

Cuthbert Bede



*Little Mr. Bouncer; and
Tales of College Life
Little Mr. Bouncer and
His Friend Verdant Green*

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Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066443672

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Titlepage](#)

[LITTLE Mr. BOUNCER](#)

[HIS FRIEND VERDANT GREEN.](#)

CHAPTER I.

[Table of Contents](#)

LITTLE MR. BOUNCER

[Table of Contents](#)

AND

HIS FRIEND VERDANT GREEN.

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE MR. BOUNCER MAKES A CALL ON HIS FRIEND VERDANT GREEN.



ULLO, Giglamps!" It was the unmistakable cheery voice of little Mr. Bouncer. He had crossed from his own rooms in the grand old College of Brazenface, Oxford, and had stopped on a certain landing, before a door over which was painted the monosyllable "GREEN." His battered College cap was on his head, but, as

no undergraduate's gown was upon his shoulders, it was to be presumed that the little gentleman had not come from lectures, or returned from a stroll through the streets of Oxford, or from any other place where the wearing of full academical costume would have been demanded by the authorities of the University. Though, if the full costume required by the statutes had been rigorously enforced, Mr. Bouncer would have cheerfully bowed to destiny, and would probably have imitated the gentleman who suspended his pair of bands under his coat tails, because the law had not expressly stated on what part of the body they were to be worn.



But Mr. Bouncer's sole academical attire on this occasion was his battered "mortar-board;" and, in place of carrying a Livy, or Euripides, or Euclid, or any other book that would have betokened a recent attendance at the rooms of Mr. Slowcoach or the Rev. Richard Harmony, and the other tutors whose delightful task it was to teach the young ideas of the Brazenfacians how to shoot—instead of any tome of learning, little Mr. Bouncer bore in his hand his long tin post-horn, from which he invoked unearthly sounds, that re-echoed from the staircase to the outer quad. He particularised this performance as "sounding his octaves," and summarised it as "going the complete unicorn." In addition to this, Mr. Bouncer was smoking a cigar—that "Nicotian herb" the consumption of which is so strictly forbidden by another of those Oxford statutes, which every student, at his matriculation, is solemnly required by the Vice-Chancellor most strictly to observe. He was, moreover, accompanied by two living creatures, who would not, by any possibility, have been admitted to a college lecture. These were his two famous bull-terriers, Huz and Buz; most villainous-looking pets, with ponderous heads and savage teeth and corkscrew tails, who, at every blast of the horn, barked and howled, either in sympathy with the noise, or in direct antagonism to its defiant summons; for, it would be difficult to interpret the feelings of Huz and Buz when they heard their master's caricature imitations of Kœnig's performance in Jullien's Post-horn Galop, which, just at that time, was in the height of its popularity, and was hummed or whistled in every quad in Brazenface and the University.

The inmate of the rooms over the outer door of which was painted the monosyllable "GREEN," had "sporting," or securely closed that outer door or "oak;" and this not only prevented little Mr. Bouncer from gaining immediate admission, but also caused him to prolong the fanfares on his tin horn and furnished Huz and Buz with a pardonable excuse for indulging in a canine chorus; all of which was most detrimental to the peace of mind of Mr. Sloe, the peripatetic reading man in the garret above, whose study of Aristophanes had already been disturbed by the doleful performance of "Away with Melancholy," given on the cornet-à-piston at an open window on the ground-floor, by a gentleman whose love for music surpassed his power of expression and execution.

"Hullo, Giglamps!" shouted little Mr. Bouncer, after his Post-horn overture; "open sesame, old fellow; and let the forty thieves come in. Blow, warder, blow thy sounding horn; and never say blow it; but, thy banners wave on high. Why don't you wave your banners, Giglamps? here's the warder calling till he is hoarse. He 's in, is n't he, Robert?"

Mr. Robert Filcher—the scout, who, as servant, waited on Mr. Verdant Green and the gentlemen who were on that staircase—was coming along the passage with a supply of eatables from the Buttery, and replied, "I know he 's in, sir; for he 's took out a *Æger*, and I 'm just taking him his Commons. He 's not had no sober-water this morning, and I 'm not aweer as he were pleasant last night; but, he 's sporting his oak, not wishing to see nobody."

As Mr. Filcher spoke these words, the outer door was opened by a tall, benevolent-looking, smooth-faced

gentleman, in spectacles; and Mr. Verdant Green gave admittance to his new friend, little Mr. Bouncer, and also to his scout, who laid the supply from the Buttery on the table, and, on hearing "there 's nothing more that I want, thank you, Robert," made his exit from the room.

It was halfway through the first term of Mr. Verdant Green's University existence, and he was still, in every sense of the word, an Oxford Freshman. It was not so very many weeks since that memorable day on which he and his father had travelled up from the Manor Green,



Warwickshire, and, on the outside of the Oxford coach, had formed their first acquaintance with little Mr. Bouncer and other Oxford men, some of whom were destined to be better known to him in his University career. In the interval since that day, the casual acquaintanceship of the coach-journey had ripened into an intimacy that was fast settling

into firm friendship. Mr. Verdant Green had gone through his intuition as an Oxford Freshman so meekly and with such good humour, that Mr. Charles Larkyns, and many others besides Mr. Bouncer, had taken very kindly to him, and were disposed to spare him when the temptation offered itself to make fresh attempts upon his credulity. But, although he had gained a certain amount of experience that would prove of great value to him in his future life, he had abundance yet to learn in that most difficult yet useful study; and it was fated that little Mr. Bouncer should be one of his preceptors.

"Hullo, Giglamps!" he cried, as Mr. Filcher left the room, "here we are again! how were you to-morrow, as the Clown says in the Pantermine? You look peakyish. What's the row?"

"I did not feel quite the thing; so, I thought I would not go to Chapel or Lectures; and Robert sent in an Æger for me," replied Mr. Verdant Green.

"What! cut Chapel and posted an Æger, for the second time in one week; and you only in your first term!" cried little Mr. Bouncer, with something like admiration in his tone. "'Pon my word, young 'un, you 're coming it strong. Perhaps it 's a deep-laid scheme of yours to post a heap of Ægers while you 're a Freshman, and then to get better and better every term, and make the Dons think that you are improving the shining hours by doing Chapels and Lectures more regularly. Artful Giglamps!" Here Mr. Bouncer's attention was distracted by his dogs. "Huz! you troublesome beggar, lie down, and don't worry the gentleman's calves and make yourself generally disagreeable. Buz! drop that, you little wretch; or I 'll know the reason why."

"Never mind," said Mr. Verdant Green; "it 's only a slipper that my sister Mary worked for me. He won't hurt it."

"Won't he?" cried little Mr. Bouncer, who evidently knew his dog's propensities. "It 's Berlin wool, ain't it? If so, he'll soon make it like Uncle Ned's head, and it'll have no wool on the top, just the place where the wool ought to grow. But, it 's his education that does it. Once bring up a dog to worry rats out of a Wellington boot, and it demoralises him for his place in society as a companion and friend of man. He thinks that every slipper contains nothing less than a mouse. Now, Buz! drop it." Little Mr. Bouncer reduced his dogs into a state of comparative subordination; and then, turning to Mr. Verdant Green, who was looking somewhat disconsolate, said, "I say, old fellow, how peaky you seem! You look as if you had been at a tea-fight or a muffin-worry, and had taken more hot toast than was good for your digestion, What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing very particular," replied Mr. Verdant Green, although in a tone that implied the contrary to be the case.

"What! not tell it to its faithful Bouncer! Oh, what base ingratitude is here! Make a clean breast of it, old fellow, and then I 'll see if I can minister to a mind diseased, as some cove says in Shikspur."

And little Mr. Bouncer puffed at his cigar, hit the obtrusive Buz with his post-horn, and awaited Mr. Verdant Green's explanation.

CHAPTER II.

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER II.

LITTLE MR. BOUNCER EXTRACTS FROM MR. VERDANT GREEN THE CAUSE OF HIS DESPONDENCY.



"NOW then! spit it out, Giglamps!" said little Mr. Bouncer, as he sat on the edge of a table, and puffed his cigar.

Thus encouraged, Mr. Verdant Green made a sudden and desperate plunge into the deep waters of his trouble. "I 've been persuaded to make a book."

"What! to come the literary dodge and do the complete author? Well! I did n't think it was in you, any more than rat-hunting is in a lamb. And what is it to be called? Is it to be the Whole Duty of Man style, as applied to Freshmen in general and Verdant Green in particular? or, is it to be some thing facetious, 'Grins by Giglamp,' or something of that sort? What 's the book about?"

"It 's about the Derby," said Mr. Verdant Green, with a heavy sigh.

"About the Derby! Oh! that 's the sort of book, is it? I see, now, which way the wind lies." Little Mr. Bouncer gave a meditative and prolonged whistle, which, being mistaken for

a signal by Huz and Buz, immediately sent them on a vain quest for rats in every corner of the room. "A book about the Derby!" said the little gentleman, when, by the aid of thwacks from his post-horn, he had reduced his dogs to a deceitful tranquillity similar to that of a volcano before eruption; "why Giglamps, you could just as soon write 'Paradise Lost,' like that mute, inglorious Milton did."

"I 've lost my paradise—at any rate, my peace of mind," groaned Mr. Verdant Green, too occupied by his own thoughts to take notice of the false application of his friend's quotation.

"Tell me how it all came about, and I 'll see if I can help you," said little Mr. Bouncer, after some thoughtful pulls at his cigar. "Two heads are better than one, although mine 's but an addled one. The fact is, I 'd too much pap when I was a baby, and it got into my noddle. But, how was it?"

"You know Blucher Boots?—the Honourable Blucher Boots, son of Lord Balmoral?" added Mr. Verdant Green in explanation.

"Know him!" cried little Mr. Bouncer; "yes! who doesn't know him? Although he 's Honourable by name, he 's not by nature. He 's as genuine a cad as was ever pupped; and if some feller would give him a good licking, and take the conceit out of him, it would be a public benefit. And did he help you to make your book on the Derby, Giglamps?"

"He did," replied the other. "At least he made it all himself; for I did not understand anything about it. I never saw a horse-race, and have never been accustomed to read much about them; and I am quite ignorant about taking

bets, and laying odds, and all that sort of things; so Blucher Boots undertook to make what he called a book for me."

"I see!" said little Mr. Bouncer; "it 's like the old rhyme —'Who 'll make his book? I, says the Rook.' And Blucher Boots is a regular rook. He 'd bet with his own grandmother, if he could, and would cheat her out of every penny if he could get on her blind side. He 's a nice young man for a small tea-party, I don't think. The less you have to do with him the better, Giglamps. Now let's hear all about it. Where did you tumble up against him?"

"I met Mr. Flexible Shanks, Lord Buttonhole's son, at Fosbrooke's wine party," replied Mr. Verdant Green, "and he very kindly asked me to come to his rooms, and I went; and there I met Blucher Boots, and he invited me to breakfast with him the next morning, and I accepted, and went."

"That little pig went to market, and this little pig stayed at home!" sang little Mr. Bouncer, in a voice that was almost too much for the feelings of Huz and Buz, who gave vent to their emotions by smothered growls. "It would have been better for you, Giglamps, if you stayed at home with this little pig—meaning me—and not have gone to Blucher Boots's breakfast."

"I went," said Verdant, simply, "because I thought it a great compliment to be invited to the rooms of two sons of noblemen, when I was not previously known to them, and was only a Freshman."

"Precisely!" rejoined little Mr. Bouncer, "I 'll say nothing against Flexible Shanks, for he 's a regular brick; but I expect it was because you were a Freshman that Blucher Boots asked you."

"But, at any rate, it was very friendly and polite of him to invite me to breakfast," argued Mr. Verdant Green, who would have wished it to be thought that the attentions of Lord Balmoral's son were due solely to his personal merits, and were not to be attributed to the fact of his being a Freshman.

"And so you went," said little Mr. Bouncer, "with the tear of gratitude in your eye, and a burst of loyalty in your bosom. Well, and what then? Cut along, my hearty."

"After breakfast," continued Verdant, "the men gradually went away; but he asked me to stop, and have a weed with him; and I did so, because I was all right for Lectures, having posted an *Æger*."

"Posted an *Æger*!" echoed Mr. Bouncer. "My gum, Giglamps, you 're coming it, for a Freshman. You pretend to be *Æger*, or sick and peaky, when you 're in robust health. And then, after your *Æger* breakfast where, of course, you behaved yourself like a sick man ought to do, and had nothing but tea and dry toast—what came next?"

"Then Blucher Boots and I were left alone, and he was very friendly and pleasant, and asked me about Warwickshire, and places that I knew; and his claret-cup was very nice; and he talked a good deal about horses and races, and the odds."

"Odd if he would n't!" said little Mr. Bouncer, puffing at his cigar; "I know his horsey proclivities. And then he offered to make your Derby book?"

"Well," replied Mr. Verdant Green—as people often do when they are speaking of something that is not at all well, but bad—"something like it. He told me that he had a friend

who had been kind enough to tell him, quite in confidence, which horse is to win the Derby. It is not the favourite; but it is a horse that, at present, is not much talked about. He said it was a dark horse; but whether a black or a brown, I don't know."

Little Mr. Bouncer involuntarily winked his eye, and smiled, as though he would direct an imaginary companion's attention, and say, "Oh, here 's a go!" but his Freshman friend was too much engaged in his narrative to notice the action.

"And Blucher Boots' friend," continued Verdant, "has kept his eye on the horse for a long time, and has seen him tried on a private course, and is in a particular position to obtain correct information on the subject. And Blucher Boots himself has seen this dark horse, whose name I may tell you—but of course, in the strictest confidence."

"Of course! the very strictest of the strict, Giglamps! I 'll be as dark as the horse."

"His name is 'The Knight.' "

"That Knight ought to be ridden by Day, ought n't he? Oh, Day and Knight, but this is wondrous strange! as Shikspur says." And the countenance of little Mr. Bouncer, as he watched Mr. Verdant Green, was quite a study.

"And," continued that innocent gentleman, "Blucher Boots, to use his own expression; is sweet upon The Knight, and is firmly convinced that no other horse, not even the favourite, has the slightest chance to win the race from him. So that he is going to support him to the best of his ability, and said that he should put a pot of money on him—an expression that I do not fully comprehend."

"It means," explained Mr. Bouncer, "that the money he will bet on the dark horse will go to the pot—that is, will be all U. P. and done for; like classical parties, who, when dead, were burnt, and had their ashes put into pots or urns." The little gentleman knocked off the ash of his cigar, and asked, "And what did B. B., which stands for Bad Boy, do then?"

"Why, then he spoke about having made his book for the Derby, and that he had done it so cleverly, and on such a sure plan, that he must be a gainer even if The Knight did not win; although he thought such an event, was an impossibility. And then he offered to show me how to make a book; and I tried to comprehend him, but I could not do so; although I fear that I gave him to understand that his explanations were quite clear to me. And he rather confused me by referring to a sweep; and although I knew that, on a race-course, people must meet with all sorts of queer characters, yet I thought it rather odd that a nobleman's son should appear to be so familiar with a sweep. And he strongly advised me to do what seemed to me a very strange thing; and that was, to join him in a sweep."

Little Mr. Bouncer chuckled to himself, and said, "I suppose, Giglamps, you took him for a cannibal of the Fa-fe-fi-fo-fum species; and, if you did, old fellow, you'd not be very far off the mark; for Blucher Boots would pick your bones as clean as a chicken, and get every shilling out of your pocket. He 's so hard up that he can scarcely rub two half-crowns against each other, and a sovereign might dance in his pocket without breaking its shins. Did he get anything out of you?"

"I am sorry to say he did," sighed Mr. Verdant Green, with a retrospective glance at his past conduct. "He talked to me so much about my Derby book, and joining him in the sweep, and other things which I could not properly understand—and he put it to me in so many ways about the great advantages that I should secure by backing The Knight at long odds,—I think that was his expression—that, at last, when he asked me if I could oblige him with change for a five-pound note"—

"I 'm interrupting you," said little Mr. Bouncer; "but, did you see that five-pound note, Giglamps?"

"No; I did not."

"If you had, you would have seen what his creditors have not yet been privileged to witness, much less to handle," observed Mr. Bouncer. "Well, young 'un, go ahead!"

"And I told him that I could not change him the note; for, curiously enough, I myself wanted change for a five-pound note; my papa—I mean, my Governor—having, that morning, sent me, in a letter, three five-pound notes. And, when Blucher Boots asked if I had got the notes with me, I said 'Oh, yes!' and pulled them out of my pocket-book. And he said that they had been sent most opportunely, and that I could n't do better than to let him lay them out for me; and that they would bring me in ever so much more. And he, in fact—that is to say," stammered Mr. Verdant Green, as he somewhat hesitated to make a full disclosure of the truth, even to his friend—"in short—I—at last I handed them to him."

"What! you gave Blucher Boots the three five-pound notes? My gum, Giglamps!" Little Mr. Bouncer did not say

much. Perhaps, like the monkeys, he thought the more. There was a silence for a few minutes. Mr.



Verdant Green sat in a dejected posture, with his head leaning upon his hand. Mr. Bouncer puffed savagely at his cigar; flung the stump out of the window; hit Buz abstractedly, yet sharply, with his post-horn, causing that canine monster to show his teeth in a highly threatening

way; and, at length, said, "I don't wonder, Giglamps, that you look in a blue funk!"

Although Mr. Verdant Green attached very indefinite ideas as to the nature and sensations of a "blue funk"—a subject on which Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" might have been able to throw some light—yet, the phrase sounded ominously in his ears, and, if possible, plunged him yet deeper into the deep waters of his trouble.

CHAPTER III.

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER III.

LITTLE MR. BOUNCER TAKES MEASURES TO BEFRIEND MR. VERDANT GREEN.



RECOVERING somewhat from the prostration of that "blue funk" with which, according to little Mr. Bouncer, Mr. Verdant Green appeared to be overcome, the Oxford Freshman resumed his explanation, mingled with an apology for the conduct both of himself and Mr. Blucher Boots.

"He only borrowed those three five-pound notes: they were not for himself, you must understand; but were for my own Derby book, and were to be used in bets on my behalf. Blucher Boots said that he was quite sure of winning. He had calculated the odds according to mathematical rules; and, whether The Knight won or lost, he himself would be a winner, and, of course, I should go shares with him. And, it seemed to be such a good chance of gaining twenty or thirty pounds, which, he said, would be the very least that I should receive—although there was every probability that I should win as much as seventy or eighty pounds if The Knight came in first, which Blucher Boots said he would be sure to do—that," continued Mr. Verdant Green, somewhat incoherently, "I saw it was such a good opportunity—and the money would have been so nice—and I could have bought

such handsome presents to take home to my sisters—and, you must remember, that I had all the benefits of Blucher Boots' superior knowledge—and he is Lord Balmoral's son, you know—and he said something about my being just the sort of man that his father would like to be introduced to—and he hinted at my coming to see them at Wellington House in the Long Vacation—and he seemed so civil and friendly—and it is for me that he is investing the fifteen pounds, and not for himself, you understand"—

"Oh! I understand perfectly," said little Mr. Bouncer, cutting his friend short; "and Blucher Boots shall find it another pair of shoes before I 've done with him. Oh, Giglamps! what would your respected parients say, if they knew that you 'd made a book on the Derby, and been and gone and done it after this fashion? Your Governor don't bet on races, does he?"

"Oh, no! I'm sure he does not!" responded Mr. Verdant Green, heartily, as his thoughts fled back to his home at the Manor Green, Warwickshire, and pictured the form of his father, sitting tranquilly, after breakfast, and reading his letters and morning news paper in slippers ease.

"And," continued little Mr. Bouncer, assuming the air of a Mentor, "I 'm equally sure that he would n't like his only son and heir to do so."

"I 'm quite sure about that," said Verdant, confidently; "and I 'm very sorry now that I have given away those three five-pound notes, and have been induced to make bets on The Knight. And the fact is, that it is fretting me very much."

"Well, don't fret yourself into fiddle-strings, old fellow!" said little Mr. Bouncer, encouragingly; "that won't mend