initials on articles he found in plenty. But they were always "S. L.," the initials of Stephen Lagden. On one or two things there was the name in full. If this man was not Stephen Lagden, he was, at all events, in possession of Stephen Lagden's outfit.

Loder's hope rose when, searching the unlocked suitcase, he found a leather pocket, in which were a couple of letters. He had no scruples whatever about looking at the letters. He told himself that he was, for the nonce, act-

ing as a detective in the interests of justice.

Whether that was so or not, Loder read both the letters. They did not help him—rather the reverse.

He had had a glimpse of hope that they might be addressed to someone whose name was not Lagden. But he found that one of them began, "Dear Mr. Lagden," and the other "Dear Lagden."

The first was from the firm of Leggett & Teggers, Regent Street, London, asking Mr. Lagden to call in reference to a temporary post which they thought would suit him—obviously the post of games master at Greyfriars.

The second was from Okeham School, in Devonshire, where, as Loder knew only too well, Stephen Lagden had been a master, and had known his Cousin James. It was a chatty letter from some man he had known at the school.

Loder jammed those letters back into the place he had taken them from, grunting with disappointment.

So far from strengthening his case, they weakened it. If the real Lagden was allowing another man to use his name and take his post, he might lend him his things, but it was very improbable that he would leave his personal letters among the things.

But if the real Lagden was not in the game, the spoofer must have got rid of him somehow—and how? Loder was willing to believe almost anything against the man he disliked, but he could hardly suppose that the fellow had knocked a man on the head to bag a temporary job at a school. Even if he had, what had become of Lagden? He must be somewhere.

Loder had come to the games master's rooms with a certainty in his mind, hoping to discover something that would make assurance doubly sure. But what he found there made his certainty waver.

Had that sulky, suspicious young ass, Vernon-Smith, made an idiotic mistake, and had Loder, jumping at any chance to score over his enemy, allowed himself to be made a fool of?

It began to look rather like it! Certainly everything he found in the games master's rooms indicated that the occupant of those rooms bore the name of Stephen Lagden.

A roar from the direction of the football ground reminded Loder, at last, that time was passing. He glared from the window, keeping in cover of the curtain. He had a glimpse of the playing-fields in the distance, and saw that the football match had just ended.

It was time for him to go. Whether he was right or wrong, whether he was on the track of an impostor, or of a mare's nest, he could not afford to be discovered in the games master's rooms, spying, when the man came in.

There was plenty of time to get clear, however, and after a glance round, to make sure that he had left no sign of his search, Loder crossed to the door and unlocked it.

He pulled at the door, and uttered an irritable exclamation as it came open less than half an inch. Something seemed to be the matter with the door!

He wrenched at it savagely.

It yielded another half-inch. After that, it stuck fast. He wrenched and dragged, but the door would not open.

Breathing hard, he went into the adjoining bed-room and unlocked the door there.

To his astonishment and alarm, that door also failed to open, giving only a trifle as he wrenched at it.

His heart was beating unpleasantly as he returned to the sitting-room door to try again.

He gripped the door-handle with both hands and dragged with all his strength. But it was in vain. Something was stopping the door from opening properly.

The perspiration started out on Loder's forehead. The minutes were passing, and if the games master came up to his rooms, after leaving the football ground, he might come at any moment now.

Loder wrenched frantically. He had to get away before the suspected man caught him there. What was he to say if the games master found him in his rooms?

But it was useless. The door came open sufficiently for him to peer out through the narrow slit and spot the box-ropes that were knotted round the door-handle. He knew now how he was imprisoned—but he had no chance of getting at the rope outside. Somebody—some japing young rascal—had done this—knowing that he was there. That knowledge did not help him. He could not get out, and he gave up the attempt, panting for breath.

He hurried across to the window. It was an upper window, and, unfortunately a good distance from the ground. It would have been possible to clamber down with the help of the ivy. But if he thought of that desperate resource, he had to abandon it at once. He could not climb down from Mr. Lagden's window in broad daylight, in full view of innumerable eyes.

He backed away and cut across the adjoining room. The bed-room had a window at the back of the building.

That was his only chance. It was that, or being caught by Mr. Lagden when he came up. As he crossed the room he heard a sound in the passage outside. Someone was coming along from the stairs!

Loder panted as he dragged open the bed-room window and stared out.

Ten feet below there were leads. It was not a difficult drop, if he could reach the ground from that lower roof.

Only one person was in sight, at the back of the buildings, Mr. Mimble, the gardener, at work in the kitchen gardens. He was busy, plying a hoe, and his back was turned.

If Loder hesitated, a sound behind him spurred him on. It was the rattle of the door-handle, and a surprised exclamation. The games master evidently had arrived at his door, and was astonished to find it tied up on the outside.

It would not take him long to untie the box-ropes—or cut it! Loder had only moments! He made up his mind, clambered from the window, and dropped on the leads below.

Panting, he crept to the edge and looked down to the ground. It was a sheer drop of fifteen or sixteen feet. At one corner was an ancient water-butt with a wooden lid.

To drop on the covered butt, and thence to the ground, was not difficult. In terror every moment of Mr. Lagden looking from the window he had left open, Loder lost no time.

He lowered himself by his hands over the edge, directly above the old water-butt, and dropped.

He had calculated well. He landed on his feet right in the centre of the wooden cover of the butt.

But he had not calculated on the extremely ancient and weather-worn condition of that wooden lid!

It creaked, cracked, and broke under the impact of his weight, and let him through!

Before he could begin to realise what was happening, he shot down through the broken cover into the butt underneath. There was a splash, a gasp from Loder, and he stood with the water swishing round his neck.

"Urrrrgh!"

Loder splashed wildly.

Mr. Mimble ceased to ply his hoe, straightened up, and looked round. His eyes almost bulged from his head at what he saw—a wet and furious face glaring over the rim of the water-butt.

"My eye!" gasped Mr. Mimble. He dropped the hoe in his astonishment, and gazed in blank amazement at Loder.

Loder scrambled frantically out of the butt, splashing water and fragments of broken lid on all sides.

Mr. Mimble gazed at him as he might have gazed at a spectre. Never had the gardener seen so surprising a sight.

Loder scrambled and splashed, and splashed and scrambled. He plunged out, dripping, gave the amazed gardener a wet and furious glare, and rushed away, leaving a trail of water behind him as he went.

"My eye!" repeated Mr. Mimble faintly.

And for long minutes after Loder of the Sixth had vanished, Mr. Mimble continued to stare—the most astonished gardener in the County of Kent.

(Continued on next page.)



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THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Doubt!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH drove his hands deep into his pocket and tramped restlessly to and fro in the October dusk.

There was a worried wrinkle in Smithy's brow. His mind was far from easy.

It was past lock-up, and from many windows light streamed out into the quadrangle. From the windows of the Rag came the sound of a rousing chorus. In that apartment there was a crowd of Remove fellows, and they were still celebrating the football victory. The roar of the cheery "sing-song" sounded a good distance—loudest of all, the powerful bawl of Bob Cherry, which made up in vigour what it might lack in tune.

Smithy, who had kicked the winning goal on the stroke of time, was a fellow whom the footballers were delighted to honour, but he had slipped away, and now he was walking restlessly and rather moodily in the quad.

The St. Jim's match was over; he had played in it; he had helped, more than helped, to win the game for his side. That was a complete satisfaction. The game had been touch and go, and there was no doubt that, had the Bounder been left out, Tom Merry & Co. would have pulled it off. With the sides so evenly matched, one first-class man had made all the difference. With good play, and good luck, the Bounder had pulled it through.

Now he was thinking of other things, however. Loder of the Sixth had got him off detention—not from good nature or sportsmanship, but as a "quid pro quo"—in return for information given.

That was worrying Smithy, now that the matter which had been uppermost in his mind was over.

Cool reflection had shown the Bounder that he had no real cause for resentment against "Mr. Lagden." Whatever the man was, he was a master at Greyfriars; and no master could possibly have allowed himself to be dictated to by a junior schoolboy. Had the man yielded to what amounted to a threat, Smithy realised—now that he reflected coolly—that he would himself have despised him for it.

It was not uncommon for the Bounder to realise, too late, that his hasty and arrogant temper had led him astray.

His only comfort was that he had never dreamed that other ears would overhear that angry outburst in the Cloisters. Angry and resentful as he was, he had never intended to give the man away.

But Loder had heard him—Loder had questioned him; and he had answered Loder's questions; and Loder had, so to speak, paid for value received. He could not be sorry that it had so happened that he had been free to play in the St. Jim's match. But what was going to happen now?

That the man who was called Mr. Lagden, at Greyfriars, was the man who had escaped from Blackmoor he was sure. Every now and then he had a doubt; but the certainty never really left him. And that man, in flight from his pursuers, assailed by Smithy himself, had risked everything to pull him from the river! And, convict as he was, he was all right! The mere fact that he had refused to make terms with the Bounder showed that he was a "straight" man.

The games master had said that, to his knowledge, the man who lay at

Courtfield was the man who had committed the robbery at Okeham!

That could only mean, if it was true, that the law had got the wrong man in the first place, and then, by a strange freak of chance, had got the right man, and still had him!

And the Bounder believed it. The man would not have lied to him. Indeed, if he had chosen to lie, he would have said that to his knowledge the man at Courtfield was No. 22.

The way he had put it had only one meaning, and bore the stamp of truth, amazing as it was. And Smithy believed it.

It was because the man had saved him in the river that he had held his tongue, in the first place. Now, to that claim of gratitude, was added the conviction that the man was innocent and wronged. And the man who had this double claim on him was the man he had given away to a bitter enemy.

Not intentionally—but the fact remained! Tramping to and fro in the October dusk, the Bounder was thinking it over with a troubled mind. No junior was allowed out of the House after lock-up; but the Bounder, with his usual reckless disregard of authority, disregarded that. He wanted to be alone, to think out this matter, and that was enough for him.

From the windows of the Rag came a roar; the Removites were joining in the chorus of the Greyfriars song:

"Greyfriars! Greyfriars! On the ball,
on!

Play up! A game's never lost till it's
won!

Stick it to the end, keen as you began,
For that is the way of a Greyfriars
man!"

The Bounder grunted, and tramped away further across the dusky quad. He was in no mood for jollity.

Loder was on the track of the master with a secret; and Smithy had set him there. Wibley had told the Remove fellows what had happened during the football match, and Smithy, at least, knew why Loder had surreptitiously visited the games master's rooms while the House was deserted. He wondered uneasily whether Gerald Loder had made any discovery there.

"Who's that?" came a sharp voice.

Smithy started, and stared round in the gloom.

It was the voice of Loder of the Sixth. The prefect loomed up in the dusk.

Loder, too, was out of the House; but a prefect had a right to be and a junior had not. Smithy was spotted—if Loder chose to "come the prefect."

The Bounder scowled.

"Oh, you!" said Loder, staring at him. "Vernon-Smith! What are you doing out of the House after lock-up?"

"Only taking a stroll, Loder."

"Or sneaking out of bounds?" asked Loder, with a sneer. "Do you fancy you can break the rules right and left, as you choose, you cheeky young rascal?"

Vernon-Smith breathed hard, Loder had done him a good turn that day—for value received. After that Smithy had been prepared to "bury the hatchet"—if Loder did.

Loder's unaccustomed geniality, however, seemed to be gone. From his black look Smithy could guess he had had no luck in his furtive search of the games master's rooms.

"I've been going to speak to you, Vernon-Smith!" said Loder. "If you've been pulling my leg, you young scoundrel, I'll make you sorry for it."

The Bounder whistled softly. Not only had Loder had no luck in his furtive search, but it seemed that he was now in a doubting state of mind. Which, from Smithy's point of view, was all to the good.

"If you've told me a cock-and-bull story about Lagden," went on Loder, in a low, concentrated voice, "I'll make you regret it. If you'd come to me with such a yarn I'd never have believed a word of it; but I heard you telling Redwing, as I dare say you've guessed, and you could hardly have known that I was there. You couldn't have been pulling my leg then."

His suspicious eyes searched the Bounder's face. Evidently, in his state of doubt, Loder's suspicions had gone to that length.

The Bounder's eyes glimmered.

"If the whole thing is a trick, and you were pulling my leg all along the line, to get me to get you off detention," muttered Loder. "If you knew I was there, and—" He broke off. "What have you got to say?"

"Nothing!" answered the Bounder.

"Well, I don't know what to think!" snarled Loder. "If you've made a fool of me—" He seemed to choke at the idea. "I can't quite think so—but— Well, I'm going to put it to the proof. I'm going to get leave on Saturday and go up to town myself, and call at Leggett & Teggars. Do you hear? I'm going to take a photograph of our precious games master and see if they know it at Leggett & Teggars. If they do, he's all right—and you've taken me in! And, by gad, I'll make you wish you hadn't."

The Bounder's heart almost stood still. He had wondered, uneasily, what measures Loder might take to obtain proof. Now he knew.

And that measure, if Loder did take it, could not fail. It was easy enough to take a snap of the games master or anybody else at Greyfriars. And if they saw that photograph at the agency in Regent Street, they would know, at a glance, that it was not the photograph of the man they had sent as a temporary master to Greyfriars.

Loder, peering at the Bounder in the dusk, read the dismay in his face. But he did not attribute it to its right cause.

"You young rotter!" he muttered. "Have you been taking me in? Did you get the whole thing up, from beginning to end, to pull my leg? Well, I shall know on Saturday; and either Lagden will be shown up or else I shall know that you've taken me in—I can't believe a word from you, either way. Now go straight to your Form-master and report yourself for breaking House bounds after lock-up—I shall speak to Quelch when I come in."

Vernon-Smith went back to the House, without a word.

Two hundred lines from Mr. Quelch did not worry him very much. But his face was clouded and his heart was heavy the remainder of the evening. Loder of the Sixth did not know, yet, what would be the result of his visit to Leggett & Teggars. But the Bounder knew; and he knew that the games master of Greyfriars was booked, and that it was his doing!

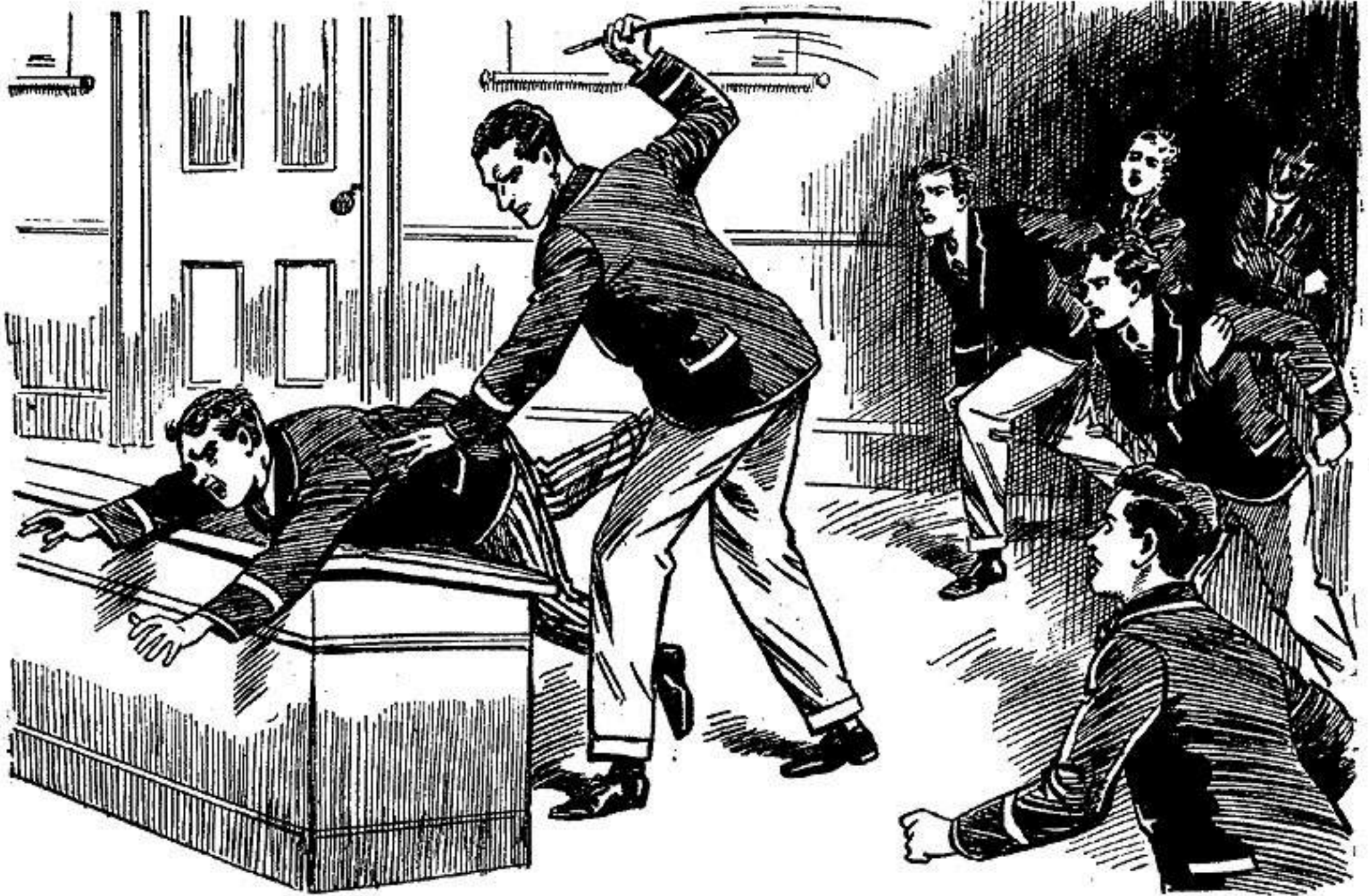
THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Snapped!

"SMILE!" said Bob Cherry.

"The smilefulness is the proper caper!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five, of the Remove, all smiled.



Vernon-Smith sprawled over the desk, and the ashplant in Loder's hand rose and fell, with terrific swipes. Then suddenly, from the dusky corner of the Form-room, the Famous Five unexpectedly leaped into view. "Collar the brute!" roared Bob Cherry. "Scrag him!" shouted Johnny Bull. "Scrag him terrifically!" yelled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

It was the following day, after morning school; a bright and sunny day for October, which was no doubt the reason why Loder of the Sixth had come out with a camera.

Bob did not really suppose that Loder wanted to "take" a Remove group; that was only Bob's little joke. The Famous Five smiled; but Loder did not smile. He passed them with knitted brow.

"I say, Loder, wouldn't you like to take a really handsome group?" called out Bob.

But Loder walked on unheeding.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Look out, Bunter!" exclaimed Bob, in alarm. "Don't you get in front of Loder's camera!"

"Eh! Why not?" demanded Bunter.

"Loder would be awfully shirty if you cracked the lens in his camera!" said Bob, solemnly. "And your features, you know——"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter, while the other fellows chuckled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy!" roared Bob. "That won't do, old man!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith had his eyes on Loder. He knew why Loder had that camera under his arm. The games master was in the quad, talking with Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth. Smithy stared at him with a knitted brow. At Bob's cheery roar he stared round at Bob Cherry.

"What do you mean, fathhead?" he snapped.

"Smile!" said Bob. "You don't want to scowl when you may come into a picture, old bean. You may not be aware of it, Smithy, but you were looking just then rather like a demon in a pantomime. Smile!"

"Idiot!" snapped the Bounder. And he walked away.

"Dear old Smithy!" said Bob. "How

does he get that brilliant polish on his manners? Jolly old Chesterfield was a fool to him."

Loder had crossed over to the group in the quad. The games master glanced at the camera under his arm, as Vernon-Smith did not fail to notice.

"Stand where you are, Wingate!" said Loder. "You don't mind if I take a snap of you?"

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

Mr. Lagden gave the Sixth Formers a nod and moved away. The action was quite a natural one; but it so happened that Loder, snapping Wingate, and getting Mr. Lagden into the picture, got only the back of the games master's head.

Smithy grinned.

Even Loder, suspicious as he was, could not have said that the games master's action was intentional. But whether intentional or not, it left him with only a photograph of the back of a head, which was hardly useful to carry up to Leggett & Teggars on Saturday.

"Thanks!" said Loder, between his lips, and Wingate nodded, and turned away with Gwynne; certainly never dreaming for a moment why Loder had wanted to take that snap.

The games master had gone into the House. Loder moved about with his camera, but if he was waiting for Mr. Lagden to come out again, he waited in vain. Mr. Lagden was not seen again till dinner.

After dinner, Loder of the Sixth went to his study.

He locked the door, opened the window about a foot, and sat there, screened by the curtain, his camera ready for action.

If the games master passed within photographic range, he was not going to escape.

Loder waited. He suspected, though he could not feel sure, that Mr. Lagden did not want to be photographed. Mr. Lagden was going to have no choice in the matter. He was bound to come out of the House sooner or later, and when he came the camera was going to click.

Generally, the games master came out into the open air immediately after dinner. Elderly masters like Prout retired to a study for "forty winks" in an armchair after lunch; but the new master had not yet reached the age when "forty winks" appealed to him after a meal.

On this occasion, however, the games master did not appear as usual. Loder wondered, sourly, whether he was thinking that a fellow might be about with a camera, and wanted to avoid accidentally coming into a picture.

If that was Mr. Lagden's reason, no doubt he was satisfied, after a time, that nobody was about with a camera; for half an hour later he came out of the House, and strolled in the quadrangle with Mr. Capper.

Loder's camera, hidden at his study window, clicked, taking snap after snap. He got a profile of Mr. Lagden, then he got him full-face as he turned in his stroll, and after that he got him in half a dozen different positions. Loder expended the whole of a spool of films on this little enterprise.

He grinned, as he stepped back from his window, and removed the spool from the camera. He put the camera away, and slipped the spool of film into his pocket, and left his study.

There was time before class to pay a visit to the dark-room. Having obtained the key of that apartment, Loder proceeded there.

The dark-room was in a passage at the back of the House. Near the
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THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Wibley is "On"!

corner of that passage a Remove junior was loafing idly.

Loder gave Herbert Vernon-Smith a scowl as he passed him, and went on to the dark-room.

Smithy ceased to loaf at the corner, and walked away with a moody brow. He knew now that Loder had succeeded in getting his "snaps."

There was nothing that Smithy could do. Loder was now developing and fixing the negatives. Later he would print the photographs—probably at the sunny window of his study. He would soon have in his possession a photograph of the games master of Greyfriars, and on Saturday he would walk into the office of Leggett & Teggers, in London. He would invent some excuse or other, in case the photograph turned out to be that of the genuine Lagden, and the whole affair a mare's-nest.

But it would not, of course; Smithy knew that. That photograph would be quite new to the eyes of Messrs. Leggett & Teggers, who had engaged Stephen Lagden for his post at Greyfriars.

And then—
Then Loder would come back to the school—triumphant. He might go to the Head, with proof that the games master was an impostor. He might go to the police station at Courtfield, and see Inspector Grimes. Whatever he did, the man who called himself Lagden was booked.

In the Form-room that afternoon, Vernon-Smith's face was very thoughtful. If Mr. Quelch fancied that that wayward member of his Form was giving unusually concentrated thought to the lesson, however, he was mistaken. Smithy was thinking of anything but Latin irregular verbs.

After school, that problem was still in Smithy's mind. Loder had his finished photograph by that time, and the Bounder could do nothing to prevent him from making use of it. He was wondering whether to give the games master a warning of what was intended. That would, at least, give him a chance to cut, before the crash came. The Bounder, in a troubled frame of mind, was thinking it out, as he came up to the Remove studies after class.

Wibley, in the Remove passage, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Just the man I want!" said Wibley cheerfully.

"Oh, don't bother!" said Vernon-Smith irritably. He was in no mood to hear about William Wibley's theatrical stunts.

Wibley glared at him.

"Did you say don't bother?" he hooted.

"Yes, I did, fathead!"

"You don't want to hear that I've got you down for a part in my play—and a jolly good part!" hooted the indignant Wibley.

"Bother your play!"

"Well, you cheeky ass!" gasped Wibley. "Why, I'm putting you in as the villain who pinched the countess' diamonds—"

Smithy went into his study and slammed the door. Wibley gazed at that door with unspeakable feelings.

"I say, Wibley, old chap!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "It's all right. I'll take the part, old fellow! You want a handsome, dashing sort of fellow for a part like that. I say—Ow! Beast!"

Wibley, having found a slight solace in kicking Bunter, went into his study and slammed the door.

"GET out!"

William Wibley snapped those words over his shoulder.

He turned from his glass to snap—and the Bounder, coming into the study, grinned, as he saw him. Wibley was practising make-up, and a set of artistic wrinkles on his face made him look about sixty.

"My dear chap—" said Vernon-Smith amicably.

"Changed your mind," jeered Wibley. "Well, it's too jolly late, see? I'm not going round offering parts to fellows who can't be civil. I'm washing you out of the play. Buzz off. That's that!"

"But look here—"

"Shut the door after you!" snapped Wibley, and he turned back to the glass.

The Bounder shut the door, and then sat on the corner of the study table, looking at the irritated dramatist of the Remove.

"I haven't come here about the play, Wib!" said Smithy. "It's quite another matter. I want you to back me up."

"Rats!"

"You're the only man who can do it. You see, you're the only man in the Remove who can act!" said the Bounder diplomatically. "Remember how you fooled Loder, making up as a convict, and making him believe that his jolly old relation from Blackmoor had called on him?"

Wibley thawed visibly. Wibley had the artistic temperament, and a little soft "sawder" worked wonders with him.

"You like our new games master, Wib?" went on Smithy.

"He's all right!"

"You don't like Loder?"

"Like Loder? He chucked my play over the banisters. I had to hunt for loose pages. I jolly nearly lost the countess' diamonds—I mean, the page where the countess' diamonds are found in the detective's tail-pocket. Like him? If he's ever lynched in the quad, I'll lend a hand with the rope!"

"Well, look here, it's a sort of jape on Loder!" said Smithy. "You know he's got a feud on with—Lagden. He's going to make trouble for him if he can."

"That's why he was spying in his rooms yesterday!" grunted Wibley. "Blessed if I know what his game was; but I can tell you, he must have had to get out of a window. I fixed him—"

"Yes, I know!" Smithy paused. He did not want to reveal more than he could help. At the same time, he had to tell Wibley enough to enlist his aid. It was rather a delicate matter. "Look here, Wib, Loder believes there's something—ahem!—something fishy about that man Lagden—"

"Loder would!" snorted Wibley. "Lagden dropped him out of Quelch's window, I've heard, when he was bullying Bunter. We all know Loder loathes him. Much to Lagden's credit that he does, if you ask me."

"Quite! Now, you're to keep this dark, Wib. I've found out, never mind how, that Loder intends to run up to town next half-holiday, and call at Leggett & Teggers, and find out anything he can against Lagden."

Wibley stared.

"What utter rot!" he said. "What is there to find out?"

"Ask me another! But it won't do Lagden any good!"

"I don't see how it could do him any harm."

"Well, you never know." Smithy was finding it a little difficult to say just enough, without saying too much or too little. "Look here, it would save Loder a journey if Mr. Leggett happened to call here to-morrow to see the Head."

"Wha-a-t?"

"I've seen the old gent, and can describe him to you. I had a relation once in that firm, and called there with my father. Old Leggett, the head of the firm, is about sixty-five, with white hair and whiskers and gold-rimmed glasses—rather a dapper old gent. You could fix yourself up all right. Loder's never seen the man, though he may have heard about him."

Wibley blinked.

"I'm to make up as old Mr. Leggett—"

"That's it! You can do it on the back of your neck!"

"I know that, ass! I could make up as Stanley Baldwin, and walk into the House and make a speech!"

"Oh, my hat! Well, old Leggett's easier than that—"

"But, you fathead, I've never seen the man, or a picture of him! The Head will know him—"

"You're not going to see the Head. You're going to call to see him, but you'll find that he's out! The Head dines to-morrow evening with Mr. Lambe, at the vicarage, and you'll time your arrival after he's gone."

"Oh!" said Wibley.

"I don't suppose another soul at Greyfriars has ever seen Mr. Leggett," went on Smithy. "This is how I've mapped it out! You bike down to Courtfield after class, and drop in at old Lazarus'. You make-up there, and come back in a taxi—as old Mr. Leggett calling to see the Head, because he happens to be in the neighbourhood. Old Lazarus will have all the things you need in his jolly old costume department, and you can run up any bill you like, and leave it to me. You arrive here as Mr. Leggett, from Leggett & Teggers—"

"Easy as falling off a Form!" said Wibley. "But where does Loder come in?"

"Loder will hear that Mr. Leggett is here—I shall take care that he does! Naturally, he will jump at the chance of speaking to him on the spot—instead of going up to London the next day. You'll give him his head."

Wibley grinned.

"And then?" he asked.

"Loder's got an idea in his head that Lagden's some sort of a spoofer," drawled the Bounder carelessly. "He might show you a photograph of him, and ask whether it's really Stephen Lagden, or not."

"Is Loder potty?" asked Wibley, in wonder. "What on earth can have put that into his silly head? I say, you're not pulling my leg?"

"Honest Injun!"

"I remember Loder was asking Wharton questions about him the other night!" said Wibley. "Has he been asking you questions, too?"

"Lots!"

"I see! He would look an awful ass if he went nosing into Leggett & Teggers', asking fool questions like that! It wouldn't do Lagden any good, either. He wants to keep all right with Leggett & Teggers, to get another job

when he leaves here at the end of the term, I suppose." Wibley nodded. "All serene, Smithy! If dear old Loder is yearning to make a fool of himself, I'll jolly well help!"

"You're the only chap who can do it," said the Bounder, "and it will be no end of a lark, Wib! Loder wants to find out something against Laggy. You can let him know what a high opinion they have of him at Leggett & Teggers."

Wibley chuckled.

"Leave it to me!" he said. "But, I say, suppose Lagden himself knows old Mr. Leggett by sight? He may, as he got his job there."

"I happen to know that he's never seen him."

"Sure of that?"

"Absolutely!"

The Bounder was quite assured that No. 22, of Blackmoor, had never seen the head of the Regent Street firm. He was also assured that "Mr. Lagden" would keep judiciously out of sight if he heard that a member of that firm was calling at Greyfriars School.

"Then it's just pie!" said Wibley. "And, look here, there's time before lock-up; let's walk down to Courtfield and fix it up with old Lazarus about the things. Then everything will be ready to-morrow."

"Done!" said the Bounder, slipping off the study table.

It was close on lock-up when Vernon-Smith and William Wibley came back from Courtfield. Wibley was in great spirits. Anything in the nature of a theatrical stunt was pie to William Wibley, and he was going to enjoy this! Wib, in fact, gave his whole thoughts to the game he was going to play, and had little interest in any other detail of the matter—which was rather a relief to Smithy, who had feared some awkward questions.

At prep, in Study No. 4 that evening, the Bounder was very thoughtful. Tom Redwing eyed him, once or twice, curiously. Since that angry talk in the Cloisters, a couple of days ago, Smithy had said nothing on the subject of the games master, and Redwing had been glad enough for the subject to drop. He hoped that his chum had got that extraordinary idea out of his mind—little dreaming what was in the Bounder's mind. To no fellow in the Remove, even his best chum, did Smithy breathe a word of what was planned for the morrow.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Mr. Leggett, of Leggett & Teggers!

"LEGGETT!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Old Leggett, of Leggett & Teggers!" said Vernon-Smith carelessly. "I saw him once, in London."

Loder of the Sixth glanced round.

It was the following day, after class. Nobody—least of all Loder of the Sixth had noticed specially that William Wibley of the Remove had gone out on his bicycle immediately the Form was dismissed by Mr. Quelch.

Nobody was specially interested in the movements of William Wibley. Only the Bounder knew where he was gone, and why, and only the Bounder knew who drove up to the gates of Greyfriars in a taxi from Courtfield.

And even the Bounder almost doubted the evidence of his eyes, when he glanced at the old gentleman who sat in that taxicab.

That gentleman was, to all appearance, about sixty-five years old, with venerable white hair and whiskers, and gold-rimmed glasses on a rather prominent nose that looked nothing like Wibley's. He wore a black frock coat of a slightly old-fashioned cut, and his venerable white hair showed under a gleaming silk topper.

Some of the fellows, noticing him speaking to Gosling at his lodge, wondered who the old boy was; but they certainly never dreamed that he was not an "old" boy at all, and that they knew who he was—when his aspect was different!

"Jolly old Leggett, is it?" said Bob Cherry. "I've heard of him. Lagden came from Leggett & Teggers, you know."

"What about a spot of footer before tea?" asked the Bounder.

"Let's!" said Bob Cherry at once.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Come on, Bunter, we'll stick you in goal! Room for you in goal if you edge in sideways!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, you don't want to be late for tea!" said Billy Bunter anxiously. "I'm teeing in your study, Wharton, old chap! You don't want to be late—"

"If you're teeing with me, old fat bean, the later the better!" contradicted the captain of the Remove, and he walked away with the other juniors.

"Beast!" remarked Bunter, and he went to look for Lord Mauleverer.

Loder of the Sixth stood looking towards the gates.

There was a gleam in his eyes. The juniors had been speaking in his hearing, and it certainly did not occur to Loder that Smithy had carefully and intentionally spoken in his hearing, to draw his attention to the old gentleman who was speaking to Gosling at his lodge.

Gerald Loder strolled down to the gates.

If Mr. Leggett, of Leggett & Teggers, had called at Greyfriars, Loder was very keen to see him. He had been intending to make a long railway journey to London on the morrow to see that very gentleman!

This unexpected call was rather luck, so far as Loder could see, if that venerable-looking old sportsman really was the head of the firm of Leggett & Teggers.

"Yes, sir, left about 'arf an hour ago, sir!" Gosling was saying. "The 'Ead's dining at the vicarage this evening, Mr. Leggett, sir. P'r'ps he wasn't expecting you to call, sir!"

"No, no!" said the old gentleman, in a thin, high-pitched voice. "Not at all! I have called simply because I was in the neighbourhood; but I am sorry to hear that Dr. Locke is not at home!"

"Yessir!" said Gosling. Really, there was nothing to be done. If an old gentleman dropped in by chance when the Head was away, obviously he could not see the Head; and that was that.

"However, as I am here, I will take a walk about the school; I have often wished to see Greyfriars!" said the old gentleman. "Please tell my driver to wait for me, porter. I shall be about half an hour."

"Yessir!"

Loder of the Sixth stepped forward, raising his hat politely to the old gentleman.

"Perhaps I could be of service to you, sir!" said Loder, with a courtesy he did not always show to old gentlemen.

Mr. Leggett blinked at him through his gold-rimmed glasses.

"If you desire to see our school, sir, I should be very happy to show you round!" explained the prefect. "My name is Loder—I am in the Sixth! It would be quite a pleasure, Mr. Leggett."

"You are very kind," said the old gentleman, in a high-pitched voice. "I shall be very much obliged."

"Not at all, sir!" said Loder.

He walked Mr. Leggett round the quadrangle, pointing out the various buildings. He walked him round the playing-fields, in the sunset, rather in the hope that the games master might be there to meet his eye. But the games master was not to be seen.

Loder piloted the visitor back to the House. He piloted him to the Sixth Form studies. Mr. Leggett looked about him through his gold-rimmed glasses, with the interest natural to an old gentleman who had never seen Greyfriars School before.

"These are the Sixth Form studies, sir!" said Loder. He threw open the door of his own study. "This is my study! Perhaps you would like to sit down and rest for a few minutes."

"The fact is, I should like it very much!" assented Mr. Leggett. "I am not so young as I used to be—not so young!"

Which was a perfectly true statement; though Mr. Leggett certainly was not so old as he looked.

He sat down in Loder's armchair, with his back to the light. With his silk topper off he showed a head of white hair that was very venerable in its aspect.

Loder could hardly conceal his satisfaction. He had Mr. Leggett of Leggett & Teggers sitting in his study, and was able to come to the matter about which he so keenly desired to see Mr. Leggett.

"I have some photographs here you might like to see—taken in the quadrangle, sir!" Loder sorted out half a dozen prints, every one of which showed the Greyfriars games master.

Mr. Leggett adjusted his gold-rimmed glasses and looked at the photographs. Loder watched him eagerly.

If the face of the Greyfriars games master was strange to the head of the firm who had sent "Mr. Lagden" to the school, he was going to know now!

"I have seen this young man before!" remarked Mr. Leggett. "Let me see—what is his name—Blagden—no, Lagden. Yes, that is it, Lagden. I hope Mr. Lagden is giving satisfaction here—a very pleasant young man, I think."

Loder caught his breath.

This was not what he wanted to hear!

"You—you recognise Mr. Lagden from these photographs, sir?" he asked.

"Eh? Oh, yes! Very good photographs indeed!" said Mr. Leggett. "Very good! No doubt you are aware that Mr. Lagden was sent here by us—I understand that the previous games master met with an accident and is laid up. We recommended Mr. Lagden very strongly—an extremely agreeable young man."

Loder set his lips, hard.

He had intended to go up to town the next day to see Leggett & Teggers, and show those photographs—in the hope of learning that the face depicted therein was not the face of the temporary master they had sent to Greyfriars!

Instead of which, Mr. Leggett recognised the face at the first glance!

Vernon-Smith had pulled his leg!

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Lagden was Lagden—and he had been on the trail of a mare's-nest. He could have no doubt of that now.

The rage that swelled up in Loder's breast almost choked him. He stood silent, his lips set, his eyes burning. That young scoundrel had made a fool of him from start to finish—made use of him, and was now doubtless laughing in his sleeve. He could believe nothing else. The games master must be the genuine Lagden, if the head of the firm of Leggett & Teggers recognised his photograph at a glance.

Mr. Leggett's eyes glimmered at Loder through the gold-rimmed glasses.

"An excellent young man," he said, in his high-pitched voice. "I am sure he must be very popular here. He was formerly at a school called Okcham, where he distinguished himself by capturing a burglar, I think it was, who was sent to Blackmoor—now, what was his name? Oh, Loder—James Loder! Yes, that was the name of the rascal. Dear me, did you not tell me that your name was Loder? What a coincidence. No connection of course—none whatever. I believe that the man James Loder, is now a convict—"

Loder of the Sixth did not want to hear about his cousin James from Mr. Leggett. He was done with Mr. Leggett!

"Excuse me—I shall have to cut, now!" he muttered; and Mr. Leggett rose from the armchair and glanced at his watch.

"Dear me! I am afraid I have taken up a great deal of your time," he said. "It has passed very pleasantly—very pleasantly indeed. It has been a pleasure to—to make your acquaintance, Master Loder. How very singular that your name should happen to be the same as—"

"This way!" grunted Loder.

He led Mr. Leggett down the passage. "As the Blackmoor convict—"

Loder walked away, without even saying good-bye to that nice old gentleman.

Mr. Leggett was left to find his way back to the gates, and his taxicab, on his own without any more polite attention from Loder of the Sixth.

Loder was not thinking of him. He was thinking of Herbert Vernon-Smith, who had, as he believed, made an utter fool of him. And Smithy, catching his eye at calling-over, knew what he had to expect from Loder of the Sixth—and did not care a straw!

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

No Luck for Loder!

BOB CHERRY jumped.

"Caught!" he ejaculated.

It was Saturday afternoon.

Vernon-Smith sat at his desk in the Remove Form Room. His detention, postponed from Wednesday, was due on Saturday—and that half holiday he had to spend in the Form-room writing lines.

It was, of course, strictly against the rules for any fellow under detention to receive visits from sympathising friends. But as Mr. Quelch had gone out for the afternoon on one of his walks with Mr. Prout, the Famous Five had relaxed those rules, in their own favour.

They had dropped in to cheer Smithy up with a chat. Smithy, glad of a rest from Virgil, was only too glad to play the St. Jim's match over again, as it were. And six juniors were in the full tide of football "jaw," when footsteps were heard coming along the Form-room passage.

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"If that's Quelch coming in—" groaned Frank Nugent.

"Hunt cover!" said the Bounder. "Ten to one he won't spot you if he only looks in. Quick!"

There was no time to lose. Like five rabbits bolting into their burrows, the Famous Five hunted cover. In the duskiest corner of the old Form-room, they squatted under the desks—and they hardly breathed, as the footsteps reached the door, and it was flung open.

There was a chance, at least, of escaping observation, if Quelch looked in; and the chums of the Remove hoped for the best.

Vernon-Smith was hard at work, writing lines, as the door opened. He did not look up; being apparently too keen on his lines, to notice that the door had opened.

The door closed again, and the footsteps came across to him. Then he realised that they were not the footsteps of his Form-master; and he looked up—at Loder of the Sixth!

Loder stopped in front of the desk, his ashplant in his hand. His eyes were fixed on the Bounder; and evidently he had no suspicion that anyone else was in the Form-room.

Smithy rose to his feet, eyeing the bully of the Sixth warily. He had quite expected to hear from Loder—and now, clearly, he was going to hear from him.

Another great Greyfriars yarn to read!

"HARRY WHARTON'S SACRIFICE!"

By Frank Richards

It's in the

GEM On Sale Now Price 2d.

"You young rotter!" said Loder between his set lips. His hand closed almost convulsively on his ash.

"Anything wrong, Loder?" asked the Bounder innocently. "Surely you didn't think I'd cut detention?"

"I told you what to expect if it turned out that you had fooled me!" said Loder grimly. "And it turns out that you did! You made use of me to get off detention for your football match, and you were fooling me all the time—as I've found out since old Leggett came here yesterday. You know that!"

"How should I know?" yawned the Bounder.

"You know well enough, you unscrupulous young rascal! Now you're going to get what's coming to you! Bend over that desk!"

"What for?"

"You know what for!" hissed Loder. "Bend over, I tell you!" He swished the ashplant. "Do you hear me?"

"I'm not deaf," said the Bounder coolly, "and I won't bend over! And if you touch me with that cane, Loder, I'll go straight to the Head, and you can tell him what you've whopped me for."

"And I'll come with you, and explain that I caught you breaking out of detention!" said Loder.

He made a grab at the Bounder's collar, with his left hand, grasped it, and fairly dragged him over the desk.

"Let go, you bully!" yelled the Bounder, and he struggled savagely.

But his struggles were useless in the grasp of the big Sixth Former. He sprawled face down over the desk, and the ashplant in Loder's hand rose and fell with terrific swipes.

Then suddenly, from the dusky corner

of the Form-room, five unexpected figures leaped into view.

"Handling a prefect" was an awfully serious matter; but the Famous Five of the Remove were not letting Loder get away with this.

"Collar the brute!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Scrag him!" shouted Johnny Bull.

"Scrag him terrifically!" yelled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Loder, with his cane up for another swipe, stared round in amazement. The next moment he was grasped on all sides and hurled headlong to the floor of the Form-room. He crashed there, with a wild yell, the ashplant clattering from his hand.

Vernon-Smith wriggled off the desk.

His eyes blazing, the Bounder jumped at the ashplant, and grabbed it from the floor.

It came down on Loder with a terrific swipe.

"Smithy!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Nugent.

"Smithy!"

The Bounder did not heed. He swiped, and swiped again, and Loder yelled frantically as he got the swipes of his own ashplant.

He scrambled to his feet and hurled himself at the Bounder.

"Back up, you men!" panted Smithy.

The Famous Five backed up at once. Loder was collared on all sides. There was a wild and scrambling struggle. It ended with Gerald Loder on his back on the floor, his collar gone, his coat split up the back, his hair a dusty mop, his face crimson and streaming with perspiration. He sprawled and gasped.

And as he sprawled and gasped, the Bounder hooked the inkpot from his desk and up-ended it over Loder's crimson face.

"Urrrh!" gurgled Loder.

He scrambled to his feet and bolted for the door. He took the door open and jumped into the passage.

"You—you—you—" he gurgled.

"You—you—you—I'm going to the Head now! You'll be sacked for this! I'm going straight to the Head!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll all go to the Head with Loder! The Head will like to hear what we heard Loder say to Smithy!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We'll all come, Loder! The Big Back will be glad to hear that you were going to whop Smithy for nothing, and tell him lies about it!"

"We're all jolly old witnesses!" said Johnny Bull. "Come on!"

Loder, from the doorway, gave the Removites an inky, infuriated glare. It dawned on him, infuriated as he was, that what he had said to Smithy had been said in the hearing of five witnesses; and that his headmaster was about the last person at Greyfriars whom he would have desired to learn the facts. He gasped, and glared, and tramped away—but he did not tramp in the direction of the Head's study!

Harry Wharton & Co. were feeling quite pleased with themselves that day.

They had "handled" the bully of the Sixth, and got away with it! Loder was not likely to forget—and it was pretty certain that he would not forgive—but he had to let it drop! So the Famous Five had reason to be pleased with themselves.

THE END.

(The final yarn in this popular series is entitled: "THE SHADOW OF THE SACK!" Watch out for it in next week's MAGNET, chums!)

MOLLY BIRCHEMALL'S TEA-PARTY!

Another Tip-Top Instalment of
DICKY NUGENT'S Rib-Tickling Serial:
"UNDER SNARLER'S THUMB!"

In the days that followed the amazing scene in Snarler's study, Jack Jolly & Co., of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, received plenty of proof of their dark suspicions that Snarler had some mysterious hold on Doctor Birchermall. Shock followed shock in quick succession, and all sorts of stories were current. It was whispered that the cadd of the Fourth was so familiar with the Head that he called him "old sport." Some even said that Snarler had developed a playful habit of giving Doctor Birchermall's beard a violent tug whenever he met him!

It was certain, anyway, that the Head and Sid Snarler shared some strange secret that made the Head eggstremely careful not to offend Snarler in any way. What that secret could be was a puzzle to the Fourth.

"It's a gilty secret, anyway," remarked Jack Jolly, when he and his pals were talking it over as they strolled across the quad one morning. "It looks to me, you chaps, as if the Head has committed some crime and Snarler knows all about it."

"Perhaps Doctor Birchermall has been diddling the Income Tax authorities," suggested Frank Fearless brightly. "Or Snarler may have caught him cracking a crib somewhere. You never know!"

"Grate pip!" None of them guessed the truth—that Snarler, knowing the Head was out to catch him at the Jolly Sailor one day, had lain in wait and taken a foto of him coming out of that infamous resort!

"Well, it's a mystery," said Jack Jolly, as they trotted up the steps of the Skool House. And that ended the discussion, for who should be coming out of the House but the Head himself!

His charming dawter, Molly, was with him, and she smiled her most bewitching smile as she reckernised Jack Jolly & Co.

"Why, I've just been talking about you boys!" she eggclaimed, in her rippling, mewical voice. "I've been asking pop to invite you all to tea with us this afternoon—and he has agreed."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Molly!"

"We shall be delighted, shan't we, you fellows?"

"What-ho!" "I suppose I'm included in this, aren't I, Miss Molly?" chimed in a leering voice behind them, and Jack Jolly & Co. turned round to find that Snarler had joined them.

Miss Molly eyed the newcomer scornfully, and gave a hawty toss of her head.

"Nothing doing, Snarler!" she trilled. "Invitations are restricted to my personal friends."

"Then I'm coming!" grinned Snarler. He turned to Dr. Birchermall. "I'm a personal friend of Miss Molly's, aren't I, sir?"

"Certainly not—that is to say, of course you are!" corrected the Head, hastily, as Snarler began to glare. "We—we must undoubtedly include Snarler, my dear."

"But I don't want to include Snarler, pop!" tinkled the Head's dawter, with a stamp of her dainty foot. "I don't like his face!"

"Hush, my dear!" mermered Doctor Birchermall. "It's quite a nice face in some ways. I admit that it's as ugly as a monkey's—"

"What!" roared Snarler.

"But it's full of honesty and kindness—and, anyway, you needn't look at it all the time," added the Head, who seemed to be searching for an eggcuse to get Snarler into the party.

"Really, my dear, I feel that we can't possibly leave Snarler out!"

"Nonsense, pop!" "Tutt-tutt! You mustn't speak like this about Snarler!" gasped the Head, with a nervous glance at the cadd of the Fourth. "He's such a nice lad when you get to know him properly—so intelligent and well-mannered."

"It's a jolly good thing for you that you've said that," snorted Snarler. "I'm coming, anyway! See you at tea-time, Miss Molly!"

And, with a leering grin, Snarler strolled off.

"Well, really, pop, I can't understand what's coming over you lately," remarked Molly Birchermall, in her rippling voice, as she gazed in serprize at her parent. "A few

days ago you'd have given Snarler the wacking of his life for daring to talk to me like that; but now he seems to be able to do eggactly as he likes. What has come over you?"

"Nun-nun-nothing, my dear!" stammered the Head, turning as red as a turkey-cock. "It's just that I—er—like the lad, that's all. You'll have him to tea this afternoon, won't you? Just to please your old pop!"

"Oh, all right, then, pop!" trilled Miss Molly with a sigh of resignation. Then she bestowed another bewitching smile on the heroes of the Fourth and tripped off with the Head—leaving Jack Jolly & Co. more mistified than ever.

As soon as afternoon lessons were over that day, Jack Jolly & Co. put on clean collars and washed their hands in honour of the occasion, then presented themselves at the Head's house for tea.

In the usual way, tea with Molly Birchermall was a really ripping treat. But on this particular occasion there was a fly in the ointment in the shape of Sidney Snarler.

Right from the start, Snarler made it clear to

helped himself to the best. Jack Jolly & Co. could remember a time when such behaviour would have caused the Head to rise in his wrath and drive the offender out of the room with a rain of blows from his birch. But now he merely grinned sheepishly and took it like a lamb. In fakt, as Merry remarked afterwards, he seemed completely cowed!

For Miss Molly's sake the Co. put up with it for a time. But when Snarler started monopolising the conversation as well as Miss Molly and the tuck, they realised that the time had come for action.

Every time one of the Co. started to speak, Snarler interrupted. Jack Jolly gave his pals a meaning glance. It was pretty obvious that Doctor Birchermall was too nervous to do anything about it. Although a keen observer mite have noticed him shoot Snarler a feroshus look when Snarler's back was turned, he was as nervous as a kitten again when Snarler happened to look his way. If anything was to be done, it was Jack Jolly & Co. who had to do it!

Jack Jolly decided to give his pals a lead. "Have another pastry,

"If you ask me, what Snarler needs is a cup of tea to pull him together," grinned Merry. "May I pore one out for him, Miss Molly?"

Merry took the teapot—and one more "axcident" happened, for, instead of pouring the tea into Snarler's cup, Merry tripped up on the carpet and pored it over his head!

Snarler didn't wait for any more after that. He'd had enuff. He staggered to his feet, covered with tea leaves and jam and cream and sandpaper, and made a dash for the door.

"Awfully sorry, old chap!" yelled Merry, as Snarler vannished. "Quite an axcident, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Ho, ho, ho! Bless my sole! I never saw anything so comical in my life!"

larked the Head, who looked quite his old self again now that Snarler had gone. "As a rule, I don't approve of horseplay, but I can't help larking at the way you made an ass of Snarler!"

"Now perhaps we can enjoy the rest of our tea in peace!" said Miss

roared Snarler, gowging jam and cream out of his

eyes. "You did that a-purpose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Head. Then he caught Snarler glaring at him and quickly stopped larking and said: "I mean, how very unforehunt! Pray find something to enable the poor lad to wipe his face!"

"I've got the very thing here, sir!" said Fearless, projecting a piece of sandpaper from his pocket. "This will rub it off in no time. Let's help you, Snarler, old chap!"

"Yarooooo! Help! Stoppit!" shrieked Snarler, as he felt the ruff sandpaper rubbed viggerously into his face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Never mind, Snarler; sit down and cool off," suggested Bright, offering the cadd of the Fourth a seat.

Snarler grunted and went to sit down. As he did so, Bright whipped the chair away, and Snarler, missing it by yards, sat down with a terrific bump on the floor instead!

"Bang! Crash! Wallop! Wooooooop! Yaroooooo!"

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FOUL PLAY AT BOOK-CARRYING CONTEST Winner May Be Disqualified

A sensation has been caused in junior sporting circles by the rumour that successful candidates in the Remove Book-Carrying Championship are thinking of appealing to the Judges' Committee to disqualify Harold Skinner, who won the contest.

"Perfectly true," said am Brown, who was runner-up in the competition, when a "Greyfriars Herald" representative asked him for a statement. "That rank out-won on a foul—we don't intend to let him get away with it!"

"But—er—how exactly does one foul in a book-carrying contest?" Skinner found a way. He would!" growled Brown. "You know the idea of the book-carrying contest? It's to see who

can carry the biggest pile of books on his head across the Form-room without dropping any.

"Smithy put up a challenge cup for it this year, and several of us have been putting in hours of practice with the idea of winning it. I quite fancied my own chance, to tell you the truth.

"When I heard that Skinner was entering for it, I laughed. I couldn't see a slacker who had never balanced books on his head in his life walking off with the cup.

"Now I'm a wiser man. Skinner went first and made a pretty low score. The rest of us felt confident of whacking him hollow.



"But every competitor after Skinner had a bad attack of sneezing just as he got his books balanced on his head—with the result that the books came tumbling down and Skinner's score remained unbeaten!"

"I was the last man of the bunch and I gave a terrific sneeze at the wrong moment, just the same as all the rest.

"The only difference between myself and the others was that they thought they were out of luck, whereas I found out that luck didn't enter into it. I happened to see Skinner blowing sneezing-powder off the back of his hand into the air just in front of me, you see!"

"Sneezing-powder! Great pip!" gasped the "Herald" representative.

"Sounds like Skinner, doesn't it?" grinned Brown. "But we're not going to let him get away with it. Wait till you hear the result of our appeal to the Judges' Committee! You'll see!"

We are now awaiting the verdict with considerable interest!

STOP PRESS.—Judges' Committee disqualified Skinner and awarded cup to Brown. Crowd cheered Brown outside Court.

Brown said: "I'm glad I've won. The trophy was worth the fuss. Anyway, it was not to be sneezed at."

FAG MANNERS ARE IMPROVING! Declares GEORGE BLUNDELL

If anyone tells you that the behaviour of fags is getting worse as time goes on, don't believe them! I know that some fellows seriously maintain this point of view. But as a senior with some knowledge of fags and their habits, I can tell you the reverse is much more the truth.

Fag manners are improving. I've been watching points lately, and that's the conclusion to which I've come. When I think of things to-day and then recall what things were like years ago, it stands out a mile.

Why, in the bad old days, it was nothing to see a cheeky fag extending the fingers of both hands from his nose at a senior he didn't like.

Nowadays no self-respecting fag behaves in such a vulgar way. He contents himself with a more dignified expression of disapproval by extending the fingers of one hand only.

Again, I have a clear recollection years ago of fags toasting herrings on the ends of penholders and afterwards eating them in a most primitive fashion out of their hands. To-day it's quite different. They toast herrings

on penholders and eat them out of sheets of exercise books instead.

And what an improvement there is in their personal cleanliness. I'm jolly sure that in the old days no fag ever washed under any circumstances. But in 1936 there are quite a number of fags who wash their necks as often as once a year!

Their language, too, is so much more moderate than it used to be. I well remember how years ago it was quite common to hear one fag call another a "silly, pie-faced idiot." But no fag would dream of using that phrase now. The most he ever says is "pie-faced idiot"—without the "silly"!

I could support my theory by many more examples if I had the time. But I think I've said enough already to convince most of my readers that in comparison with the fag of a bygone age the modern fag is a little gentleman!

Answers to Correspondents

W. G. BUNTER (Remove).—"I insist on cleanliness. The first question I ask on arriving at a strange house is 'Where do I wash?'"

Ten to one in doughnuts the host answers "Not round your neck, by the look of it!"

"SCEPTICAL" (Remove).—"Skinner boasts that he once smoked brown paper."

That's nothing. A fishmonger we know often smokes herrings.

"NERVOUS" (Upper Fourth).—"Every Tuesday evening I hear fiendish wailings and shriekings as of a thousand souls in torment."

Yes, it's time Ogilvy did his bagpipes-practice in a soundproof room.

G. TUBB (Third).—"Fancy my uncle giving me a paltry electric torch for my birthday!"

Well, it's a disappointment; but we expect you'll make light of it.

FOR A CHANGE

Says H. VERNON-SMITH

LET'S BOOST SOME UNSUNG HEROES!

Whenever the Beak wants to fire us with ambition or to hold up a shining example, he always starts talking about Old Boys who are now colonels or admirals or celebrated explorers or statesmen.

"My mind goes back, boys," he says, "to a diligent and painstaking boy whose spare time at Greyfriars was occupied by more serious things than the futile recreations which some of you seem to find so amusing. His name is now a household word, for he is none other than—"

And then he mentions Colonel What-name or Admiral Whosit or Sir G. Lobetrotter, F.R.G.S., or the Right Honourable Cyril Blurb, or some other big pot!

Now I think this is all wrong. Why the dickens should the Head want us all to aim at being colonels and things? They're all very necessary, of course, and it's useful to have a few chaps knocking about who are mapping out careers for themselves. But what a dickens of a jam there's going to be later on if we all aim in the same direction!

Just imagine the British Army loaded up with thousands of colonels and the Navy with thousands of admirals! Crowds and crowds of painstaking and diligent fellows, all waiting to give orders—and nobody available to carry them out! Thousands and thousands of explorers all unemployed because there's nothing left to explore, and vast armies of statesmen unable to govern because there's nobody left to govern!

If I were in the Head's place I'd change the record and boost up a few Old Boy heroes whose praises have not yet been sung.

"My mind goes back, boys," I would say, "to a lazy young idler whose spare time at Greyfriars was occupied by one single pastime—eating! His name is now a household word, for he is none other than—"

And then I should mention Mr. Bakewell, the patentee of Perfection Pork Pies, or someone like that!

There must be plenty of Old Boys whose careers are just as edifying as those the Beak is so fond of quoting. The kid who used to be so deadly accurate with his ink-pellets in the Third is probably now an international darts champion. The Removeite who chalked libellous pictures of his Form-master all over the walls has quite likely become the staff artist of a popular comic paper. The inky fag who was always walking on his hands in the gym, has possibly grown into the star turn of a circus!

These are the chaps the Head should bid us follow.

We don't all want to be colonels or admirals or explorers or statesmen—and it's a jolly good thing we don't!