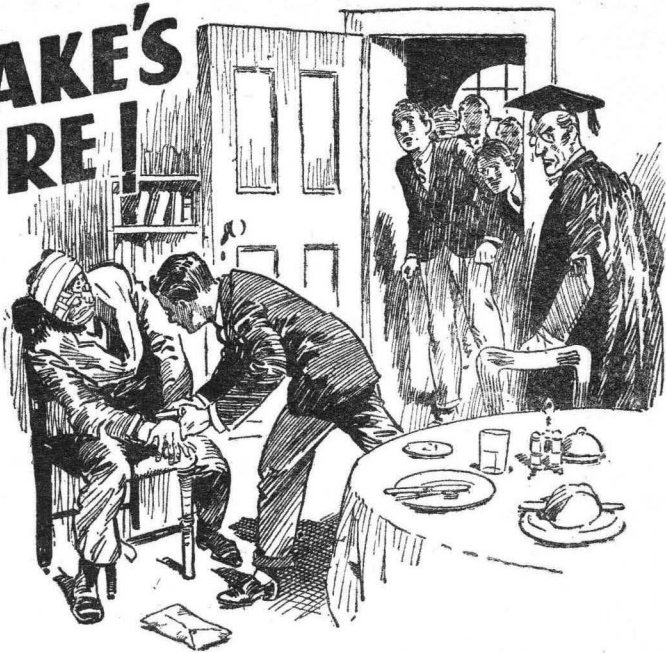


# JACK DRAKE'S CAPTURE!

By  
FRANK RICHARDS

*Jack Drake, assistant to Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, combines business with pleasure when he pays a visit to his old friends at Greyfriars!*



## THE FIRST CHAPTER

UP TO JACK DRAKE!

FERRERS LOCKE put up the receiver and turned from the telephone, a thoughtful look on his clear-cut face. His eyes fixed on his boy assistant, Jack Drake, seated at his desk sorting over press cuttings.

"Drake!"

Scissors in hand, Drake glanced round at his chief.

"It is some time, I think, since you have seen your old friends at your former school, Drake," remarked Ferrers Locke.

"I haven't seen a Greyfriars man since the last holidays, sir," answered Drake.

"You would like to see them again—Wharton, Cherry, and the rest?"

The famous detective smiled at the brightening in the face of his assistant.

"Yes, rather, sir!" answered Drake promptly. "I'd be glad to see even Billy Bunter!"

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"A change from Baker Street to the green fields of Kent would do you good, Drake," he said. "I believe your old Form-master, Mr. Quelch, would make you very welcome. I can easily arrange matters with my relative, Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars. A few days at your old school, and perhaps a spot of football—what?"

Jack Drake chuckled.

His reply was surprising.

"Height five feet eight inches, eyes grey, nose aquiline, slim build but strong and muscular," he said.

"What?" ejaculated Ferrers Locke.

"Last seen near Lantham, in Kent," continued Drake. "Evidently seeking to reach the coast and escape from the country, with seven thousand pounds in banknotes taken from the Capital and Suburban Bank——"

The Baker Street detective stared

blankly at his boy assistant for a moment. Then he burst into a laugh.

"You are quick on the uptake, my boy," he said.

"You've taught me to be, sir," said Drake. "Do I get you?"

"You get me exactly!" said Ferrers Locke, with a smile. "As I was saying, a change will do you good, and you will enjoy a visit to your old friends at your old school. But while your old schoolfellows are in class, you will naturally take walks abroad, and spins on your bicycle, visiting the old familiar scenes. At the same time you will be keeping an eye open for Julius Drew, whose description you apparently know by heart."

"I thought so, sir!" assented Drake. "Greyfriars School being only nine or ten miles from Lantham, where the man was last seen, I couldn't help jumping to it."

Locke's face became serious again.

"I have just been asked to take a hand in the matter," he said. "The police, of course, have it in hand; but the Capital and Suburban Bank is naturally more concerned about the bundle of banknotes than anything else, and they desire me to take up the matter unofficially. I am too busily engaged at the present time to leave London. But I can spare my assistant for a short time, valuable as he is——"

"Thank you, sir!" said Drake. "I'll try to prove my value, if there's anything doing in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars School."

"It appears to me," said Ferrers Locke, "very probable. It is nearly a week since Julius Drew, bank-robber and hold-up man, was seen near Lantham. Since then he has disappeared as completely as if he had sunk into the earth, or vanished

into the air. As he has, of course, done neither, it would seem that he is lying low in some obscure hiding-place. The local police are keeping a very careful watch on the coast, and the railways, of course, are carefully watched also. It does not seem likely that he has succeeded in getting away. I should imagine that he is lying very low, waiting for the search to relax, to give him a chance."

"It looks like it, sir," agreed Drake.

"He must be obtaining food from somewhere," went on Ferrers Locke. "It is unlikely that he would venture into even a remote village store when his description has been so widely circulated. An inquiring schoolboy may pick up news of even such trifles as the robbing of hen-roosts or the purloining of loaves from a baker's cart. Such trifles will lead, in ninety-nine cases in a hundred, to a pilfering tramp, but in the hundredth case——"

"To Julius Drew!" said Drake, with a nod.

"Precisely! A visit to your old school, Drake, combining business with pleasure——"

"Suits me fine, sir! When do I start?"

"I will get on the telephone to Dr. Locke while you are packing your bag, my boy. There is a train at two-fifteen for Lantham Junction."

Half an hour later Jack Drake, once of the Greyfriars Remove, stepped into a taxi and whizzed away down Baker Street.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

THE DOUGHNUTS THAT DISAPPEARED!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Wonderful!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Eh! What's wonderful?" asked Billy Bunter, blinking into No. 1 Study in the Remove passage at

Greyfriars through his big spectacles.

"Your scent for a feed, old fat man!"

"The wonderfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I never knew you had doughnuts!" said Billy Bunter. "How the thump should I know you had doughnuts here?"

"Didn't you?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Hadn't the foggiest!" said Bunter. "I never saw you get them at the tuck-shop, old chap——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Billy Bunter. "I never came up here for your mouldy old doughnuts. I thought you'd like to hear the news."

"What's the jolly old news?" asked Frank Nugent. "Don't say your postal order's come!"

"Anything but that!" grinned Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton had just opened a large paper bag on the table in No. 1 Study. It contained a dozen doughnuts. After football practice in a keen wind the chums of the Remove were prepared to deal with a dozen doughnuts easily. Still, there was one for Bunter, as Bunter had blown in. The drawback to that was that one doughnut was not of much use to the fat Owl of the Remove. Even the whole dozen would have left him yearning for more.

Billy Bunter had a hungry eye—in fact, two hungry eyes as well as a pair of spectacles—on that bag!



Coker was still in the way of the hurrying juniors, but as he was now horizontal instead of perpendicular that did not matter. Harry Wharton & Co. trod over Coker and rushed on down the stairs. "Owl!" roared Coker. "Oh! What—who—which—why—whoop!"

Bunter had had only two teas—one in his own study with Peter Todd, the other in No. 12 with Lord Mauleverer. So he was still hungry.

"Here you are, old fat man!" said Harry Wharton. He held up a doughnut.

To the general surprise, Bunter shook his head.

"I never came up here after your old doughnuts," he declared. "It's a bit sickening, I think, that a fellow can't look into a study without fellows thinking that a fellow's after a fellow's tuck——"

"What a lot of fellows!" ejaculated Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep your mouldy old doughnut!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I've a jolly good mind not to tell you the news now. After all, you fellows were never pally with Drake like I was."

"Drake!" exclaimed the Famous Five in chorus. At the mention of that well-remembered name they forgot the doughnuts.

"I dare say you've forgotten Jack Drake, who used to be in the Remove here with us," said Billy Bunter scornfully. "I'm not the fellow to forget an old pal——"

"What about Drake, you silly ass?" hooted Bob.

"He's come!" said Bunter.

The Famous Five jumped up as if moved by the same spring.

"Old Drake's here!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"He's in Quelch's study now," said Bunter. "Quelch asked me to tell you, and to go down if you wanted to see him. He can't stay long."

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Bob. "Fancy old Drake blowing in! We jolly well want to see him—rather!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter, apparently disdainful of doughnuts, rolled up the Remove passage, having imparted the glad tidings. Harry Wharton and Co. came out of the study with a rush. Doughnuts, at such a moment, were trifles light as air. There was no doubt that they wanted to see Jack Drake, the fellow who had been their pal in the Remove, and who had since become the assistant of the famous detective, Ferrers Locke. They saw him sometimes in the school holidays, but in term time it was an unexpected pleasure; and as Bunter had stated that he couldn't stay long, there was no time to lose.

They went scampering down the stairs, forgetful of doughnuts. But those doughnuts were not wholly forgotten. As the Famous Five disappeared down the Remove staircase, Billy Bunter revolved on his axis and rolled back to No. 1 Study—with a fat grin on his face.

Harry Wharton and Co. did the Remove staircase almost in one! On the next landing, Coker of the Fifth was standing, laying down the law on the subject of football to Potter and Greene, who were leaning on the banisters. It was unfortunate—for Coker, at least—that he was in the way of five juniors who were in a tearing hurry.

What hit him suddenly in the back, Horace Coker did not know. It felt like a battering-ram or a runaway lorry.

"Yoo-hoop!" spluttered Coker, ceasing his remarks on the subject of Soccer quite suddenly, as he flew.

Coker crashed! His nose, his chin, and his waistcoat established contact with the hard, unsympathetic floor. He was still in the way of the hurrying juniors, but as he was now horizontal instead of perpendicular

that did not matter. They trod over Coker, and rushed on to the lower stairs.

"Ow!" roared Coker. "Oh! What — who — which — why — whoooooop!"

He sat up quite dizzily.

Harry Wharton and Co. had vanished. Potter and Greene were grinning, as if they saw something funny in the episode. Coker spluttered.

The juniors scampered on, without even stopping to ask Coker whether he was hurt! Still, that was unnecessary, as they knew from his roar that he was!

Not till they reached the corner of Masters' passage did the chums of the Remove slacken speed. In those precincts it was impossible to rush at top speed. They walked up that passage, and tapped at Mr. Quelch's door, and opened the same.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Here we are, old chap!" said Harry.

"The herefulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Drake!" said Huree Janset Ram Singh.

Mr. Quelch was seated at his study table. Standing at the table, in talk with the Remove master, was a handsome, sturdy fellow whom the chums of the Remove knew at once. He turned towards them with a smiling face. Mr. Quelch, on the other hand, did not smile. He glared!

"Wharton!" he rapped. "Cherry! Bull! Nugent! Huree Singh!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped the five together.

"What do you mean by rushing into my study in a crowd?" asked Mr. Quelch. "I can understand that you desire to see an old friend—but you should have waited until Drake came to you."

The Famous Five blinked at him. They blinked at Drake. The latter was smiling, evidently glad to see his old schoolfellows again; but he was looking a little surprised at their sudden invasion of Mr. Quelch's study.

"But—but we've just been told that Drake's here, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"That is no reason——"

"But you sent us a message to come, sir!"

"What do you mean, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch testily. "I did nothing of the sort! Neither is there any hurry for you to greet your former schoolfellow, as he will be staying here some days, and you will have ample opportunity——"

"But—but Bunter said——" gasped Harry.

"Bunter said he wasn't staying long——" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"And that we were to come, if we wanted to see him——" gasped Nugent.

"So—so we came——" said Johnny Bull.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"There is some absurd mistake!" he snapped. "Drake is paying us a visit, and arrangements have been made for him to spend some days at his old school."

"Oh, good! I—I mean, we—we thought——"

"That ass Bunter——" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, well, there is no harm done," said Mr. Quelch, his brows unbending. "Drake, I will see you again—at present, you may go with your friends, who seem very glad to see you."

"Thank you, sir!" said Drake.

And he left the study with the Famous Five. In the corridor they surrounded him, shaking his hands, and thumping him on the back.

" Jolly glad to see you, old bean," said Harry Wharton. " That fathead Bunter got it all wrong, of course! Never mind—here you are! Come up to the study—you haven't had your tea? "

" No," said Drake, smiling. " I was rather looking forward to tea in the study—like the jolly old times! "

" Good egg! Come on! You cut off to the tuckshop, Franky——"

" Right-ho! "

Frank Nugent cut off to the tuckshop. With a distinguished visitor to tea, something was required to back up the doughnuts. Wharton and Bob, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh gathered round Drake and marched him off to the Remove passage. A dozen fellows greeted him on his way there. Ferrers Locke's boy assistant had left many friends behind him at his old school, and they were all glad to see him again.

The chums of the Remove arrived in No. 1 Study and marched Jack Drake in.

" Ripping to have you here again, old fellow! " said the captain of the Remove. " That ass Bunter said you weren't staying long, and that Quelch said we were to come down if we wanted to see you—just like that blithering owl to get it all mixed——"

" Tea won't be long," said Bob. " Have a doughnut to go on with—why, where's that bag of doughnuts? "

He stared at the study table. There was an inkstand, a dog-eared Latin grammar, a dictionary, and a sheaf of various papers to be seen there. But there was nothing even distantly resembling a doughnut.

" Ha, ha, ha! " roared Drake. " Did you leave a bag of doughnuts here? "

" Yes, rather! Goodness knows where——"

" And Bunter told you Quelch said you were to go down if you wanted to see me! " chortled Drake.

" Oh! " gasped Harry Wharton.

" Without being trained by Ferrers Locke, I think I could handle the Mystery of the Missing Doughnuts—from what I remember of Bunter! " chuckled Drake.

" The fat villain——"

" The pilfering porpoise——"

" The snaffling slug——"

" I'll scrag him! " roared Johnny Bull. " Making out he didn't want a doughnut, and pulling our legs, and snaffling the lot! I—I'll—I'll——"

" Ha, ha, ha! " roared Drake.

Wharton and Bob and Hurree Singh joined in the laugh. Johnny Bull rushed out of the study, picking up a fives bat as he went, to look for Bunter—and the doughnuts! But Billy Bunter was not to be found within the circumference of Greyfriars School—though there was little doubt that the doughnuts, if ever found, would be found within the circumference of Billy Bunter!

### THE THIRD CHAPTER

ONLY ONE FOR BUNTER!

**B**ILLY BUNTER grinned. He grinned over the success of his strategy—and over the doughnuts! Both pleased Bunter—especially the doughnuts!

Harry Wharton and Co. had not been long absent from No. 1 Study, but they had been absent long enough for Bunter. Not generally rapid in his movements, the fat Owl could put on speed for a really urgent and important reason—such as tuck! Billy Bunter rolled out of the House with that bag of doughnuts under a fat arm—and, like Iser in the poem, he rolled rapidly! In wonderfully quick time the Owl of the Remove had



"What do you mean by rushing into my study in a crowd?" asked Mr. Quelch, glaring at Harry Wharton & Co. "I can understand your desire to see an old friend, but you should have waited until Drake came to you."

scuttled through the gateway and across into the wood in the direction of the river.

Out of doors did not attract Billy Bunter very much, especially on a keen winter's day. He would have preferred to frowst over a study fire while he disposed of his plunder. But as it was probable—not to say certain—that the owners of the doughnuts would very soon be on his track, the fat Owl prudently decided to place a safe distance between himself and the trackers.

He rolled down the woodland footpath towards the river. From that footpath he turned into the wood, threading a way among the trees and brambles for a hundred yards or so.

That distance seemed safe enough

to Bunter. Even if the juniors hunted for him out of gates, they were not likely to spot him among the trees and thickets along the Sark. And he was eager to get going!

He sat on a log under the branches of a beech screened by hawthorns and opened the bag on his fat knees.

He grinned with unbounded satisfaction. There were a dozen doughnuts in that bag, and every one of them looked plump and fresh and attractive.

"Prime!" said Bunter.

And he started.

The first doughnut went down almost like an oyster. The second was in Bunter's podgy hand, about to follow it on the downward path, when a rustle in the thickets startled him.

" Oh, crikey ! " gasped Bunter.

With the doughnut half-way to his capacious mouth, the Owl of the Remove gave a frightened blink round through his big spectacles.

" I—I say, you fellows, I—I never bagged those doughnuts," he gasped. " I—I say, I—I haven't got them here. Oh, crikey ! "

It was not one of the juniors who looked through the hawthorns at the fat Owl seated on the log. It was a man's face on which Bunter's startled eyes fixed—a face pale, gaunt, almost haggard.

The fat junior blinked at him in alarm. In dodging so carefully the danger of pursuit, it had not occurred to Billy Bunter that he might be getting into any other danger—out of the frying-pan into the fire, as it were. Now he realised it as he blinked at that haggard, hungry face.

But he blinked at it only for a moment. He had hardly time to see what it looked like, except that it had a prominent nose.

The gaunt-looking man plunged through the hawthorns, straight at him. He came almost with the spring of a wild animal.

Billy Bunter bounded from the log in dire alarm ! All the Famous Five, at once, would not have alarmed him so much as that hungry-looking vagrant lurking in the wood by the river.

Smack !

" Ow ! Wow ! Help ! Yaroooh ! " roared Bunter as he spun.

A heavy hand landed on the side of Billy Bunter's fat head. He landed on the earth with a heavy bump.

The bag of doughnuts flew from his fat hands. But Bunter, in his terror, forgot even the doughnuts !

" Ow ! Keep off ! " he roared. " I

say, you keep off ! Ow ! Beast ! Help ! Yaroop ! Oh, crikey ! Oh crumbs ! Ow ! "

There was a rustle in the thickets again. The terrified Owl blinked round him, dizzily, as he sprawled.

The gaunt man was already going. In one hand he held the bag. In the other he held a doughnut, cramming it into his mouth as he fled.

Billy Bunter sat up, blinking.

His fat head was singing from the smack that had knocked him over. He rubbed it ruefully with a fat hand. With dizzy eyes he blinked after the fleeing man.

The latter vanished in a few seconds. The rustle in the wood died away—he was gone with the doughnuts !

Billy Bunter tottered to his feet.

" Oh, crikey ! Beast ! " he gasped. " Oh, dear, if I'd known there was a beastly tramp here— Oh, lor' ! Greedy beast, bagging the whole lot ! I'd have given the beast one if he was hungry—but bagging the whole lot—the awful rotter ! Oh, crumbs ! "

Bunter was both indignant and shocked ! It was clear that the unknown man was hungry, from the fact that he crammed food into his mouth as he ran. Bunter could feel for a fellow who was hungry ! It was an awful state for any fellow to be in ! Bunter had known what it was to be hungry—Mr. Quelch had sometimes stopped him at his fourth helping at dinner ! Willingly he would have given one of the doughnuts to a man who was hungry—even a tramp. But bagging the whole lot seemed to Billy Bunter the limit !

" The awful beast ! " said Bunter. " I've a jolly good mind to go after him and give him a good hiding ! Absolutely disgusting beast—bagging the whole lot ! Thank goodness I've had one ! "



Billy Bunter was no longer grinning as he took his way out of the dusky wood. He had had one doughnut—which he might have had in No. 1 Study! The rest were gone—gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream! All that his deep strategy had earned him had been a terrific smack on his head, and the prospect of a booting when he got back to the school!

It was a sadder if not a wiser Bunter that rolled in at the gates of Greyfriars!

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER

### TEA IN NO. 1 STUDY!

**J**ACK DRAKE's face was very bright as he sat at the festive board in No. 1 Study in the Remove.

In the underworld of London there were crooks who regarded with dread the keen-witted, wary assistant of the celebrated Baker Street detective. But anyone who had seen Drake at the present moment would never have dreamed that he was a detective, that he had solved problems of crime and trodden the paths of danger. He looked like what he had been—not so very long ago—a happy and cheery schoolboy.

He was so evidently pleased to find himself in a Greyfriars study again, among Greyfriars fellows, that Harry Wharton and Co., already pleased to see their old friend, were more pleased than ever.

There was quite a spread on the study table, though the doughnuts were missing; and the cheery talk in the study was very different from what Drake had been accustomed to in Ferrers Locke's consulting-room in Baker Street. The topic was Soccer, a subject into which Jack entered with the keenest zest.

"Couldn't have happened better, really!" said Harry Wharton. "It's

a half-holiday to-morrow, old bean, and we play the Shell. If you're keen on a game——"

"If!" grinned Drake.

"The if-fulness is probably not terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and idiotic Drake was a preposterous keen footballer while he still honoured these absurd scholastic precincts with his excellent and execrable presence."

Jack Drake chuckled.

"Inky, old man, it's a real pleasure to hear you talking English again!" he said. "And I think more than ever that that old moonshee at Bhanipur who taught you was a stout lad!"

"The stoutfulness of the lad was terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The wise and benighted Mook Mookerjee taught me well of English pure and undefiled, though it does not always agree with the idiots of this country!"

"The what?"

"Inky means idioms," explained Bob Cherry. "It's a sort of guessing game to make out what he means."

"My esteemed and atrocious Bob!" said the nabob of Bhanipur reproachfully.

"I say, you fellows!"

The study door opened rather cautiously, and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in.

The Famous Five stared round at Billy Bunter.

"That fat burglar!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"That pilfering porpoise!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Come in and be scragged, you obnoxious octopus!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the spread on the table with longing eyes. But he did not seem in a hurry to come in.

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" he said. "I say, I hope you didn't

think I had the doughnuts! If you missed them, I—I hope you won't put it down to me! I—I say, Drake, old chap, how do you do?"

"Fine!" said Drake. "I'll lend a hand scragging you, old fat man!"

"Oh, really, Drake——"

"Have you brought back those doughnuts?" roared Johnny Bull.

"I—I—I was going to!" stammered Bunter. "I—I was really going to, you know, but—but I couldn't when a tramp bagged them after I'd eaten only one! Not that I had them, you know! I—I dare say they're still in the study, and you've overlooked them, or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Drake.

"Drake jolly well knows I'm not the fellow to bag a fellow's doughnuts," said Bunter warmly. "Don't you, old chap? You remember what I was like when you were at Greyfriars, Drake?"

"Yes, rather!" agreed Drake. "Like a boa-constrictor!"

"Has that fat cormorant really scoffed a whole dozen doughnuts?" asked Frank Nugent.

"No!" hooted Bunter. "I tell you a beastly tramp got them away from me. I say, you fellows, I—I thought you'd like me to come to tea, as my old pal Drake is here. C-c-can I come in?"

Jack Drake gave the fat Owl a keen, penetrating look. For a moment he was Ferrers Locke's assistant again.

"A tramp bagged them from you?" he asked.

"Yes, old chap. Rushed on me like—like a tiger!" said Bunter. "I fought like anything, knocked him right and left, but—but he got away with the bag. Lucky he didn't rob me of my splendid gold watch, wasn't it? It was a birthday present from one of my titled relations, you

know, and cost thirty guineas. But he only seemed to want the doughnuts. I—I say, Bull, wh-what are you going to do with that fives bat?"

"Lay it round a pilfering porpoise!" answered Johnny Bull.

"I—I say, I—I hope you're not going to kick up a row, when we've got a visitor here!" said Bunter. "I say, that tramp really had the doughnuts, and——"

"Yes, I can see a tramp snaffling doughnuts!" said Johnny Bull. "Your splendid gold watch is worth five bob, an he'd have taken that, if he'd taken anything."

"I—I think he was hungry!" said Bunter. "He really had them, old fellow! I was sitting in the wood and started on them, when he sprang at me like a tiger, and——"

"Then you had them?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh! No," said Bunter promptly. "I never had them! As if I'd touch a fellow's tuck! It's rather rotten for you fellows to make out before Drake that I'm the sort of fellow that snoops tuck! Drake jolly well knows I wouldn't, though, don't you, old chap?"

"Isn't he a cough-drop?" said Jack Drake. "Isn't he the jolly old limit, and then some, and a few over? You fellows mind if we have him to tea?"

Johnny Bull stared for a moment. Then he laid down the fives bat. Drake was an honoured guest and his request was law.

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton. "Roll in, Bunter."

"Well, I didn't really come to tea!" said Bunter. "I never came up here because I thought you might be standing Drake a spread in the study! Still, as you're so pressing, I'll stop."

Bunter rolled in. He drew a chair to the table and sat down with a beaming fat face. He had looked into No. 1 Study like a lion seeking what he might devour, so to speak; but he had never expected so much luck as this! Harry Wharton and Co. were already glad that Jack Drake had dropped in at his old school. Now Billy Bunter was glad, too!

"Now tell us what became of the doughnuts!" said Drake, as Billy Bunter started on the foodstuffs.

"The fat villain bolted them,

"I—I say," gasped Bunter, "I—I haven't bagged those doughnuts! Oh, crikey!" It was not one of the juniors who looked through the hawthorns. It was a man's face—a face pale, gaunt, almost haggard!



of course!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You don't need to be a detective to work that out."

"I didn't!" said Bunter, with his mouth full. "I never touched them! There weren't any doughnuts in the

study when I came in after you fellows went down, and they were still there, just as you left them, when I went out. Not that I came into the study, you know! I was nowhere near it! I was in the gym. at the time I was here——"



"Oh, crikey!"

"Drake can take my word, if you fellows can't!" said Bunter scornfully. "He knows me!"

"There couldn't have been a vacancy in a home for idiots when they sent Bunter to Greyfriars!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, these sosses ain't bad! If you fellows don't want any, I'll take the lot! I say, go easy with those poached eggs—I shall be ready for them in a minute! I've had nothing since tea, except just that one doughnut——"

"Except a dozen doughnuts, you podgy bandit."

"I tell you that tramp collared

them!" hooted Bunter. "I hadn't started on the second one when he jumped on me, and knocked me over and snaffled them."

"What was he like?" asked Drake.

"Hungry-looking beast," said Bunter. "The fact is, he looked so jolly hungry, I'd have let him have one or perhaps two! But the greedy beast grabbed the lot."

"Not the first greedy beast that grabbed the lot—if he did!" chuckled Bob.

"Hungry, was he?" said Drake.

"Well, yes, rather; he crammed one into his mouth as he scuttled off," said Bunter. "Must have been pretty hungry to do that, I should think."

"Isn't he spinning that yarn just as if he believed it himself?" said Bob. "As if a tramp would bag a fellow's doughnuts, and not go through his pockets! He couldn't have known there was nothing in them—not knowing Bunter!"

"Tell us some more!" said Jack Drake, laughing. "What were his jolly old features like, Bunter?"

"Oh, like—like features, you know!" said Bunter vaguely. "He had a face that was like—like a face, you know. I say, pass that ham!"

"Bunter's a good hand at a description," remarked Drake gravely. "The police would run him down as easy as anything on that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I rather notice things, you know," said Bunter. "I'm rather an observant chap, you see!"

"Did you notice the colour of his eyes?"

"Well, they might have been blue—or brown. Or perhaps grey. Or— or some other colour, old chap."

"We're getting on," said Drake gravely, while the Famous Five chortled. "Any fellow would spot

him from that. What sort of a nose, Bunter?"

"Oh, rather a beak—I noticed that!" said Bunter.

Drake's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"You don't really believe there was a tramp at all, Drake?" asked the captain of the Remove in astonishment.

"Well, accidents will happen," said Drake, "and Bunter might be telling the truth for once. I remember he told it once while I was at Greyfriars—or was it twice, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Drake! I say, you fellows, if you don't want any of those poached eggs—I say, I suppose you want a fellow to have something to eat when you press him to come to tea! You haven't left me half the eggs! Never mind—I can fill up on cake! I never was greedy!"

And Bunter filled up on cake, and then finished the jam—which the presence of the distinguished visitor saved him from having down the outside instead of the inside of his fat neck!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER BUNTER DRAWS A BLANK!

"A PICNIC-BASKET!"

"That's it!"

"Certainly! But isn't it a bit parky for picnicking?" asked Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"Ripping weather for long walks—and a fellow gets hungry in this sharp weather!" said Jack Drake, smiling too.

It was after breakfast the following morning. Ferrers Locke's boy assistant was strolling in the old quad of Greyfriars with his friends till the bell rang for school.

That morning, while the Greyfriars' fellows were in class, Jack Drake was

going to take a long walk, visiting the old familiar spots round about the school—especially the wood where Bunter had seen a tramp who, judging by the fat Owl's description, was sorely in need of food.

His request to borrow a picnic-basket rather surprised the juniors. It would have been natural to take a bundle of sandwiches in his pocket. But taking a packed picnic-basket seemed rather more like Billy Bunter than Jack Drake.

However, they were more than willing to oblige; and Frank Nugent cut into the House to fetch a picnic-basket from the study.

As he came out with it in his hand, a pair of little round eyes, behind a pair of big round spectacles, fell on it. Billy Bunter bestowed his fascinating company on the chums of the Remove at once.

"I say, you fellows, who's picnic-ing?" he inquired. "I thought you were playing football this afternoon. I say, if you're cutting the football to go on a picnic, I'm on! Jolly good idea, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

The idea of cutting a football match to go on a picnic struck Billy Bunter as good. It did not strike the Remove footballers in the same way.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said Bunter. "I think it's a ripping idea. When do you start?"

"Kick-off at three," said Bob Cherry.

"Eh! I mean the picnic, fathead—"

"There isn't any picnic, cormorant! We're lending this basket to Drake to take out with him this morning," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh! Going for a picnic on your own, old chap?" asked Bunter.

"Sort of!" assented Drake.

"Well, look here, if I can get leave from Quelch, I'll come," said Bunter. "I say, as you're a visitor here, Quelch might let me off if you asked him as a special favour. What about that?"

"Oh, fine!" said Drake. "I'm going to walk about twenty miles——"

"Oh! I'm afraid Quelch might not let me off class," said Bunter. Even class was better than a walk of twenty miles! "But I say, I'll help you to do your shopping, old chap, and pack the basket for you. I'm pretty good at packing grub——"

"Nobody better at that!" agreed Drake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, come on," said Bunter. "It will be class in ten minutes. Time to get your basket packed. I'll help with the grub. I say, you fellows, don't walk away when a chap's talking to you!" roared Bunter.

But the juniors did walk away, Drake swinging the empty basket in his hand. Billy Bunter blinked after them wrathfully. Breakfast had left the fat Owl with plenty of space yet to fill—and, though not generally an obliging fellow, Bunter would have been glad to oblige Jack Drake by packing that picnic-basket for him. It was probable that more would have been packed in Bunter than in the basket.

Drake, however, appeared to have no use for Billy Bunter's services as a grub-packer. He walked and talked with his friends till the bell rang, when they had to leave him to go into class.

Billy Bunter was frowning as he rolled into the Remove room with his Form. He was not in the least interested in Latin verse, but he was deeply, intensely interested in Drake's picnic-basket.

He had no doubt that while he was sitting in the Remove Form-room, Drake was packing that basket with excellent provender to take with him on his morning walk. Obviously, he had borrowed that basket to pack it with grub. He could hardly have wanted it for anything else.

"If—if you please, sir——" exclaimed Bunter suddenly.

Mr. Quelch looked at him.

"What is it, Bunter?"

"I—I've just remembered that I left the tap running, sir! M-m-may I go and turn it off, sir? In the Remove passage, sir."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"You may, Bunter," he answered, "and you may take a hundred lines for your carelessness."

"Oh, crikey! I—I mean, yes, sir."

Bunter rolled out of the Remove Form-room. He did not head for the Remove studies, but for the quad.

There he cut across to Mrs. Mible's little shop in the corner behind the elms. He had no doubt that Drake was there, packing the basket.

To his surprise, Drake was not there. Mrs. Mible had seen nothing of him. The fat junior rolled out again, and hurried down to the gates. Gosling, the porter, eyed him from his lodge.

"I say, Gosling, has Drake gone out yet?" squeaked Bunter.

"Which I ain't seed him, Master Bunter!" answered Gosling. "And wot I says is this 'ere—you're out of class, and I'll report you."

Bunter snorted and rolled off to the House. He could only conclude that Drake was getting supplies for that picnic-basket from the house-dame. Near the House, Jack Drake came into sight, the basket in his hand.

"Hallo, Quelch given you leave?" asked Drake, as the fat Owl of the Remove rolled up to him.

"Oh! Yes! No!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, I've got out to see you off, old chap! I—I say, I'll carry that basket for you as far as the gate."

"You're awfully good!" said Drake.

Most Greyfriars fellows would have thought twice, if not three times, before handing a picnic-basket to Bunter to carry. Such a burden would have been likely, like Aesop's of old, to grow lighter and lighter the farther it was carried. But Jack Drake, perhaps, had been long enough away from Greyfriars to have forgotten Billy Bunter's manners and customs. At all events he handed over the picnic-basket at once.

Bunter's fat fingers closed eagerly on the handle. Drake, smiling, walked by his side towards the school gates.

"I—I say, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "Wharton wants to speak to you before you start. About—about the football this afternoon, you know."

"We've fixed all that up," said Drake.

"I—I mean, he—he's rather anxious that—that you don't walk too far, and—and tire yourself before the football, you know. He—he wants to speak to you very particularly!"

"Quelch won't like me speaking to him in class," said Drake, shaking his head.

"He—he's got leave out of class—he's waiting for you in the Rag—he asked me specially to tell you——"

"Oh, all right!" said Drake. "Look after that basket while I'm gone, will you?"

"Oh! Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter.

The fat Owl could scarcely believe



The terrified Bunter blinked up dizzily as he sprawled on the ground. The gaunt man was already going. In one hand he held the bag. In the other he held a doughnut, cramming it into his mouth as he fled.



in his good luck as Drake turned and walked towards the House. Ferrers Locke's boy assistant might be able to deal with crooks, but he did not seem equal to the deep duplicity of William George Bunter! Apparently he had not the remotest idea that Bunter had felonious designs on that basket.

Almost as his back turned, Bunter changed his direction. He whisked round the nearest of the ancient Greyfriars elms and set the picnic-basket on the old oak bench under the tree.

He grinned joyously.

Drake, perhaps, would be five minutes gone! Five minutes was plenty of time for Bunter! It was worth a hundred lines from Quelch to have five minutes at a well-packed picnic-basket!

Grinning, Bunter opened the lid.

Then the grin faded from his fat face! He stared into the basket, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

There was no "grub" in that basket. If Drake was taking anything in the way of provender, it was in his overcoat pockets.

The picnic-basket contained the usual fittings. It contained nothing else. There was nothing to eat—and nothing to drink! There was not even a sandwich! There was not so much as a jam tart or a bun!

Bunter gazed into it!

Drake had specially borrowed that picnic-basket to take with him on his morning's walk. He had been heading for the gates when Bunter stopped him. Any fellow seeing that basket swinging in his hand would have taken it for granted that it contained

provisions. Who could possibly guess that a fellow was going out for a walk carrying an empty picnic-basket? Brighter fellows than Bunter might have failed to guess that one!

"Mad!" gasped Bunter.

That was the only possible conclusion to which Bunter could come.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

It dawned on his fat brain now why that picnic-basket had fallen so easily into his clutches. It was not because Jack Drake was blind to his obtuse manoeuvres. It was because there was nothing to eat in it. Even Bunter, who could eat almost anything, could not eat the basket itself!

For a long minute Billy Bunter glared at the empty picnic-basket, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. Then, in speechless disgust, he rolled back to the House.

Drake passed him on his way.

"Wharton doesn't seem to be in the Rag," he remarked.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He rolled on with that. Jack Drake chuckled and walked on. He picked up the picnic-basket, closed the lid carefully, and walked out of the gates, swinging it in his hand. If during his long ramble through the woods that morning, a hungry outcast spotted a schoolboy carrying a picnic-basket, and snatched the same, he would not benefit much in the way of provender—but he would furnish Ferrers Locke's assistant with a clue to Julius Drew!

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER

FOOTBALL—AND THE FALLING  
PLANE!

"FEELING fit?" asked Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"Fit as a fiddle!" said Drake cheerily.

In the changing-room that after-

noon it was like old times to Jack Drake. He had played for the Remove in his days at Greyfriars School, and he had been a good man at Soccer. It was sheer satisfaction to him to be lining up with the Remove footballers again.

Ferrers Locke had said that in his visit to his old school he would be combining business with pleasure. But it was mostly pleasure so far!

Many a long mile had he rambled that morning, through the woods round Greyfriars, the tempting picnic-basket swinging in his hand, to catch a watchful eye. But he had had no luck.

It was possible—indeed probable—that the lurking outcast who had snatched Billy Bunter's doughnuts was the man who was wanted. Ferrers Locke's assistant had easily been able to sift the wheat from the chaff in the fat Owl's strange tale.

Drake had a clue—he had little doubt that the hunted, hidden man was somewhere in the neighbourhood. His morning had been devoted to business—with no result! His afternoon was to be devoted to pleasure—football with his old schoolfellows! On the morrow, when his friends were in class again, business would be resumed! He did not dream, just then, what was going to happen before the morrow! Business was destined to be combined with pleasure in a way that Ferrers Locke himself certainly could not have foreseen!

He had had quite a long ramble that morning. But he was fresh as paint as he walked down to Little Side with the Remove footballers.

Hobson, the captain of the Shell, gave him a grin of welcome. Drake's face was very bright as he lined up with the Remove men.

Potter of the Fifth blew the whistle.



A good many Greyfriars fellows gathered round the field to watch, as much interested in Ferrers Locke's assistant as in the game. Even Lord Mauleverer made an effort to walk down to the field, and Billy Bunter rolled after him—not in the hope of seeing Remove men bag goals, but in the hope of touching Mauly for a little loan to tide him over till his celebrated postal order arrived.

“Goal!”

In the first ten minutes of the game the leather went in—from the foot of the new recruit!

“Good old Drake!” chuckled Bob Cherry.

“Bravo!”

“By gum,” said Hobson of the Shell, “that man hasn't left his shooting-boots in Baker Street!”

Harry Wharton clapped Drake on the shoulder as they walked back to the centre of the field.

“Good man!” he said. “We'll have a few more like that!”

And Drake grinned cheerily. That goal for the Remove was almost as much a satisfaction as it would have been to clap the handcuffs on the wrists of Julius Drew!

The whistle blew again, and the game went on, hot and strong. Fellows round the field hardly noticed the boom of an aeroplane in the steely sky—the footballers did not notice it at all. Plenty of planes zoomed over Greyfriars School from the air camp at Wapshot ten miles away.

But Billy Bunter blinked up uneasily through his big spectacles as the humming of the plane sounded closer and louder.

“I say, you fellows, that beastly plane is flying jolly low!” squeaked Bunter.

The hum deepened into a roar, and a good many fellows glanced up.

The plane was flying low—dangerously low! It dawned on the fellows on the football ground that the airman was in trouble.

More and more fellows stared up—until, at length, all faces round the field were turned upward, and the game went on unregarded.

“I say, you fellows, he's going to fall!” squeaked Bunter in alarm.

“Shut up, Bunter!”

“Oh, crikey!” gasped Bunter.

The plane shot on, passing over the school grounds, and rising a little over the trees beyond.

Every eye followed it.

Even the game stopped now. The footballers ceased play, all eyes on the plane. It was still in clear view when what looked like a doll suddenly dropped from it.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” gasped Bob Cherry, utterly forgetful even of Soccer. “Look!”

“He's falling——”

“The pilot——”

With starting eyes, the Greyfriars crowd stared at that distant falling figure, watching in tense anxiety to see the parachute open. From the pitching plane a spurt of flame came, but the airman was clear of it. It was only a second—but it seemed to the watching crowd like an hour—before the parachute spread, and the whizzing fall of the airman was changed into a gentle descent.

“Oh, thank heaven!” gasped Harry Wharton.

“The thankfulness is terrific!” breathed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The wind was strong, and it was carrying the floating airman farther and farther away, over the tree-tops, as he sank lower and lower under the full-spread parachute.

It was well for him, too, for the plane, with a sudden plunge, shot

down, and crashed, bursting into flames in the middle of a meadow.

But the floating man was clear of it.

"He will fall in Friardale Wood!" panted Bob Cherry. "If that 'chute' fouls on the trees——"

"Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Chuck it, Hobby, what?"

"You bet!" said Hobson of the Shell. "Get going, you men—we've got to help that chap if we can!"

Fellows were already streaming off the ground. The footballers followed them with a rush.

They were keen on Soccer, but Soccer did not count when a man was in danger of losing his life.

"Put it on!" exclaimed Jack Drake.

The man swinging on the parachute was down now. He had disappeared from sight in the trees of Friardale Wood.

That the parachute had fouled on the branches seemed certain, but whether the man was hurt or not could not be discovered till the spot was reached. And the whole Greyfriars crowd ran hard.

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton drew ahead. Jack Drake was quickly with them. The three reached the wood ahead of the panting crowd.

But in the wood they had to slacken speed.

Exactly where the parachute had fallen it was impossible to see among the trees and thickets. They listened anxiously for a call for help, but no call reached their ears. The terrible thought was in their minds that the airman might have been killed by the fall, and it was quite likely that he had been stunned. They heard nothing but the rustle of the wind in the branches, and their own hurried breathing.

A shout came from a distance.

"This way!" roared the voice of Johnny Bull.

"Come on!" panted Drake; "Johnny's found him!"

They plunged through tangled thickets.

"Here!" shouted Johnny Bull. "This way!"

The panting juniors burst into a glade. From the branches of an oak, the wrecked parachute hung tangled. This was the spot where the airman had fallen, that was certain.

"That's the parachute!" shouted Johnny Bull. "He can't be far away!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

An answering call came from the thickets by the glade.

"Help!"

"That's him!" exclaimed Bob promptly and ungrammatically; and the juniors rushed into the thickets, to gather round a man in airman's garb, who stood leaning and panting on a tree—while from all directions, shouting voices and hurrying footsteps told of others hastening to the spot.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

### THE MAN FROM THE SKY!

"HURT?" asked Harry Wharton. "Shaken—bruised—that's all!" the man panted.

Apparently the fallen airman had disentangled himself from the crumpled parachute and started to find his way out of the wood, when he heard the shouts and footsteps of the Greyfriars crowd.

Eager, sympathetic faces now surrounded the panting man. All eyes were fixed on him—more and more every moment, as a swarm of fellows gathered round the spot.

It was a little difficult to see what the man looked like. His face was

smothered with dirt, as if he had rolled face down in mud after his fall. Hardly a feature could be distinguished, except a prominent nose.

"No bones broken?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No!"

"That's good!"

"The goodfulness is terrific!"

"Anything we can do?" asked Harry.

"Nothing, thanks! I've got a few bruises, but I can manage! Unless somebody's got a sandwich—I've had a—a long trip——"

"Oh! You're not from Wapshot Camp?"

"No. Paris this morning, and I lost my bearings in a fog—it's been



Grinning, Bunter opened the lid of Jack Drake's picnic-basket. Then the grin faded from his fat face. He stared into the basket, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles. There was no grub in it!

"Your plane's gone!" said Johnny Bull. Over the tree-tops the glare of flames could be seen from the plane burning in the meadow a quarter of a mile away.

The panting man stared round at the crowd of eager schoolboys. It seemed as if he was surprised to find himself so suddenly surrounded, especially by fellows, a score of whom were in football garb.

a long slip, and if any of you lads have a sandwich——"

"I'm afraid not," said Harry. "We were playing football when we saw you falling, and rushed off to help if we could. But come with us—our school's quite near—if you can walk."

"I can walk all right, if you lend me a hand! If your schoolmaster wouldn't mind——"

"Everybody would be jolly glad to do anything, after what you've been through!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Come on."

The panting man stepped away from the tree. Wharton gave him an arm on one side, Bob Cherry on the other.

That the man could walk was quite clear. He walked quickly, and the two juniors had to step out to keep pace. The whole crowd of Greyfriars fellows marched off with him—with one exception. Jack Drake lingered under the tree on which the man had been leaning.

But in the excitement of the moment, and the general concern for the wrecked airman, even the distinguished visitor to Greyfriars was forgotten. Not a fellow in the crowd noticed that Jack Drake stayed behind.

In a few minutes they emerged from the wood into a footpath which led into Friardale Lane. Up the lane they marched in an excited crowd for the school. Every fellow there was anxious to help a man who had had a terribly narrow escape from a fearful death.

Five or six fellows cut ahead at a rapid run to tell the news that the rescued man was coming. If he had had a long and anxious flight from France, and had been "up" since early morning, he was very likely to be in need of a meal. His request for a sandwich showed that he was, as a matter of fact, hungry. Hospitality, in such a case, would be unbounded at Greyfriars. Even Billy Bunter would have shared his last jam-tart with a man who had fallen from a burning plane!

Considering what he had been through, the man seemed brisk enough. He walked fast, and clearly did not

need much assistance from Wharton and Bob.

Every fellow was glad to see that he had suffered so little from so fearful an experience. The crowd arrived at the school, with the airman in their midst, in a sort of triumphal procession.

Five or six fellows had already burst in with the news. Mr. Quelch met them at the door of the House.

"Here he is, sir!" chirruped Bob Cherry, as the airman was marched in. "Safe and sound!"

"I am very glad to hear that!" said the Remove master. "Anything we can do for you, my dear sir——"

"I say, you fellows, he wants a wash!" said Billy Bunter in a stage whisper, which was heard far and wide.

"Shut up, you fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Anything in our power, sir——" Mr. Quelch was saying.

"Thank you, sir! I have had a very long and trying flight, and if I might rest for the remainder of the afternoon—somewhere——"

"Most assuredly."

"And I have eaten nothing since—since early morning——"

"Bless my soul! I will give instructions at once——"

"And perhaps someone could find me some sticking-plaster, sir. I have a few cuts on my face——"

"Immediately!" said Mr. Quelch.

Taking charge of the airman, Mr. Quelch led him into the House. A buzzing, excited crowd was left as the man disappeared with the Remove master. It was quite a thrilling episode at Greyfriars School. Even the unfinished football match was forgotten.

"Tons of nerve!" remarked Smithy of the Remove. "Who'd

think that chap had just had a parachute drop from a burning plane?"

"The tonfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, fancy having had nothing to eat since early morning!" said Billy Bunter. "Awful, ain't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently, in the opinion of Billy Bunter, that was the most harrowing part of the flying-man's experiences!

"Jolly lucky he wasn't damaged!" said Johnny Bull. "When I spotted that parachute crumpled on the tree I thought he must have come a cropper."

"It seems that his face is cut, from what he said to Quelch," remarked Harry.

"Yes, he must have banged it somewhere to get all that mud on it," said Bob. "Well, this has rather mucked up our football match. Rotten for old Drake, but we'll jolly well make him stay over Saturday and play it out. But where's Drake?"

"Drake! Hasn't he come in!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Drake, old bean!" roared Bob Cherry. "Anybody seen Drake?"

Nobody, it seemed, had. Now that they remembered him, his friends found that he was missing.

Two or three fellows cut down to the gates and looked out into the road. But there was no sign of Drake returning.

"He must have stayed behind in the wood," said Harry Wharton, greatly puzzled. "I suppose he can't have gone for a walk in football clobber. Why the dickens hasn't he come in?"

"Goodness knows."

Considerably puzzled, the Famous Five went to the changing-room. Jack Drake did not come in, and where he

was, and what he was up to, was rather a mystery. Having changed, the chums of the Remove went down to the gates to wait for him.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter joined them at the gates a little later. "I say, what about tea?"

"Blow away, Bunter!"

"Well, I was going to ask you fellows and Drake to tea in my study," said the fat Owl. "But I find that my postal order hasn't come——"

"Roll away!"

"I say, I—I wonder if that airman chap would like a little company," said Bunter thoughtfully. "They've fixed him up in a room, and I saw Trotter taking in a tray of grub——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I say, there was ham and eggs, and cold beef, and a steak-and-kidney pie, and—and I think very likely he would like a little friendly company," argued Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he's had a wash, and got that mud off, but his face is fairly covered all over with sticking-plaster; he must have cut it a lot. I saw it when I watched Trotter taking in the grub—I mean I never watched Trotter taking in the grub; I just looked in out of sympathy——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Drake!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

A boyish figure came trotting up the road from Friardale, and Jack Drake, with a smiling face, joined his friends at the gate.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

### STARTLING!

JACK DRAKE grinned as he met the surprised stares of his friends. They could not help being surprised. Drake was still in football rig, as when he had rushed off the soccer field with the rest to the rescue of

the falling airman. Why he had remained out of gates for an hour, in keen wintry weather, in that rather sparse attire was a mystery to the chums of the Remove. But howsoever he had been occupied, it was clear that he had returned in the best of spirits. He was grinning cheerfully, and his eyes sparkled.

"Well, here you are again!" said Harry.

"Here I am again!" agreed Drake. "I'll cut in and change—it's a bit parky in this rig."

His friends walked with him to the dressing-room. They waited while he changed, perplexed not only by his unaccountable proceedings that afternoon, but by the happy satisfaction that beamed on his smiling face.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter's big spectacles gleamed in at the door. "I say, now Drake's got back, what about tea?"

"Shut up, Bunter! What on earth have you been up to, old bean?" asked Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I can make you out."

"I say, Drake must be hungry——"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"I've been rather busy since you fellows left me in Friardale Wood," explained Drake. "To tell you the truth, it was not wholly for the pleasure of seeing you chaps—and even Bunter—that I've blown in at Greyfriars this time. Ever heard of Julius Drew?"

"Blessed if I have," said Harry.

"I say, you fellows, I've seen that name in the papers," said Billy Bunter. "It's a bank-robber, or a hold-up man, or something or other."

"That's it!" said Drake. "Hidden somewhere in this jolly old locality, waiting for a chance to cut when the hunt slackens! Seven thousand

pounds in his pockets, of which he doesn't dare to spend a bob on grub—think of that, Bunter!"

"Poor chap!" said Bunter, with feeling. "Whatever he's done, that's awfully rough luck!"

"The awfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"And you're after him, Drake?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Sort of," admitted Drake.

"By gum! You've been tracking a jolly old bank-robber this afternoon!" exclaimed Bob.

"That's it," assented Drake. "See?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Harry blankly. "I suppose you mean that you picked up a clue while we were all looking after that airman—is that it?"

"You've got it!"

"Good egg!" said Johnny Bull. "Got the man?"

"Just going to, I hope."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob. "I suppose you're pretty sure, or you wouldn't be telling us about it now."

Jack Drake chuckled.

"You can bet your football boots on that!" he agreed. "And the jolly old Soccer ball along with them."

"I remember now," said Harry. "I've seen it in the papers! The man was seen near Lantham—but that's a week ago. How the thump did you pick it up that he was near Greyfriars?"

"Bunter told me!" chuckled Drake.

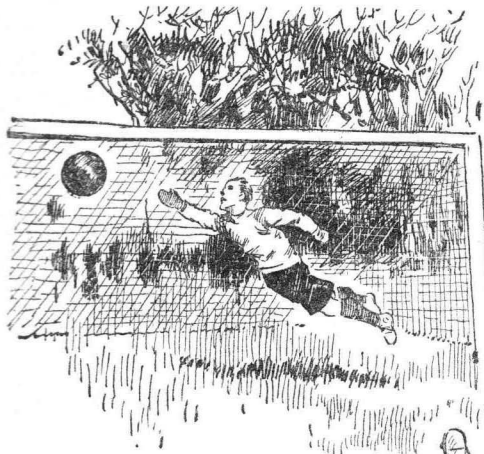
"Bunter!" yelled the juniors.

"A tramp who snatched a bag of doughnuts, and gobbled one of them as he ran, looked sort of hopeful, anyhow," grinned Drake. "You see, the man has been without food for a week, except what he could snoop here and there!"

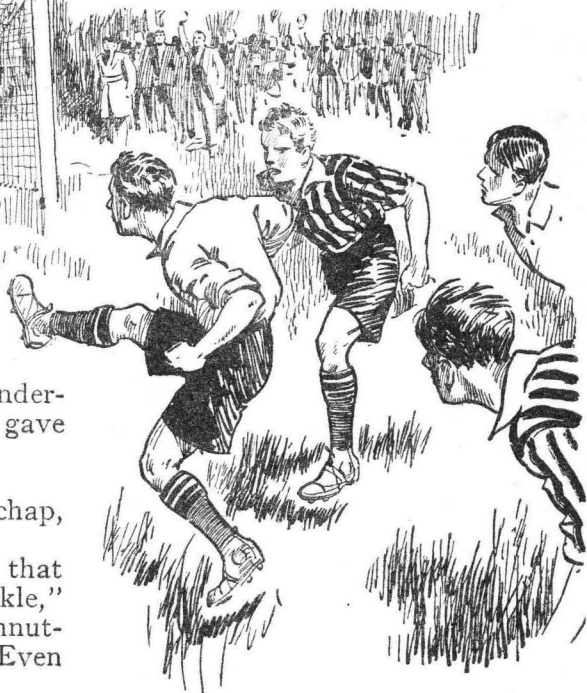
"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, crumbs! Mean to say—oh, lor'!" The fat Owl fairly gaped at the idea that it was a desperate hold-up man, wanted by the police, who had smacked his fat head, and snaffled that bag of doughnuts.

"You are, old bean!" said Drake. "Come on, you fellows." He had finished changing now, and he left the room with his friends. "I hope they've fed that jolly old airman! He must have been hungry."

"They have," said Harry.



"Goal!" In the first ten minutes of the game the leather went in—from the foot of the new recruit! "Good old Drake! Bravo!"



"You remember what a wonderfully accurate description Bunter gave of the man," grinned Drake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm rather an observant chap, you know," remarked Bunter.

"He mentioned one thing that mattered, with all his idiotic cackle," went on Drake. "The doughnut-snatcher had a beaky nose. Even Bunter couldn't miss that!"

"Oh, really, Drake——"

"Well, that's not much of a clue!" grinned Bob. "The airman chap has a beaky nose—it was all we could see of his features, with so much mud on his phiz—what are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Drake.

Bob stared at him.

"Well," he said, "if I've said something funny, I must be one of those jolly old unconscious humorists."

"Bunter's been watching the grub taken in——"

"Has he washed his face?"

"Eh? Yes, I suppose so!" said the captain of the Remove, staring. "Yes—Bunter's seen him——"

"Bunter sees everything, doesn't he?" grinned Drake. "I remember his jolly old ways. What has he put on his face since he washed it, Bunter? Sticking-plaster?"

"Yes," answered Bunter. "No end of it. He seems to have been cut all over the chivvy——"

"Look here, Drake, is that jolly old magic, or what?" asked Bob Cherry. "You couldn't have seen that the man's face was cut, under all that mud, when you saw him in the wood! How the thump did you know he had put anything on his face after he washed it?"

The Famous Five stared at Drake. He had not seen the airman since the Greyfriars fellows had brought him out of Friardale Wood. This seemed to them, as Bob put it, rather like magic.

"Well, I sort of guessed it would be sticking-plaster," said Drake, with a grin. "What else could he put on?"

"You knew his face was cut, then?"

"No; I knew it wasn't!"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Wandering in your mind, old chap?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The wanderfulness must be terrific."

Drake chuckled.

"I've got to see the man," he said.

"Take me along to his quarters, will you? I must see him before he leaves."

"He won't leave yet," said Harry. "I heard him ask Quelch if he could rest here for the remainder of the afternoon——"

"Yes, but it gets dark early."

"Eh! What? What's that got to do with it, ass?"

"He might prefer to leave after dark," explained Drake. "But it will be dark in an hour from now. Lead on, old bean—I want to see him."

"But I don't know whether you can, old chap!" said Harry Wharton, perplexed. "If he's resting——"

"I've got something to tell him," explained Drake. "There's a man coming here to see him—and he won't be long after me."

"Oh, I see!"

"Come on, old chap!" said Bunter. "I'll take you to him! I wonder if he's finished all that grub yet? There was lots and lots."

Jack Drake followed Billy Bunter, and the Famous Five followed Drake, more than a little mystified. They arrived at the door of the room that had been assigned to the airman. Drake tapped at the door, and it was opened by Mr. Quelch, who was there with the flying-man.

"What is it?" he asked. "You boys should not come here——"

"Drake has a message for the airman, sir," said Harry.

"Oh! In that case, you may come in, Drake."

Jack Drake entered, the other fellows remaining at the door. They looked across the room at the man, with considerable interest. The mud had been washed from his face; but it was, as Billy Bunter had said, covered all over with sticking-plaster. It was as difficult as ever to see what his features were like, except that he had an aquiline nose.

The remains of a meal—an extensive meal—were on the table. The man had, apparently, disposed of the whole of the large supply that Bunter had seen Trotter taking in. Obviously, he must have been very hungry.

"This lad has a message for you, sir," said Mr. Quelch courteously.

The man sat upright suddenly, his keen grey eyes glinting among the strips of sticking-plaster. He seemed startled by that simple announcement.

"A message—for me!"



Drake put his hands in his pockets and fumbled. His left hand came out, with an envelope in it. He stepped across to the man and held it out.

The airman stretched out a hand to take the envelope.

What happened next passed in a flash—so swiftly that the eye could hardly follow it. As Drake handed over the envelope with his left hand, and the airman took it, his right whipped from his pocket, with something in it that gleamed. With the same movement he flung himself on the man in the chair, and there was a sudden click!

Mr. Quelch gave a startled cry—echoed by the juniors at the doorway! In that split second Jack Drake had grabbed the wrists of the airman, dragged them together and snapped the handcuffs on. It was so unexpected and so swift that the man was taken utterly by surprise—as utterly as the Remove master and the Remove fellows!

For an instant he sat as if stunned! Then with a roar of rage, he leaped to his feet, wrenching madly at the handcuffs.

“Drake!” shrieked Mr. Quelch.

“Drake!” yelled the juniors.

“Oh, crikey!” gasped Billy Bunter his eyes nearly starting through his spectacles.

Drake smiled—grimly!

“Sorry to startle you, sir!” he said. “But the man carries an automatic—and I couldn’t give him a chance of using it! Your game’s up, Julius Drew!”

## THE NINTH CHAPTER

HOW IT WAS DONE!

“**B**UT how——” gasped Harry Wharton.

It was half an hour later—in No. 1 Study in the Remove. Drake was

ready for tea—Billy Bunter more than ready! The Famous Five, however, were not giving much thought to tea in the study for the moment.

They were in a state of almost dizzy amazement.

The man in the handcuffs had gone. Inspector Grimes had arrived from Courtfield not long after Drake. With great satisfaction, the inspector had taken the prisoner away in a taxi—and fellows who had seen him go, had seen that the sticking-plaster was no longer on his face—neither were any cuts revealed by its removal. That Ferrers Locke’s boy assistant had made no mistake was proved by the fact that Inspector Grimes had taken the man into official custody, and by the fact, now known, that seven thousand pounds in banknotes had been found on him, as well as the automatic that he had used, more than a week ago, in the hold-up at the Capital and Suburban Bank. But the chums of the Remove could not begin to understand how Drake had done it.

“How——” they all demanded together.

“I say, you fellows, I’ll cook the sosses——”

“Shut up, Bunter!” roared five voices.

“Oh, really, you fellows——”

“Now, look here, Drake, how——”

“I’ll tell you while Bunter cooks the sosses,” chuckled Drake. “Get on with it, old fat man.”

“What-ho!” said Bunter. And he got on with it. He was interested in the remarkable exploit of Ferrers Locke’s boy assistant, but not to the same extent, naturally, as he was interested in fried sausages!

“I suppose you had the blighter’s description,” said Bob. “But you couldn’t have recognised him with all that mud on his face——”

"That's why the mud was there, old bean!" Drake smiled. "You see, it was at least a quarter of an hour after that parachute fell that the first man arrived on the spot. That gave Drew time."

"You mean that he was——"

"After what happened to Bunter's doughnuts yesterday, I never doubted that he was somewhere around!" said Drake. "I went out for a walk this morning, with a picnic-basket in full view, in the hope of drawing him. I had no luck. But if he did not spot a schoolboy with a picnic-basket this morning, he could hardly fail to spot a falling plane, and an airman dropping in a parachute, if he was anywhere about. I fancy he marked the spot where the airmen fell, and ran for it."

"But why——"

"The man was desperate for a chance of escape—still more desperate for food," said Jack Drake. "I've no doubt that as soon as he saw the airman dropping he saw his chance. I didn't think of that at the time, of course—I was only thinking, like you fellows, of helping a fallen flying-man. But when I saw him——"

"We all saw him, and took him for the airman," said Nugent.

"You haven't worked with Ferrers Locke," smiled Drake. "From the way the parachute was crumpled on the tree, it looked as if the pilot had had a fall——"

"Yes, Johnny noticed that, but——"

"But he was unhurt," said Drake, "and his face was smothered with mud. Where did the mud come from?"

"Eh?"

"If he fell where the parachute fell—as the airman must have done—he fell on grass. You fellows did not look round for a muddy spot?"

"Nunno!"

"I did—and there was none! Our friend could not have collected all that mud on his face in falling and rolling over—he had collected it carefully, and smudged it over his face——"

"To avoid recognition, of course!" said Harry. "I see now."

"And his first request was for a sandwich," said Drake. "An airman might be hungry after an unexpectedly long flip, but there was no 'might' about it with Julius Drew—he may have had nothing for days except Bunter's doughnuts."

"But, if you knew——" gasped Bob.

Drake shook his head.

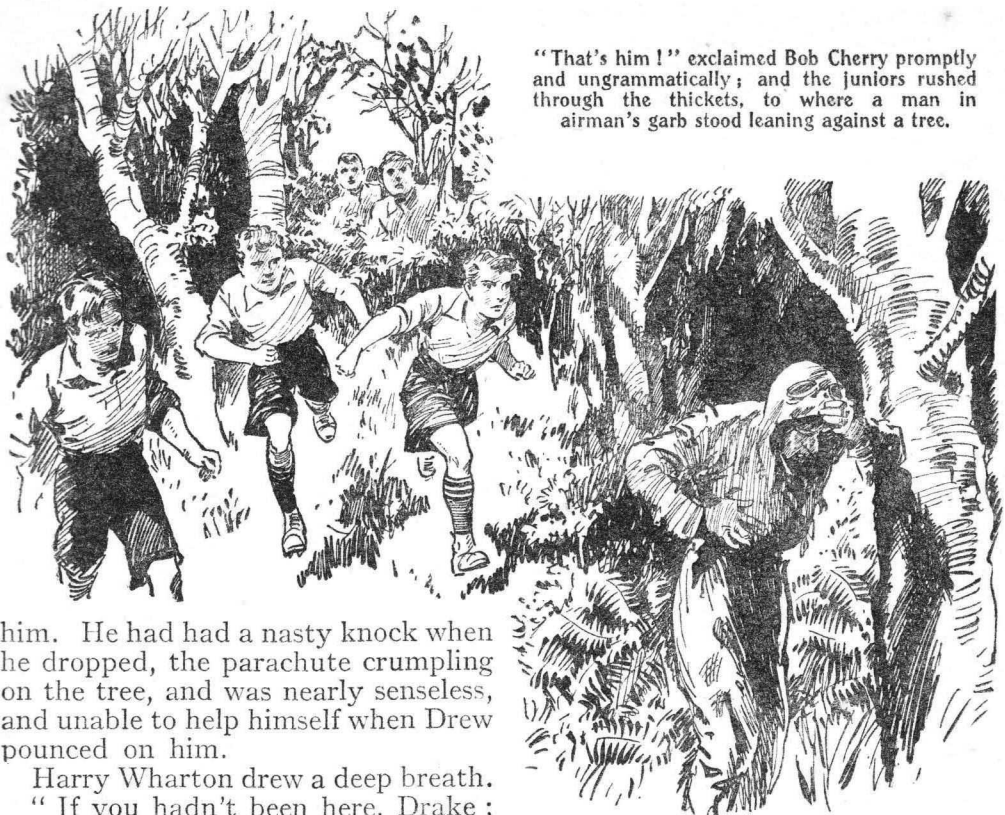
"I didn't know," he said. "If I'd known, I'd have got him then. I took him, at first, for an airman, same as you fellows did. Then I began to figure it out. By the time you walked him off I had it pretty clear in my mind—but I had to make sure. It was only theory so far. But if the theory was correct, that brute had pounced on the fallen airman immediately he fell, and got rid of him; overpowered him and got his clothes and outfit, and obviously the poor chap could not be very far away."

"You looked for him?"

"At once. Not only to get proof of my theory, but to help the poor chap without delay," explained Drake. "I was a quarter of an hour finding him—you fellows were back at Greyfriars with your man by that time! I found the flying-man, bound hand and foot, gagged, and crammed into a deep hollow under the roots of an old tree, hardly a hundred yards from the spot where you found that scoundrel in his outfit."

"The brute!" breathed Bob.

"A desperate brute," said Drake quietly. "You can bet that the flying-man was jolly glad when I got



"That's him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry promptly and ungrammatically; and the juniors rushed through the thickets, to where a man in airman's garb stood leaning against a tree.

him. He had had a nasty knock when he dropped, the parachute crumpling on the tree, and was nearly senseless, and unable to help himself when Drew pounced on him.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"If you hadn't been here, Drake; if you hadn't spotted the trick and found him——"

"He would have had a night in the wood to-night, with goodness knows what results!" said Drake. "As soon as I got him, of course, I knew who the man must be whom you had brought to the school. I cut into the village, sent Police-constable Tozer and a party to bring him in, and telephoned from the village post-office to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield. And then I walked home," added Drake, with a smile.

"And that's how you knew he'd have sticking-plaster on his face, after he'd washed it!" exclaimed Bob.

Jack Drake laughed.

"Well, he had to get a wash—he couldn't keep the mud on his face for

ever!" he said. "And as his description is pretty widely circulated, he had to understudy the shy violet, and not let his face be seen—and sticking-plaster was plausible in the circumstances, and a useful thing till he could get some better disguise."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But the sosses——"

"Shut up! Go on, Drake, old man."

"That's the lot," said Drake, smiling. "I fancy Drew's first idea was simply to get fixed up in the airman's rig, as a chance of breaking fresh country undetected; above all, of getting a meal somewhere without being arrested while he was scoffing it! Then he suddenly found himself

surrounded by forty or fifty Greyfriars men, swarming up to help the airman ! He called for help when he saw that the wood was swarming with fellows and he could not steal away unseen. And then, I've no doubt, he jumped at the chance of being taken in as an airman who had had a disaster—the chance of a square meal, which he wanted more than anything else—of a safe hiding-place till dark—and some sticking-plaster to put on his face instead of a daub of mud ! ”

“ And he would have pulled it off without a hitch if he'd only had Greyfriars fellows to deal with,” said Harry. “ We were all taken right in.”

“ And Drake—if he noticed Drake at all—he took for a Greyfriars fellow like the rest ! ” chuckled Bob. “ He didn't know that that particular Greyfriars fellow was Ferrers Locke's jolly old assistant ! ”

“ I say, you fellows——”

“ Shut up, Bunter ! ”

“ Shan't ! ” roared Bunter. “ I say, the sosses are done, and I'm hungry ; I mean, Drake's hungry.”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Well, I'm done,” said Drake, laughing, “ and if the sosses are done,

too, well then, let's have tea, what ? ”

And, to Billy Bunter's relief and satisfaction, they had it !

It was quite a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars.

Jack Drake, so long as he stayed, was the cynosure of all eyes at his old school.

Everybody was glad to hear that the airman, thanks to his prompt discovery by Drake, was little the worse for what had happened to him. Everybody was glad, too, that a desperate hold-up man was safe at last in the hands of the police. And everybody was glad, also, when the interrupted football match was played over again on Saturday, and Jack Drake kicked the winning goal for the Remove. Everybody was sorry when Jack Drake at last left to rejoin his chief in Baker Street—except Billy Bunter ! For Drake, perhaps as a reward for the doughnut clue, cashed Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order before he left, the fat Owl solemnly promising to send it on to Baker Street as soon as it arrived. But it never did !

THE



END