

LONG COMPLETE TALE OF SCHOOL, MYSTERY, AND ADVENTURE
IN THIS ISSUE!



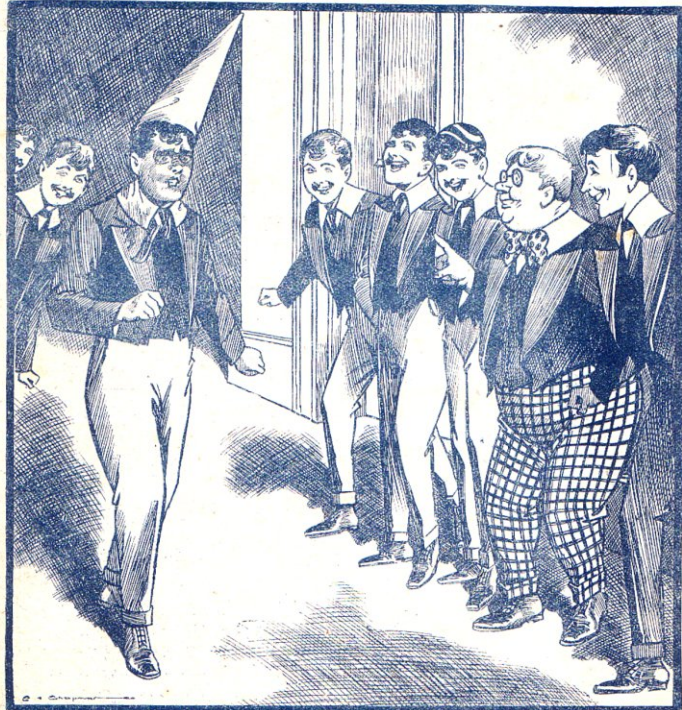
The Magnet Library

With which is incorporated
The Greyfriars Herald.

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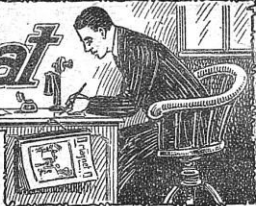
No. 688. Vol. XVIII.

April 15th, 1921.



A VICTIM OF THE SECRET SOCIETY! (An awkward moment for Johnny Bull, in the long complete School Tale inside.)

The Editor's Chat



Address all your letters to:
The Editor, "The Magnet Library,"
The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.
I am always pleased to hear from my chums.

FOR NEXT MONDAY.

Our next issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY, which will appear at all news-agents' shops next Monday morning, will contain a magnificent long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., and Billy Bunter, entitled:

"DEAF BUNTER!" By Frank Richards.

This is one of the funniest yarns we have ever had. Billy, the boy with ideas, gets busy on a scheme which, at first, works exceedingly well. He has pretty much his own way in everything he wants to do, and not a few fellows are surprised at the astonishing number of feeds the fat junior is invited to. Readers who want a good laugh, must order their copy of next Monday's MAGNET at once.

THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD" SUPPLEMENT.

Harry Wharton tells me that he has secured another magnificent, humorous story of the adventures of Terrora Shocks from "Peter Todd," and it is to be published in the next issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," which, as you all know, is the supplement to be found in the centre of the MAGNET LIBRARY every Monday morning.

There will also be some more interesting articles and stories from the pens of the Greyfriars boys; and, altogether, we are assured a splendid supplement.

"THE POPULAR."

Just a word about this week's issue of "The Popular," my chums. There are two very fine long complete stories, one of which is entitled, "At War with the Prefects," which tells of some stirring events in the Remove Form at Greyfriars. The second complete story is Jimmy Silver & Co. and is entitled, "The Test of Friendship," written by Owen Conquest, and all about Rookwood.

Perhaps the funniest feature ever compiled is included in the "Popular." I refer to

"BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY."

Readers of the MAGNET LIBRARY who read Billy's paper when I publish it in these pages cannot say it wasn't funny! And Billy, now that he has the assistance of Four Fat Subs—well, he's funnier than ever. In fact, he's a scream!

Then there is a new serial just starting—an amazing story of school and adventure in islandland, entitled, "The Daredevil Schoolboy."

When you have read this budget of reading matter, set your brains working and earn Five Shillings in the "Popular's" easy competition, which you will find set out in the Chat page.

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Correspondence.

William Griffin, 3, Post Office Yard, Pontefract, Yorks, would like to correspond with MAGNET readers.

J. Stuart Rae-Brown, 124, Farringdon Road, E.C., wishes to correspond with readers at home and abroad, aged 15-17.

C. H. Gibbons, care of Mr. E. C. Gibbons, Renmark, South Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, with a view to exchanging cards, papers, etc.

Miss Minnie James, 47, Morehead Street, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers outside Australia and New Zealand.

J. Holmes, 352, Toorongo Road, East Malvern, Victoria, Australia, would like to hear from readers for the purpose of exchanging English and Australian newspapers.

F. R. George, 15, Trinity Grove, Blackheath, S.E. 10, wishes to join football team in South London (age 17-18). He also wishes to hear of a Companion Papers Club. Will secretaries communicate?

The editor of "Nuts and Bolts," 4, Alfred Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham, would like readers of the MAGNET and the "Popular" to contribute to his magazine.

J. Butler, 20, Britannia Road, London, N. 1, wishes to hear from readers in North and North-East London.

Frank Davies, 112, Edge Lane, Liverpool, wishes to correspond with stamp collectors, and for magazine exchange.

Marcus Sollan, 16, Abercrombie Street, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to hear from readers in the United Kingdom, especially in Hertford.

Reginald Mack, 78, Manor Road, Rogby, wishes readers to know about the successful club he is running in the famous town. Sports of all kinds, chess, camping out, etc., are well looked after. This correspondent wants to see similar clubs started elsewhere.

T. Rice, 9, Princes Street, West Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, would like to correspond with readers anywhere.

Robert King, Claverton, 60, St. Mark's Road, Randwick, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in the British Isles. He wants to send them yarns of old Australia and to exchange stamps.

Aubrey Holmes, Box 3626, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers—Tottenham and Manchester especially.

R. Regan, 150, Clover Road, Welling, Kent, wishes to hear from readers interested in amateur journalism, as he is issuing a paper called the "Boys' Own." Contributions invited.

Football.

Matches wanted by Archel United; average age 13. Write W. Walton, 57, Archel Road, West Kensington, W. 14.

Cricket.

Players wanted for Thursday evening cricket-club in neighbourhood of Greenwich, Rotherhithe, New Cross, etc.; average age 15-16. W. Morrison, 38, Edward Street, Deptford, S.E. 8.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

It having come to my knowledge that a number of my readers have received a circular letter concerning a new publication, I should like it to be understood by all my chums, that I, as Editor of the Companion Papers, am not responsible for this letter. Since the issue of "Billy Bunter's Weekly," which is incorporated in "The Popular," no new additions have been made to the list of Companion Papers. As to the future—well, I plead guilty to having a number of new ideas under consideration, but my chums may rest assured that any new addition to our famous series will be announced in all the Companion Papers well in advance.

The full list of your Editor's publications at the present time is as follows: "The Boys' Friend," the MAGNET LIBRARY, the "Gem Library," the "Boys' Herald," the "Popular," "Chuckles," and the "Greyfriars Holiday Annual."

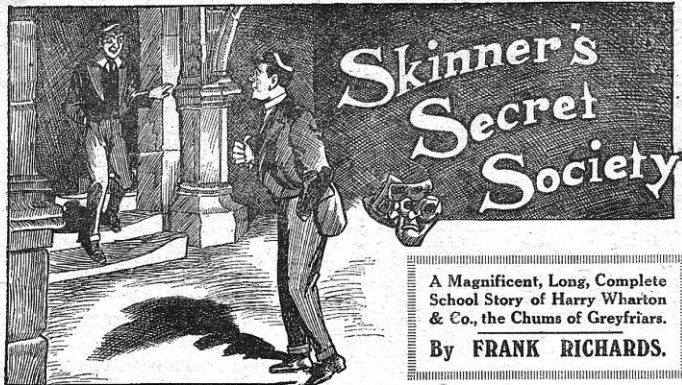
NEW READERS, NOTE!

Once again I must welcome hundreds of new chums who have taken to the MAGNET LIBRARY. And for their benefit I wish to write a short paragraph.

I want them all to understand that I am their friend—a friend who is willing to help them at any time with advice on any subject. If you want to know how to feed a guinea-pig, write and ask me. If you want to know how you can join the Merchant Service, I will tell you. I will use every means at my disposal to help you—if you just let me know what you want. If you don't want to know anything, write to me and tell me what you think of the MAGNET LIBRARY. Every letter is cordially welcomed, read carefully, and answered either in this page or by post.

I just ask this of you—if you like the MAGNET LIBRARY, tell your friends all about it, and get them to become readers. The more the merrier, you know!

Your Editor.



A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Very Mysterious!

LETTER for you, Bob!" Mark Linley, of the Remove, came into Study No. 1 and tossed the missive to his chum. The Famous Five had just come in from footer practice, and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, the joint owners of Study No. 1, had invited the other three to tea.

Bob Cherry glanced curiously at the note which Mark Linley had brought. It was addressed to himself in printed capitals, and there was no clue as to the sender.

"How did this come, Marky?" inquired Bob.

"Don't know. I found it on your desk in Study No. 13."

"It didn't come through the post, anyway," said Johnny Bull. "Must be from somebody at Greyfriars. Bolsover major's challenging you to a scrap, I expect."

"Or Bunter's paid back that five bob you lent him a couple of terms ago," said Frank Nugent, with a grin.

Bob Cherry ripped open the envelope and drew out a half-sheet of notepaper. Then he gave a violent start.

"My only aunt!" he ejaculated. "We seem to have some merry anarchists in the place. Just look at this, you fellows!"

The following grim message was printed in capital letters, and in red ink, upon the half-sheet of paper:

"ROBERT CHERRY, BEWARE! YOU ARE A MARKET MAN; ERE SUNDOWN YOU WILL FALL INTO OUR HANDS. THIS IS THE FIRST AND LAST WARNING YOU WILL RECEIVE.—B. B."

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at the strange document in astonishment.

Frank Nugent was the first to find his voice.

"This is a jape, of course!" he said. Bob Cherry looked grim.

"I don't care for japes of that sort," he said; "and it'll go hard with the giddy japer if I lay hands on him!"

"Hear, hear!" said Harry Wharton. "I loathe anonymous letters. I think all anonymous letter-writers deserve to be kicked!"

"Especially when they cover up their tracks by printing a message in capitals," said Mark Linley.

"The question is," said Johnny Bull, with a frown, "what does 'B. B.' stand for?"

The light of understanding came into Bob Cherry's eyes.

"It's Bunter, of course!" he exclaimed. "Billy Bunter!"

"My hat!"

"I say, you fellows—"

A fat face, adorned by a pair of spectacles, appeared in the doorway.

"Here's the fat load!" said Bob Cherry. "Bring him in, Marky!"

The Lancashire lad seized Billy Bunter by the scruff of the neck, and marched him into the study.

Billy Bunter protested volubly.

"Yow-ow-ow! Hands off, you factory cad! What h've I done? Why are you looking at me like that, Cherry?"

"I'll teach you to send me anonymous letters!" roared Bob. "Hand me a cricket-stump, somebody!"

Billy Bunter quaked with alarm.

"I haven't! I didn't! I never!" he screamed wildly. "I don't know what you're talking about, Cherry! I haven't been writing any ominous letters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Half a jiffy, Bob!" said Harry Wharton. "It's just possible that the porpoise is telling the truth for once. Look here, Bunter, are you prepared to swear—"

"Certainly not!" said the fat junior indignantly. "I'm too well-bred to do that sort of thing."

"Ass! Are you prepared to swear that you had no hand in the writing or the dispatch of this letter?"

And Harry Wharton held up the anonymous note for Bunter's inspection.

"Of course I had no hand in it!"

"But it's signed 'B. B.'"

"I can't help that. 'B. B.' stands for a score of things."

"Then you didn't write this letter yourself, and you've no idea who did?"

"No!"

"You swear that?"

"I swear it!"

Harry Wharton turned to his chums.

"It isn't often that one can believe Bunter," he said. "But I believe him now. If he'd had anything to do with this letter, he'd be sure to give himself away. Besides, Bunter couldn't print so neatly as this. The fellow who did was something of an artist."

"That's so," admitted Bob Cherry.

He put down the cricket-stump, while Mark Linley released the Owl of the Remove.

"I think you fellows ought to apologise for treating me like this!" said Billy Bunter. "It's shameful! It's scandalous! As if I went about writing ominous letters! The least you fellows can do, after wrongly accusing me, is to ask me to stay to tea!"

Frank Nugent picked up the remnants of a plum-cake.

"Take this and travel!" he growled.

Billy Bunter grabbed at the flying fragments of cake, and rolled out of the study, apparently well satisfied.

When he had gone, the juniors examined the anonymous letter in the hope of finding some clue as to the identity of the sender. They hoped to be able to trace the ownership of the notepaper and the envelope. But all their efforts proved futile.

"What do you make of it, Bob?" asked Wharton at length.

"I think it's merely a silly joke!" said Bob Cherry. "Somebody's trying to scare me. But it would take more than an anonymous letter to do that."

"You don't think you're going to fall into anybody's hands before sundown?"

"If I do, there will be ructions! I'll show 'B. B.' whoever he is, that I'm quite capable of looking after myself!"

So saying, Bob tucked the anonymous letter into his pocket and pitched into the buttered scones.

No further reference was made, during tea, to the subject of the mysterious

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note. A discussion on football drove it from the juniors' minds.

"We haven't a fixture for Saturday," said Harry Wharton. "What are we going to do about it?"

"I vote fully propose that we fix up a matchless encounter with Dick Trumper & Co.," said Hurree Singh.

"Good!" said Wharton. "The Courtfielders have been getting too big for their shoes lately. It's high time we put it across them on the football."

"I'll go over and see Trumper after tea," said Bob Cherry, "and fix things up."

"Tell him we mean to pulverise his rag-time eleven, and, what's more, we'll give them choice of ground," said Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry nodded, and when the meal was over he started off to Courtfield in the gathering dusk.

Harry Wharton and the others played chess, pending their chum's return.

An hour passed—two hours—and Bob Cherry had not put in an appearance.

The juniors began to look alarmed. "Where's the silly duffer got to?" exclaimed Wharton, glancing at his watch for the tenth time.

"P'raps he stayed in Courtfield, and went to the pictures," suggested Nugent.

"But he hasn't a late pass. I can't help thinking that—that something has happened to him."

"As a result of that anonymous letter, do you mean?" said Johnny Bull.

"Yes. We were inclined to pooh-pooh the whole bizney at first, but there might be something in it, after all. Anyway, Bob hasn't come back, and there's nothing to account for his absence, barring the anonymous letter."

"My hat!"

"You'll be saying he's been kidnapped next!" said Nugent.

"It's not unlikely."

When a further half-hour had expired, Harry Wharton's three chums came round to his way of thinking.

It was passing strange that Bob Cherry should have failed to put in an appearance. True, he might have chatted for half an hour or so with Dick Trumper; but he would not have remained at the County Council School for two hours and a half. It would only have taken a few minutes to fix up a football match.

The juniors were looking quite startled now.

"Better form a search-party," said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton nodded.

The four chums donned their caps and coats, and Mark Linley, Peter Todd, and Vernon-Smith consented to accompany them on their quest.

"Just like Bob Cherry, to mislay himself like this!" growled Peter Todd. "I expect we shall find him at the cinema."

"But he said he was coming straight back," said Wharton.

"Then he must have changed his mind."

"The first thing to do," said Vernon-Smith, "is to call at the Council School and ask if Bob's been there. If he hasn't, then we shall know that something must have happened to him on his way to Courtfield."

Harry Wharton looked very uneasy. A few hours before, he had been inclined to regard the anonymous letter as a joke. But it now opened up sinister possibilities.

Was it possible that, instead of being a practical joke, the threat had been meant seriously?

Wharton's worst fears were confirmed when the party reached Courtfield.

Dick Trumper had not seen Bob Cherry at all that evening, and inquiries showed that Bob had not called at the Council School.

The Greyfriars juniors visited the cinema, and the attendant informed them that Bob Cherry was not there. They tramped the whole length of Courtfield High Street, making inquiries, but they could learn nothing.

"This is a giddy poser, and no mistake!" said Peter Todd. "Bob seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth."

"What are we going to do now?" asked Nugent helplessly.

"We'd better go back to Greyfriars and report it," said Harry Wharton. "Let's cut back across the fields."

"It's pitch dark!" grumbled Johnny Bull.

"Never mind! We know every inch of the way!"

The party set off in silence. Even the most optimistic of them could not help thinking that there had been foul play.

Bob Cherry had set out with the intention of going to Courtfield, and he had never got there. Obviously, then, he must have been intercepted en route.

The juniors were proceeding along a footpath when skirted a dense copse, when Frank Nugent, who was walking in front with Harry Wharton, suddenly halted, and clutched his chum by the arm.

"Listen!" he muttered.

For a moment no sound was audible. And then came a faint but unmistakable cry from the heart of the copse.

"Help! Help!"

The juniors exchanged hurried glances. "That's Bob's voice!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather! Come on!"

And the juniors plunged into the copse.

Guided by Bob Cherry's shouts, they were not long in locating his whereabouts. When they came upon him, they uttered low exclamations of astonishment.

For Bob was securely bound by a length of rope to a tree!

The rope had been knotted so tightly that there had been no possible loophole of escape.

Bob Cherry drew a deep, almost a sobbing breath of relief as his chums came on the scene.

"Thank goodness!" he exclaimed. "I thought I was doomed to stay here all the blessed night!"

Mark Linley promptly drew out his penknife, and severed the bonds.

"How on earth did this happen, Bob?" he ejaculated.

"It happened suddenly, and without warning. I hadn't a ghost of a chance to make any resistance. I was tramping along the footpath, on the way to Courtfield, when I was attacked by a masked gang. They sprang out at me from the copse. Oh, yes, I know it sounds like an incident out of a Wild West story, but it's a fact. I was collared, and dragged through the copse, and tied to this tree."

"The rotters!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, clenching his hands. "But surely you know who they were, Bob?"

"I've just told you that they were masked—"

"Yes; but didn't you recognise their voices?"

"They didn't say a single word during the operations. They simply overpowered me, and fastened me to the tree, and made off."

"Did they go through your pockets?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"No."

"Then they couldn't have been common footpads. What was their motive in attacking you, I wonder?"

"Give it up!" said Bob Cherry, stretching his cramped limbs.

"This is the handiwork of the 'B.B.'—the merchants who sent you that anonymous letter, Bob," said Harry Wharton. "We shall have to make it our business to find out who and what they are."

"Hear, hear!"

"They must be taught that they can't wander round the country doing this rag-time stunt," said Johnny Bull. "Come on, you fellows, or we shall be late for looking-up."

On their way back to Greyfriars, the juniors formed all sorts of conjectures as to who Bob Cherry's assailants were. But they could find no satisfactory solution to the problem. The "B.B." sounded like a secret society of some sort.

But the objects of the society, and the names of its members, were wrapped in mystery.

And Harry Wharton & Co., as they tramped across the fields, resolved to leave no stone unturned in their efforts to bring Bob Cherry's assailants to book.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Another Victim!

"YOU'RE in luck, Wharton!" Jack Drake, the boy from St. Winifred's, nodded towards the post-rack in the hall.

Harry Wharton had just come downstairs with his chums, and they had gone into the hall to collect their correspondence before going out into the bright morning sunshine.

There were more than a score of letters for the captain of the Remove. The majority of them were from readers of the "Greyfriars Herald," and they had been forwarded to Wharton by the editor of the Companion Papers.

Wharton opened them one by one, smiling and frowning alternately at the numerous queries put to him by his correspondents.

"Anything exciting, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Here's a letter from a fellow signing himself 'Straight Left,'" said Wharton. "He says he's coming down to Greyfriars to wipe up the floor with our Fighting Editor."

"He's welcome to try!" said Bob warmly.

"And here's a request from a girl reader for cabinet photographs of the Famous Five, and of Jack Drake and Dennis Carr."

"A afraid her Indyship will be unlucky," chuckled Jack Drake. "I haven't had my chivvy taken for months, and I don't intend to!"

"I should think not!" said Johnny Bull, in his blunt way. "With a face like yours—"

"Eh? What's the matter with my face?"

"It's enough to give any girl a nightmare!"

"Why, you—you—"

Jack Drake was on the point of squaring up to Johnny Bull, when Harry Wharton exploded a bombshell.

"My only aunt!" he ejaculated. "I've got a similar sort of letter to the one you had yesterday, Bob—from the 'B.B.'"

"Great pip!"

"Has it come through the post?" asked Nugent.

"No; it's unstamped."

"What does it say?" asked Jack Drake curiously.



Guided by Bob Cherry's shouts, Harry Wharton & Co. soon located him. They uttered exclamations of astonishment, when, on emerging from the thicket, they saw their lost chum secured to a tree trunk. "Thank goodness you have come," Bob Cherry muttered. (See Chapter 1.)

Harry Wharton held up the note for inspection.

The message was in printed capitals, and ran as follows:

"HARRY WHARTON.—BEWARE! IT IS YOUR TURN NEXT. WITHIN THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS YOU WILL FALL INTO THE HANDS OF

"THE B.B."

Harry Wharton frowned.

"This is getting beyond a joke," he said.

"Absolutely!"

"You'd better not budge out of gates to-day, Harry," said Frank Nugent.

"Rats! I'm not going in fear of my life just because some lunatic chooses to send me a letter like this!"

"Well, if you go out of gates, we'll come with you, and form a strong body-guard," said Bob Cherry.

"Look here, I'm not frightened—"

"We know that, old scout. At the same time, there's no sense in running into danger. And I might mention that those rotters who attacked me last night didn't handle me any too gently."

Harry Wharton clenched his hands.

"If they try any of their tricks on me, they'll find they've woken up the wrong passenger!" he said grimly.

The breakfast-gong put an end to the juniors' discussion.

The arrival of the anonymous letter did not affect Harry Wharton's appetite. He seemed to be indifferent to the threats of the mysterious "B.B." But his indifference was only assumed. He was wary and watchful, and prepared for all eventualities.

The morning passed without incident.

When lessons were over Harry Wharton

went down to the village to collect his football-boots, which had been left for repair.

Wharton wanted to go alone, but a whole crowd of juniors insisted upon accompanying him. Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, Peter Todd, Mark Linley, Jack Drake, Vernon-Smith, and Dennis Carr—all of them tramped down to the village with their leader; and it would have gone hard with any would-be kidnapers had they attempted to molest Wharton just then.

The juniors were on the alert at every moment. But nothing happened. No suspicious persons were encountered; no attempt was made to waylay the captain of the Remove.

Wherever Harry Wharton went that day he was accompanied by a very sturdy and vigilant body-guard. He was exasperated, instead of grateful, at being guarded so jealously, and he told his followers in language more emphatic than polite that their services were not required. But they stuck to him like limpets.

The day wore on without incident. The afternoon merged into evening, and Harry Wharton was still safe and unharmed.

When locking-up time arrived it was generally agreed that the "B.B.," whoever they might be, had abandoned their project.

Harry Wharton remained in his study. He had obtained permission from Mr. Quelch to stay up late, for he had all his correspondence to attend to and his "Editorial" to write.

As a precaution against possible invasion, Wharton locked the door. He was not in any way intimidated by the threats of the "B.B.," but he had im-

portant work to do, and he did not wish to be disturbed.

Boom!

The first stroke of ten sounded from the clock-tower.

Greyfriars, with the exception of the masters and the prefects on duty, had retired for the night. And a stillness, as of some brooding fate, hung over the ancient building.

Harry Wharton was glad that everything was quiet. He always did his best work under these conditions.

The junior's pen travelled over the paper at express speed. Letter after letter was written and sealed, and by eleven o'clock Wharton had dealt with all outstanding correspondence.

"I've still got my 'Editorial' to write," he muttered. "Strikes me I shall be here till midnight. Never mind! That's the penalty of being an editor."

He rose to his feet with a yawn and lighted the spirit-stove, with a view to making himself some coffee. The beverage refreshed and stimulated him, and he tackled his "Editorial" with enthusiasm.

He was seated with his back to the window, and so absorbed was he in his task that he failed to hear a creaking sound which came from that direction.

The lower part of the window was cautiously raised, and a couple of masked faces peered into the study.

The masks were of the hideous variety, as worn on Guy Fawkes nights, and Harry Wharton would certainly have been startled had he seen those two faces peering in at him through the window.

Presently the junior paused, with uplifted pen. He had heard no sound, and yet he had a strange premonition that something was about to happen. He turned his head; and as he did so the

wearers of the masks sprang upon him from behind and pinned him to his chair.

"Harry Wharton gave a shout which must have echoed through the building.

"Silence the brat!" came a deep, unfamiliar voice.

And a gag was thrust into the junior's mouth.

Wharton struggled wildly, but he was as a baby in the strong grasp of his captors. He caught a glimpse of them, and he saw that they wore long black cloaks and grotesque masks. But he hadn't the foggiest notion who they were.

He struggled until he was utterly spent; and then he found himself being bound to his chair. Strong cords were fastened around his legs and body, and he was entirely helpless.

During the operation of binding their victim to the chair neither of the two assailants spoke.

Having made Harry Wharton secure, they stepped back a pace and surveyed their handiwork; and two pairs of mocking eyes glinted at Wharton through the slits in the masks.

The light was left burning, and the two mysterious individuals clambered through the window and dropped down into the Close.

"Cowards!"

Wharton tried to frame the word, but his efforts resulted in a faint mumble.

The captive wriggled and writhed in his bonds, but all to no purpose. The members of the "B. B." had been nothing if not thorough.

For nearly an hour Harry Wharton remained bound to his chair. He twisted and turned, and tried to kick or turn, and he went crashing to the floor.

For a moment he lay dazed. And then came the welcome sound of footsteps. They halted outside the door of Study No. 1, and somebody tried the handle.

Harry Wharton uttered a muffled exclamation of annoyance. He remembered that he had locked the door before settling down to work.

"Wharton, are you within? Pray open this door!"

It was the voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

An inarticulate mumble was the only response Mr. Quelch got to his command.

"Do you hear me, Wharton? I insist upon entering this study!"

"Mummm!"

Wharton nearly choked in his endeavour to make himself understood.

"I am waiting, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Why do you not answer me? Unlock this door immediately!"

By a herculean effort Harry Wharton managed to wrench one of his arms free. Then he pulled the gag out of his mouth, and, still fastened to the chair, he rolled over and over until he reached the door. He turned the key, and the Remove-master entered.

To say that Mr. Quelch was astonished was to put it mildly. He stood blinking at Harry Wharton in utter amazement.

"Why, bless my soul! What ever has happened, Wharton? Why are you grovelling on the floor in that ridiculous manner? And how came you to be fastened to a chair?"

"I was attacked, sir!" said Wharton breathlessly.

"Attacked! By whom?"

"A couple of masked men, sir. They came in through the window, and took me by surprise."

"Wharton!"

"I know it sounds like a fairy-tale, sir, but it's a fact. I wonder you didn't hear me when I shouted for help."

"Now you mention it, I fancied I heard a shout at about eleven o'clock; but I

could not be certain," said Mr. Quelch. "But come! Let me liberate you from your unfortunate plight."

By means of a penknife Mr. Quelch freed the junior's legs and the arm that was still pinioned to the chair. And Harry Wharton tottered to his feet.

"Have you any idea of the identity of the scoundrels who attacked you in such a dastardly manner?" asked Mr. Quelch.

Wharton shook his head.

"They were masked, and they wore black cloaks, sir," he said. "But they didn't say a word, and I've no idea who they were."

"Did they take anything from the study?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked thoughtful.

"Had you received any intimation that this was going to happen, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir. I had an anonymous letter this morning."

"Ah!"

"Here it is, sir."

And Wharton produced the letter from his pocket and passed it to Mr. Quelch.

"B. B." murmured the Remove-master. "Can you suggest what those letters stand for, Wharton?"

"No, sir. We've made all sorts of guesses, but we're still in the dark."

For some moments Mr. Quelch was silent.

"I can only conclude," he said at length, "that this is a practical joke on the part of some of your Form-fellows."

"I should hardly think so, sir. The fellows who attacked me were too big to belong to the Remove."

"I'm! Well, it is inconceivable that any members of the senior Forms should so far forget themselves as to do this sort of thing."

"I think it must be somebody from outside the school, sir—some gang of rascals."

"That is quite probable. I will make the fullest investigation into this matter to-morrow. Meanwhile, I will accompany you to your dormitory, Wharton, and ascertain if all the boys are in bed."

When master and junior entered the Remove dormitory together they found that everything was as usual.

Every bed was occupied, and Billy Bunter's trumpet-like snore reverberated through the room.

"Everything appears to be in order," murmured Mr. Quelch. "This is a very mysterious and baffling business, but I will look into it in the morning. Good-night, Wharton!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Mr. Quelch retired, and Harry Wharton undressed and got into bed without disturbing his chums.

He lay awake far into the night, trying to fathom the mystery. But it remained as much a mystery as ever, and at last Harry Wharton fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Fresh Outrage!

WHEREFORE that worried frown, Harry?

It was Bob Cherry who asked the question.

The rising-bell had sounded, and as he got out of bed Harry Wharton looked in anything but an angelic mood.

"The 'B.B.' have been on the war-path again," he said, in reply to Bob Cherry's question.

"Great pip! What's the latest?"

"I stayed up late last night, answering letters and writing my editorial for the 'Herald,' and a couple of masked hoodlums clambered through the study window and pounced upon me," explained Wharton.

Instantly the dormitory was in a buzz. "Do you mean to say that they captured you?" exclaimed Dennis Carr.

"Yes, and tied me to my chair."

"My hat!"

"A fellow like you, who prides himself on being an expert fighting-man, ought to have wiped up the floor with them," said Skinner, with a sneer.

"A fat lot of chance I had to defend myself!" growled Wharton. "They were on me in a flash. I struggled like fury, but it was no use."

"Why didn't you sing out for help?" asked Nugent.

"I did, and then one of the rotters stuffed a gag into my mouth."

"You say these fellows were masked?" said Bolsover major.

"Yes."

"What sort of togs were they wearing?"

"They had black cloaks on, and their chivvies were hideous!"

Harry Wharton shuddered at the recollection of those mocking eyes which had glowered at him through the slits in the masks.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "Wharton's having us on toast, you know!—I don't believe a word he says. He's awfully good at telling the tale, but he can't pull the wool over my eyes! He, he, he!"

Harry Wharton strode across to the bed in which Billy Bunter lay, and threw back the bedclothes. Then he seized the Owl of the Remove by the collar of his pyjamas, and heaved him out on to the floor.

Bump!

"Yaroooonh!" roared Bunter. "You've broken my glasses, you beast!"

"I'll break a few more things, if you accuse me of romancing!" said Wharton grimly. "Now, then, are you prepared to believe me or not?"

Wharton accompanied the words by a series of violent shakings.

"Ow-ow-ow! Of course I b-b-believe you! I b-b-believe you all along!"

Yerked out Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton released the Owl of the Remove and started to dress.

"We live in stirring times, and no mistake!" said Jack Drake. "Who rescued you, Wharton?"

"Quickly. He says he's going to look into the matter to-day; but he's not likely to discover much. The members of the 'B.B.' seem to cover up their tracks pretty well."

"Wonder who'll be the next victim?" said Bob Cherry.

Even as Bob spoke there was a startled exclamation from Johnny Bull.

"My only aunt!"

"What's up, Johnny?" asked Wharton.

"Look here! I've just found this under my pillow!"

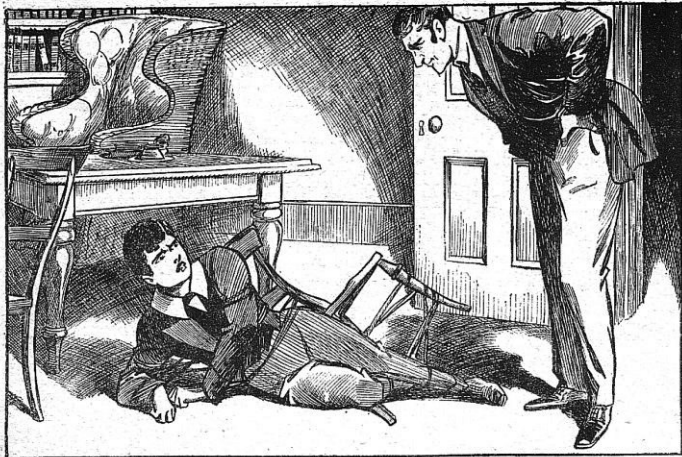
And Johnny Bull displayed to the astonished eyes of his chums a letter from the mysterious "B.B." gang. It was worded in practically the same way as the communications which had reached Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton.

"JOHN BULL—BEWARE! BEFORE THE DAY IS OUT YOU WILL BE CAPTURED AND DEALT WITH IN THE SAME MANNER AS YOUR PALS. THE B.B."

These anonymous letters were now getting quite familiar. Johnny Bull was the third junior to receive one, and the curious part about it was that the missive had been placed under his pillow.

Who had placed it there?

"This is the absolute limit!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I told Quelch last night that I believed this gang consisted of fellows outside the



Mr. Quelch turned the key and entered the study. He stood blinking down at Harry Wharton in utter amazement. "Why are you grovelling on the floor in that manner, Wharton! And how came you to be tied up like this?" "I was attacked by two masked men who jumped in through the window!" replied the Remove captain. (See Chapter 2.)

school. But I've changed my mind now. Somebody at Greyfriars must have smuggled the letter under Johnny's pillow."

"Somebody in this very dorm, most likely," said Vernon-Smith.

And he darted a searching glance at Skinner, who was humming a merry tune. The cad of the Remove looked in no way uneasy, nor did he seem to have any knowledge of the affair.

Johnny Bull tore the anonymous letter into fragments.

"The 'B.B.' will get precious little change out of me!" he declared grimly.

"That's what Wharton said," remarked Jack Drake. "But he went through the hoop, all the same."

"Wharton wasn't vary enough," said Johnny Bull. "He ought to have been on his guard. I'm prepared to wager a bag of jam-tarts that I go through the day without a scratch."

"I'll take you," said Skinner promptly.

Johnny Bull nodded.

"I fancy I know how to take care of myself," he said.

"Wharton fancied the same thing," chuckled Bolsover major, "but he didn't escape. The 'B.B.' were too smart for him."

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "I believe 'B.B.' stands for 'Bully Bolsover'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better make up your mind that it stands for nothing of the sort," growled Bolsover, "or you'll get badly luffed."

"Ahem! I—I meant 'Bully Bulstrode' slammered Bunter."

"What!" roared Bulstrode.

"Oh, crums! I—I didn't know you were there, Bulstrode, old chap! On consideration, I should say that 'B.B.' stands for the Boys' Brigade!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There was great excitement in the Remove Form that morning, and many lively discussions concerning the activities of the unknown gang.

Mr. Quelch made reference to the subject before morning lessons commenced.

"I regret to announce, my boys," he said, "that a serious outrage occurred late last night. I expect Wharton has already told you of his experiences. There appears to be some sort of a gang at work, and I wish you all to be very cautious and careful in your movements. I trust that no one here has received an anonymous communication this morning!"

Johnny Bull rose in his place.

Mr. Quelch looked startled.

"You have received an anonymous letter, Bull?"

"Yes, sir. I found it under my pillow."

"Kindly let me see it."

Johnny Bull handed over the letter, and Mr. Quelch examined it carefully.

"I cannot help thinking that this is the work of a practical joker," he said, at length. "It is improbable that any serious measures are contemplated. The idea seems to be to frighten the recipients of these letters."

"I can assure you that I'm not frightened, sir," said Johnny Bull stoutly.

"I quite believe you, Bull. You are not the sort of boy to be intimidated by an anonymous threat. At the same time, I advise you to be very careful. I do not wish you to go out of gates at all to-day."

"Very well, sir."

"And if anything untoward should happen, you will report the circumstances to me."

Johnny Bull nodded and sat down,

and morning lessons proceeded. But it was difficult for the juniors to concentrate on their Form-work. Their minds were full of recent happenings, and of the possibility of future outrages.

Even in the Form-room, surrounded by his schoolfellows, Johnny Bull remained watchful and alert.

It seemed next door to impossible that an attack would be made upon him in class. But Johnny was prepared for any emergency.

The morning passed uneventfully.

During the interval before dinner, Johnny Bull played footer in the Close with his chums, and when dinner was over he played chess in the junior Common-room, with Hurree Singh. And all the time he was on the look-out, fully prepared for a sudden attack to be made upon him, and equally prepared to resist the attack when it came.

But nothing happened. It seemed that the members of the "B.B." preferred to carry on their operations in the evening. It had been late in the day when Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton had been attacked, and it appeared as if no attempt would be made to capture Johnny Bull until darkness had set in.

Afternoon lessons over, Johnny went to his study and stayed there. He had promised Mr. Quelch that he would not go out of gates, and he decided that the best thing to do would be to write a long letter to his Australian uncle.

"I've neglected uncle for weeks," he reflected, "and I'll make up for lost time."

It took Johnny nearly an hour to cover two sheets of notepaper, partly because he was naturally a slow writer, and partly because he found it necessary to keep an eye on the door and window. He recalled Harry Wharton's overnight.

experience, and he didn't want to be caught napping in the same way.

Presently the door opened, and Johnny half-rose to his feet.

But no masked intruders entered. It was Squiff who came into the study, accompanied by Fisher T. Fish.

"Hallo, Johnny!" said Squiff cheerfully. "Still alive and kicking—what?"

Johnny Bull nodded.

"The 'B.B.' have given me a wide berth, so far," he said.

"Guess it's time we had tea," said Fisher T. Fish. "You can shift that writing-pad, Johnny, and finish your letter afterwards."

Quite a sumptuous repast was set out on the table, for Study No. 14 were in funds.

Johnny Bull sat with a hearty appetite, and the manner in which he chatted with his study-mates clearly showed that the "B. B." had no terrors for him.

Squiff and Fish remained in the study after tea. They pointed out that Johnny Bull might require a bodyguard.

Johnny politely told them to go, and eat cake, and to go and chop chips; but they insisted upon remaining, though Fisher T. Fish would probably have fled had a masked face suddenly appeared at the window.

Johnny Bull resumed his letter-writing, and the epistle was finished by pre-ptime. He sealed and stamped it, and rose to his feet.

"Whither bound, Johnny?" asked Squiff.

"I'm going to catch the last collection."

"You'll catch a sandbag on your napper if you start wandering about in the dark. Better get Trotter to post your letter."

"Rais! It's only a stone's throw from here to the pillar-box, and I shall have my wits about me. If anybody starts any hanky-panky they'll find that I can hit straight from the shoulder!"

So saying, Johnny Bull quitted the study.

It was intensely dark in the Close, and the junior walked slowly and with caution. He was quite prepared for someone to leap out at him from the shadows.

He reached the pillar-box without mishap, and posted his letter. He was in the act of turning away when there was a sudden rush of footsteps, and a heavy hand descended upon the junior's shoulder.

Johnny Bull wheeled round in a flash. Dark though it was, he could discern a burly figure, clad in a long black cloak and wearing a mask.

Summoning all his strength, Johnny Bull shot out his left. And his masked assailant reeled back with a muttered imprecation. The blow had caught him squarely on the nose.

"Come on, you rotter!" roared Johnny angrily. "If you want a scrap you shall have one! And, what's more, I don't mean to let you get away until I've found out who you are!"

The burly individual in the mask made a surprisingly rapid recovery. He sprang at Johnny Bull like a panther, and the junior staggered under an avalanche of blows. They were heavy blows, too, with plenty of power behind them.

Johnny Bull fought gamely, but he knew that he had met his master.

Burly though Johnny was, his opponent was even more so.

With his back to the pillar-box, the Removite offered a stout resistance. But he felt that he was being overpowered—that it would only be a matter of moments before he was knocked out.

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He would have shouted for help, but he needed all his breath in coping with the hurricane attack of his opponent.

Just as Johnny was wondering how much longer he could last out another masked figure loomed up in the darkness.

Johnny Bull was in despair now. With the odds at two to one against him, he knew he was beaten.

The end came shortly afterwards. Johnny received a smashing jolt to the jaw, and he collapsed in a heap on the flagstones, with all the fight knocked out of him.

For a moment he lay gasping at the feet of his assailants, whose mocking laughter gounded him to fury. But he was too far spent to resume the struggle.

He suffered himself to be dragged away in the direction of the elms.

"What are you going to do with me, you rotters?" he panted.

There was no reply. But the intentions of Johnny Bull's captors were soon apparent.

A length of rope was produced, and Johnny was securely fastened to one of the trees, in the same manner as Bob Cherry had been secured a couple of nights previously.

But Johnny's captors did not rest content with this. One of them disappeared, returning inside two minutes with a tin of red paint. He then proceeded to adorn Johnny Bull's countenance, laying on the paint with a liberal brush.

The junior spluttered and fumed and strove to wrench himself free, but in vain.

"You cads! Oh, you cads! You'll suffer for this!" he panted.

Johnny Bull's countenance speedily resembled that of a Red Indian. And when the painting was finished a fool's cap was produced and stuck on Johnny's head, giving him a most ludicrous appearance.

Then, with a triumphant chuckle, the two members of the gang turned away, and were soon swallowed up in the darkness.

Johnny Bull was almost beside himself with rage and chagrin. He had openly boasted that he would not fall a victim to the mysterious "B. B." gang. Yet here he was, bound and helpless, within sight of the school building!

"I've lost my wager with Skinner!" he muttered. "And I sha'n't feel like looking anybody in the face after this!"

He shouted for help; but there was a strong gale blowing, and his voice was drowned by the elements.

After about half an hour, however, Johnny's persistent shouts were heard by Gosling, the porter, as he shuffled out of his lodge to lock the gates.

"My hero!" ejaculated Gosling, stopping short in astonishment.

"Help! Rescue!"

Gosling made his way in the direction of the sound, and he nearly fell down on catching sight of a red-faced individual, straining at his bonds, and with a dunce's cap perched on his head.

"Quick, Gossy!" panted Johnny Bull. "Get me out of this fix, for goodness' sake!"

"Master Bull!" gasped Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—who done this trick?"

"I'd give a fiver to know!" growled Johnny. "Buck up and untie these confounded knots!"

Gosling set to work to liberate the junior, and Johnny Bull, with a gruff word of thanks, made his way into the building.

He hoped to get to the nearest bathroom without being seen, and with this object in view he dashed along the passage, without having removed the fool's cap from his head.

Suddenly the door of Study No. 14 opened, and Squiff and Fisher T. Fish came out.

"Why, here he is!" exclaimed Squiff. "Painted like an Indian chief, too! What's happened, Johnny? We've been hunting for you everywhere!"

"Pity you didn't hunt in the Close!" growled Johnny Bull. "I've been there all the time, tied to a blessed elm-tree!"

"My hat!"

"I guess I've never seen such a queer-looking guy!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "I s'orter calculate that the 'B. B.' are responsible for this!"

"Is that so, Johnny?" asked Squiff.

"Yes!"

"But you vowed they'd never collar you—"

"I put up the best fight I knew," said Johnny Bull. "I dotted one of the rotters on the nose, and—"

Johnny Bull was interrupted by a sudden roar of laughter.

A crowd of juniors, headed by Skinner, came along the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who on earth is it?"

"Must be the Wild Man from Borneo!"

"Don't go near him!" warned Skinner. "He ought to have a placard stuck on him—'Wet paint!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull clenched his hands.

"Buzz off, you cackling idiots!" he roared.

"I'll trouble you for a bag of jam-tarts," said Skinner calmly. "I've won my wager."

"Bless your wagger!" growled Johnny Bull.

And he elbowed his way through the grinning throng and headed for the bathroom.

Before he reached his objective, however, Johnny had the misfortune to come face to face with Mr. Quech.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Removite-master, in amazement. "Who—what— Why, it is Bull! How did you get into that disgraceful state, boy?"

"I was collared by that gang, sir—"

"Dear me! I warned you this morning to be very careful, Bull."

"So I was, sir. I went out into the Close to post a letter, and I had my wits about me the whole time. But I was no match for the fellow who attacked me. His fists were like battering-rams!"

"Who was he?" asked Mr. Quech.

"I've no idea, sir. He was masked, and he wore a cloak. I stood up to him for some time, and then he was joined by another hoodlum. They dragged me through the Close, tied me to one of the elms, and painted my face, sir."

"This—is this outrageous!" gasped Mr. Quech. "You are, I believe, the third boy to be attacked by this mysterious organisation. Unless the authors of these outrages are speedily brought to book, there is no knowing what might happen! Why, even the masters might be molested!"

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised, sir."

"Well, you had better go and make yourself presentable, Bull. I shall mention this matter to Dr. Locke, and steps will be taken to discover the culprits. If it should transpire that they belong to this school things will go hard with them!"

And Mr. Quech swept away with rustling gown; while Johnny Bull, feeling very sore physically and mentally, limped away to the bath-room to remove all traces of the outrage.

(Continued on page 9.)

The Greyfriars HERALD

Supplement No. 16.

April 16th, 1921.



The Staff



Skinner Squashed.

Skinner of the Remove has been responsible for a big upheaval this week. He called a special meeting in the Rag and declared that I was not a fit and proper person to control the "Greyfriars Herald." Bob Cherry asked him who was, and he promptly replied, "Me!" It appears that Skinner resents the various stories and articles which have recently been written about him, and he did his best to stir up strife, and to get the Remove to elect a new editor. He proposed himself, and Stott seconded the proposal. But that was as far as it got, for at that point the audience waded in and swept Skinner off his perch. They then proceeded to wipe up the floor of the Rag with him.

I have no sympathy with the mischief-making end, and he got no more than he deserved.

Bolover Biffed!

The next fellow with a grievance was Bolover major, who came along to the

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

editorial sanctum and demanded a job on the staff. Demanded, if you please! He declared he would make a ripping Fighting Editor—far better than Bob Cherry—so I allowed this to be put to the test by letting Bob loose on Bolsy! The upshot of it was that Bolover went out of the study a jolly sight quicker than he came in; and Rover, the office mottif, was at hand to speed the parting guest!

Coker Collared!

It has been an exciting week. Coker of the Fifth thought he would be rendering a great service to humanity by wrecking the editorial sanctum. So he wrecked it! When we discovered the damage, we thought we

should be rendering a great service to humanity by wrecking Coker. So we wrecked him! He was made to run the gauntlet at the hands of the Remove, and I venture to think it will be a long time before he does any more study-wrecking!

Still Going Great Guns!

Meanwhile, the "Herald" is forging merrily ahead, and if my chums' letters are any criterion, our stories and articles are better than ever! Are you doing your best to popularise our little supplement, and to obtain new readers? You are? That's the style! May you never be given cause to shakeen your efforts!

Harry Wharton.

COKERISMS!

By Horace Coker.

"COKER IS A KOMIC KARD!" Such is the motto which has been skrawled across the looking-glass in my study. I suppose this is the work of some cheeky Remove kid. He uses how to spell "komic" and "kard" allrite, but he has yet to learn that their is only one "k" in "Coker"!

I am thinking of bringing an action for libel against the yung bratt who wrote those words. I shall also bring a libel action against Mr. Frank Richards for making nasty remarks in the "Magnet" Library about my personal appearance. He says, "Coker's face was a study!"

We have had several eggalling trips lately on my motor-bike. I have not yet lost my head; and as for Potter and Grenc, they are still alive to tell the tall!

Has any reader got a raser he would like to lend me? I keep on getting hares on my upper lip, and I find it difficult to remove them with an ordinary pen-knife!

That kweer fello Blundell is still kaptin of the Fifth. I wonder when the fellows will realize that Mr. Horace Coker, would make a kool and kollected kaptin!

The krickel season is dorning, and Blundell says he will be able to get me a place in the Fifth Form team. "You'll be long-stopp," he said. "But I'm afraid you won't stopp long!"

My Aunt Judy looks of presenting a silver cup-to the fello who has the best batting average at the end of the season. But I explained to her that it would be hardly fare, as I should be a dead set for the owners!

I asked her to send the cup along to me, as I am bound to win it. But she did not cotton on to the idea at all.

I have come to the conclusion that the only way to make the cricket season a success is to draw up a team of my own, so that I can challenge the Fifth Form team under Blundell to a match and beat them hollow. Then they will flock round me with congrats, and offer me the kaptainy.

I posted up an advertisement the other day referring to spelling lessons. I have not had any answer to this yet. So I take it the Juniors are a little nervous of admitting their ignorance on this subject. Don't delay! It is your grated opportunity—and there might not be another.

I should like to know the name of the yung swamp who had the ardacity to tie those chains and iron dumbbells on to the wheels of my motor-bike. If he were anything of a sportman he would come forward and own up.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS!

By the Editor.

Archibald Wynter (Gateshead).—"I hear that Fisher T. Fish is a moneylender. Do you think he would advance me five bob if I wrote and asked him?"—The reply, Archibald, is certainly not!

Jack K. (Plymouth).—"You can poke fun at Dicky Nugent's spelling as much as you like, but he's a jolly nice little chap, and the way he looks after his white mice proves that he is very fond of dumb animals."—And the way we look after Master Nugent proves that we, too, believe in being kind to dumb animals!

Oswald H. (Helsingfors).—"When is Mr. Frank Richards going to introduce a Finnish boy to Greyfriars?"—We have had numerous requests of this sort, which have been passed on to Mr. Richards; but this one will just about "Finnish" him!

Doris Pilkington (Leicester).—"Is Billy Bunter really a good footballer, and is it really personal jealousy that keeps him out of the Remove team?"—My dear young lady, Bunter's antics on the football field would send you into convulsions or hysterics.

"Gay Dog" (Cafford).—"I can't help thinking that you're a bit of a peig. Why don't you smoke an occasional cigarette, like Skinner? And why don't you have a periodical right out at the Cross Keys, like Loder? For goodness' sake, be a bit manly!"—If that sort of thing constitutes manliness, we prefer to remain childish!

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How to Cure Sleeplessness!

By TOM BROWN.

I don't know whether the Editor thinks I'm a blessed doctor; but, anyway, he has asked me to give his readers some advice on this subject; and as I happen to be "broke," and I shall get at least scurpines for a column in the Herald, the opportunity is too good to miss.

Sleeplessness is a rotten thing. I don't suffer from it myself, but I know dozens of fellows who do; and it makes one weep to see their drawn, haggard faces when rising-bell goes.

What is the cause of sleeplessness? Well, there are several causes. If some practical joker has made you an apple-pie bed, for instance, it's jolly hard to get comfortable. Or, again, if the fellow in the next bed persists in mooring like a blessed trombone, the sound hardly has a lulling effect!

Then, again, some chaps are troubled with consciences. They lay awake at night, brooding over their misdeeds of the day. They try to reckon up the number of offences they have committed, and, of course, it takes them up till five o'clock in the morning!

Another cause of sleeplessness is a heavy supper overnight. I know a fag in the Third who religiously eats six fried bladders before he retires. And then he wonders why he lays awake in agony!

We will now proceed from cause to cure.

One of the best cures for sleeplessness is to get your chum to sit on the edge of your bed and hum a soothing lullaby.

Supposing I were the victim, my chum would proceed to warble the following touching refrain:

"Hush-a-bye, Brownay, on the tree-top,
If you can't get to sleep, it isn't much
cop.

Hide in the pillows like little Bo-peep,
And sleep, Brownay, sleep, Brownay,
Sleep, Brownay, sleep!"

Then, of course, I should simply have to go to sleep, to prevent my pal from singing any more!

Another old-fashioned, but infallible remedy for sleeplessness is to count sheep coming through a hedge. If you are quick at figures you ought to get up to about twenty thousand by rising-bell!

Famous specialists, when consulted on this subject, have said, "In order to get to sleep, make your mind a blank." But this wouldn't work in the case of a fellow like Billy Bunter, because his mind's a complete blank as it is!

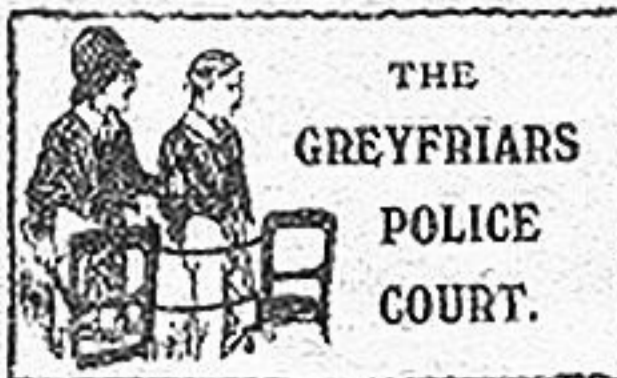
An excellent way of getting to sleep is to get out of bed, dress, and go for a good long walk. Keep clear of the "pubs," or people might misunderstand your motives! Take a sharp jaunt to, say, St. Jim's, or Rookwood; and when you get back at six in the morning you'll sleep like a top!

Yet another good wheeze is to yawn vigorously sixteen times. When you start on the seventeenth yawn you'll find yourself fast asleep!

There are also numerous ways of getting to sleep in the day-time. But I'm not qualified to give advice on this subject.

Those who suffer from insomnia during lessons, and wish to know how they may court slumber, should apply to Lord Mauleverer, of "Slackersville," Remote Passage. Manly will be delighted to help them—if he happens to be awake!

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SIDNEY SNOOP GOES THROUGH THE HOOP!

A "Contempt of Court" Case.

Before Mr. Justice Wharton and a Grand Jury, Sidney James Snoop was charged with contempt of Court.

Mr. Richard Russell, K.C., for the prosecution, said that prisoner had received the usual notice ordering him to serve on the jury at the Woodshed Assizes, and he had failed to turn up. The jury being a man short, no prisoners could be convicted on that occasion.

"I take a very strong view of this case, your worship," said Mr. Russell, "and I propose that prisoner be soundly and severely bumped, forthwith and instantly."

Magistrate: "What you propose, sir, is of no consequence! Stand down!"

Mr. Russell: "But it's your worship's duty, as a magistrate and a Justice of the Peace—"

Magistrate: "To refuse to listen to the piling prattle of a chop-headed counsel!" (Laughter.)

Mr. Harold Skinner, K.C., C.A.D., defending, said that his client was perfectly justified in refusing to turn up on the occasion in question.

"Mr. Snoop is every inch a sportsman!" declared counsel. "He plays nap, he plays shove-ha'penny, and he plays truant. Surely you will not convict such a fine all-round sportsman?"

Magistrate: "I suspect that prisoner was bribed to stay away from the court."

Detective-Inspector Peafold: "Your worship's suspicions are correct. Mr. Skinner was one of the prisoners on that occasion, and he gave prisoner a box of Flor de Cabbagio cigars to keep away."

Magistrate: "No wonder prisoner failed to turn up. Having sampled one of the Flor de Cabbagios, he was probably in no condition to attend any sort of function!" (Laughter.) "Now, gentlemen of the jury. Kindly retire, and consider your verdict."

After a retirement of two seconds, the jury found prisoner guilty of contempt of court, and of bribery and corruption.

Magistrate: "Fifty strokes with the mappole!"

Prisoner pleaded that he was physically unfit to receive such a castigation, one of his shoulder-bones being dislocated.

Magistrate: "The flogging will force it back into position again!"

The sentence was duly carried out, and prisoner showed the court that besides being an expert at playing truant, he was a talented vocalist!

REPORT IN BRIEF.

Peter Todd complained to the magistrate that Study No. 7 was not a fit place to live in, and he asked that fresh quarters might be found him.

Applicant: "There's a fat rat there, your worship."

Magistrate: "Then why not destroy it?"

Applicant: "It happens to be Billy Bunter!" (Loud laughter.)

His worship advised the applicant to put down some rat-poison at the earliest opportunity.

Should Schoolboys Smoke?

A Number of Greyfriars Celebrities give their views on this "burning" question.

BOB CHERRY:

"I'm not a prig, but I've a wholesome contempt for the schoolboy who smokes. He stunts his growth; he makes himself out of condition; and he's generally a sly beggar. If I catch anybody in the Remote at the game I shall address him faithfully, as Inky would say!"

BILLY BUNTER:

"I quite agree with the remark, 'No smoking aloud,' but I don't see why we shouldn't enjoy a smoke quietly!"

HAROLD SKINNER:

"Smoking! It's a horrible vice—simply ghastly! I can't imagine how any decent fellow can indulge in such a pernicious habit. He becomes a dwarf; he gets short of breath; and he's generally a cunning and a crafty sort of merchant. Anybody got a Woodbine?"

LORD MAULEVERER:

"Sorry I can't answer this question about smoking. It's too much 'fag'!"

BOLSOVER MAJOR:

"Should schoolboys smoke? Why not? Everybody's doing it! When I was in Courtfield the other day I actually saw a chimney smoking!"

GERALD LODER:

"No; the average schoolboy should leave smoking severely alone. The privilege of a pipe should be reserved for the prefects."

DICKY NUGENT:

"In 1 way I don't think it rite that schoolboys should smoke but in another way I don't think their's any harm in it of course it all depends on the individual you see if a fello has a weak heart or a scar throto smoking wout do him any good but if he is a helthy mettle an okkasional siggar wout hurt him that's my oppinion anyway so you can put that in yore pipe and smoke it!"

MR. QUELCH:

"Schoolboys smoke, indeed! The bare suggestion fills me with horror! If ever I found one of my pupils indulging in this disgusting practice, there would be short shrift for him!"

WILLIAM GOSLING:

"Wot I says is this here—it ain't right nor proper for schoolboys to smoke. But I don't see why they shouldn't buy an ounce of baccy occasionally; so long as they leaves it at my ledge!"

HORACE COKER:

"Schoolboys over sixteen, certainly. Schoolboys under sixteen, certainly knot!"

SIDNEY SNOOP:

"That all depends who you are referring to, and the brand of cigarettes. For myself, I say, yes, certainly! There is no reason for being up against it, like some fellows are. The best brand you can get now is a Woodbine. They are not expensive, and not strong, like Turkish brands. If there is anyone who would like to join me in a quiet one, I am always to be found, either in the woodshed, or in the Friarsdale barn, which is half-way to the village, on halves, or in the evenings."

VERNON SMITH:

"If you had asked me a term or two back my answer would have been: 'Yes, will you join me?' Now my answer is 'NO!' with a straight left behind to back that opinion up!"

POOR, DEAR PERCY!

or, *The Boy Who Went Astray.*

By ALONZO TODD.

I.

PERCY PILKINGTON sat alone in the corner of a first-class carriage. His beautiful, noble countenance was stained with tears. For he had just kissed his mother good-bye, and he was on his way to St. Timothy's.

Percy was shaken with sobs as the train rumbled on its way.

"Hoo-hoo! I don't want to go to school!" he wailed. "I've heard all sorts of dreadful tales about St. Timothy's. The big boys will bully me, and the small boys will sneer at me! Oh, if only I could have stayed at home with my kind tutor!"

Poor Percy! It was a terrible ordeal for the dear lad, who had been tied so long to his mother's apron-strings.

Our hero was still sobbing in fitful spasms when the train arrived at his destination.

Percy had his portmanteau placed on the station hack, and he was then driven up to St. Timothy's.

No sooner did he set foot in the quadrangle than a crowd of rough boys surged up to him. These were his future schoolfellows. There was Tom Truant, the black-sheep of the Fourth; Bill Bashem, the school bully, and a crowd of their cronies.

"Hallo! A new kid, by Jove!" exclaimed Bashem. "What's your name, you pudding-faced pumpkin?"

"Pip-Pip-Percy Pilkington, please!" stammered Percy.

"Where do you come from—Colney Hatch?"

"No! I wasn't hatched at Colney. My native place is Southampton."

"I seem to have heard of that little fishing-village before!" said Bashem. "Can you play cricket, Pilkington?"

Percy shook his head.

"I consider that cricket is far too rough a game for a young gentleman like myself to indulge in," he said. "Only coarse and common people play cricket."

At this there was a howl from the group of juniors.

"The—the cheeky young cad!"

"Knock his head off, Bashem!"

The bully of the Fourth removed his coat, and rolled up his sleeves.

Percy backed away in alarm.

"I—I don't fight!" he gasped. "Such brutality and Bolshevism is repellent to my peace-loving nature!"

"My hat!"

"And if you attempt to strike me, I shall tell of you!"

"Sneak!"

Bill Bashem struck out savagely at our hero, and smote him on the nose.

For the second time that day the water rushed into Percy's eyes.

"Oh, you brute!" he panted.

And he fled away in search of Mr. Grimmer, the master of the Fourth.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated that worthy, as Percy rushed into his study with the claret streaming from his nose. "You are the new boy Pilkington, are you not? What has happened?"

"Please, sir, Bashem hit me!" said Percy.

Mr. Grimmer frowned.

"Send Bashem to me!" he said. "He is always molesting new boys, and one of these days Bashem will bash 'em once too often! I will see that he is severely flogged for this outrage!"

When it became known that Percy Pilkington had weaked, the anger of the Fourth-Formers knew no bounds.

Not a soul would speak to Percy. Everybody cut him dead. And the poor, homesick lad spent a miserable evening.

Hot, burning tears fell upon his pillow that night as he reviewed all that had happened.

A few hours before he had been in Southampton. And now, alas! he was in Coventry.

II.

"I can't lay down under it any longer!" exclaimed Percy, throwing the sideboard off his bed. "This is a dreadful place, and my schoolfellows are positively hateful! I shall run away!"

So saying, Percy slipped out of bed, and donned his garments.

He was afraid that the sound of his sobbing would arouse the others. Ever since he had left his mother's arms, Percy had been weeping, and he could not suppress his grief.

But nobody heard him, and he was able to leave the dormitory without detection.

Percy stole downstairs, and dismounted through the window of the boot lobby.

He was in the act of crossing the quadrangle, when a voice hailed him.

Percy stopped short. His heart was thumping against his bony ribs.

"Who—who is that?" he faltered.

"Tom Truant!" came the reply. "That you, Pilkington?"

"Y-e-e-s."

"What's the little game?"

Percy dared not say that he intended to run away.

"I—I just came out to—to see if the stars were still shining!" he stammered.



Before Percy could put the notes away, an electric torch flashed on him and a voice cried, "Caught in the very act."

Tom Truant laughed.

"Well, now you're here, you might as well join me in a little Snooker," he said.

"A—A little Snooker?" gasped Percy. "I am afraid I don't understand!"

"I'm going down to the Snooker Arms, in the village," explained Tom Truant. "I generally play a nightly game of pills with the landlord."

"Pills! Is the landlord a doctor, then?"

"Of course not, fathead! By pills, I mean snooker. It's a game."

Percy confessed that he had never heard of it.

"Well, I'll take you in hand and teach you," said Tom Truant. "Come on!"

In the ordinary way our hero would have shuddered at the bare thought of visiting a public-house. He had often visited private houses, but that was different.

However, the poor lad was in a reckless and devil-may-care mood, and he suffered Tom Truant to lead him out of the straight and narrow path on to the broad road that leads to destruction.

On arriving at the billiard-room of the Snooker Arms, Tom Truant offered his companion a cigarette.

Percy had been a non-smoker and a total abstainer all his life; but now that he was drawn into Tom Truant's net, how could he resist the temptation? He placed the cigarette between his innocent lips, and nearly

chokeled as Tom Truant applied a lighted match to the pernicious weed.

Then the landlord came in, carrying two glasses of cider on a tray, and Percy Pilkington took a further step on the downward path.

The strong drink inflamed him, and he turned to Tom Truant with gleaming eyes.

"I've never played Snooker in my life!" he exclaimed. "But I'll play you now, for a five!"

"Good!" said Tom Truant. "That's the real sporting spirit. We'll play a hundred up."

"And I'll be the marker, gentlemen," said the landlord.

Alas, poor Percy! He was hopelessly out-classed by his opponent, who rattled up a hundred before Percy could find out why the balls had different colours, and what the pockets all round the table were for.

"I'll trouble you for a five!" Pilkington!" said Tom Truant.

Percy's face grew ghastly in the gaslight.

"I—I regret to state that I am in a condition of impecuniosity!" he stammered.

"What! You haven't any money?"

Percy shook his head.

"Then you'd better find it by to-morrow, or I'll show you up before all the fellows, and your life won't be worth living!"

So saying, Tom Truant dragged Percy out of the Snooker Arms by the scruff of his neck, and marched him back to St. Timothy's.

Percy was quite unable to carry out his original intention of running away. He was helpless in the grip of his captor, and it was with black despair in his heart that he re-entered the Fourth Form dormitory.

For hour after hour our hero—or should I say villain?—lay awake, wondering how he could raise the money wherewith to pay Tom Truant.

Could he beg it? No. The Pilkingtons had never been beggars. Could he borrow it? No. There was no one at St. Timothy's who would trust him with twopenny.

Could he steal it?

Yes!

The voice of the tempter urged Percy to go downstairs, and loot the box containing the cricket funds. He tried to shake off the temptation, but in vain. After all, he reflected, what harm was there in taking five pounds out of the box, provided he replaced it when his next postal order arrived?

He hesitated—he was lost! And a few moments later he was engaged in opening the cash-box with feverish fingers.

He plunged his hand into the box, and it closed over a bundle of notes.

"Ha, ha!" he muttered triumphantly.

But before the midnight marauder could get away with the spoils, an electric torch flashed out, and the voice of Mr. Grimmer exclaimed:

"Caught! Caught in the very act!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Percy.

Mr. Grimmer's brow grew grimmer and grimmer.

"So you're a thief, Pilkington—a looter of cash-boxes!" he thundered. "You shall pay dearly for this outrage! Put those notes back in the box, and accompany me to the punishment-room!"

It would be only fitting, dear readers, to draw a veil over the painful scene which followed.

Suffice it to say that Percy's tender skin was lacerated next morning by the Head's birch, and that he left St. Timothy's, never to return.

Take warning, Harold Skinner! Have a care, Loder of the Sixth! And when next you are tempted to stray from the straight and narrow path, pause and reflect on the pitiful, painful, poignant tragedy of Percy Pilkington!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 668.

A DROWSY DIALOGUE!

Between Lord Maulverer of the Greyfriars Remove, and the Caterpillar, of Highcliffe.

MAULY: "Yaw-aw-aw! Mornin', Caterpillar! How are you feelin'?"

CATERPILLAR: "Fagged out, dear boy!"

MAULY: "Same here! Haven't had a wink of sleep for the last hour—thanks to that energetic beggar, Bob Cherry. He made me skip sixteen times round the Close."

CATERPILLAR: "Shame! Frank Courtenay's just as bad. Made me hop round the Highcliffe quad on one foot, holdin' a twelve-pound dumb-bell above my napper! Groo! I'm nearly expirin'!"

MAULY: "Ditto, dear boy! I shall go to sleep standin' up, like a horse, in a minute!"

CATERPILLAR: "Do you know, Mauly, you an' I ought to have been born on a desert island, where there'd be nothin' to do all day but lie under a palm-tree an' snooze!"

MAULY: "That's it! The Greyfriars fellows are always chippin' me about bein' lazy. But I can't help it. It's hereditary. My pater was Director of Slumber at the War Office."

CATERPILLAR: "An' mine was in the Forty Winks Department of the Hot-Air Ministry. This tired feelin' was born in us, Mauly, an' people ought to feel sorry for us."

MAULY: "Yaas, begad! By the way, how much sleep have you had lately?"

CATERPILLAR: "Precious little, old top! Every time I dozed off in the Form-room yesterday, Mobby, our respected Form-master, tickled me in the ribs with his pointer."

MAULY: "Just what Quelch did to me! I think Mobby an' Quelch ought to be chained together an' shoved in a kennel, don't you?"

CATERPILLAR: "Yaas, dear boy! I say, are you comin' along as far as Highcliffe?"

MAULY: "Nunno! Too much fag. Will you come along as far as Greyfriars?"

CATERPILLAR: "Heaps too much fag, old top! Tell you what. Let's curl up on the grass here, and take forty winks!"

MAULY: "All serene!"

The Caterpillar promptly stretches his elegant form on the grassy bank, and Mauly follows suit. After an interval of a few seconds, the following duet takes place:

CATERPILLAR: "Ow!"

MAULY: "You!"

CATERPILLAR: "Yaroo!"

MAULY: "Yaropski!"

CATERPILLAR: "I'm lyin' on a blessed ant-beap, begad!"

MAULY: "An' I've disturbed a confounded wasp-nest! Ow-ow-ow-ow!"

CATERPILLAR (leaping to his feet): "I've never felt so wind-suckle in my life!"

MAULY: "Neither have I, begad! Got any soothin' ointment on you, Caterpillar?"

CATERPILLAR: "No! Got any insect-destroyer?"

MAULY: "No, dear boy!"

CATERPILLAR: "Then neither of us is any use to the other. Cheerio!"

MAULY: "An' revoir, my priceless old born!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 600.

HOW TO BECOME A HERO!

By Billy Bunter.

We bring the most heroic character of Greyfriars, the editor, has asked me to give him advice to fellows who would like to follow in my tracks.

It is a great thing, dear readers, to be the hero of the hour—to go about day by day saving people's lives, and collecting all sorts of medals and distinctions of value. How is it done? Listen, and you shall here:

Stopping a Runaway Hoarse.

If the hoarse is coming towards you, stand perfectly still in the roadway with arms and legs akimbo—whatever that means! The eyes of a hoarse magnify to a large extent, and the size of your face will terrify the animal so much that he will stop at once. If the hoarse is running away from you, run after it at top speed, and shout "Stop! Stop!" until you have started yourself hoarse. If this has no effect, flip your arms round the creature's neck, and hang on like grim death, until the hoarse is pulled out and comes to a standstill.

Then the old gent who is in the trap will see you by the hand, and say, in a hoarse whisper, "My dear brace boy! You have saved my life at the risk of your own! What sort of a reward would you like?"

You can then proceed to name your own figure.

Saving a Parson from Drowning.

First of all ascertain how deep the water is. If it's more than four feet, keep your distance, or you will be risking your life.

If less than four feet, carefully remove your coat, waistcoat, boots, sock, collar, tie, gloves, spots, and wrist-watch. Then take a dive into the water, see the victim by the scruff of the neck, and tow him to the shore. If he becomes unresponsive, apply artificial respiration. When he comes to, congratulate him what you can, and name a substantial figure, as in the previous case.

Rescuing a Chap From a Burning Building.

Wait until the local fire-brigade has put the fire out; then gallantly swarm up a ladder to the room in which the victim is being slowly suffocated.

Show to the crowd below to hold a tablecloth taut, and then toss the victim out of the window. He will alight safe and sound—always provided the tablecloth dazzened best!

On reaching terra firma yourself, pretend to faint. You will collect kylie a lot of sympathy—and pocket-money—that way.

There are lots of other tips I could give you on the subject of life-saving, but the editor will only allow me one column, so I am compelled to leave out a lot of useful hints. But perhaps I shall be permitted to return to this topic at some later date. (You jolly well won't!—Ed.)

OUR WEEKLY CARTOON.

"CASTLE!"

OUR ADVERTISEMENT COLUMN!**HOUSES, FLATS, ETC., TO LET.**

TO LET, furnished study, commanding good view of the fountain in the Close and the porter's lodge. If prospective tenant is interested in the study of mice and beetles, he will find billions of the little loggans here! Rent, 2 tanner a week. Apply, P. Todd, Study No. 7, Remove Passage.

OLD BARN to let, near Head's lorn. Suitable for young gent as wants to do amacher carpentry or enjoy a quiet smoke. Rent, five shillings a month. Apply, Joseph Minde, Jobbing Gardener, Greyfriars.

SITUATIONS VACANT.

SMART fag wanted immediately. I've just given a trial to Smart of the Second, but he failed to give satisfaction. Let it be clearly understood that I want a smart young fag—therefore I can't fag young Smart! Applicants—whose collars must be free of thumbmarks, and whose hair must be neatly brushed—should present themselves before George Wingate, captain of Greyfriars, at nine o'clock on Monday morning.

WANTED, a youthful secretary, to assist me with my "History of Greyfriars," for sheer love of the thing. No salary will be paid, and the secretary's work will consist of pinning pages together, counting the number of words on each sheet, and oiling and dusting the typewriter. No uneducated young hooligan need apply.—Mr. H. H. Quelch, Remove-master.

SITUATIONS WANTED.

KOOK-JENNERAL desires a remunerative job at wunce. Menny years' experience of kooking and kooconing grub. Willing to run the kitchen in any private household in spare time.—Apply, W. G. Bunter, Study No. 7, Remove Passage.

YUNG FAGG, in deliket helth, is willing to accept the job of lining fires, and other "lute" duties. Humour saltery rekivered.—Apply, Dicky Nugent, 2nd Form.

MISCELLANEOUS.

LOST, on Wednesday afternoon, between the hours of four and five, a rich plum-cake. Billy Bunter will greatly oblige by returning same to Mark Linley, Study No. 13, Remove Passage.

CRICKETERS! ATHLETES! RUNNERS! Try my home-brewed ginger-pop! Nourishing, Invigorating, Stimulating, and Refreshing! You can go on drinking it till you bust! This is not empty "gas." I guess my ginger-pop's the real goods! Sold in tanks, barrels, casks, bottles, and thimbles, by Fisher T. Fish, the American Soda Fountain, Study No. 14, Remove Passage.

WARNING TO STRAY DOGS! If you tamper with any of the juicy bones I've buried in the Head's garden, I'll jolly well pulverise you! Grow!—Rover (the Office Mastiff).

"Skinner's Secret Society!"

(Continued from page 8.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**An Adventure on the Highway!**

"I T must be somebody at Greyfriars!" Frank Nugent made that exclamation with an air of conviction.

The Removes had just taken their places at the breakfast-table in Hall, and Frank Nugent had found a note on his plate. On opening the envelope he discovered one of the warning notices signed by the "B.B." The letter—inscribed, as usual, in printed capitals—stated that Frank Nugent would be dealt with before the day was out.

"It must have been a Greyfriars fellow who put this on my plate," declared Nugent. "How else could it have got here?"

"I've got a strong suspicion," said Dennis Carr, "that Coker of the Fifth is mixed up in this business."

"Coker!" echoed Harry Wharton, in astonishment. "What makes you think that?"

"You remember Johnny Bull telling us that he dotted his opponent on the nose last night?"

"Well!"

"Look at Coker's nose now. Hardly a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, is it?"

All eyes were turned towards the Fifth Form table, at which Horace Coker was seated.

It was noticed that Coker's nose had a very bulbous appearance; in fact, it was swollen nearly double its normal size.

"My hat!" muttered Johnny Bull. "I wonder—"

"Coker must have got that in a scarp," said Wharton.

"Yes—with Johnny Bull!" said Dennis Carr.

"I shouldn't think so. Coker's several sorts of an ass, but he isn't a hoodlum. I don't believe for one moment that he had a hand in this affair."

Dennis Carr shrugged his shoulders.

"It looks jolly suspicious, anyway," he said. "I saw Coker yesterday afternoon, and his nose was perfectly normal then. Besides, Coker's been up against the Remove from the very beginning, and he'd think it a great joke to form a secret society, and kidnap some of our fellows—in fact, cause a reign of terror."

"Oh, draw it mild, Carr!" said Jack Drake. "We all know that Coker's a prize chump, but I can't picture him being the leader of a secret society. He hasn't the brains, and he's far too clumsy."

"Well, I mean to ask him how he came by that nose," said Dennis.

"He'll send you about your business if you start trying to pump him," said Bob Cherry.

And so it proved. When Dennis Carr approached Coker of the Fifth after breakfast, and asked him how his nose came to be swollen, Coker was most aggressive.

"You cheeky young cub!" he exclaimed. "If you don't buzz off, I'll give you a nose to match mine!"

And Dennis Carr promptly "buzzed." He was a very useful fighting-man, but he had no desire to get in the way of one of Coker's punches.

There were no lessons that morning, for it was Saturday.

Frank Nugent "watched his step," as the saying went, and was careful not to expose himself to danger. He met with

no mishap during the morning, and in the afternoon he accompanied the Remove team to Courtfield, for the match against Dick Trumper's eleven.

Quite a crowd of Greyfriars fellows walked over to Courtfield. Several changes had been made in the Remove side, and the juniors were anxious to see how those changes would work.

Both Dennis Carr and Jack Drake had been given places in the forward line, and it remained to be seen whether they would justify their selection.

Frank Nugent was as jealously guarded as if he had been a member of the Royal family. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry walked on one side of him, and Johnny Bull and Ilurree Singh on the other. Half a dozen fellows walked immediately in front, and another half-dozen brought up the rear.

It seemed impossible that any sort of an attack would be made by the members of the "B.B." under such conditions.

Nevertheless, the unexpected happened.

The footballers had reached a lonely part of the road, when suddenly, and without warning, half a dozen masked figures sprang out from an ambush.

"Look out!" yelled Harry Wharton.

Even as he spoke, Frank Nugent was pounced upon by two of the individuals in cloaks and masks. They made a determined effort to get the junior away, but Harry Wharton and the others rushed at them, and the would-be kidnapers realised that they hadn't the ghost of a chance against such numbers. Deeming discretion the better part of valour, they turned and fled.

"After them!" roared Johnny Bull.

A stern chase followed, but the pursuers were at a disadvantage. In the first place, they fell over each other in their efforts to clamber through the hedge; and by the time they got through they found that the masked individuals had vanished into the neighbouring wood.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed hot-foot on the trail, but eventually they had to give it up, for the wood was dense, and afforded numerous hiding-places.

"If we had the time to spare," panted the captain of the Remove, "we'd ferret them out! But we can't keep Trumper & Co. waiting. We promised to be on the ground at two."

Very reluctantly, the footballers resumed their journey to Courtfield. They were exasperated to think that the members of the gang had slipped through their fingers. But Frank Nugent was safe, and that was the main thing.

The match with the County Council School proved tremendously exciting.

In the first half Dick Trumper & Co. had matters all their own-way, and their forwards ran riot.

The half-time score was 3-1 in favour of the home side, and it seemed morally certain that the Friars would be beaten—and well beaten at that.

In the second half, however, the Remove played like an inspired team. With the wind in their favour, they attacked continuously, and Harry Wharton and Dennis Carr put on two lovely goals, bringing the scores level.

With only five minutes to go, Greyfriars crowded on all sail. Jack Drake snapped up a splendid pass from Vernon-Smith, and sent the ball crashing into the net. And thus the Friars won on the post, and added another glowing chapter to their football history.

Harry Wharton & Co. were jubilant as they tramped back to Greyfriars, after being entertained to tea by their rivals.

In the hour of victory the attack upon Frank Nugent was almost forgotten. If the juniors thought about the matter at

all, they did not imagine that the attack would be renewed. The members of the gang had been driven off, and they were not likely to cause any further trouble that day.

But again the unexpected happened. There was a sudden gleam of light through the dusk, accompanied by the throbbing of a vehicle.

"A motor-bike!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Stand clear, kids!"

The juniors edged in to the bank, and the motor-cycle drew level with them, and then halted.

The rider of the machine was muffled up in such a way that only a portion of his face was visible. It seemed that he was wearing a mask—not one of the hideous ones to which the juniors were rapidly getting accustomed—but a mask of black crape.

"What the thump—" began Johnny Bull.

The individual in the mask produced something from his pocket, and levelled it at the Greyfriars juniors.

"Hands up!" he commanded, in a gruff voice.

Harry Wharton & Co. hesitated, but not for long. They had sense enough to realise that the rider of the motor-cycle might be a dangerous man—a man who would have no compunction in firing upon them. Anyway, he was armed, and they were not; so they deemed it best to humour him.

Each junior raised both hands above his head.

"Good!" said the stranger, still in the same gruff voice. "I'm glad you recognise the fact that I'm not to be trifled with!"

"Who—who are you?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Never mind who I am. Is Frank Nugent here?"

"What do you want with me?" demanded Nugent.

"Get into this side-car!"

"Look here—"

"Don't argue! Do as I tell you!"

"But—but what's the little game?" stammered Nugent, in bewilderment.

"Get into this side-car!"

The command was repeated in such a threatening tone that Frank Nugent obeyed with alacrity.

"Franky! Don't go!"

It was Bob Cherry who spoke.

"He's got no alternative!" said the armed motor-cyclist. "I mean to be obeyed."

"Where are you going to take him?" asked Dennis Carr.

"To a safe place."

"Is it going to any harm—"

"He'll come to no harm. I promise you. Stand back, there! If anybody moves a step, I'll fire!"

Bob Cherry had been about to rush forward, but the motor-cyclist's threat caused him to pull up abruptly.

The next moment the machine leapt forward, and the Greyfriars juniors watched its twinkling lights until they were out of sight. Then they stepped out from the hedge, and exchanged dismayed glances.

"Well, of all the nerve!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"This is the last straw!" said Johnny Bull. "Who'd have thought that Nugent would be collared like that!"

"We ought to have prevented it," said Wharton ruefully.

"But how could we? We were at that fellow's mercy. He had us covered all the time. If Franky had refused to get into that side-car—"

Johnny Bull paused impressively, and the others shuddered.

"Well, the deed's done," said Jack

Drake. "One man has hoodwinked the lot of us. The question is, what are we going to do about it?"

"Inform the police," said Harry Wharton promptly. "Come on!"

"The police!" echoed Vernon-Smith scornfully. "A fat lot of use old Tozer will be! Why, that blessed motor-bike's a couple of miles away already!"

"Still, we ought to let Tozer know," said the captain of the Remove. "He'll be able to give the alarm, and every road and thoroughfare will be watched. There will be police-traps everywhere, and the kidnapper's bound to be stopped."

The juniors turned back towards Courtfield. They were utterly staggered by what had taken place. The audacity of the thing was astounding. It had seemed impossible that Frank Nugent could come to any harm, with such a big bodyguard in attendance. And yet he had been carried off by a mysterious motor-cyclist.

Where was he being taken?

Harry Wharton & Co. pondered for a long time over this problem, but they could form no satisfactory solution. They knew that the motor-cyclist was a member of the "B.B." gang. Beyond that, they knew nothing.

Meanwhile, Frank Nugent was being borne swiftly through the darkness. The events of the past few moments had almost stunned him, and he was unable to think clearly.

As for the driver, he bent over the handlebars, and said no word. He was driving with a reckless disregard of the darkness and the state of the roads. More than once, the machine was nearly precipitated into the bank.

Several miles had been covered before Frank Nugent spoke.

"I want to know what this means!" he exclaimed.

"Silence, you cub!"

"Who are you?"

There was no response.

"You're rather smart as a kidnapper, but you've no idea how to control a motor-bike," said Nugent. "We shall find ourselves wallowing in a horse-pond, if you don't ease up a bit."

The machine tore on at the same reckless speed.

Frank Nugent continued to fire questions at his companion, but he was curiously told to hold his tongue. And at last Frank gave it up.

He had no idea where he was being taken. His kidnapper had promised that he should come to no harm—though whether that promise would be kept was extremely doubtful.

Anyway, Nugent determined to make his escape at the first available opportunity.

The chance came rather sooner than he expected.

A traction-engine came puffing along the road, which was extremely narrow at that part. And the motor-cyclist was reluctantly compelled to slacken his speed.

This gave Nugent the chance he wanted. He started up suddenly in the side-car, with a view to leaping out.

He knew that he ran a double risk in so doing. He ran the risk of being fired upon by his captor, and also the risk of coming a nasty cropper.

But it was neck or nothing now, and Frank Nugent was not wanting in pluck. The machine was travelling at little more than a snail's pace now. And Nugent took the leap.

To his joy, he landed unhurt on the grassy bank; and then, leaping to his feet, he darted through a gap in the hedge and raced off across the fields.

He half-expected a bullet to whizz by

his ear. But no shot was fired, and so far as the junior could gather, he was not being pursued.

"I've got out of that rotter's clutches, anyway!" he panted. "And now I've got to fag all the way back to Greyfriars. Goodness knows how far it is. It must be miles and miles!"

Nugent dropped into a walk, and after a time he emerged on to a main road. A signpost informed him that it was seven miles to Friardale.

"That's not so bad," he reflected. "I expected it to be at least a dozen miles!"

He set out along the dark road at a swinging stride, and in little more than an hour and a half he reached the village of Friardale.

As Frank Nugent entered the village, the portly form of P.-c. Tozer loomed up in the dusk.

"Why, it's Master Noogent!" ejaculated the constable.

"Of course it is, Tozey! You didn't expect it to be my ghost, did you?"

"Which I understood as 'ow you had fallen into the hands of a despit character," said Tozer.

"Quite correct, old sport! And now I've fallen out again—see?"

"But 'ow—"

"No time to go into details," said Nugent. "I've got to be in by locking-up!"

And he passed on, leaving P.-c. Tozer stroking his chin in baffled perplexity.

When Frank Nugent stepped into the junior Common-room at Greyfriars, he found it in a buzz. Over a score of juniors were assembled there, discussing the latest exploit of the "B.B." gang.

Bob Cherry was the first to catch sight of his chum, and he gave a shout:

"Here's Franky!"

Nugent's chums promptly fell upon him and hugged him.

"We thought you were lost and gone for ever, old chap!" said Johnny Ball.

"How did you wangle your escape?"

Frank Nugent related his experiences amid breathless excitement.

"My hat! You've had a giddy adventure to-night, and no mistake," said Bob Cherry.

"Enough adventure to last me for the rest of the term," said Nugent, with a grin. "Still, I gave that rotter the slip, and I'm safe and sound. I should like to know what he intended to do with me, though!"

"He'd have put you under lock and key, I expect," said Dennis Carr. "You did a jolly good thing for yourself by jumping out of that side-car."

"Yes, rather!"

"Who's going to be the next victim of the 'B.B.'? I wonder?" said Peter Todd. "Topsy, you bet!" said Squiff. "He's the only member of the Famous Five who hasn't received one of the warning notices yet."

"I expect I shall receivefully get one in the morning," said Hurree Singh. "But I'm not afraid. I haven't got the gustful breeze up, as your English sayings go."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think a reward ought to be offered for the capture, alive or dead, of the leader of this precious gang," said Jack Drake.

"Hear, hear!"

"They'll be bowled out in the long run, never fear," said Harry Wharton. "They're getting more venturesome each day, and presently they'll walk right into a trap."

But the rest of the juniors had their doubts.

The members of the "B.B." gang were cunning as well as daring, and they undoubtedly had their wits about them. Twice that day they had been balked

in their designs. But not one of them had been captured, and their identity remained a sealed book to the chums of the Remove.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Black Brotherhood!

SKINNER of the Remove strolled out of the Common-room, with a sardonic smile on his sallow features.

He had heard Frank Nugent's story, and several times he had chuckled outright. But no one had paid any heed to Skinner.

It did not occur to Harry Wharton & Co. that the cad of the Remove had anything to do with the recent series of outrages. Had it come to their knowledge that Harold Skinner was the prime mover in the business—that he had engineered the whole affair—they would have been fairly staggered.

Nevertheless, it was a fact. Skinner had hit upon the brilliant notion of forming a secret society, with himself as president.

The cad of the Remove had always been up against Harry Wharton & Co., and his chief idea was to play a series of practical jokes upon them, and hold them up to ridicule in the eyes of their school-fellows.

Skinner felt that this was a very worthy object indeed. He didn't stop to count the cost, or to consider the possibility of his being bowled out. He at once set about the task of obtaining members for his precious society.

This was rather a problem.

Snoop and Stott readily agreed to enlist under Skinner's banner. They were duly enrolled, and pledged to strict secrecy.

Neither Snopp nor Stott, however, was capable of carrying out deeds of physical violence. Both were very feeble fighting-men.

Skinner realised this at the outset.

"If my secret society's going to be a success," he said, "I shall want some hefty fellows—giants who know how to use their fists. That's the only way to create a reign of terror. No use having a set of weaklings who haven't a ha'porth of light in them."

Skinner was a blending himself, but he appeared to be blind to the fact.

When the opportunity arose, he approached Bolsover major, who was one of the strongest fellows in the Form.

"I say, Bolsoy," he said, cornering the bully of the Remove in the Close, "I'm forming a secret society."

"A what?" gasped Bolsover.

"A sort of anarchist gang, on a small scale," explained Skinner. "Of course, we're not going to blow up Greyfriars, or assassinate the Head, or anything of that sort. Our object is to give Wharton and the others a scare."

Bolsover grinned.

"I get you, Steve!" he said. "You're going to practise some secret japes on them?"

"That's it! My word, Bolsoy, you're getting quite intelligent! Now, I want you to join forces with me, and I intend to make you my right-hand man. You're a hefty merchant, and you'll come in very useful for the kidnapping."

"The — the kidnapping?" gasped Bolsover.

"Yes. Don't look so horrified. We're not going to do anything criminal. We shall merely tie these fellows to trees, and paint their chivvies, and so forth."

"But there'll be the dickens of a row—"

"Ass! We're going to wear masks, and nobody will twig who we are. We'll

send anonymous letters to Wharton and his set, warning them that they're going to fall into our hands."

"Good!" said Bolsover. "I get the idea. But if you think I am going to be kidnapper-in-chief, without any help, you're jolly well mistaken!"

Skinner stroked his chin thoughtfully. "That's just where the difficulty comes in," he said. "You'll want two or three big fellows to give you a hand."

"What price Coker & Co.?"

Skinner stared.

"You must be potty!" he exclaimed. "Old Coker would never agree to join our society."

"Oh, yes, he would! He's up against Wharton & Co. just as much as we are! Think of the times they've japed him, and raided his study, and so forth! Why, Coker will simply jump at the chance of getting some of his own back!"

"I'll go and have a heart-to-heart talk with brother Horace," said Skinner.

And he did. To his delight he found that Coker, Potter, and Greene were willing to join his society.

In the ordinary way Coker would have washed his hands of the business. But he was feeling very wrathful just then towards Harry Wharton & Co.

Only a few days before Coker's study had been raided by the chums of the Remove, and his furniture had been scattered in wild confusion. Coker was not a revengeful sort of person, but he felt justified in levelling things up a little.

"Look here, kid," he said to Skinner. "We'll join your society, and we'll make those cheeky fags sit up. But there's to be no foul play, mind. You know what I mean. I'm quite willing to kidnap fellows, and tie 'em to trees, and paint their chivvies, as you suggest, but I draw the line at doing 'em any serious harm."

"Oh, of course!" said Skinner. "Our object is to scare them rather than hurt them."

"What are we going to call ourselves?" asked Potter.

"The B.B.," said Skinner mysteriously.

"Bh?"

"The Black Brotherhood, if you want it in full."

"My hat!"

"We'll hold meetings down in the crypt, and everything that we discuss and arrange must be kept a dead secret. That's to be our most important rule, and if any member of the society blabs—we'll, we shall know how to deal with him!"

"Precisely!" said Coker. "When's the first meeting coming off?"

"This evening, at seven."

And after a further discussion with the Fifth-Formers, Skinner took his departure, feeling well pleased with himself.

The first meeting was duly held, and all the prospective members of the Black Brotherhood were "sworn in."

Skinner's secret society then got to business, and Bob Cherry, Harry Wharton, and Johnny Bull had been dealt with in turn.

Now, as he strolled in the Close after listening to Frank Nugent's account of his experiences, Skinner felt hugely elated.

"Coker seems to have bungled this business," he muttered. "Still, he didn't give himself away, and that's all that matters. Wonder if he's back yet?"

Skinner crossed over to the bicycle-shed and peered within.

Coker's motor-cycle was there, shedding petrol on the floor.

"Good! He's back all right!" murmured Skinner. "I expect he's gone down to the crypt."

Skinner hurried across to the stone slab

which gave access to the crypt and the vaults.

The slab had been partially removed, and there was just room for the junior to squeeze himself through. He did so, and descended the stone steps into the crypt.

"Who goes there?"

It was Coker's voice that rapped out the question.

"Friend!" chuckled Skinner.

"Advance, friend, and give the password!"

Skinner stepped forward a pace and gave the password—"R.R." Then he entered the crypt, where all the members of the society were assembled by candle-light.

"Coker, you champion clump," said Skinner, "what do you mean by letting Nugent slip through your fingers?"

Those masks and cloaks make a jolly fine disguise!"

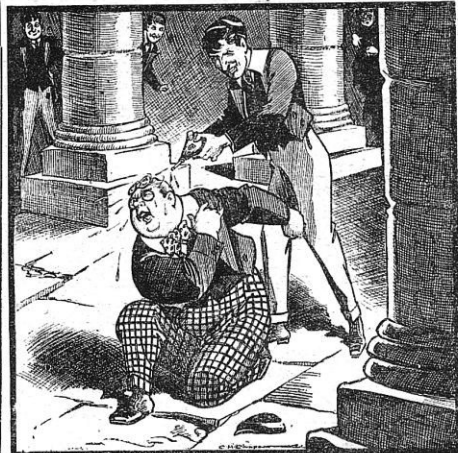
"I thought Coker's nose would have given the show away," said Greene.

Coker caressed his damaged nasal organ tenderly.

"If I'd known young Bull was going to be such a handful I'd have left him alone," he said. "He put up a terrific fight, and I doubt if I should have been able to string him up to that tree if Potter hadn't come along and lent a hand."

"The question is," said Bolsover major, "who's going to be the next victim?"

"Look here," said Coker, "it's all very well for you kids to keep picking out victims, but I want a rest! I've had a jolly strenuous time these last few days. We won't send out any more warning



Before Bunter had time to protest, Skinner squeezed the triangular-shaped oil-can, and a jet of liquid shot over the nape of the victim's neck. "You are now annointed a member of the Black Brotherhood!" chuckled Skinner. (See Chapter 6.)

"It couldn't be helped," growled Coker. "I had to slow up to avoid a traction-engine, and the kid jumped out of the side-car. Still, I gave him a nice little tramp back to Greyfriars; and I scared Wharton and the others out of their wits. I waylaid them on the road and covered them with my water-pistol. They thought it was a giddy revolver!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great work!" chuckled Skinner. "And you made Nugent get into the side-car!"

"Yes. He hopped in like a bird, and the others were too paralysed to move a finger! As you know, I intended to leave young Nugent stranded about a dozen miles from Greyfriars. But I think that would have been a bit too thick. I'm not sorry the kid jumped out when he did."

"Well, we've scored over four of the beggars," said Skinner, "and nobody's got the slightest suspicion who we are,

notices for a bit. We'll lie low for a time, and then, just as everybody's thinking the R.B. has faded out of existence, we'll show 'em that we're still very much alive and kicking!"

"Good!" said Skinner.

"I say, Skinner," said Snoop uneasily, "how long is this bisney going on?"

"There's no reason why we shouldn't keep it up right through the term. Dash it all, there's heaps of fellows we haven't dealt with yet! There's Carr and Drake and Smithy and Linley—"

"But—but supposing we get bowled out?"

"Don't be such a beastly funk! There's no possible chance of our being spotted."

"Quelchy's on the warpath, you know."

"Bah! Quelchy's no earthly use as a sleuth. Besides, he wouldn't dream of THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 666.

suspecting such estimable fellows as ourselves."

"No jolly fear!" chuckled Bolsover. "We're as safe as houses!"

"But if somebody came down here and caught us!" said Snoop in almost panicky tones.

"That wouldn't be proof that we belonged to the B.B. We could say that we were holding a debate, or something of that sort."

"The crypt's a queer place for a debating society to meet!" said Stott.

Skinner spun round angrily on the speaker.

"Look here, if you're as chicken-hearted as all that you can clear out!" he said. "This isn't a Society of Funks!"

"Hear, hear!" said Coker. "Blest if I can understand why Snoop and Stott were ever allowed to join! They're merely a pair of ornaments!"

"I'm not a funk!" said Stott. "But any fellow with an ounce of imagination can see that we're running a big risk in being down here. The slab of stone's out of position, and if one of the beaks were to notice it—"

Even as Stott spoke Coker sprang to his feet with an exclamation of alarm.

"Listen!"

There was a sound of footsteps overhead. They halted at the entrance to the crypt, and then they could be heard descending the stone staircase. They were accompanied by the sound of quick breathing.

The members of the Black Brotherhood exchanged startled glances.

"Somebody's coming!" muttered Skinner.

"Douse the candles—quick!"

The crypt was plunged into darkness, and the members of the secret society waited, with fast-beating hearts, for what was to follow.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Gets Busy!

"G OOD! I've dodged him all right!"

That was the exclamation which came to the ears of Skinner & Co. as they crouched in the

darkness. And they at once became easy in their minds. For the intruder was not a master or a prefect. The voice they heard was the voice of Billy Bunter.

"Jolly lucky that stone had been moved, or I shouldn't have been able to dodge down here!" the voice continued. "Loder would have nailed me, as sure as Fate!"

After this there was silence, save for the steady champing of jaws.

The members of the Black Brotherhood could guess what had happened.

Billy Bunter had raided a cake, or some other article of food, from Loder's study, and the prefect had pursued him. The fat junior had taken refuge in the crypt, and he was now engaged in bolting the cake, or whatever it was he had taken.

Skinner & Co. remained perfectly still and silent. They had very good reasons for not wishing Billy Bunter to become aware of their presence. They hoped that as soon as he had finished eating he would take his departure.

Clamp, champ, champ!

Bunter's jaws were working overtime, and he seemed to be enjoying himself. It was one of Bunter's unpleasant little habits to make a great deal of noise during the consumption of his food.

Potter of the Fifth experienced a frantic desire to sneeze. He fought hard against it, but it mastered him, and a violent sneeze echoed through the gloomy crypt.

"Shoo! Atishoo!"

Billy Bunter gave a jump, dropping the remnants of the cake as he did so.

"M-m-my hat!" he gasped.

It had not occurred to him that there was anybody in the crypt beside himself, and Potter's sudden sneeze startled him considerably.

"Potter, you ass!" growled Coker. "You've given the whole show away now!"

"I couldn't help it!" grunted Potter. "It's harder than you think to bottle a sneeze!"

Billy Bunter recognised the voices of the Fifth-Formers.

"I say, you fellows, what are you doing down here?" he demanded.

"That's done it!" groaned Bolsover major. "We'd better light the candles again, I suppose!"

The candles were re-lit, and Billy Bunter blinked around him in astonishment. He found seven pairs of eyes glaring at him.

"Buzz off, you spying worm!" snapped Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner? I want to know what you fellows are doing down here. It looks jolly suspicious, you know!"

"Can't we explore the vaults if we want to?" growled Coker.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "You can't pull the wool over my eyes, Coker. I wasn't born yesterday. I think I know why you're here. You're holding a secret meeting!"

"What if we are?" said Skinner defiantly.

"Secret meetings aren't allowed, you know. The Head wouldn't approve of it if he knew—and neither would Quelchey." "We were discussing footer," said Greene.

"Oh, come off! I know I'm short-sighted, but I'm not too short-sighted to see those masks and cloaks piled up in the corner!"

And Billy Bunter pointed to a dark heap in the corner of the crypt.

"I've tumbled to your little game," said the Owl of the Remove. "You're the gang that's been working all these kidnapping stunts. You're the 'B. B.'"

It was futile for Skinner & Co. to deny Bunter's allegation. The masks, the cloaks, the fact that a secret meeting was in progress—all went to prove that Billy Bunter's theory was correct.

The members of the gang exchanged glances of alarm. They knew Billy Bunter of old. He had fathomed their secret, and within half an hour it would be all over Greyfriars—unless steps were taken to silence Bunter's tongue.

"If you dare to breathe a word about this, you're trying to—"

"I consider it my duty to report the facts to Quelchey," said Bunter piously. "I shall be acting in the interests of the community. Can't have this sort of thing going on, you know. Why, you're scaring the whole blessed school! Fellows can't sleep soundly in their beds."

"There's no harm in what we're doing," said Potter.

"He, he, he! I'll bet Quelchey won't say there's no harm in it!"

Billy Bunter's gloating cackle exasperated the members of the gang. But they realised that they were in the fat junior's hands.

Skinner had a fleeting thought of capturing Bunter, and keeping him a prisoner in the crypt. But that would not do. They would only be able to keep Bunter a prisoner for a couple of days, at the most, and then the facts would come to light, and the "B. B." would be exposed and punished.

"What are we going to do?" asked Bolsover major helplessly. "We've got to keep Bunter from blabbing, somehow!"

"There's only one thing for it," said Skinner, at length. "We must make Bunter a member of our society, and swear him to secrecy, according to the rules."

"My hat!"

Skinner's suggestion did not find favour with the others. But they realised that they would have to adopt it. Something would have to be done to keep Billy Bunter's tongue from wagging.

"Look here, Bunt," said Skinner, forcing himself to speak affectionately. "How would you like to be a member of our society?"

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Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles. The idea of becoming a member of a secret society appealed to him strongly.

"I'll join like a shot," he said, "provided you make me your right-hand man."

"That's all right," said Skinner. "Of course, you must understand that everything we plan and do has got to be kept dead secret. Any member who reveals our plans is liable to be—"

"Shot at dawn!" said Coker.

"Exactly! We can't have any traitors in the camp!"

"Look here," said Bunter. "Am I the sort of fellow who's likely to give any secrets away? Have you ever known me fail to keep a secret?"

"Never!" said Skinner solemnly.

"Well, hardly ever," amended Bolsover.

"I'll be as mum as a mouse," said Bunter. "And from now on, Skinny, you can count on me as your right-hand man."

"Half a jiffy!" said Skinner. "Before becoming a member of the Black Brotherhood, you'll have to take the vows."

"Eh?"

"You can't become a Black Brother until you're properly sworn in. The ceremony won't take long. All you've got to do is to obey my directions. Drop on to one knee!"

"Look here—"

"You're wasting our time by humming and hawing," said Skinner. "Down you get!"

Billy Bunter dropped on to one knee, as requested.

"Now say this after me," said Skinner solemnly. "'I, William Gorgor Bunter—"

"My name's William George!" said the fat junior indignantly.

"Sorry!" "I, William George Bunter—"

Bunter repeated the words.

"Do hereby solemnly state, swear, vow, and promise, that I will be loyal to the Black Brotherhood through thick and thin, through storm and shine, for better for worse, for richer for poorer—"

"Hold on!" gasped Billy Bunter. "You're going too fast!"

"Sounds as if you're conducting a wedding, Skinny!" chuckled Bolsover major.

"I am!" said Skinner. "Bunter's being wedded to the Black Brotherhood. Now, Bunt, you will repeat what I said just now."

"I can't remember it," said Bunter. "Still, the long and short of it was that I'm to back you up all along the line. I promise that."

"Then we'll proceed. 'I also solemnly state, swear, vow, and promise that I will not divulge any of the Brotherhood's secrets—'"

"That I will not indulge in any of the Brotherhood's secrets," said Bunter. "Ass! I said 'divulge,' not 'indulge'!"

"Well, it's the same thing, isn't it?" said Bunter peevishly.

Skinner gave a snort.

"You're not intelligent enough to belong to my society," he said. "Oh, every well!" said Bunter, rising to his feet. "I'll go and have a friendly jaw with Quelch—"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Coker, in alarm. "Skinner was only pulling your leg, Bunt! What he really meant was that you were too intelligent—that you've got more brains than the rest of us put together!"

"In that case, I ought to be president of the society!"

"Ahem!" said Skinner. "Down on your knee again, Bunt, and we'll com-

plete the ceremony. 'I will not breathe a word to a soul—'"

"What about?" asked Bunter, in surprise.

"Chump! That's what I want you to say after me. 'I will not breathe a word to a soul concerning the meetings that take place in the crypt. I will at all times obey the commands of Brother Skinner—'"

"I'm not so sure about that," said Bunter.

"Well, you can't join the society unless you agree to make yourself subservient to my inexorable will," said Skinner.

"My hat! Did you crib that from a parliamentary speech, Skinny?"

"In vulgar language, you've got to toe the line," said Skinner. "Even Coker realises that. He belongs to a higher Form, but he recognises my authority as president and founder of this society."

"Every time!" said Coker.

"And it's up to you to follow suit, Bunt. I'll make you a vice-president, if you like!" added Skinner graciously.

"All serene," said Bunter. "How many more vows have I got to make? I'm tired of squatting on one knee like this. I've got the cramp in all my joints, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's only one more thing for you to repeat," said Skinner. "If I am ever false to the society, in word or deed—if I ever blossom into a giddy traitor, then—"

"If—" said Bunter.

"When I shall be perfectly willing to be bumped, biffed, pulverised, and flayed alive—"

"I shan't be willing at all," said Bunter.

"Never mind. You've got to repeat the formula."

Bunter repeated it.

"You will now be duly anointed as a member of the Black Brotherhood," said Skinner. "Pass the oil-can, Bolsy!"

Billy Bunter looked up in alarm.

"Wharrer you going to do?" he gasped.

"Simply squeeze a little of this fluid over your napper," explained Skinner. "Ready?"

Before Bunter had time to launch a protest, Skinner squeezed the triangular-shaped oilcan, and a jet of liquid shot over the nape of the victim's neck, and dispersed itself over his hair.

"Yarookoo!" roared Bunter.

"The shower-bath completes the ceremony," said Skinner calmly. "You may now consider yourself a duly elected member of the Black Brotherhood. You are now one of us. You've sworn never to betray our secrets, and you know the penalty!"

Billy Bunter rose to his feet, dabbing at his head and neck with a pocket-handkerchief.

"You've got a jolly queer way of electing your members!" he growled. "Now, I want to know something about the inner working of this show. How did you manage to kidnap all those fellows?"

Skinner & Co. explained their methods, and Billy Bunter listened with great interest. It tickled his vanity to think that he was a member of a secret society, and that he was in possession of all their secrets, and he resolved to make use of his membership to serve his own ends.

After a discussion lasting twenty minutes the meeting broke up.

Skinner went, first up the stone steps, and gave the "all clear" signal, and the other members trooped up after him.

Loder of the Sixth, infuriated at the loss of his cake, was still looking for Billy Bunter with an asphalt.

But the Owl of the Remove was wise in his generation. He kept out of Loder's way until bed-time, and the Sixth-Former could not touch him then, Faulkner being the prefect on duty.

Billy Bunter was usually the first to fall asleep in the Remove dormitory. But on this occasion he lay awake until past midnight. He was debating what steps he should take, now that he was a member of Skinner's secret society.

"I know!" he muttered, at length. "Quelch's going to be my first victim! He licked me yesterday for eating toffee in class. The beast! I'll give him a scare on Monday. I'll jolly well make him sit up!"

And, having formed that decision, Billy Bunter fell asleep, and his trumpet-like snore reverberated through the dormitory.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Bombshell for the Brotherhood!

SUNDAY passed peacefully and uneventfully at Greyfriars.

Hurree Singh had expected to receive one of the warning notices from the "B.B." But evidently the mysterious gang did not believe in breaking the Sabbath.

"I shall expect to find a letter in the rackfulness to-morrow morning," said the Nabob of Bharanipur, as he strolled out of gates with his chums.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Your turn will come, Inky," he said. "There's no doubt about that."

"I'd give a term's pocket-money to be able to track down this gang!" said Dennis Carr. "I'm still convinced that Coker of the Fifth has got something to do with it. He's been behaving jolly queerly lately. He and Potter and Greene have been absent from their study for hours together."

"Nothing in that," said Bob Cherry. "Personally, I don't think Coker's clever enough to belong to a secret society. He'd have given the whole show away long ago."

And that was the general opinion.

Next morning there was quite a scramble on the part of the juniors to get to the post-rack. There was a letter for Hurree Singh, certainly, but it was from India. No anonymous letter was in the rack.

"You'll get it at breakfast, most likely," said Nugent. "It'll be on your plate."

But it wasn't!

"Wonder if the 'B.B.'s' shut up shop?" said Jack Drake.

"I expect they're lying low for a bit," said Johnny Bull.

Although Hurree Singh had not received a communication that morning from the "B.B.," there was somebody at Greyfriars who had.

That somebody was Mr. Quelch.

On going down to his study early in the morning, the Remove-master discovered a missive lying on his desk, beside his typewriter.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "Who is this from, I wonder? The writing on the envelope seems familiar."

Mr. Quelch opened the envelope, and drew out a half-sheet of notepaper. Then he frowned darkly.

The following quaint message—not in printed capitals, but in a scrawling hand—greeted the Form-master's gaze:

"Mister Quelch.—Yur tern has come! Befour weather day has dawned you will find yourself in the haet! The mysterious 'B.B.' Society will have you in its gripp! BEWARE!"

Mr. Quelch's expression, as he perused THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 623.

that threatening communication was simply thousandous.

"This—this is outrageous!" he gasped. "Never before have I been subjected to such monstrous impudence!"

Mr. Quelch was perfectly aware who had written the letter. The scrawl, the spelling, the phraseology—whose could they be but Billy Bunter?

In his colossal stupidity, Bunter imagined that he would be safe from detection. It did not occur to him that the handwriting and spelling would give him away. He lacked the cleverness and cunning of Skinner, who had disguised his handwriting by using printed capitals.

"That boy Bunter must be out of his senses!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "He has issued a threat to me, his Form-master! Is it possible that he is the leader of this nefarious gang that has been giving so much trouble of late?"

Mr. Quelch's first impulse was to send for Billy Bunter, and deal with him there and then. But on second thoughts he decided to wait and see what would happen. He put the letter in his pocket, and made his way to the dining-hall.

Quelch's looking pretty black this morning! murmured Bob Cherry, as the Remove-master took his seat at the head of the table.

Harry Wharton nodded. "There's trouble brewing for somebody!" he muttered.

Billy Bunter gave a fat chuckle as he bent over his eggs and bacon.

"I know why Quelch's looking like that," he whispered. "He's scared out of his wits!"

"Eh? Why should he be scared?" asked Johnny Bull.

"He's going to be dealt with to-day by the 'B.B.'," said Bunter.

Skinner and Dolsover major scowled at the fat junior, and beckoned him to be silent.

"How do you know that Quelch's been threatened by the 'B.B.'?" demanded Dennis Carr.

Billy Bunter gave a knowing wink.

"You trust your Uncle Bill to know these things," he said. "I don't miss much that goes on in this place. I tell you, before the day's out Quelch will find himself in the soup!"

"Bunter!" Mr. Quelch's rasping voice made the fat junior jump.

"Ye-es-s, sir!"

"What were you saying, Bunter?"

"Ahem! I—I was saying that I wished we could have some soup, sir."

"Soup for breakfast, you stupid boy? Why?"

"We always have soup for brekkar at Bunter Court, sir."

"You are not at Bunter Court now!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Moreover, I am convinced that such a place does not exist. You will oblige me, Bunter, by remaining silent."

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. I'm not at all a talkative sort of chap—"

"If you utter another word, Bunter, I shall award you an imposition!"

Billy Bunter relapsed into silence. And breakfast passed without any further incident.

During morning lessons the juniors found Mr. Quelch in a very aggressive mood. He dealt out impositions and canings on the slightest provocation; and Billy Bunter, who was the most backward pupil in the class, came in for a very bad time.

"The awful tyrant!" he muttered, as he rolled out of the Form-room after lessons. "Never mind! I'll get my own back on him this evening!"

The fat junior had said no word to Skinner and the others of his intentions. They did not know that he had sent Mr. Quelch a warning notice. Had they known it they would probably have massacred their latest recruit.

Mr. Quelch was again on the war-path during afternoon lessons. Billy Bunter attributed the Form-master's conduct to panic.

"He's shaking in his shoes!" he reflected. "He knows jolly well that before the day's out he'll fall into the hands of the 'B.B.' Serve the beast right! I shan't spare him!"

After lessons, Mr. Quelch had a golfing appointment with Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

As the two masters walked to the links together, Mr. Quelch frequently glanced back over his shoulder.

"You appear to be nervous about something, Quelch," said Mr. Prout. "I am not nervous," was the reply. "I am merely watchful."

"But why?"

"I anticipate being attacked by a clumsy and misguided band of young hoodlums!"

"Bless my soul! Are you referring to the gang which has caused such a sensation of late?"

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"It is a pity," said Mr. Prout, "that I left my Winchester repeater behind—a great pity!"

"On the contrary, I regard it as a blessing," said Mr. Quelch drily.

"But in the event of an attack—"

"You would probably shoot me in error!"

Mr. Prout frowned.

"Really, Quelch, you have no right to say such a thing! My ability as a marksman is indisputable."

"We will agree to differ on that point," said Mr. Quelch.

"But do you seriously anticipate an attack?"

"I should not be surprised if I were pounced upon at any moment. But do not be alarmed. The gang in question consists of a number of Greyfriars boys, and I am anxious to discover who they are, and to deal with them accordingly!"

The two masters reached the links without mishap.

In the ordinary way, Mr. Quelch was a better golfer than his colleague. But he was badly beaten on this occasion. His mind wandered from the game, and he was constantly on the look-out for signs of an impending attack.

But nothing happened.

On the way back to the school, Mr. Quelch strained his eyes and ears for every sight and sound. He fully expected to be suddenly waylaid by a number of masked figures. But his expectations were not realised.

Mr. Quelch spent the evening in his study. He was occupied with his "History of Greyfriars"—that celebrated work, which, like the brook, seemed destined to go on for ever.

Occasionally the Form-master paused at his typewriter and listened. But all was silent.

The hours passed by, until it was the juniors' bed-time.

"Evidently that wretched boy has abandoned his wild intentions!" murmured Mr. Quelch. "After sending me that absurd letter, he thought better of it, and is taking no action."

To tell the truth, the Remove-master was disappointed. Nothing would have suited him better than for Billy Bunter to walk right into his arms.

Satisfied that no attack would be made upon him that night, Mr. Quelch resumed his work.

Eleven o'clock found him still at his desk. And barely had the last stroke of the hour died away when there was a sound of cautious footsteps in the corridor.

Mr. Quelch rose quietly to his feet. He crossed over to the electric-light switch and plunged his study into darkness. Then he took up his position in front of the mantelpiece and waited.

A few seconds passed. Then the door of the study was thrown open, and a fat figure rushed in.

Mr. Quelch heard the intruder's quick breathing. Then he heard Billy Bunter exclaim, in tones of intense disappointment:

"What a sell! Quelch's gone to bed!"

"He has not, Bunter!" came in a voice of thunder. "He is here!"

"Ow! Oh crumls!"

The fat junior, utterly unarmred, made a bolt for the door.

But he was too late. Mr. Quelch strode across the room and intercepted him, and then he switched on the electric-light.

"Why, good gracious!"

The Remove-master was fairly staggered on catching sight of Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was attired in a long, black cloak, and his face was hidden by a hideous, grinning mask. A water-pistol was clutched in his plump fingers.

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch, in a terrible voice.

"Nunno, sir!" panted the fat junior.

"You're quite mistaken, sir. I can assure you! It isn't me at all!"

"Boy!"

"You've got hold of the wrong end of the stick, sir!" said Bunter, who was so agitated that he scarcely knew what he was saying. "I—I'm Skinner, sir!"

"Do not stand there telling such flagrant and palpable untruths!" shouted Mr. Quelch. "Remove that ridiculous cloak and mask immediately!"

"Oh, help!"

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Billy Bunter's knees were knocking together with fright.

The fat junior had been confident of giving Mr. Quelch the scare of his life. But the boot was on the other foot. It was Bunter who was scared—and not without good reason.

"Obey me, Bunter!" rumbled the Remove-master.

Billy Bunter removed the cloak and then the mask. His complexion was a sickly yellow, and his little round eyes were fixed beseechingly on Mr. Quelch.

"I—I didn't mean any harm, sir!" he faltered. "I—I know you've got a sense of humour, and can take a joke, sir. And this is a jolly good joke, isn't it? He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter finished up with a feeble and mirthless cackle.

"A joke!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Do you suppose for one moment, Bunter,

that I shall treat this matter in a spirit of flippancy? You have committed an unpardonable offence, for which you richly deserve to be expelled!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You sent me a threatening letter, and you followed it up by invading my study at eleven o'clock at night, with intent to attack me!"

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir! I—I wouldn't harm a hair of your head, sir!"

"Then why did you burst into my study in such a manner?"

"I—I just wanted to give you a slight scare, sir!"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"You are, I believe, the president of the ridiculous gang known as the 'B.B.'?"

he said.

"Nunno, sir! Skinner's the president."

"Ah!"

"I'm nothing to do with the gang,

sir. I've got no connection with it whatever. I resigned long ago—that is to say, I've never been a member!"

"How dare you tell me such falsehoods, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, sir! As if I'd ever have anything to do with a gang of hoodlums like Coker and Potter and Greene! Do I look like an anarchist, sir?"

Billy Bunter certainly did not, at that moment. He looked more like a frightened rabbit.

"Coker! Potter! Greene!" echoed Mr. Quelch, in amazement. "Do you mean to tell me, Bunter, that those three boys belong to this wretched gang?"

"Yessir. And then there's Snop and Stott and Bolsver major—"

"Good gracious!"

Billy Bunter hoped, by reciting a

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 683.

"Skinner's Secret Society!"

(Continued from page 15.)

string of names, to divert Mr. Quelch's thoughts into other channels. By mentioning the other members of the Brotherhood, Bunter imagined that he would be making things better for himself.

Mr. Quelch gave a gasp. "It hardly seems possible," he murmured, "that boys like Coker, who are in a higher Form, and who are, therefore, supposed to possess a higher degree of intelligence, should so far forget themselves as to join a secret society."

"Well, it's a fact, sir. I think the whole business is disgraceful! The society ought to be stamped out at once, sir."

"And yet you yourself are a member of it!"

Billy Bunter shook his head vigorously.

"I'm nothing to do with the gang, sir," he repeated. "I didn't know anything about it until this evening, and then I stumbled across the secret society by accident. I found them holding a meeting in the crypt, and I warned them that I should report the matter to you, sir. And—and I've just come here for that purpose, sir," Bunter concluded.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"If you wished to come to me with a report, Bunter, why was it necessary for you to don that absurd cloak and mask? Why was it necessary for you to carry a water pistol? Moreover, why did you make such a statement, Bunter? The writing and spelling are your own, beyond all dispute."

"But I haven't done any harm, sir—in fact, I've done quite a lot of good. I've cracked down this secret society, and exposed it—"

"Be silent, wretched boy! You will return to your dormitory at once! I will place the full facts before Dr. Locke in the morning."

Billy Bunter almost tottered away from the Form-master's study.

Bitterly he regretted having threatened Mr. Quelch, and having attempted to carry out his threat.

He regretted it still more the next morning. The Head called a general assembly, and after informing the school that he was in possession of the names of all members of the Black Brotherhood, commanded them to come forward.

It was useless to ignore the command. Skinner & Co., and Coker & Co., after very little hesitation, walked up to the Head. Then followed a scene which Greyfriars will never forget—Fifth Formers being flogged in public. The Renovites concerned also received a flogging, and, as Bob Cherry put it, the Head's arm must have ached like Billy-o by the time the punishments were inflicted. Thus ended the brief, but by no means exciting, career of Skinner's Secret Society!

THE END.

(Full particulars of next week's story will be found in page 2.)

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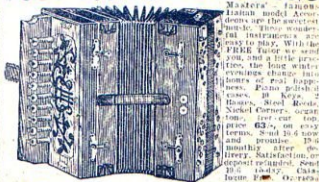
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