

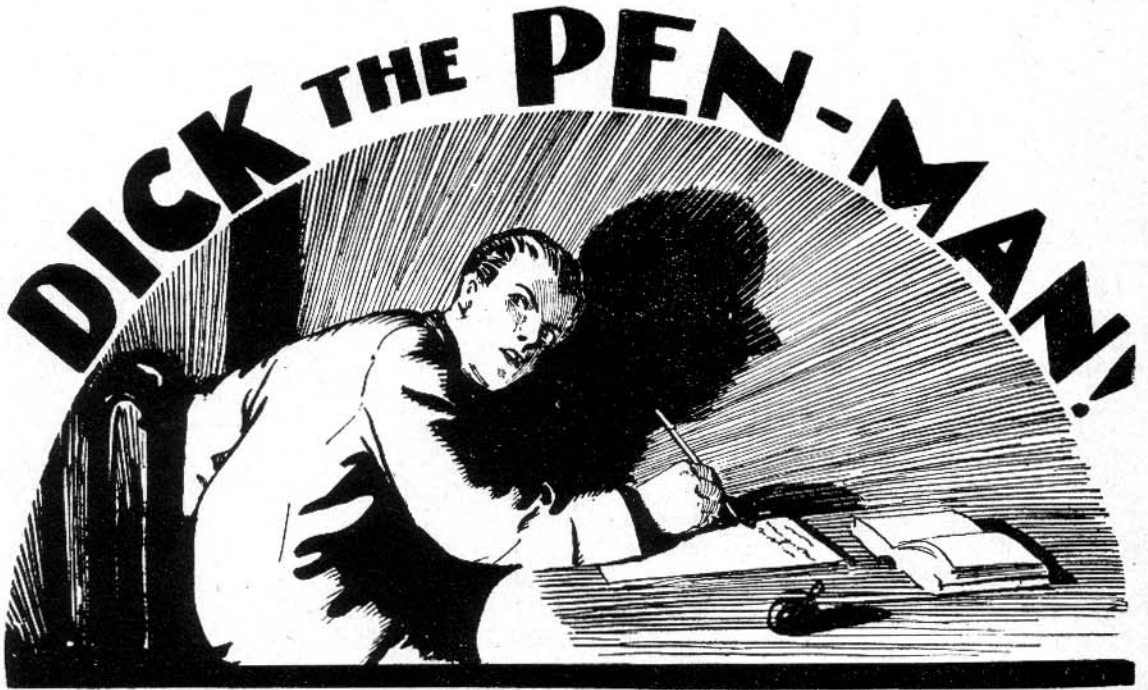
Grand New Year Number and 6 More Free Picture Stamps!

The MAGNET

2



*Billy Bunter's
Treat!*



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Hamper!

L END me—"
 "Bunter's beginning early," remarked Bob Cherry.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 It was the first day of the new term at Greyfriars School.
 Harry Wharton & Co. were on the Remove landing, where Peter Todd was relating to a chortling crowd of Removites how he had caught Coker of the Fifth in the ear with a snowball. He had dodged Coker in the Cloisters, and got back to the House, leaving Coker still hunting for him. Coker of the Fifth, according to Toddy, was still rooting about the Cloisters for the fellow who wasn't there, which seemed to entertain the merry Removites.

Billy Bunter came up the Remove staircase in haste.
 "Lend me—" he began breathlessly.

"Give us a rest, first day of term, old fat bean!" said Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I was going to say—"

"The speech may be taken as read!" said Bob Cherry. "You needn't tell us that you're expecting a postal order."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "I want you fellows to lend me—"

"Nothing doing!"
 "A hand!" roared Bunter.

"A which?" ejaculated Bob.

"A hand, fathead! My hamper's come! I want you fellows to lend me a hand to get it up to my study."

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry. "Who's going to lend Bunter a hand to get somebody else's hamper up to his study?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I say, you fellows, it's my hamper! It's in the lobby downstairs—Gosling put it there. It's too heavy for me. You fellows lend me a hand with it, and I'll

By FRANK RICHARDS.

whack it out in my study. I can tell you fellows it's a ripping hamper—from Bunter Court—"

"Gammon!" repeated Johnny Bull.
 "Oh, really, Bull—"

"Dear old Coker's still in the Cloisters," said Peter Todd. "I saw Potter and Greene looking for him in the quad. They love Coker on the first day of term—he always brings back something good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I say, you fellows—"

"Dry up, Bunter!"
 "But my hamper—"

"Rats!"
 Several Remove fellows had brought back hampers after the holidays. But nobody seemed to believe that Billy Bunter had a hamper from Bunter Court. They did not, as a matter of fact, believe even in Bunter Court! But it was quite possible that William George Bunter had taken a fancy to some other fellow's hamper. Bunter was a Bolshevik in such matters.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ring off, Bunter!"

"Look here, you silly chumps!" roared Bunter. "Seeing is believing. I suppose! Come down to the lobby, and you'll see the hamper. I'm going to whack it out with all my pals."

"Go and ask your pals to carry it up for you, then!" suggested Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! 'Tain't everybody who would offer to whack out a ripping hamper like that! There's such a thing as gratitude. I tell you the hamper's in the lobby—"

"Whose is it?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Mine!" yelled Bunter.

"Gammon!"
 "You can see the label on it! I say,

you fellows, do come and lend me a hand," urged Bunter. "Be pals, you know!"

Billy Bunter was in earnest—almost tearful earnest. And he was in a hurry. Evidently he was anxious to get at the contents of that ripping hamper.

"Look here, you fat duffer," said Bob Cherry, relenting, "if we come down and find that there isn't a hamper, we'll jolly well kick you—hard!"

"Done!" said Bunter at once.
 "Well, let's go and see!" said Bob.

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

"Bunter never has a hamper! We know all about the pinceries and vinerias at Bunter Court! Gammon!"

"Well, may as well go and see," said the good-natured Bob. "Bunter might be telling the truth for once. Miracles do happen."

"Beast! I mean, come on, old chap! You come, too, Wharton—two of you can manage it."

"Oh, all right!" said Harry.
 "Buck up!" said Bunter anxiously.

"I want to get it out of the lobby before—"

"Before the owner comes along for it?" asked Smithy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I—I mean, before Quelch sees it.

Quelch might make a fuss about a Remove man having so much tuck. They're stricter with us than the seniors. Do buck up, you fellows!"

"Coming!" said Bob.

And Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry followed the fat junior down the staircase, much to his satisfaction. In the lobby downstairs there were a good many packages, boxes, and hampers, and two or three fellows of various Forms were there.

Bunter cast an anxious blink round as he entered with Wharton and Bob. He blinked at Temp' o' the Fourth, Ogilvy of the Remove, and Hobson of the Shell. It really seemed as if the fat junior had been in dread of finding somebody else there.

Satisfied, however, after that anxious blink round, he rolled across to a hamper, and pointed it out with a fat finger.

"Here you are, you chaps! Buck up!"

"We'll look at the label first," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You see, we know you, old bean!"

"Well, look at it only buck up!" yapped Bunter.

"My only hat! It's Bunter's all right!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he looked at the attached label. "Wonders will never cease!"

Typewritten on the label was the style and title:

"W. G. BUNTER, Esq.,
Greyfriars School,
Kent."

Seeing was believing, as Billy Bunter had declared. Satisfied that the hamper really was Bunter's, Wharton and Bob Cherry heaved it up and bore it out of the lobby. It was a good-sized hamper, and it was well-packed and heavy. But the two sturdy juniors managed it easily enough.

Billy Bunter rolled after them, his little round eyes gleaming with satisfaction behind his big round spectacles.

"Buck up!" he gasped. "Here comes Walker!"

"What does Walker matter?" asked Bob.

"Oh, nothing! But buck up!"

Walker of the Sixth glanced at the juniors. Walker was a prefect, and had his official ashplant under his arm.

Billy Bunter seemed rather uneasy; but Wharton and Bob saw no cause for uneasiness. They carried the hamper on, regardless of Walker of the Sixth.

The prefect called to them in passing: "Here, Wharton!"

"Hallo, Walker!" answered the junior cheerfully.

"Have you been up to your tricks again?"

"What the thump do you mean?" snapped Wharton.

"Somebody's been larking in your Form master's study. Quelch says that his typewriter has been meddled with."

"Well, I haven't been there!" grunted Wharton. "I don't know anything about it."

Walker gave him rather a suspicious look. Last term Harry Wharton had found a great deal of trouble, and had been a good deal of a scapegrace. He had made good resolutions for the new term, and he did not like being reminded of the troubles of last term. Still, he could not quite expect the prefects to forget, all at once, that he had been a dog with a bad name.

"I say, you fellows, buck up!" urged Bunter.

Up the stairs went the two juniors with the hamper, Billy Bunter rolling on behind. Quite an interested crowd watched them as they reached the Remove landing. They were breathing rather hard by that time. It was quite a heavy hamper.

"Is that Bunter's?" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"Gammon!" growled Johnny Bull.

"It's Bunter's—his name's on the label," answered Wharton. "Might have given Gosling or Trotter a tip to bring it up, you fat boulder."

"Well, Gosling wouldn't have—I mean, I don't believe in tipping," said Billy Bunter. "Get it along to my study. I say, you fellows, all of you come! I'm going to whack it out!"

"Well, my hat!" said Nugent.

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Quite an army marched after the hamper to Study No. 7 in the Remove. It was rather an event for Bunter to get a hamper. It was a still more remarkable event for Bunter to stand a spread! If Bunter was cultivating new manners and customs in this style, Bunter was a man to be encouraged. All the fellows agreed on that.

The hamper was dumped down at last in Study No. 7. More than a dozen fellows crowded into the study. Billy Bunter, with his fat face beaming, got the hamper open. A sea of eyes stared into it. Seeing was believing. But really it was a surprising sight! The hamper was packed to the very brim with the best of good things.

Fellows wondered dizzily whether, after all, there really was such a place as Bunter Court! Pounds and pounds, at least, must have been expended on that hamper. Few fellows at Greyfriars got such consignments of tuck—wealthy fellows like Coker of the Fifth, for instance.

Still, seeing was believing, and there was Bunter's name plainly typewritten on the label. Billy Bunter's fat hands handed out the good things in large quantities. He filled his own capacious

At Greyfriars he is known as Jim Valentine, the new boy. To the underworld and the police he is known as Dick the Penman—a forger of considerable skill!

mouth to begin with, of course. With his mouth full, he handed out good things right and left.

"Pile in, you fellows! Grooogh! Go it! Ooogh!" Bunter choked a little, his large mouth being not only full, but rather over-full. "Don't leave anything! Wade in! I don't want anything left—not a crumb! I hope you've got good appetites. Pile in, all round!"

Such an invitation was not to be declined. Nobody dreamed of declining it. The study swarmed with Remove men, all piling in. Other fellows heard of what was on, and came along and wedged into Study No. 7, and piled in, too. Study No. 7 was crowded, not to say crammed. As the news spread there was an overflow meeting in the passage outside. And Billy Bunter, with his fat jaws going like clockwork, beamed hospitably over the happy crowd. He beamed in silence—his jaws too busy for speech.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Boy With a Past!

"THAT is the boy!" said Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master was in Dr. Locke's study with the Head. First day of term was a busy day for all the staff; but Mr. Quelch had found time at last to speak to the Head on the subject of the new boy in the Remove. The dusk was falling in the quadrangle at Greyfriars; but Dr. Locke, following with his eyes the Form master's gesture towards the window, saw the boy who was passing at a little distance outside.

He fixed his eyes on that boy with

considerable interest. It was the first time he had seen Jim Valentine, who was to join the Remove that day—if the Head consented, as Mr. Quelch hoped and expected. He was a good-looking, in fact, handsome, lad, with pleasant features, and dark, hazel eyes, a slim, but sturdy figure. And the expression on the boy's face was pleasing; it expressed so much contentment and happiness. There were fellows at Greyfriars School who groused about one thing or another; but this boy, Valentine, showed plainly enough that he liked to be at Greyfriars.

He passed on out of sight, and Dr. Locke turned his glance from the window, Mr. Quelch eyeing him anxiously.

"I like the boy's looks, Mr. Quelch," said the Head.

"I am glad of that, sir! He is waiting to be called in, when you can spare a few minutes to see him. I am aware, sir, that the circumstances are unusual." Mr. Quelch coughed a little. "As I acquainted you in my letter on the subject, I came into contact with the boy while on a visit to Wharton Lodge in the vacation. Owing to an accident to my taxi, I was lost in the fog, and should have spent a night in a frozen wood, but for this boy finding me and guiding me to safety. It was a very great service."

"No doubt!" assented the Head.

"Naturally, I questioned the boy, and learned that he was alone in the world, without relatives, and without friends, and without resources," went on Mr. Quelch. "I have to admit, sir, that all I know of him is that his name is Jim Valentine."

Dr. Locke coughed.

"But he has been at the school under my supervision, during the latter part of the vacation, and I have observed him very carefully. I am satisfied that he is a boy of good character. That he has been in bad hands is a fact. But it counts in his favour that he has left his former associates, and is extremely anxious to keep clear of them, sir."

"No doubt. But—"

"He desires to say nothing of these people, whoever they may be. He is unwilling to say anything at all concerning his past. I gather that he desires to make a fresh start, and dismiss the past from his mind entirely. I am assured that he is, personally, of an excellent character. But will you see him, sir, and judge for yourself."

"Please call him in, Mr. Quelch."

The Remove master stepped to the window, and made a sign to the boy strolling in the quad outside.

A minute later there was a tap at the study door, and Jim Valentine entered. Dr. Locke scanned him keenly.

It was a strange enough story that he had heard from Mr. Quelch concerning this boy, and he was interested and sympathetic. But allowing an unknown boy who had been in "bad hands" to enter Greyfriars School, was rather a serious matter. He had great faith in Mr. Quelch's judgment. But—there was a "but"—and a very considerable "but."

"Dr. Locke desires to question you, Valentine," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," said the boy, in his pleasant voice, respectfully.

The colour waved in his handsome face a little, as he stood before the headmaster.

His fate was to be decided now.

"Please answer me frankly, Valentine," said the Head kindly. "I learn that you very generously and bravely helped Mr. Quelch when he was in a position of difficulty, indeed danger.

That is very much to your credit. But I must know more than this before you can become a Greyfriars boy. You have been to school before?"

"I was at a prep school, sir, while my uncle lived."

"And after that?"

"I was left with nothing, and I went to a man whom my uncle had known, and to whose care he left me."

"Who was this man?"

Jim Valentine was silent. He had known that this questioning must come; but he knew that he could tell the Head nothing about Nosey Clark. Nothing would have induced him to lie; but he had to keep his secret.

"He was a bad man, sir," he said at last. "My poor uncle never knew—and I never knew at first—but he was a bad man. I thought he had taken charge of me out of kindness of heart; but I found—"

"You found what?"

"I found that he was a rascal, sir, and—and"—Valentine's face was flooded with crimson—"if I'd had anywhere to go, I'd have left him as soon as I found out the kind of man he was. I wish I had now, and chanced it! As it was, I stayed with him more than a year. But I ran away at last."

"His name?"

"I—I can't tell you anything about him, sir. I can't tell anybody."

The Head's face became very grave.

"Answer this question, Valentine! Was this man a breaker of the law?"

"Yes, sir!" said Jim, in a very low voice.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head blankly.

"The boy is frank and truthful, sir, as you see," said Mr. Quelch. "It would be quite easy for him to deceive us on this point."

"No doubt!" said the Head.

There was a long silence.

Jim Valentine broke it. The colour had faded from his face, and a worn look came over it. He had desired so much to stay at Greyfriars, to keep clear of Nosey Clark and the gang, that he had somehow counted on it, knowing that his kind protector would help him all he could. But, in the presence of the headmaster, he felt that he had been living the last few weeks in a dream, in a fool's paradise. It was not to be!

"I—I know it won't do, sir!" he faltered. "You can't take me in after what I've told you, and—and I can't tell you lies. I was a fool to think it was possible! Mr. Quelch was so kind and good that I hoped—" His voice trembled. "But I can see now that I was wrong to think of imposing on his kindness. Only it seemed such a chance of keeping clear of those villains. They'd never dream of looking for me in a place like this—I'd never see them again—never hear of them! But I know it won't do. I'll go, sir."

He made a movement towards the door.

"Stay!" said the Head, in a moved voice. "If you leave here, Valentine, what are your resources?"

"I—I have none, sir."

"You do not mean that you would return to the lawless persons you have spoken of?"

"Never that, sir!" said Jim Valentine. "Never!"

"Then what will you do?"

"I don't know yet, sir! I might be able to go to sea. I don't care what, so long as I keep clear of that gang."

There was another long silence.

"Leave me now, Valentine, but remain in the House," said the Head at last. "Wait in Mr. Quelch's study."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,299.

"Very well, sir."

Valentine went quietly out.

"This is a difficult matter, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "The boy's hopes have been raised, and it would seem cruel to dash them to the ground again. Yet—"

"I can only say, sir, that I am prepared, personally, to answer for the boy, and to take full responsibility as if I were his guardian," said the Remove master.

"That, indeed, should be sufficient, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "If the poor lad indeed has no relatives—"

"He has none, sir, according to what he has told me, and I believe him implicitly—so far as he knows, at least. He had an uncle, who went abroad when he was a small boy, and of whom he has never heard since. He does not know whether this relative is living or not. Apart from this man, he has no connections whatever."

The Head meditated.

"If, sir, you felt disposed to trust my judgment in the matter—" said Mr. Quelch.

"Quite!" said the Head. "I shall trust to your judgment, sir, and the matter shall be as you wish."

He had made up his mind at last, though perhaps with a lingering doubt. Mr. Quelch rose.

"Dr. Locke, I can only thank you," he said, and he left the Head in a very thoughtful and meditative mood.

Jim Valentine was waiting for the Remove master in his study. He gave him an anxious look as he came in.

"The matter is arranged, Valentine," said Mr. Quelch. "From this day, you will be a Greyfriars boy."

Jim caught his breath.

"Oh, sir! I—I think that perhaps I ought to go—perhaps some day you may be sorry for this—"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch decisively. "I am taking you, to a great extent, on trust, Valentine; and I have made myself personally responsible for you to the headmaster. Your school fees and other expenses will be my care. I am sure that you will never give me cause to regret it."

The tears stood in Valentine's eyes.

"You may go, my boy," said Mr. Quelch kindly. "I have placed you in Wharton's study in the Remove, as you met Wharton during the holidays, and seem to have made friends with him and his friends. I hope that will continue. As for what may have happened in the past, I advise you to dismiss it entirely from your mind, and remember only that you are Valentine of the Greyfriars Remove."

The boy's heart was too full for words. But his look was eloquent. He left the Remove master's study in silence.

Mr. Quelch glanced after him benevolently. He was sure that he had not been mistaken in the boy; he was glad that he had been able to find him a safe refuge from old, bad associations, and provide him with a chance in life. But what he would have thought, had he known all that Jim dared not tell him, was a dismaying puzzle to the boy. If he had known of Nosey Clark, the crook, of Barney Hayes, the thug, and Nutty Nixon, the crackman, and the rest. If he had known of "Dick the Penman"—wanted by the police—and known that Jim Valentine in the underworld had been Dick the Penman. He should never know, the boy told himself passionately. Dick the Penman was dead and done with, and Valentine of the Remove lived in his place. And yet, at the

back of the boy's mind was a lingering fear that the shadows of the past were not to be so easily shaken off.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Coker is Cross!

YOU young sweep! Got you!" Jim Valentine jumped.

He had walked out of the House, after leaving Mr. Quelch, and strolled into the dim, old Cloisters. The winter dusk was deepening to darkness as he sauntered there, his hands in his pockets, a wrinkle of thought in his boyish brow.

He was a Greyfriars fellow now—that was fixed and settled. He was in the Remove, beginning the new term with the rest—and owing to the chance encounter at Wharton Lodge, in the Christmas holidays, he already knew some of the Remove fellows—Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and the Nabob of Bhanipur, and had made friends with them.

They knew about Nosey Clark—but they had said that they would not talk of what they knew, and he had no doubt about that. He had forgotten that there was another fellow he had met at Wharton Lodge—no other than William George Bunter, who would not have been flattered had he known that he was forgotten. But he had seen Bunter only once, and then only for a few minutes, and had hardly noticed that fat fellow in spectacles, he would not have known that he was at Greyfriars, if it came to that. So, now that his fate was settled, the future seemed rosy to Jim Valentine—and, as Mr. Quelch had advised him, he resolved to drive the memory of the past from his mind.

He was thinking it over as he walked in the dim, solitary Cloisters, when his meditations were suddenly interrupted. A burly fellow loomed out of the shadows, rushed down on him, and grabbed him by the shoulder, and announced in triumphant tones that he had "got" him.

Valentine stared at the stranger. Coker of the Fifth had "got him," there was no doubt about that; but the boy wondered what the big fellow wanted him for. He wriggled in Coker's powerful grip.

"I'll teach you to chuck snowballs at a senior!" roared Coker.

"Thanks," said Valentine. "I don't want any teaching! Who the thump are you, and what the dickens is this game?"

"Oh!" said Coker. He peered at the boy in the thick dusk. "Ain't you Todd?"

"No; I'm Valentine," said Jim, laughing.

"Some new tick?" growled Coker, releasing him. "Have you seen Todd?"

"Shouldn't know him if I saw him."

"He chucked a snowball at me, and dodged into here," grunted Coker. "I've been after him, and I thought—"

What the dickens are you doing here, mooching about, you young sweep?"

"Talking to a silly ass at the present moment," answered Valentine cheerfully.

"What?" roared Coker.

"A silly ass!"

"By gun!" said Coker of the Fifth. He was searching for Potor Todd, to annihilate that cheeky youth. Todd had vanished, but this new tick seemed just as cheeky, and Horace Coker was not the man to stand cheek from a junior. Coker, as he often told Potter and Greene, had a short way with fags.

This fag had called him—Horace Coker of the Fifth Form—a silly ass! Coker had no use for painful truths of this sort. He grabbed at Valentine again.

"I'm jolly well——" began Coker, as he grabbed.

Bump!

How the slim, new junior hooked his leg and up-ended him, in spite of his sinewy grasp and his extensive bulk, Coker never knew. But he knew that the new kid did it; for he suddenly pitched forward, and his prominent nose embedded itself in the snow. With a chuckle, Jim Valentine disappeared into the shadows, and was gone.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Ow! My hat! Why, I'll smash him—I'll spifficate him—I'll pulverise him—I—I—I'll——"

laughing matter, William Greene. I've just come across another cheeky fag—a new tick—and he had the cheek to hook my leg, and bump me down wallop when I was going to whop him! Greyfriars is coming to something! And if you fellows think it funny——"

"Not a bit of it, old chap!" said Potter soothingly. "Let's get in, old fellow—we've missed you—fellows want to see you on the first day of term, you know——"

"You neglect your friends a little, old fellow," said Greene. "Might let a pal see something of you, first day of term."

Coker was mollified. Coker was not a suspicious or distrustful fellow. It was natural, of course, that his pals should want to see him after a long parting which must have been painful

manded Coker, addressing the world in general. "Anybody shifted my hamper? Gosling put it here! You shifted my hamper, young Temple? I'll jolly well kick you if you have."

"Haven't seen your hamper," said Temple of the Fourth disdainfully. "Bother your silly hamper!"

"You shifted my hamper, young Field?"

"Not guilty, my lord!" answered Squiff of the Remove.

"Look here, that hamper was here!" exclaimed Coker excitedly. "Where's that hamper? Where's that dashed hamper—what? Who's shifted my hamper?"

Potter and Greene looked round for it. There were two or three hampers to be seen, but the names on them were



Satisfied that the hamper was really Bunter's, Wharton and Bob Cherry heaved it up and bore it out of the lobby. Billy Bunter rolled after them, his little round eyes gleaming with satisfaction behind his big round spectacles. "Buck up!" he gasped. "Quelch might make a fuss if he sees it!"

Horace Coker scrambled up and glared round for the new tick. But the new tick had vanished; and the smashing, spifficating, and pulverising were unavoidably postponed. Snorting with wrath, Coker of the Fifth tramped away. Valentine was gone; and it had dawned on Coker's powerful brain by this time that Toddy must have dodged him and escaped. He tramped away across the quad towards the House.

"Oh, here you are!" Potter and Greene of the Fifth came up. "Been looking for you, Coker."

"Seen young Todd of the Remove?" snapped Coker.

"Eh? No! Why?" asked Greene.

"He caught me in the ear with a snowball——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Coker. "I can tell you it isn't a

to them! It was plain that they wanted Coker's company now—and the unsuspecting Coker did not dream that it had anything to do with the hamper he had brought back to school with him. In point of fact, Potter and Greene were less keen on Coker's company than on Coker's hamper. Fortunately, the great Horace did not guess that.

"Well, come on," he said. "Those cheeky fags will keep! I've got a hamper in the lobby—let's go and sort it out. I'll get Trotter to take it up to the study—what?"

And the three Fifth-Formers went in. There were several fellows in the lobby, sorting over the things there, when Coker & Co. arrived. Coker strode across to the spot where Gosling had deposited his hamper—and stared at the spot. It was a vacant spot now.

"Hallo! Where's my hamper?" de-

not Coker's. Potter picked up a detached label from an obscure corner. It bore the style and title of Horace Coker.

"Hallo, here's the label!" he said.

Coker stared at it.

"That's the label," he said. "But where's the hamper? What?"

"Lost a hamper?" yawned Walker of the Sixth, who was opening a box. "What sort of a hamper? Rather a heavy one?"

"Yes. Seen it?"

Walker chuckled.

"I saw some Remove kids walking one off," he answered. "That young sweep Wharton was one of them. Cherry and Bunter were with him. It may have been their own hamper, of course."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,299.

There was a roar from Horace Coker.

"My hamper! My hat! I'll jolly well—Come on, Potter! Come on, Greene!"

Coker stalked away in great wrath. "Hold on!" gasped Potter. "For goodness' sake don't kick up a row with the Remove, Coker! Wharton wouldn't touch your hamper!"

"Wouldn't he?" roared Coker. "Isn't he always up to something? Wasn't he jolly nearly sacked last term for playing tricks? Of course it was my hamper! Isn't my hamper gone?"

"Yes; but—"

"Well, I'm going to see! If they've got my hamper, I'll smash 'em! Come and lend a hand!" hooted Coker.

He tramped up the stairs. Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. They wanted the hamper; but they did not want a row with the Remove, especially on the first day of term, when those lively young gentlemen were a little out of hand, and likely to be unusually obstreperous. Potter and Greene sagely resolved to leave Coker to interview the Remove on his lonely own, and they disappeared in another direction while Coker of the Fifth tramped up to the Remove passage.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Horrid for Horace!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Jolly old Coker!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter, in Study No. 7, started. A jam-tart, which was going the way of all jam-tarts, stuck half-way as the fat Owl jumped; and Bunter gurgled.

"Groogh! I say, you fellows—woogh! Is that Coker? Ooooh! D-d-don't let him come in here! Groogh!"

Horace Coker tramped wrathfully up the Remove passage. He had little doubt that his hamper had been carried off by unlawful hands. He had no doubt at all, when he sighted the crowd of fellows gathered round the doorway of Study No. 7—every one of them rejoicing in the possession of some excellent thing of an edible nature. And as he shoved through the crowd, stared into the study, and saw the open hamper there—empty by this time—his rugged face grew purple with wrath and indignation.

"Want anything, Coker?" asked Harry Wharton. "Heard that there's a spread on? Give Coker a bun!"

"Hear, hear!" said Peter Todd. "Let's be hospitable! A bun for Coker!"

The Removites chuckled. It was only too clear that Coker did not want a bun. He looked as if he had come hunting for trouble. The Remove fellows had no objection to letting him have what he had come hunting for. They thrived on trouble in the Greyfriars Remove.

"You young villains!" roared Coker. "My hamper!"

"Your hamper!" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, my hamper!" roared Coker. "Walker saw you bagging it, and here it is! And—and my tuck gone! My hat!"

"Draw it mild, old bean," said Nugent. "This is Bunter's hamper."

"It's my hamper!" roared Coker. "Think I don't know my hamper when I see it? My Aunt Judy packed it

under my own eye! Bunter's scoffing the tarts that Aunt Judy made herself! Why, I—I—I—I!"

"Oh, don't be an ass—if you can help it!" said Wharton warmly. "This is Bunter's hamper—his name was on the label. Hampers are much alike, old bean. Perhaps yours hasn't come!"

"You young sweep—"

"My esteemed and idiotic Coker—"

"You cheery nigger—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry, "I don't like Coker's manners! They're all right for the Fifth; but they won't do in this passage. Lend me a hand with Coker!"

"What-ho!"

"Collar him!"

"Hands off!" roared Coker. "I tell you that's my hamper, and I'll jolly well—Whooop! Yooooop! Yarooooop!"

Coker feared no foe, and never counted odds. Really, it would have been more judicious, on Coker's part, to count odds. Remove fellows jumped up on all sides and collared Coker. Hands that seemed innumerable were laid on the great Horace. Coker had come there for his hamper, and for vengeance. He got neither the hamper nor vengeance. What he got was a heavy bump on the floor of Study No. 7. Innumerable juniors scrambled over him, grasping, grabbing, and clutching. Coker struggled and roared and bellowed.

"Kick him out!" shouted Squiff.

"Boot him out!" roared Toddy.

"Hurrah!"

"This way, Coker!"

"I say, you fellows, roll him down the stairs!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Making out it's his hamper! Roll him down!"

"Outside, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

How many fellows had hold of Coker, the dazed and dizzy Horace could not have computed. Some had his arms, some had his legs; others had his ears, his neck, his hair, and his nose. In the midst of a yelling mob of Removites, Coker of the Fifth went along the Remove passage to the stairs, gurgling, gasping, and guggling.

Billy Bunter gasped with relief when he was gone from Study No. 7. Bunter did not join in ejecting Coker. His assistance was really not needed; there were plenty of fellows to deal with Coker. Bunter resumed operations on the bag of jam-tarts—which, according to Coker, had been made by his Aunt Judith. Those jam-tarts went down one after another, like oysters. Everybody else lent a hand with Coker. Bunter concentrated on the jam-tarts.

"Leggo!" roared Coker, as he went whirling along the passage. "You young sweeps—whoop!—I'll smash the lot of you—yarooooh!—I'll go to Quelch—I'll go to the Head—I'll go to—Whoooooop!"

Bump!

Coker rolled on the Remove landing.

"Now all kick together!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yarooooop!"

Coker rolled.

A junior who was coming up the Remove staircase, jumped aside just in time as Horace Coker rolled down. Valentine, in amazement, stared after Coker as he went, bumping from stair to stair, and then stared up at the Removites. Jim Valentine was unaccustomed, as yet, to the merry ways of the Greyfriars Remove.

Coker reached the lower landing.

There he sprawled and roared. There was a shout of laughter from above.

"Come up again, Coker!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Lots more if you want it!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"The lotfulness is terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker scrambled up. Red with wrath, he charged up the Remove staircase.

"Look out, Valentine!" shouted Wharton.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Valentine. "Here, I say! Leggo! Great pip!"

He staggered under a terrific smite that Coker gave him on his way up. He lost his footing, clutched Coker to save himself, and they went rolling down together.

Bump! Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

They landed together on the lower landing. Valentine struggled up breathlessly. Coker grabbed him and thumped.

"Rescue!" shouted Harry Wharton.

And the whole crowd of juniors rushed down the Remove staircase. Coker was collared on all sides again, and Valentine got away. Then the great Horace was sent rolling down the lower stairs.

Valentine, gasping, went up to Study No. 1. The rest of the crowd packed the landing, yelling down after Coker of the Fifth.

"Come up again, Coker!"

Coker scrambled up. He glared up the stairs at the juniors. But this time he did not accept the invitation to come up again. Even Coker realised that it was not good enough. Spluttering for breath, Coker limped away, followed by howls and yells and cat-calls from the Remove.

"So much for Coker!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

And the victorious Removites crowded back to their passage, satisfied with having dealt faithfully with Coker of the Fifth.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Beastly For Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"All serene, old fat bean!"

"Is—is—is he gone?"

"The goneliness is terrific!"

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter. "Checky ass, you know, making out that this was his hamper! Hampers are much alike! I—I say, you fellows, finish those cream puffs! Don't leave anything!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Coker seems to have missed a hamper, though," said Peter Todd.

"This can't be it, as it was addressed to Bunter. But—"

"I dare say Coker's hamper hasn't come yet," said Bunter hastily. "In fact, I'm sure it hasn't. I didn't see Gosling bring it in."

"You didn't see Gosling bring it in?" repeated Harry Wharton, staring at the fat Owl.

"No, old chap. I was in the lobby at the time, too."

"At the time he didn't bring it in?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes—no, I mean—I—I mean, have—have some of those toffees, old chap! Better get the lot finished! No good leaving anything! I—I say, where can we shove the hamper?"

"Better shove it in the box-room if you want to get rid of it," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, it might be found there—"

"What does that matter?"
 "Oh, nothing! Still, Coker might make out—"
 "What might Coker make out, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, with a rather grim look at the Owl of the Remove.

He was beginning to have an alarming doubt. It was, at least, an odd coincidence that Coker of the Fifth should have missed a hamper at the very time that William George Bunter was in unexpected possession of one!

"Well, you—you know what a fool he is," said Bunter. "He might make out that this was his hamper, as they're exactly alike—"

"How do you know they're exactly alike if you haven't seen Coker's hamper?"

"Oh—I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Nothing, old chap! Have some of those nuts?"

"Never mind the nuts!" said Harry Wharton. "I'm beginning to think that—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. He was beginning to think, too!

"I told you it was gammon!" growled Johnny Bull. "Looks to me as if you've helped that fat sweep bag another fellow's hamper!"

"Oh, really, Bull, you've jolly well had a whack in the tuck, anyhow!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "You'll have to stand by me if Coker goes to Quelch!"

"If Coker goes to Quelch!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What does it matter if Coker goes to Quelch if it's your hamper?"

"Oh, nothing! Have—have some of those chocs, old chap?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder. "I thought there was a catch in it somewhere! It's Coker's hamper!"

"But it was addressed to Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Look at the label! It's addressed plain enough—typewritten, too!"

"Yes, that's so," Smithy was puzzled. "Looks all right! All the same—"

"Look here, Smithy, don't you be a suspicious beast!" exclaimed Billy Bunter warmly. "Think nobody ever has a hamper but you? This hamper was sent to me by one of my titled relations."

Bob Cherry gave a sudden yell. A light had suddenly flashed on his mind.

"That label—typewritten!" he spluttered. "You remember what Walker said—somebody has been messing about with Quelch's typewriter in his study!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wharton.

"Bunter, you fat villain—"

"Bunter, you podgy pirate—"

"Bunter, you bloated brigand—"

"I—I—I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter, in alarm, "it's all right! It's my hamper! I never changed the labels—"

"Changed the labels!" gurgled Peter Todd.

"I—I never thought of such a thing, you know! I—I wouldn't! I never went into Quelch's study at all. As for using his typewriter, I wouldn't! You know what a fuss he makes if anybody touches his typewriter! In fact, I'd quite forgotten that Quelch had a typewriter at all. Besides, I don't believe he's unpacked it. It wasn't standing on his table when I went to his study—I mean, when—I never went to his study—that is—"

"Spoofer!" chuckled the Bounder.

"You—you—you pernicious porpoise!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You took the label off Coker's hamper, and put a new

one on, addressed to yourself on Quelch's type—"

"I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter. "I say, old chap, that's frightfully suspicious, when I've stood you such a ripping spread, too! Talk about ingratitude being a sharper tooth than a serpent's child—"

"You've bagged Coker's hamper!" roared Bob.

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter. "You bagged it—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"You and Wharton!"

"Why, you—you—you—"

"If you're thinking of putting it on me, I can tell you I think you're jolly mean!" said Bunter indignantly. "I had nothing to do with it, as you jolly well know. Walker saw you carrying the hamper, too! Walker's a witness, and he's a prefect! Not that it's Coker's hamper! It's mine—sent specially from Bunter Court! Still, if Coker makes out that it's his hamper, I expect you fellows to own up that you walked it off! That's only cricket!"

The juniors gazed at Bunter.

The cat was out of the bag now!

you out of a scrape!" said Bunter warmly. "As matters stand, you and Wharton are booked for a row—walking off a Fifth Form man's hamper under the very eyes of a prefect—"

"Slaughter him!"

"Not that it's Coker's hamper," added Bunter. "I keep on telling you that it's my hamper, straight from Bunter Court. But Coker might make out that it's his—he's untruthful!"

"Ye gods!" gasped Peter Todd.

"It's all your fault, too, Toddy!"

"Mine!" yelled Toddy.

"Yes. If you hadn't snowballed Coker, he wouldn't have cleared off after you, and I shouldn't have had time to change the labels. I—I say, you fellows, if Walker tells Quelch that he saw you walking off the hamper, you needn't mention anything about the label! Quelch might be down on me for that!"

"After all, it's not a bad thing," said the Bounder thoughtfully. "Bunter will be sacked for this! It's worth a row."

Yelp, from Billy Bunter.

"You beast, Smithy! What have I done, I'd like to know? I say, chuck

STILL THEY COME!
Watch Out for Next
Week's MAGNET, and
Six More Free Picture
Stamps!



You will also find six
FREE STAMPS in each
of this week's issues of
"Ranger" and **"Modern**
Boy."

*Be Sure You Add Them to Your
Collection, Chums!*

They knew whose hamper that hamper was!

And almost everything in that gorgeous hamper had been devoured! It was a well-packed hamper—Aunt Judy had put in no end of good things for her beloved Horace. But many hands make light work. Sixteen or seventeen fellows had joined in the spread. Nearly everything was gone—but the hamper! The hamper remained if Coker wanted it!

"Well, my only hat!" said Frank Nugent at last. "Coker's hamper—"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Coker's hamper—and we bagged it! And we rolled him downstairs for coming up after it!" gasped Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—"

"There'll be a row about it!" grinned the Bounder. "Coker won't take this lying down! He will go to Quelch!"

"I—I say, you fellows, let's chuck the hamper out of the window," said Bunter. "Then we can all say that we never had it—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"If—if we all say the same thing, you know!" said Bunter hopefully. "Quelch might doubt my word—he's doubted it before! I dare say he would doubt yours, Wharton, as you were such a rotter last term! But the other fellows—if they all swear that the hamper was never here—you, Bob, and you, Franky, old chap—Quelch will take your word—"

"Kill him, somebody!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I'm trying to get

that label on the fire, will you, Franky? I'd rather Quelch didn't see it!"

"Slaughter him!"

"I say, you fellows— Yaroo! If this is what you call gratitude—Whoop! Leggo! Why, you beasts, I've stood you a ripping spread— Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Give him what's left!" gasped Harry Wharton, as the fat Owl was grasped on all sides.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I don't want any more. I—I— Groogh—oooh—woooch—groooch!"

Only a few things remained! Such as they were, Bunter had them! A couple of jam-tarts were squeezed down the back of his neck. A cream-puff was flattened on a fat cheek. A jar of Devonshire cream was mixed with his hair, with the addition of a pot of jam. A tin of golden syrup streamed over his fat features. A crusty roll was thrust into his capacious mouth.

Billy Bunter had enjoyed the spread, but he was not enjoying the conclusion thereof. All these things, taken internally, were grateful and comforting; taken externally, they were horrid. Bunter wriggled and squirmed and gasped and spluttered.

"Ware prefects!" called out Hazel-done from the passage.

Wingate of the Sixth looked into the study.

"Wharton here?" he rapped.

"Here!" said Harry.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,299.

"You're wanted in your Form master's study."

"Oh! All right!"

There was rather a cloud on Harry Wharton's brow as he repaired to Mr. Quelch's study. The trouble of the past term was over and done with; all was forgotten and forgiven. He had resolved that there should be no trouble this term—that his Form master should never have a fault to find with him. Was the new term, after all, to begin with trouble?

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Trouble?

MR. QUELCH'S face was very grave when Wharton entered his study. His gimlet eyes fixed severely upon the junior.

On the first day of term the Form master's duties were many and multifarious; and he really had no time to concern himself with reckless ragging by the Remove fellows.

He hoped, and he believed, that Harry Wharton, the scapegrace of the school last term, had turned over a new leaf. In that belief he had visited Wharton's home during the vacation; and the junior, at Wharton Lodge, had certainly confirmed him in the belief that he had seen the error of his ways, and resolved on amendment. Yet now—

Mr. Quelch was prepared to give the former scapegrace every chance. But if Harry Wharton was recommencing his wild ways with the new term, the Remove master intended to make it quite clear, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a very firm foot would be put down on it.

"I have sent for you, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch. "The matter is serious. A Fifth Form boy has complained that a hamper belonging to him has been taken to the Remove studies. Is this the fact?"

"Well, yes, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"I have the statement of a Sixth Form prefect that you were one of the Remove boys who carried it off."

"Yes, sir, but—"

Mr. Quelch's face hardened.

"This is, I presume, what you would call a rag," he said. "Every allowance is made for a little wildness on the first day of term, Wharton. I am very far from desiring to be unduly strict. But the appropriation of another boy's property is very far beyond a jest. If the hamper can be returned intact—"

"It—it cannot, sir—"

"Am I to understand that the contents have been disposed of?" asked Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Yes!" gasped Wharton.

"Wharton! This is a serious matter! Surely, my boy, you have no intention of resuming your lawless and reckless conduct of last term?"

Wharton crimsoned.

"I—I was taken in!" he stammered. "I—I never knew it was Coker's hamper. I—I thought—"

"That is a very strange statement," said Mr. Quelch. "I understand that the hamper came by railway, and was addressed to Coker at the school."

"Yes, but—but—"

Wharton broke off. Bunter's fatuous trick with the label was, in the fat Owl's opinion, a mere trifle; in fact, rather a neat and clever performance. But a beak was certain to regard it as a very grave matter—as indeed it was!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,299.

A Head's flogging was the very least that would have been awarded to the fatuous Owl, and he might have been expelled for such a thing. Billy Bunter's fat brain moved in mysterious ways, its wonders to perform; and the Remove fellows made allowances for his impenetrable obtuseness. But the view of a beak was certain to be more severe and drastic.

It was simply impossible to give Bunter away to condign punishment. Wharton would gladly have kicked him from one end of Greyfriars to the other and back again. But giving him away was another matter.

His silence and confusion caused Mr. Quelch's face to harden. The Remove master waited for Wharton to speak; but he did not speak.

"Have you anything to say, Wharton?" he rapped at last.

"I—I— You see—" stammered Wharton. "I—I—"

He broke off again, in confusion.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"I will question you no further, Wharton," he said curtly. "You have been guilty of a foolish prank, for which you will take two hundred lines. I shall direct Coker to ascertain the value of the goods he has lost, and that amount must be paid; I shall regard you as being responsible for it. You may go!"

Wharton left the study in silence.

His brow was darkly clouded.

He went back to the Remove passage. He could see his friends there, in a group at the doorway of Johnny Bull's study—No. 14. He did not go along the passage to join them. He went into Study No. 1, and shut the door after him with a slam.

There was a rather startled exclamation in the study. That sudden slam of the door had made a fellow there jump.

Wharton uttered an exclamation, too, of annoyance. He had supposed that the study was empty; having forgotten for the moment the new boy who had been assigned to Study No. 1. But Jim Valentine was in the study, sorting over some books, and he dropped one of the books as the door slammed.

He glanced across at Wharton the next moment with a smile, a glimmer of amusement in his dark hazel eyes. Wharton coloured with vexation.

He was feeling angry, and he had slammed the door, but it was annoying for anyone to have witnessed that rather childish exhibition of temper.

"Oh, you're here!" he said awkwardly. "I'd forgotten you!"

"Yes, I'm here," said Valentine cheerfully. "Anything the matter?"

"Oh, nothing special!"

Wharton turned to the door again. But he stopped. It was hardly civil to walk out of the study just because Valentine was there.

"Getting settled down here?" he asked, by way of being civil.

He really rather liked Jim Valentine, and wanted to make the new fellow feel at home in the study.

"Oh, yes!" answered Valentine.

"I've had time to settle down. I've been here most of the vacation—since Christmas, you know. Only it wasn't settled till to-day that I was to stay definitely."

"It's definite now?"

"Yes; the Head and Quelch have fixed it."

"I'm glad!" said Harry, sincerely enough.

He had inward doubts whether it was wise for Jim Valentine to become a

Greyfriars fellow; but he was glad on the boy's own account.

"That's jolly decent of you," said Valentine gratefully. "Knowing what you do about me—I mean, about Nosey Clark and his gang—I shouldn't be surprised if you'd object."

"What rot!" said Harry.

"Anyhow, if you'd rather not have me in your study—" Valentine hesitated.

"You like the study?"

"Yes, rather; and I should be jolly glad to be here with you and Nugent!" said Valentine frankly. "But if you don't like the idea, put it plain. I shan't be offended in the very least."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But I do like the idea!" he said. "There's some rather queer things about you, Valentine; but I feel sure that you're a straight chap personally. And I don't care about anything else. How do you get on with Quelch?"

Valentine's face softened.

"Fine! He's a splendid man, isn't he?"

"Oh!" said Harry, rather taken aback.

At the bottom of his heart Wharton had a very deep respect for his Form master. But his recent interview had roused again something of the old antagonism.

"A splendid man!" repeated Valentine. "I did him a little service, nothing much—never even thinking that he would remember it afterwards. And he—well, he's more than remembered it. He's standing my school fees here."

"By Jove, is he?"

"I'm not telling all the school that, of course; but you know how I'm fixed," said Valentine. "I suppose he's fairly well-off; but it's frightfully generous of him. Isn't it?"

"Very!" agreed Harry. "He's a good old bean."

"I shall repay him some day, I hope," said Valentine. "But, that's rather in the air at present—naturally."

"I suppose so. He's a good man," said Harry, with a twinge of remorse for the bitterness he had been feeling only a few minutes ago. "He's really one of the best, though he's rather a Tartar. I had a lot of trouble with him last term—"

"Did you?"

"I dare say the fault was more mine than his—"

"I think you can bank on that," said Valentine quietly. "He's a good man, if ever there was one."

"I can see he's got a champion in this study, anyhow," said Harry, smiling. "But you're right, kid, and I'm going to be more careful this term. I've got into rather a row with him already."

"I'm sorry for that," said Valentine seriously.

"That idiot, Bunter, pulled my leg," growled Wharton. "I'm really not to blame this time. But Quelch, of course, remembers last term. I've got two hundred lines—really for nothing."

He paused a moment.

"I was an ass to get my back up. I see that. Come along and see some of the fellows, Valentine!"

"Right-ho!"

The two juniors left Study No. 1 together, Wharton's brief spasm of temper over and his face cheerful and smiling again.

Jim Valentine had poured oil on the troubled waters, and it was, perhaps, just as well for Harry Wharton that the boy who had fled from Nosey Clark was at Greyfriars that day.



As Coker made a grab at Valentine, the slim new junior hooked his leg and up-ended him, in spite of his sinewy grasp and extensive bulk. Bump! The great Horace pitched forward and his prominent nose embedded itself in the snow. "Oh!" he gasped. "Ow! My hat!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Bunter!

TODDY, old chap!" Peter Todd did not answer that affectionate address in words. He picked up a cushion.

Billy Bunter eyed him warily from the doorway.

Bunter had been busy, since the feast in Study No. 7, cleaning off the remnants of the feast that had been plastered over him.

Since then Bunter, much to his indignation, had found himself unpopular.

A fellow who had stood half the Form a record spread on the first day of term might have expected popularity to accrue. Instead of which, almost every fellow who saw Bunter kicked him.

The trouble was, that after the feast came the reckoning. Coker of the Fifth really could not be expected to lose that gorgeous hamper and receive, in exchange, nothing but a ragging from the Remove.

Mr. Quelch had informed Wharton, who passed the news on to the Remove, that the hamper had to be paid for. They admitted that was only fair and just. Still, it was extremely irritating and awkward. Wharton was made responsible, Mr. Quelch being under the impression that he was the ringleader in the affair. Most of the fellows were ready to stand their whack, when it came to that. But some fellows, human nature being what it was, declined to play up in that respect. They left it to Bunter—and, really, it was up to Bunter! But nothing, of course, was to be expected from Bunter. This little financial affair looked like being rather troublesome before it was done with.

All the fellows agreed on one thing

—that William George Bunter deserved to be kicked—hard and often. They kicked him hard and they kicked him often, and Bunter did not like it in the very least.

In his own study, where the great feast had taken place, Bunter felt that he might have expected better things. But it was plain that he was going to be disappointed. Blinking at Peter Todd from the door, ready to dodge, he could see that Toddy was going to be a beast, like the rest.

Watching Toddy warily, Bunter stepped into the study. The cushion flew, and he jumped back through the doorway just in time.

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "Come in again!" invited Peter Todd. "I've got the inkpot ready."

Bunter did not come in again. He rolled wearily down the passage. Vernon-Smith was in the doorway of his study, and he reached out with his foot as Bunter passed, and landed quite a good one.

The fat Owl roared and scuttled on. It was only too evident that William George Bunter was unpopular in his Form!

The door of Study No. 12 was open and Bunter blinked into that apartment hopefully. Lord Mauleverer was the best-tempered fellow in the Remove.

"I say, Mauly—"

Mauleverer was reclining gracefully on his study sofa. He had unpacked two or three books. After this exertion his lordship required a rest.

"Yaas?" yawned Mauly.

"Shall I help you to unpack, old chap?"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"Nohin' doin'," he answered. "I'm poolin' the tuck with Wharton's lot—supper in their study."

"I—I wasn't thinking of tuck, of course!"

"No, you wouldn't be," agreed Mauly. "Not in your line at all—what? But of you'd like to make yourself useful—"

"Certainly, old chap!"

"There's a Latin dic on the table, I think—"

"Yes, here it is."

"Hand it to me, will you?"

"What the thump do you want a Latin dictionary for, Mauly? There's no prep to-night—first night of term! You're not mugging up Latin for fun?"

"Not at all! But I want that dic, and it's too much trouble to get up and get it, see?" yawned Mauly.

"Well, here you are!" Billy Bunter handed over the Latin dictionary. "Blessed if I see what you want it for."

"Only to chuck at you, old bean."

"What?" yelled Bunter.

"Stand steady!"

Instead of standing steady, Bunter jumped into the passage. He blinked at Lord Mauleverer round the corner of the doorway.

"Look here, Mauly, you ass—"

"I'm lookin'. But I can't get you with this dic when I can only see your silly nose," complained Lord Mauleverer. "Show up!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter.

"Look here, Bunter, I can't hold this dic for ever. It makes a fellow tired. Come into the study!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away again.

After that tremendous feed in Study No. 7, anyone who did not know Bunter might have supposed that he would not be very anxious about supper.

As a matter of fact, Bunter was quite anxious. It did not take Bunter long

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,299.

to recover from the most extensive feed. He decided to go down to Hall, and rolled down the Remove staircase with that object in view. At the foot of the lower staircase he sighted three Fifth Form fellows—Coker and Potter and Greeno.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

He did not want to meet Coker of the Fifth! He trudged wearily up the Remove staircase again.

The door of Study No. 1 was half open, and there was a sound of cheery voices within. The Famous Five were all there, and they were making preparations for a study supper on a magnificent scale, though not quite so magnificent as that feast in Study No. 7 had been.

Billy Bunter stopped at Study No. 1.

There were six fellows in the study. Bunter could hear a voice that did not belong to any of the Famous Five. It had a faint familiarity, as if he had heard it before somewhere. So far, Billy Bunter's eyes—and spectacles—had not fallen on the new fellow in the Remove.

He hesitated long at the door. One good turn deserves another, and after that gorgeous spread in Study No. 7 the least those fellows could do was to ask him to supper, Bunter considered. But the fat Owl had a foreboding that if he showed up in Study No. 1 he would not be asked to sit down. He was much more likely to be made to sit up!

"A dozen fellows, at least." He heard Bob Cherry's voice. "Well, there's lots of tuck—Manly's lot and ours, and—"

"The lofulness is terrific!"

"We shall have to get some chairs along the passage—"

Billy Bunter inserted a fat face and

a glimmering pair of spectacles into the doorway.

"I say, you fellows, shall I fetch you some—some chairs?"

"That fat scoundrel—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Kick him!"

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I say, don't be beasts, you know. I stood you a jolly good spread in my study at tea-time—"

"And we're going to get a bill in for it from Coker!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Leave that to me," said Bunter recklessly. "I shall pay it, of course! Never mind how much it comes to. Leave it to me."

"And where are you going to get the cash, you fat fraud?" demanded Nugent.

"I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Oh, squash him!"

"Kick him!"

"Burst him!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows—" Billy Bunter broke off suddenly as his eyes fell on the sixth fellow in the study.

He blinked at that fellow in blank astonishment, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles. He forgot even supper in his amazement.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Jim Valentine! I say, you fellows, what is that fellow doing here?"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Keeping it Dark!

JIM VALENTINE was staring at Bunter.

He had forgotten the existence of the fat fellow he had seen at Wharton Lodge, never dreaming that he would ever see him again.

But he knew him at once when he saw him.

Bunter was a fellow whose appearance was easily remembered. His circumference leaped to the eye.

Bob Cherry had lifted his foot to assist Bunter into the passage. He dropped it again, and stared.

All the Co. had joined up cheerily with Jim Valentine, finding him a Greyfriars man. It was tacitly understood that they were going to say nothing about his former mysterious and questionable connections. They had rather forgotten about Bunter, and the fact that he had seen Valentine in the holidays. And had, of course, heard a great deal of discussion about him at Wharton Lodge. Even had he not seen him, Bunter would have remembered his name as soon as he heard it spoken at Greyfriars. But he had seen him, and evidently he recognised him at once. He was gazing at him in blank amazement.

There was a rather painful silence in the study. Jim Valentine broke it.

"Is that chap here—I mean, is he a Greyfriars chap?" he asked.

"Yes; that's Bunter," said Harry.

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter found his voice.

"I say, you fellows, that's Valentine! That's the chap who was running away from those crooks—Nosy Clark, wasn't the name? I say, what have you got him here for? You'll get into a row if Quelch sees him."

"You fat owl!" growled Bob Cherry. Valentine's handsome face paled a little. He set his lips.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter fairly gasped. "Suppose the Head knew that fellow was here—"

"Fatead!"

"I'm not going to tell anybody, of course," said Bunter. "I'm not a sneak! Still, you'd get into a row."

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—"

"But what the thump have you got him here for?" demanded Bunter. "How on earth did he turn up at Greyfriars? Is this man Nosy still after you, Valentine?"

Valentine made no answer to that.

"You frabjous owl!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Shut up! Valentine's a Greyfriars man now! He's in the Remove!"

"Gammon!" grinned Bunter.

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Can't you see it's so? Valentine belongs to this study."

"Pile it on!" grinned Bunter.

"It's true, you fat fool!" snapped Wharton.

"That chap a Greyfriars man!" repeated Bunter. "Look here! What's the good of trying to pull my leg? If he is, I'll bet you the Head don't know anything about Nosy Clark. He, he, he!"

"You burbling bandersnatch!" said Bob. "Valentine's a new kid here, and he's seen the Head, and seen Quelch."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

It was borne in upon Billy Bunter's fat brain that it was true.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter. "Fancy finding him here! I thought he was a crook or something, mixed up with that gang, you know."

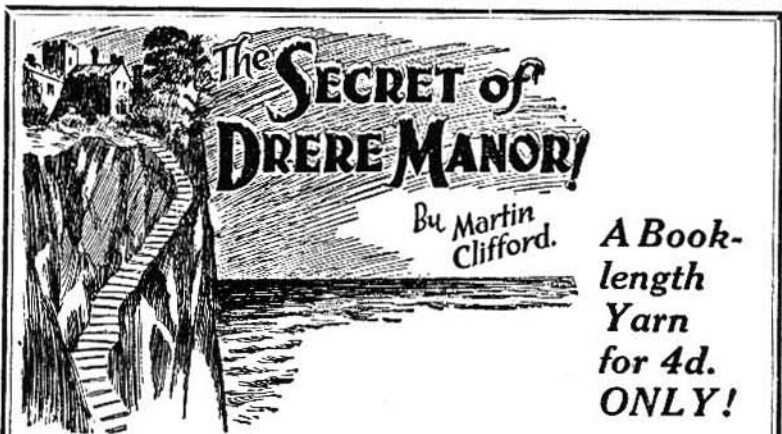
"You howling ass!"

"You pernicious and preposterous idiot—"

"Well, what was a fellow to think?" said Bunter. "He was jolly well mixed up with them, and they were after him. Still, if you fellows are friendly with him, I don't mind being friendly. What about supper?"

Billy Bunter came back to the really important topic.

The chums of the Remove exchanged rather uneasy looks. Obviously it was better, in Jim Valentine's new career



TOM MERRY & CO., the cheery chums of St. Jim's, decide to spend their Christmas holidays with Kit Wildrake, in a lonely manor, high on a cliff-top, overlooking the sea. Strange things happen in Drere Manor when a ghostly visitor arrives, and the St. Jim's juniors have many thrilling adventures before the ghost is eventually laid. Boys, here is a really gripping Christmas adventure yarn, packed with thrills that will set your nerves tingling! Get a copy to-day—and get the thrill of a lifetime!

Ask for No. 186 of

SCHOOLBOYS' OWN
Library - Now on Sale - 4^d.

as a Greyfriars man, for nothing to be said about Nosey Clark & Co. That was easy enough, so far as the Famous Five were concerned. It was not so easy with Bunter. To keep Bunter from tattling about what did not concern him, was a task that might have made a thirteenth labour for Hercules harder than any of the other twelve. Wharton decided to make the effort, however.

"Look here, Bunter," he said quietly, "Valentine's a Greyfriars man now—a Remove man like the rest of us. There's no need to jaw about anything that happened while you were staying at my place at Christmas—see?"

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He saw!

And he grinned.

"The least said the sooner the cracked pitcher goes to the well, as the English proverb remarks," said Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"He, he, he!"

"Do you understand, you sniggering rhinoceros?" growled Bob.

"Oh, yes, rather!" grinned Bunter. "Rely on me, old chaps! I'm not a fellow for tattling, as you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Not like some fellows I could name," said Bunter. "I'll keep it dark, if that's what you want. I can keep a secret—trust me! If it gets out in the school, it will be through you fellows gabbling. You know what a gabbling lot you are."

"Why, you fat freak—" roared Johnny Bull.

"Mum's the word," said Bunter. "That's all right. Now, what about supper?"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"I'll buzz off, if you like," said Bunter, with dignity. "I'm not a fellow to butt in where my company's not appreciated, I hope. Of course, if you don't treat me as a pal, you can hardly expect me to keep secrets for you."

"You can stay to supper, Bunter," said Wharton hastily.

"That's hardly the way to put it, Wharton. If you mean that you want me to stay to supper, and ask me decently—"

Wharton breathed hard.

"Look here, you fellows," said Jim Valentine restively, "you needn't bother on my account."

"That's all right," said Harry. "Stay to supper, Bunter. Look here, lend a hand getting the things unpacked."

"Right-ho, old fellow!" said Bunter. "I say, those mince pies look good! Mind if I try one or two to see what they're like?"

Without waiting for a reply Billy Bunter proceeded to try the mince pies. He went on trying them, without a pause, while the preparations for supper went on. The fact that all the fellows in the study yearned to kick him into the passage did not worry Billy Bunter in the least. So long as he wasn't kicked into the passage, that was all right.

Supper was ready at last, and the guests began to arrive. Lord Mauleverer came in, and Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, Squiff and Tom Brown, Toddy and Hazeldene, Penfold and Newland, and more fellows. Study No. 1 was filled to capacity. There was a faint cloud on Jim Valentine's hand some face—Billy Bunter had given him rather a shock. But Bunter soon forgot Valentine's existence in his deep interest in the foodstuffs.

It was quite a merry supper in Study No. 1. The study was crowded—in fact, a little over-crowded. But Remove fellows were used to that on such

festive occasions. The supply of tuck was ample and good, and that was the chief thing. Valentine was soon quite at his ease in the cheery crowd, and he forgot Bunter.

It was not till the function was nearly over that Billy Bunter, having packed away all that even his extensive interior could hold, remembered Valentine, and the fact that something like a secret had been confided to his keeping. He nudged Peter Todd, who was next to him.

"Noticed that new chap, Toddy?" he whispered.

"Eh—yes? What about him?" asked Toddy indifferently.

"His name's Valentine," whispered Bunter. "I've seen him before."

"Know him?" said Peter, without much interest.

"Well, I should hardly know him, considering his connections," said Bunter. "Do you've seen him before. He, he, he!"

Bob Cherry gave the fat Owl a glare across the table.

Bunter winked in response.

"All right, old chap! I'm not going to say anything," he said. "Mum's the word, old fellow! Don't you worry!" And Bunter sniggered.

**HE'S STARTED THE NEW YEAR WELL!
HE'S WON A SPLENDID POCKET WALLET!**

Congratulations to Edward Laidlaw, of Brockmoor Farm, West Sleekburn, Choppington, who sent in the following Greyfriarslimerick:

**Coker's Jigger's an old curiosity,
But it speeds with amazing velocity.**

**While Horace, begoggled,
Is jolted and joggled,
Attempting to quell its ferocity.**

"What's the jolly old joke?" asked the Bouncer, staring at Bunter.

"Oh! Nothing!" answered the Owl of the Remove. "I'm not going to tell you anything about Valentine, Smithy!"

"About Valentine?" Smithy glanced round at the new junior. "What is that fat ass driving at?"

"Talking rot, as usual!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The jawfulness of the esteemed Bunter is too terrific," remarked Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky! I'm not going to say anything," said Bunter. "I can keep a secret, I suppose."

"So there's a secret, is there?" asked Hazeldene. "Cough it up, Bunter! You may as well tell us to-day as to-morrow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "Who's that backing me under the table? Whoop! Look here, you beast—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When the supper-party in Study No. 1 broke up, Billy Bunter hooked on to Vernon-Smith as the Bouncer went up the passage.

"I say, Smithy—" His fat whisper was audible in Study No. 1. "I say, that new kid, Valentine—you'd never guess— He, he, he!"

It did not look as if the secret would be kept long. That supper for Bunter had been a sheer waste!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

No Takers!

JIM VALENTINE took his place in the Remove the following morning. Settling down to the collar, for the new term was not a process that most Remove fellows enjoyed; but there was an expression of cheery satisfaction on Valentine's face that drew more than one kindly glance from his Form master.

The other fellows had not been through experiences like his; and to them the dusky old Form-room was not the haven of refuge, the safe harbour after a perilous voyage, that it was to the boy who had been called "Dick the Penman" in Nosey Clark's gang. Judging by his looks, Jim might have been enjoying class with Mr. Quelch—which the most studious fellow in the Remove seldom did.

He came out in break with the Famous Five, who considered that it was up to them to show the new kid some attention. The other fellows were civil enough to him—some of them friendly. Some fellows gave him rather curious glances, however. Billy Bunter was "keeping it dark" in his own way; and his nods and winks and mysterious hints had roused some curiosity about Valentine. But he looked a decent fellow, and was evidently on pally terms with the leaders of the Form, and that was good enough for most of the Remove.

There was still some snow in the quad, under the old elms, and Valentine joined cheerily in snowballing Coker of the Fifth, a merry crowd of Removites driving that great man across the quad under a regular fusillade, much to his indignant wrath. Billy Bunter was looking for Valentine in break, having something very special to say to him; but Bob Cherry, perhaps by accident, gave Bunter a snowball that had been kneaded for Coker, and the fat Owl retired spluttering.

It was as the Remove went in for third school that Bunter found an opportunity of speaking to Valentine—and he spoke in a stage whisper audible to half the Form.

"I say, old chap, I haven't said anything, you know!" said Bunter.

Instead of expressing grateful acknowledgment, as Bunter doubtless expected, Valentine walked to his place, as if deaf, taking no notice of Bunter at all.

The fat Owl blinked after him rather indignantly.

This was not the sort of treatment Bunter expected from a fellow to whom he was doing kind and generous favours.

The Owl of the Remove decided, in his fat mind, that the sooner the fellow learned that he had better be civil, the better it would be for him.

After third school, he hooked on to the new junior as the Remove came out, grabbing his arm with a fat paw.

Valentine shook his arm impatiently. But Bunter held on.

"I've got something to say to you, old chap," explained Bunter. "Hang on a minute. It's rather important."

"Cut it short, then," said Valentine.

"Oh, really, you know! A letter I was expecting this morning hasn't come," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I was expecting a postal order, old chap."

"Well?" said Valentine impatiently.

"Well, it hasn't come."

"Is that all?"

"As we're friends," said Bunter, with quiet dignity, "I thought that you wouldn't mind lending me the pound."

Valentine laughed.

"Sorry, I've no pounds to lend," he answered.

"I mean, the ten shillings—"
"Sorry, I've no ten shillings to lend—"

"That is to say, the five bob—"
"Make it twopence!" suggested Valentine.

"Of course, I mean it only as a temporary loan," explained Bunter, unheeding that suggestion. "My postal order will be here this afternoon. It's from one of my titled relations, you know! Lend me the half-crown—"
"Bow-wow!"

Billy Bunter frowned. Having reduced the amount of the postal order to half-a-crown, Bunter expected the new fellow to play up. If the fellow was short of cash, Bunter was prepared to temper the wind to the shorn lamb, as it were. But half-a-crown was the minimum.

"Now, look here, Valentine," he said, "one good turn deserves another. You see that? I'm doing you favours! I'm not the fellow to make a song about it. Still, there it is! A half-crown isn't much—especially as I shall square tomorrow morning, when my postal order comes. What about it?"

"If you mean that you want me to give you half-a-crown to hold your silly tongue, forget it!" was Valentine's answer.

"Why, you—you—your cheeky rotter!" gasped Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to punch your cheeky head! Like me to tell all the fellows about Nosey Clark?"

Jim Valentine gave Bunter a look; and then, grasping him by his fat shoulders, sat him down on the quad, hard.

Bunter roared.

Valentine walked away with a knitted brow, leaving him to roar.

"Ow! Beast! Oh crikey! Wow! I say, Toddy, give a chap a hand up!"

Peter Todd came along, and kindly gave a chap a hand up. But as he grasped Bunter's ear for the purpose, Bunter did not seem grateful.

"Ow! Beast! Leggo my ear!" he roared. "Wow! Yah! Beast!" Bunter rubbed his ear. "Wow! I say, Toddy, see that chap Valentine—"

"I'm not blind!"

"Well, I know something about him," said Bunter. "I was going to keep it dark, but he's cheeky, and I jolly well won't, see? I'm going to tell you all about him, Toddy!"

"Your mistake—you're not!" said Peter. "Sit down again."

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as he sat down again with a bump. Peter Todd walked off, grinning.

Billy Bunter scrambled up in wrath. Toddy did not seem inquisitive on the subject of the new fellow. But the angry and indignant Owl was not going to keep secrets for a fellow who did not understand that one good turn deserved another. He hooked on to Squiff.

"I say, Field, you saw that chap Valentine in Wharton's study last night—"

"What about it, fathead?" asked the Australian junior.

"He's an awfully shady fellow," said Bunter impressively. "Fearfully bad character, mixed up with a lot of crooks."

Sampson Quincy Ifley Field stared blankly at Bunter.

"Potty?" he asked.

"I'm telling you, old chap, because you're captain of the Remove and I think you ought to know," said Bunter. "That shady rotter is some sort of an awful character—"

"Turn round!" said Squiff.

"Eh? What for?"

"I'm going to kick you!"

"Why, you silly idiot—" gasped

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,299.

Bunter. "Mean to say you don't believe me?"

"Believe you? Well, not quite! But you mustn't make up these yarns about fellows," said Squiff. "Will you turn round?"

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I won't!"

Squiff grasped the fat Owl and slewed him round. In horrid anticipation of what was coming, Bunter started to run. Squiff's foot caught him as he started, and accelerated him. He flew.

"Wow! Beast! Wow!" howled Bunter.

Apparently, Bunter's remarkable statements concerning the new fellow were not believed. But it was no new experience for Billy Bunter not to be believed! It was quite an old experience!

He bore down on Mark Linley as the latter came out of the House.

"I say, Linley, there's something I ought to tell you, as you're head boy of the Form," he said. "That new chap, Valentine—"

"I hear you've been talking about that chap, Bunter," said the Lancashire junior quietly. "You'd better be a bit careful!"

"I happen to know that he was mixed up in a gang of crooks—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I fancy he's a crook himself—"

"I think I'd get rid of fancies like that, Bunter," said Mark, laughing. "I suppose it's no good trying to knock any sense into your silly head. Still, I'll try."

Taking Bunter by the collar, Mark tapped his bullet head against the House. There was a fearful yell from Bunter.

"Yaroooooooh!"

Mark left him rubbing his head. Whether he had knocked any sense into it was doubtful, but it seemed to be rather damaged.

"Well, of all the beasts!" gasped Bunter. "Making out that a fellow's telling whoppers! Of all the rotters!"

Really, it was rather hard not to be believed when the fat Owl was telling the truth for once. But Bunter's reputation was against him. The mere fact that Bunter made a statement rendered it a doubtful one in the opinion of fellows who knew Bunter.

Skinner & Co. came along, and Bunter hastened to join them. Skinner was a fellow who was always glad to hear anything against anybody. Bunter felt that he would have a sympathetic hearer in Skinner, at least.

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter. "I've got something to tell you—you'll be surprised!"

"Has your postal order come?" asked Skinner.

"Eh! No!"

"Well, that would have surprised us." Snoop and Stott chortled.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "It's about that new chap, Valentine! I know all about him!"

Skinner winked at Snoop and Stott.

"Pile in!" he said.

"I met him in the hols, you know," said Bunter. "I was staying at Wharton Lodge! Not much of a place for a fellow like me to stay at over Christmas, but Wharton begged me to come—"

"Sat up and begged, I've no doubt," agreed Skinner. "Fellows are so awfully anxious to have you for the hols. I've noticed it."

"Oh, really, Skinner! Well, while I was there that fellow Valentine turned up!"

"I fancied Wharton knew him before he came," remarked Stott. "They

seemed rather friendly. Looks a decent kid."

"Looks ain't everything," said Bunter impressively.

"Hard luck on you, old fat bean, if they were," remarked Skinner.

"Beast! I mean, listen to me, old chap! That fellow Valentine was running away from a gang of crooks—"

"Sub-title, the Gang of Crooks!" said Skinner. "Who paid for your ticket when you saw that film, Bunter?"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "I'm not telling you about a film, I'm telling you the truth!"

"You're telling the truth?" ejaculated Skinner.

"Yes!" hooted Bunter.

"Are these sudden changes good for the health?" inquired Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you silly fathead! I tell you that fellow Valentine was a crook, or something—anyhow, he was mixed up with a gang of crooks, and he was running away, and Wharton helped him—"

took him in, you know—"

"And now you're trying to take me in?"

"Oh, don't be a funny idiot! Wharton took him in, and—"

and hid him so that the crooks couldn't find him! And they came after him—I believe they're after him now. He's a bad character—some fearful bad character—and Wharton and his lot know it as well as I do!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" grinned Skinner, with a glance at the Famous Five, who were walking in the quad with Jim Valentine, the whole little crowd of juniors chatting amicably.

Snoop and Stott chuckled. Really, the Famous Five were not fellows whom even Skinner could suspect of making friends with a fearful bad character.

"They're keeping it dark," said Bunter—"keeping the secret for him, you know—making out that he's all right. But I know what I know. I'm telling you fellows because—"

"Because you think we're green enough to swallow a yarn like that?" asked Skinner. "We're not, old bean—not in your lifetime! Tell us an easier one!"

"It's true!" yelled Bunter.

"Be reasonable," urged Skinner.

"How can it be true when it's you that's telling it? The two things don't go together!"

"You silly dummy—"

Skinner & Co. walked on, laughing. Billy Bunter snorted with disgust. Really, it looked as if Bunter's latest would find no takers in the Remove.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Luck!

"ROTTEN!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"The rottenfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree

Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton gave a grunt.

"Can't be helped!" he said. "You fellows cut off."

It was after tea in Study No. 1. Two hundred lines, awarded to Wharton for the affair of Coker the day before, had to be handed in by half-past six, and there was no lot of time left to get them done.

He cleared a space on the study table, sorted out impot paper, and prepared to get on with it—not in the best of humours. There was a Form meeting in the Rag after tea, which Wharton did not want to miss, but he had to miss it.

"I suppose a fellow couldn't lend you



"I say, you fellows—yaroo!" spluttered Bunter. "If this is what you call gratitude—whoop!—after I've stood you a ripping spread—yow-ow-ow-ow!" The fat junior wriggled and squirmed as treacle was emptied over his head, jam tarts squeezed down his neck, a cream puff flattened on his fat cheek, and a crusty roll thrust into his capacious mouth.

a hand?" said Frank Nugent. "Quelch is rather too wide for that."

"Sure to spot it!" growled Wharton. "The widefulness is too terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The absurd Quelch is a downy bird, and the spotfulness would be a deadly cert."

"I'd be glad to help, if you like—"

begin Jim Valentine.

Wharton shook his head. "You don't know Quelch—he's too keen," he answered.

Valentine opened his lips—and closed them again. He would have been glad to help, and he could have helped easily enough if the chums of the Remove had only known it. "Dick the Penman" had only to see a sample of any hand to imitate it with such accuracy that the keenest eye could have detected no difference. It was that strange and dangerous gift of penmanship that made him so valuable to Nosey Clark's gang.

But he realised very clearly that it would not be wise to let that peculiar gift become known at Greyfriars School. "Cut off, you men!" said Harry. "I'll get through with it! I'm going to be good this term—if Quelch will give me a chance! Leave me to it!"

And his friends left him to it, glad at all events that he was toying the line, and that there was to be no more reckless rebelliousness of last term.

Having made up his mind to the task, Wharton set to work industriously. Two hundred lines of Virgil was not a light matter. But he laboured at it sedulously, and line after line ran from his pen.

Two or three fellows looked into the study to ask if he was coming down, but he shook his head at every inquirer. Squiff, who was captain of the Remove, stayed to speak a word or two,

"Look here, you're an ass to get lines to-day," said the Australian junior. "You ought to be at the meeting."

"Can't be helped!"

"I'm going to propose a new election—and put it to the fellows," said Squiff. "You're going to be captain of the Form again this term, old bean."

"Oh, rot!" said Harry.

Squiff laughed.

"Well, I mean it," he said. "Now you've chucked playing the goat, it's your job, and I'm handing it back. I'm going to raise the question at the meeting."

And Squiff walked away, leaving Wharton in a thoughtful mood. However, the lines had to be done, and he resumed scribbling. That impot really was undeserved had Mr. Quelch only known it, but Wharton had to realise that Mr. Quelch did not know that. He was resolved not to be sulky or rebellious, and to take in the lines at the prescribed time. Moreover, the morrow was a half-holiday, the first of the term, and he did not want to risk getting a detention. The Famous Five were going over to Highcliffe to see Courtenay and the Caterpillar that half-holiday.

He scribbled away industriously, and the impot was nearly finished when Billy Bunter's fat face appeared in the study doorway.

"Oh, you're here!" ejaculated Bunter. "Ain't you going to the meeting in the Rag, Wharton?"

"Cut off!"

"I say, old chap, you'd better go to the meeting," urged Bunter. "The fellows will miss you, you know."

Harry Wharton laughed. "There's nothing in the cupboard, Bunter! Cut off!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"For goodness' sake roll away!" exclaimed Wharton. "I've a dozen more lines to write, and it's close on half-past."

"Well, I'm not interrupting you," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I say, 'Get out!'"

"Did I mention to you that I was expecting a postal order?" asked Bunter. "Shut up!"

"There's been some delay in the post," said the fat Owl. "It hasn't come, Wharton. I say—would you believe it—that rotter Valentine refused to lend me half-a-crown when I'm doing the fellow favours you know—keeping his shady secrets and all that!"

Scratch, scratch, scratch! went the busy pen. Closing his ears to the dulcet tones of William George Bunter, Wharton raced on with the lines.

"It's a bit thick, isn't it?" pursued Bunter. "Look here, Wharton, my postal order hasn't come, and considering that you've asked me to keep it dark about that fellow Valentine—"

"Will you shut up?" shrieked Wharton. "You've made me miss a couple of words—"

"Oh, that's all right! Quelch won't notice," said Bunter. "Besides, what do you care? You're always ragging old Quelch. At least, you were last term, and I don't suppose you've changed. He, he, he! Look here, old chap—"

"You blithering, blithering, burbling bandersnatch!" Wharton laid down the pen and grabbed up a cushion. "Get out!"

Bunter jumped to the door. But he did not escape the cushion. It landed on the back of his neck as he

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,299.



(Continued from page 13.)

jumped, and Bunter went headlong into the passage.

He landed there on his fat hands and knees, roaring. The cushion landed beside him.

Wharton resumed scribbling. "Ow! Beast!" roared Bunter. "Yah! Rotter! Wow!"

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet. Bunter was hurt, and Bunter was wrathful. He grabbed up the cushion, and turned back into the doorway.

Whiz! The cushion flew into the study.

Crash!

It landed.

Bunter had intended it for the head bent over the table. But the fat Owl's aim was never good.

It crashed on the inkpot, knocked it over, and sent it rolling, with a stream of ink, over Wharton's almost finished lines.

There was a yell of wrath from the hapless Wharton. It wanted only two or three minutes to half-past six, when the impot had to be handed in. Only a couple of lines remained to be written. And now the whole impot was swamped with flowing ink! It was not in a state in which it could be handed to any Form master—especially Mr. Quelch!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "He, he, he! Serve you jolly well right! He, he!"

"My hat! I'll—I'll—"

Wharton made a jump for the door. Billy Bunter, like the guests in Macbeth, stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once. He fairly whizzed up the Remove passage. The door of Study No. 7 was slammed and locked.

Harry Wharton looked in utter dismay at his impot. It was swamped, smothered, and soaked, most of it quite illegible. It dripped with ink.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

Half-past six began to chime as he stood staring at the ruined impot. He hurried out of the study.

Taking the soaked and dripping impot to Quelch was out of the question. But there was time to arrive at the Form master's study and explain the accident. Quelch, of course, would tell him to do the lines again. Such accidents were not supposed to happen. That could not be helped. But as the Remove master was expecting him at half-past six, he had to go.

He was only a couple of minutes late when he arrived rather breathlessly in Masters' Studies and tapped at Mr. Quelch's door.

"Come in!"

Wharton entered. Mr. Quelch glanced at him, not unkindly; but as he saw that the junior came empty-handed, his face set. Without waiting for Wharton to speak, he rapped out:

"Where are your lines, Wharton?"

"I've had an accident with them sir—"

Mr. Quelch held up his hand.

"That will do, Wharton! You were directed to bring me two hundred lines."

at half-past six. You have not done so!"

"A fellow upset some ink—"

"Possibly," said Mr. Quelch very dryly. "Listen to me, Wharton! It is my desire, my intention, to give you every chance. I am extremely unwilling to remember your bad record of the last term against you. You compel me to do so. Yesterday you appear to have been the ringleader in an outrageous prank, to call it by no worse a name. Desiring to be as lenient as possible with you, I gave you what you must yourself admit to be a very lenient punishment—two hundred lines. Now you come to me without the lines and with an excuse."

"But, sir—"

"I repeat, Wharton, that I desire to hear no excuses. Your imposition is doubled, and you will bring it to my study to-morrow, by tea-time. I hope," added Mr. Quelch, with an ominous look, "that that will be the end of the matter."

"But, sir, I had—"

"That will do, Wharton! You may go."

"If you will let me explain, sir—"

"You are wasting my time, Wharton. Leave my study!"

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath, and his eyes gleamed. Mr. Quelch turned away from him and busied himself with papers on his desk. For a moment the junior looked at him with gleaming eyes, and then he quietly turned and left the study. His face was set with anger and resentment as he went.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Scapegrace Again!

FRANK NUGENT came cheerily into Study No. 1. He looked rather surprised as he saw how Wharton was occupied there.

Wharton was stuffing the inky imposition into the fire and jamming it down with the poker. His face was clouded and angry, and Nugent's heart sank a little as he saw it. Only too well he knew that expression on Wharton's face.

"Anything up, old chap?" he asked.

Wharton looked rump.

"Only Quelch at it again!" he muttered.

Frank's face became very grave.

"Not trouble with Quelch?"

"Yes," said Wharton shortly.

"Harry, old chap, for goodness' sake don't let that begin again!" exclaimed Frank anxiously.

"How can I help it?" snapped Wharton. "Quelch can't forget last term. He's got his eye on me like a hawk."

"You can't expect him to forget it all at once, old fellow. You can soon set his mind at rest if you play up."

"Looks like it!" growled Wharton. "I got those lines for nothing. You know that as well as I do."

"Quelch didn't," said Nugent quietly. "Haven't you done the lines, Harry? We left you here doing them."

"That idiot Bunter mopped the ink over them when I'd nearly finished. I went to Quelch, and he refused to hear a word. Was it my fault that that fat dummy spoiled the impot?" demanded Wharton savagely.

"Well, what's the upshot?"

"Impot doubled—which means stopping in to-morrow afternoon and putting in the first half-holiday of the term writing lines—if I write them."

"I hope there's no 'if' about it, Harry."

"There is. I'm not going to do them! I've done my impot once, and that's

that!" answered Wharton. "Quelch had a right to tell me to do it over again. He has no right to double it because a clumsy duffer mucked it up."

"It's hard luck," said Frank. "But it's no good playing the goat. You can't blame Quelch for being a bit stiff, after all the troubles and rows of last term. I suppose he thinks you're beginning that game again."

"Well, he shouldn't."

"You can't expect—"

"Oh, rot!" broke in Wharton irritably.

"Of course, Quelch is in the right and I'm in the wrong. I know that, of course."

"You ought to know it, at least,"

came a quiet voice from the doorway.

Harry Wharton started, and glanced in that direction. He had not noticed Jim Valentine coming in after Nugent.

"Oh! Is that your opinion, Valentine?" he snapped. "Would you mind keeping it to yourself till you're asked for it?"

Valentine looked at him steadily.

"I've been hearing something about your scrapes last term, Wharton," he said. "I couldn't quite make it all out, but I can now. This is the first time I've seen you in a silly temper."

"What?"

Nugent smiled involuntarily.

"You're making a fool of yourself, Wharton," said Valentine coolly. "From what I've heard, you played the giddy ox last term to such an extent that you nearly got sacked. It's up to you to play up this term and show that you mean business."

"Will you keep your advice till it's asked for?" snapped Wharton. "I'm not going to do the lines, at any rate, and Quelch can do anything he likes."

"That will mean a lot of trouble," said Valentine.

"Let it!"

"It means all the old trouble over again, Harry," said Nugent anxiously.

"That's not my fault!"

"It is your fault," said Valentine sharply, "and you'd see it if you hadn't got your silly back up over nothing, or next to nothing."

"I've asked you to mind your own business, Valentine!" said Harry Wharton, with a dangerous look at the new junior. "If you're asking for a row you won't have to ask twice."

"For goodness' sake don't you two begin to rag!" exclaimed Nugent. "We had rows enough in this study last term."

"I'm not going to rag," said Valentine quietly. "I owe you too much to quarrel with you, Wharton, if I can help it."

"You needn't let that worry you—and you don't owe me anything, either. Get on with it if you want to."

"Thanks; I don't want to," said Valentine dryly, and he walked out of the study to avoid further argument.

"Look here, Harry—" said Nugent uneasily.

"Oh, let it drop!" said Wharton. "What's the good of jawing? I'm not going to stay in to-morrow afternoon writing lines—I know that."

"That isn't necessary—after tea to-morrow—"

"Quelch wants the four hundred lines by tea-time."

"Then you must stay in," said Nugent earnestly.

"Well, I won't!"

When Wharton spoke in that tone Frank knew that it was useless to argue further. He left the study, leaving Wharton to his own angry mood.

He did not come back to Study No. 1 till it was time for prep, and then Jim Valentine came with him. Wharton was

there, getting out his books, with a clouded face.

All the obstinacy in his nature—and there was a great deal—had been roused by the sense of injustice, and his mind was irrevocably made up. He had said that he would not do the lines, and he meant it. The scapegrace of the school, the fellow who had been in constant hot water all through the previous term, had come to life again, with a vengeance.

After one look at his face Nugent decided not to speak, and the three juniors sat down to prep in silence.

Wharton remained savagely silent all through prep.

Frank Nugent spoke to Valentine a good many times, giving him a little assistance, which he needed as a new

fellow. Neither of them addressed Wharton once.

When prep was over they were glad to get out of the study. The atmosphere of Study No. 1 was decidedly chilly.

Wharton was left alone again, more irritated than ever. A few minutes later Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh looked in, on their way down to the Rag after prep.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob. "You fellows finished?"

"Nugent and Valentino have gone down," said Wharton shortly.

The three juniors looked at him, read the expression on his face, and exchanged glances.

"What's up?" asked Bob very quietly.

"Nothing"

"My esteemed and absurd Wharton—" said the nabob gently.

"Look here, are you rowing again in this study?" asked Johnny Bull. "I thought there was something up, when I saw Frank before prep."

"I've not rowed with anybody, that I know of. Nugent thinks—as usual—that Quelch is in the right and I'm in the wrong, that's all. It's a difference of opinion."

"Trouble with Quelch?" asked Bob dismally.

"Yes!"

"For goodness' sake keep clear of that!" said Johnny Bull. "I should

(Continued on next page.)

An Affair of Luck!

HERE is an important question which is frequently discussed at this period of the season: What sort of football wins the Cup? Players of many clubs want to find the answer to that question, for it is safe to say that to be in a Cup-winning side is the chief ambition of every first-class footballer.

International caps are valued, of course, and it is also good to be in a side which gains promotion or carries off a championship. But the most prized possession of the footballer is the gold medal which tells the world that he was in a side which won the Cup. Obviously there is no short and sure way to Cup-winning. If there were, then some set of players would just go on winning the trophy season after season.

It is not even true to say that the best team of the season wins the Cup. Evidence of this is provided by the fact that the same team has not won the championship of the First Division and the English Cup in the same season for thirty-five years.

The Cup competition is, to a much greater extent than the League competition, an affair of luck. The better side does not always win any particular match. A mis-kick here, a chance shot there, may mean the difference between victory and defeat in the Cup competition. That the same applies to the League is true in a way, of course. But during a long season the luck of the League games evens itself out more or less. One bit of bad luck, however, often means that a good team goes right out of the competition.

Play Your Natural Game!

AS I am, however, asked to reply to a question as to what sort of football is most likely to win the Cup, I must say something on this head. In the first place, I am absolutely convinced that it is a big mistake for football teams to imagine that some particular style of play is necessary in order that success should come in the Cup competition. The words "typical Cup team" are often used, but for my part I don't believe there is any such thing. The style of football which is good enough to win League games is good enough to win Cup games, and I am quite sure that many a football team has failed to make its mark in the Cup competition as clearly as it should have done because, when playing in a Cup tie, the players of those teams have changed their style.

SOCGER QUERIES ANSWERED HERE.

"LINESMAN CALLING!"



Our sporting contributor is one of the greatest living authorities on football. He'll solve all your Soccer problems if you will let him. Address your queries to: "Linesman," c/o MAGNET, the Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

I happened to be with the Newcastle United players when they were just about ready to start off for Wembley to play in the Cup Final of last season. And I overheard the manager, Mr. "Andy" Cunningham, giving the men a bit of advice. This was what he told them:

"Forget that it is a Cup Final if you possibly can. Play as if it was just an ordinary match, and play in your usual style."

That was fine advice—the best bit of advice which can possibly be given to any set of players entering on a big Cup tie, or playing any other game which is of more than ordinary importance. "Play your own game." That is the way to success. Don't try to change the style because the game happens to be a different competition. The game is the same no matter how important the occasion.

Stage Fright!

MIND you, I am quite willing to admit that this advice of play a natural game is easier to give than to carry out. The Cup tie atmosphere is different from the ordinary atmosphere; everybody is excited, and the players are apt to get excited, too. I have known footballers—not very young footballers, either—who have been so excited—nervous, when preparing for a big Cup tie, that they could not even keep calm enough to lace their own boots.

It's temperament, which, in other words is the quality of treating a specially important match as if it was an ordinary one, which wins big Cup ties.

I believe that this is the main reason why the First Division teams usually do best in the Cup ties. The players of

those teams are usually more experienced, and less liable to an attack of nerves. Sometimes the teams from the other divisions—Second and Third—do well for a period in the Cup ties, but as they progress so do they get affected more and more by "nerves."

Play to the Whistle!

FROM time to time in this game of football, we bump up against hard cases, and a MAGNET reader wants to know if some special consideration might not be given by referees from time to time. This reader instances a case which happened at Charlton some little time ago. Charlton were playing against Fulham in a Second Division match, and Fulham were attacking. Suddenly the Charlton players stopped playing, thinking that the whistle had gone for an infringement of the rules. The Charlton goalkeeper, instead of kicking the ball clear as he might have done, rolled it to the place where he thought the free-kick would be taken. Thereupon the Fulham centre-forward kicked the ball into the net, and a goal was allowed.

The Charlton players were staggered, but according to rule the referee could do no other than award a goal. The whistle had not sounded. This was bad luck, of course, especially as that goal cost Charlton a point. It was just one of those cases which cannot be helped.

The bit of advice which should be given to all players is "carry on" until you are quite sure that the whistle has sounded for an infringement. Scores of goals are given away every football season by players who stop to appeal for this or that offence. Get on with the game and play to the whistle is the only way.

"LINESMAN,"
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,299.

have thought you'd had enough of that last term."

"You can think what you like."

Johnny Bull gave him a stare and walked away.

"Will you tell me what the trouble is, Wharton?" asked Bob Cherry, in a very quiet tone.

"I'll tell you if you like."

Wharton told him in a few words.

"It's hard luck," said Bob. "But you can't expect—"

"I've had that from Nugent!" interrupted Wharton.

"Well, now you're getting it from me!" said Bob sharply. "You ragged Quelch almost to death last term, and now he thinks you're beginning again! It looks like it, from his point of view, too. We can cut out Highcliffe tomorrow—"

"I'm not going to cut it out!"

"The out-fulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Wharton," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The absurd Quelch will be infuriated if the lines are not done."

"I don't care!"

"Well, you ought to care!" rapped Bob.

"Rats!"

The three juniors walked on after that reply. There had been serious trouble in the Co. last term, and they were deeply anxious that it should not begin again. They could only hope that Wharton's better sense would prevail; but on that subject there was a dismaying doubt.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

War!

MR. QUELCH gave the one-time rebel of the Remove several sharp looks in the Form-room the following morning.

Other fellows glanced at Wharton, too, and Skinner & Co. exchanged winks.

Most of the Remove had wondered and surmised a great deal whether the scapegrace of last term would "carry on" this term in the same way.

It looked like it now.

Wharton had come back to school with good resolutions; with the very best resolutions. But those excellent resolutions seemed to have been thrown to the winds now.

Two or three times that morning there was a trace of the old sarcastic impertinence in Wharton's manner, which his Form master did not fail to note.

He took no outward cognizance of it, however.

Mr. Quelch was sincerely and earnestly desirous of giving the scapegrace a chance. He had even been considering making Wharton head boy of the Form again that term.

But if the rebel of the Remove intended to carry on in the old wild way, and prove a thorn in his Form master's side that term, as he had done the term before, Mr. Quelch's mind was made up. He meant to put his foot down on it in the shortest and sharpest manner. But he was patient, the wayward fellow should have every chance.

To the relief of the Co. morning classes ended without any trouble. They were glad to get out of the Form-room.

After dinner the Co. gathered in the quad, in a troubled mood. They were going over to Highcliffe, where their friends expected them. If Wharton came the lines could not be written. They had to be written. But the look of Harry Wharton that morning had not encouraged them to hope that he had

arrived at a more sensible frame of mind.

Jim Valentine joined them in the quadrangle. They had asked the new fellow to walk over to Highcliffe with them, to make the acquaintance of Courtenay and the Caterpillar. He came out of the House with a bright and cheery face—which clouded a little as he noted the dismal looks of the Co.

Harry Wharton came out, glanced round, and joined the group of juniors. He was in coat and cap, which looked as if he was going out.

"You fellows ready?" asked Harry.

"We're ready!" grunted Johnny Bull. "But—"

"Well, let's start then."

"We're staying for tea with Courtenay at Highcliffe," said Bob. "You can't get back in time for your lines, Wharton."

"I've told you I'm not doing the lines."

"But Quelch—"

"Bother Quelch!"

"Look here, Wharton—" began Jim Valentine.

Wharton looked at him.

"Will you keep from butting-in, Valentine?" he asked. "It's no bizney of yours, that I know of."

Valentine drew a deep breath.

"You're playing the fool!" he said.

"That needn't worry you. If you don't like a fool's company, you're not bound to put up with it."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hero's Quelch!" muttered Bob.

Mr. Quelch came out of the House. He was in hat and coat, and evidently going out. The juniors saw his eyes fix on Wharton and a steely glitter come into them. He came over to the group.

"Wharton!" he rapped.

"Here, sir!"

"You have your coat on—"

"It's a cold day, sir," said Wharton.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"Does that mean that you are going out, Wharton?"

"We generally go out on a half-holiday, sir!"

The Co. stood in dismal silence. It was the scapegrace of last term over again, hunting for trouble.

"Listen to me, Wharton!" Mr. Quelch's voice came like ice. "I have told you that your imposition must be written by tea-time."

"I remember, sir."

"I am going out this afternoon," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall return at half-past five. I shall expect to find your imposition, four hundred lines from the first book of Virgil, on my study table when I return."

"Indeed, sir!"

"If I do not find your lines there, Wharton, I shall report the matter to your headmaster, and request him to administer a public flogging."

"Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Quelch seemed to choke a little at that reply. But he made no rejoinder. He walked on to the gates and disappeared from sight.

Wharton glanced round at the dismayed faces of his friends with a sarcastic look.

"Well, are you coming?" he asked.

"You're going out for the afternoon—after what Quelch said?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Certainly!"

"Then you're not coming with me," said Johnny. "I'll be no party to it. If you go to Highcliffe, I'll go somewhere else."

"Ploase yourself."

"Same here," said Bob. "If you won't have any sense, Wharton—"

"The samefulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Wharton, for goodness' sake—" began Nugent.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"It looks as if I shall have to go on my own, if I go to Highcliffe," he said sarcastically. "Well, I won't do that! If you fellows don't want my company, leave me out. You've got a new pal—you won't miss me!"

With that, he walked away to the gates.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

"The esteemed fat is in the absurd fire now!" groaned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull gave a snort.

"Let the silly ass rip, and be blowed to him!" he growled. "If he's not going to Highcliffe we may as well go. Come on, Valentine!"

Jim Valentine shook his head.

"Thanks, I won't come," he said. "I think I'd better not, in the circumstances. Thanks, all the same!"

"Oh, all right!"

The Co. walked slowly to the gates. After what Wharton had said they were not surprised that Valentine preferred to stand out. Outside the gates, they looked round for Wharton.

They had a glimpse of him in the distance, sauntering across the fields towards the cliffs.

"He means it!" said Bob in a low tone. "He's got his back up—and there's going to be a row! Last term over again."

"It's rotten!"

"All that fat fool Bunter's fault!" growled Nugent.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled out of gates. "Nearly missed you, old chaps! I say—Whoop! Beast! I say—Yaroooh! Yow-ow-ow! Oh crikey!"

Bunter apparently had arranged to walk over to Highcliffe with the chums of the Remove. That arrangement fell through on the spot. Four boots were planted on William George Bunter, and William George flew.

He landed with a bump and a roar.

Bob Cherry & Co. walked away towards Courtfield. Bunter sat up, set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked after them.

"Beasts! Yah! I won't come now! Beasts!" he roared.

And the Co. walked on to Highcliffe, minus the fascinating company of William George Bunter.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Dick the Penman!

JIM VALENTINE strolled down to the football ground, where a senior practice was going on, and stood for some time looking at Wingate and his men. His face was deeply clouded with thought.

But for the trouble that had arisen, he would have gone over to Highcliffe with Harry Wharton & Co. that afternoon and enjoyed his half-holiday. He was not enjoying it now.

He left the football ground and strolled in the quad for some time. He went into the House at last.

Most of the fellows were out of doors. He saw no one as he went up to the Remove passage.

He entered Study No. 1 with a faint hope of seeing Wharton there. Surely the fellow would have had sense enough, prudence enough, to think better of it, to return and get on with his task.

But the study was empty.



Bunter grabbed up the cushion and sent it flying into the study. Whiz! It missed the bent head and crashed on the inkpot, knocking it over and sending it rolling—with a stream of ink—over Wharton's almost finished lines. "He, he, he!" laughed the fat junior. "Serve you jolly well right, Wharton!"

Valentine's clouded face clouded more deeply.

Evidently Harry Wharton had gone out for the afternoon, though he had not gone with his friends. He was not coming back—he was not going to do the lines. It was an act of defiance that his Form master could not possibly overlook or forgive.

The new junior was deeply troubled.

Towards Mr. Quelch his feelings were of the deepest gratitude and respect. What the Remove master had done for him might have made even a thankless fellow thankful, and Jim was far from being a thankless fellow. But he could make allowances for Wharton, too.

Without intending it, obviously influenced by the recollection of Wharton's reckless waywardness the term before, Mr. Quelch had been a little hasty—even a little unjust. That was no excuse for Wharton's dogged defiance—a fellow had to take the rough with the smooth at school, as everywhere else; he ought to have made the best of it. But Valentine, mindful of kindness at the junior's hands at a time when he had needed it, mindful of his cheery friendliness on the first day of term, was not thinking of blaming the hot-headed fellow; he was feeling worried and anxious about him. How could he help to put matters right?

Mr. Quelch, kind-hearted as Valentine knew him to be, was a strict, severe man. He meant every word he had said to Wharton.

Four hundred lines of Latin had to be ready for him on the table in his study when he returned to the school, or—

Or Wharton would begin the term with a Head's flogging—as Valentine had heard, from talk among the juniors,

he had begun the previous term. What that bad beginning had led to he knew from the gossip in the Remove. A kind, decent, generous fellow was landing himself into a sea of troubles from a hasty fault of temper—which he would probably be sorry for when it was too late! If Valentine could help him out—

The boy's handsome face was a little pale as he walked to and fro in the study. The thoughts that were in his mind were thoughts that he would never have dared to utter.

Yet, here the harm?

Dick the Penman the wizard with the pen, had never been heard of at Greyfriars. For his safety's sake, for every reason, that fatal gift of penmanship required to be kept a secret, deep and dark. And yet—

To save a friend, a kind and good friend in spite of his passionate temper! Fellows often helped one another with their lines where it seemed secure to do so. Quelch had the eye of a hawk; such a game could not be played with him. But there were prefects who handed out lines, and hardly glanced at them when given in. In such a case three or four fellows would sometimes each do his "bit," many hands making light work. Valentine was new to Greyfriars, but he had been at school before. If Quelch had been an absent-minded master like Mr. Wiggins of the Third, or a careless one like Mr. Capper of the Fourth, probably the whole Co. would have helped Wharton with his lines the day before.

And he—Dick the Penman—could help, even in the case of a master with an eye like a hawk such as Henry Samuel Quelch.

But he hesitated long.

There was a difference between

thoughtless schoolboys scrawling a batch of lines in company, taking the risk of a licking if found out, and what Valentine was thinking of doing.

And yet—

A Head's flogging for the fellow who had generously befriended him—chagrin and disappointment and trouble for the master who had done so much for him. Why should he let it go on if he could stop it?

Valentine thought it over long and hard. He made up his mind at last. He locked the study door and sat down at the table.

There were plenty of samples of Wharton's handwriting to be seen. He needed only a glance at one of them.

He dipped the pen in the ink and began to write.

Four hundred lines of Virgil was a heavy task. Of that he thought nothing. He began at "Arma virumque cano," and went on steadily.

Wharton, had he been there and seeing that impot grow, would have fancied that he was dreaming. For it was his own handwriting that ran from Valentine's pen.

The boy was no longer Valentine of the Remove, he was once more Dick the Penman, whose strange skill made him so valuable to Nosey Clark.

Swiftly, steadily, the boy wrote, line after line running from the pen, in a hand that Harry Wharton would have believed to be his own if he had seen it.

Wharton's writing was rather distinctive—a good hand, unlike the happy scrawl that most of the Remove fellows considered good enough. It was not a hand easily imitated—except by one who possessed Jim Valentine's

strange and dangerous gift. But every little peculiarity of that hand was faithfully reproduced without a fault. It would have seemed like magic to any Remove fellow who had seen the new junior at work.

It was finished at last.

Five o'clock was striking as Jim Valentine rose from the table. He breathed a sigh of relief at the end of the weary task.

Taking up the finished imposition, he left the study. There was plenty of time before Mr. Quelch came back. The Remove master's study was empty when Valentine slipped in and laid the lines on the Form master's table.

He slipped out again, his heart beating fast.

He strolled into the Rag, where a number of the Remove fellows had gathered. A faint smile was on his face now.

Mr. Quelch would find the lines, apparently written by Wharton, and he would be satisfied. Wharton would think that he had "got away" with his disobedience; he was welcome to that satisfaction, such as it was. The affair was at an end; the threatened trouble was averted. If Valentine had a lingering doubt, it was banished by the talk he heard as he came into the Rag. Squiff was there, in conversation with some of the footballing fellows.

"We want Wharton, I never thought of myself as anything but a top-gap, really. He's going to be captain of the Remove again this term. But—if he's hunting for trouble with Quelch again—and it looks like it—I suppose it won't do. I hope to goodness he will think better of it."

"Quelch's been rather rough on him," said Tom Brown.

"That's no reason for making a fool of himself this term as he did last," grunted Squiff.

"Well, no. Hallo! Seen Wharton, Valentine?" called out Tom Brown.

"Not for some time."

"Do you know whether his impot's done?"

Valentine hesitated a second.

"I believe so," he answered.

"Oh, good!" said several fellows together.

Evidently they were glad to hear that. And Valentine, driving the last lingering doubt from his mind, was glad, too.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Too Late!

"I'M so glad!" said Marjorie Hazeldene softly.

Harry Wharton winced a little. He had been walking on the cliffs that afternoon, in a sour, savage, and resentful mood. Like the prophet of old, he told himself that he did well to be angry. In the rugged old street of Pegg, he had fallen in with Marjorie Hazeldene of Cliff House School, and walked back to Cliff House with her. Hazel had told his sister all about the troubles of last term; but Marjorie was aware that those troubles were over—and unaware that they looked like beginning again—which naturally Wharton did not mention.

"I'm so glad it's all right again," said Marjorie, when they stopped at the gate of Cliff House, and Wharton forced a smile, and nodded. When the girl went in, the Greyfriars junior walked away, with a knitted brow.

A walk in the fresh, keen air had done a great deal towards clearing off the clouds of resentment and anger. The talk with Marjorie had helped. Wharton was in a different frame of mind as he walked back slowly towards Greyfriars.

Last term there had been misunderstanding, injustice; matters had gone from bad to worse; but it had been borne in on Wharton's mind that much, if not most, of the trouble had been caused by his own hasty temper and obstinacy. He had resolved, with the deepest sincerity, to keep a more careful guard upon himself; to make the most of his new chance; to give his Form master and headmaster no cause for complaint.

How had he kept that resolution?

His cheeks burned.

Unreflectingly, he had allowed temper and resentment to hurry him

into folly again. The old trouble was starting again—why? Who was he, after all, that he could not toe the line like any other fellow, and take the rough with the smooth? Suppose old Bob, for instance, had been given an undeserved impot? He would have said it was hard luck, and turned out the lines as bidden, and forgotten about it ten minutes afterwards.

And he would have been right—Wharton knew that quite well. From which it followed, that Wharton was wrong.

The old trouble over again—a reckless scapegrace setting himself up against authority—and all for nothing, or next to nothing. What a fool he had been! He had almost quarrelled with his friends—because they did not want to see him playing the fool again. He was not, at heart, a fellow like the Bouncer, who liked ragging the masters and defying constituted authority. His temper had led him astray, and he had made a mistake—he realised that now, as he walked back to the school in the falling dusk. But it was too late now to do what he ought to have done at first.

There was the rub!

From the bottom of his heart he wished that he had listened to his chums, that he had done what he knew very well he ought to have done.

But it was too late!

Quelch meant every word he had said. He was going to begin the term with a Head's flogging. Headmaster and Form master down on him—convinced now that he was still the reckless rebel of last term, and that there was nothing better to be hoped from him. What a fool he had been!

In that rather dismal frame of mind Harry Wharton arrived at Greyfriars. Study No. 1 was vacant when he went into it. He turned on the light and stirred the fire, wondering if the other fellows had come back from Highcliffe. If so, they were leaving him alone. But a few minutes later Jim Valentine came into the study.

Wharton coloured a little as he caught the quick, keen glance the new junior gave him.

He forced a laugh.

"It's all right, old bean," he said. "Sorry I spoke to you as I did, to-day. I was in a rotten temper, I suppose."

"All serene," said Valentine cheerily. "Wash it all out, old fellow! Had your tea?"

"No!"

"Then let's."

"Have the fellows come in?"

"I think I heard them in the Rag." "Well, they tea'd at Highcliffe, I believe. I—I wish—"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing! Let's get tea."

They sat down to tea in the study. After half-past five he expected every minute to hear Mr. Quelch's step in the passage, or to receive a message calling him to his Form master's study. But neither happened. "I've been a silly ass, Valentine," said Wharton at last, breaking a rather long silence.

"Well, I wouldn't have said so; but it struck me rather in that light," said



The RANGER also contains six Picture Stamps which you can add to your collection.

Popular FRANK RICHARDS writes in this week's RANGER!

Meet Jim Dainty & Co., the cheery chums of Grimsdale School.

Here is a set of schoolboy characters, created by famous Frank Richards, whose adventures are just as amusing and as entertaining as those of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. This week's story of the Grimsdale chums is a real top-notch. It's First Day of Term, and the fun wages fast and furious. Why not read this yarn—and a host of other ripping stories—in

The RANGER

ADVENTURE—THRILLS—COLOUR!

Get Your Copy Now

2^d.

Valentine, laughing. "But so long as you can see it—"

"I was going to begin fresh this term—wash out all that rot of last term," said Wharton restlessly. "Quelch isn't really a bad old bean. It was decent of him to give me another chance. It's only to be expected that he will have a rather sharp eye on me for a time—considering. I—I wish I'd thought of that before."

"Better late than never, old chap."
"Well, it's rather too late now to be of any use, I suppose. Can't be helped," said Harry, and he left the study and went to look for Nugent.

He had not far to look; he found the Co. on the Remove landing. He flushed as he came under their eyes. It was evident that they were wondering whether they had to deal with the self-willed, arrogant fellow who, last term, had made it impossible for his friends to keep on a friendly footing with him.

"Like to give a fellow some advice, you men?" asked Wharton, speaking in a light tone.

"Pile in!" said Bob cheerily.

"I haven't done my lines."

Grunt, from Johnny Bull.

"I've been thinking over the matter," said Harry quietly, "and you can't call me a bigger ass than I've been calling myself. I'm booked for a Head's flogging, and—and I know I've asked for it. I'm not worrying so much about that, as—as—"

"What, old chap?" asked Frank.

"Well, Quelch has been pretty decent, really," said Harry. "I ought not to have had those lines, really—and they ought not to have been doubled, and—and—" He paused. "All the same, Quelch has been jolly decent, in his way—and now I've got the old bean's back up again—and all the fat's in the fire. I—I suppose it's too late to do anything now?"

The Co. were silent. They were glad enough to see their chum in this reasonable mood; but, obviously, it was too late for anything to be done. It was some time since Mr. Quelch had come in, and they could guess his mood easily enough, if he had not found Wharton's lines in his study.

Nugent minor, of the Second, came up the Remove staircase.

"Wharton here?" he asked. "Oh, here you are! Your jolly old Form master wants you in his study!"

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"I'm for it now!" he said.

He went down the stairs. The Co. looked at one another with dismal and dismayed looks. Wharton had arrived at a better frame of mind, but repentance, as so often happens, had come too late. He was "for it," and his friends could only wonder, with deep misgivings, what the outcome would be.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise—and a Shock!

"COME in, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch.

His tone was genial.

To Wharton's amazement, his Form master gave him a kind and benevolent glance as he entered the study.

He had expected to find Henry Samuel Quelch in his grimmest mood. But there was no sign of grimness about him.

Judging by his looks, Mr. Quelch was pleased with the junior. Wharton could only wonder, in almost dizzy astonishment.

The fact was, that Mr. Quelch was

relieved as well as pleased, and in high good-humour.

The vials of wrath had been all ready to be poured on Harry Wharton's devoted head. There was no mercy for the rebel of the Remove if he was continuing last term's career as a rebel. If those lines had not been found on Mr. Quelch's table when he came in the thunderstorm would have burst.

But they had been found.

Four hundred lines of the first book of the *Æneid*, from "Arma virumque cano," to "subit ostia velo," had met Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes when he entered the study and turned on the light—four hundred lines, carefully written, without a mistake, in Harry Wharton's best hand!

That had caused a revulsion of feeling in Mr. Quelch's breast.

Rebellion, impertinence, dogged defiance, he was prepared to deal with, with the sternest hand. But he was relieved, greatly relieved, to find that the stern hand was not required.

There were the lines; not only written to the last line, but written carefully and well; obviously by a fellow who desired to please!

That was enough!

"I have sent for you, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, in the same kind, genial tone, "to tell you that I am very pleased and satisfied with you."

Wharton gasped.

If the bust of Socrates on Mr. Quelch's bookcase had opened its marble lips and uttered those words, he could scarcely have been more astonished.

"I am sorry to say that I had some doubts—perhaps some natural doubts, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch. "I am more glad than I can say to be relieved of those doubts."

"Oh, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"I am anxious—only too anxious—to forget the disagreeable incidents of last term," said Mr. Quelch. "Forget them also, my boy, now that you have made a fresh start. I have had a talk with Linley. Linley is not only willing, but anxious that you should resume your old place as head boy of the Remove."

Wharton could only gaze at his Form master.

"I desire to show my confidence in you, my faith in your good resolutions, by appointing you to your old position," said Mr. Quelch. "You will begin this term, Wharton, as head boy of the Form again."

"Oh, sir!"

"I understand," continued Mr. Quelch, "that it has already been mooted in the Remove that there should be a new election, and that you should take your old place as captain of the Form. This has my complete approval."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"I sent for you to tell you this, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch benevolently. "That is all, my boy. You may go."

Wharton stammered some incoherent words of thanks, and almost tottered from his Form master's study.

He went down the passage like a fellow in a dream.

What it all meant was a mystery to him.

His chums were waiting for him on the Remove landing, in a worried and anxious mood. They were rather surprised to see him return so soon—and still more surprised by the expression on his face.

"What's the verdict?" asked Frank Nugent, as Wharton came up.

"Licked?"

"No!" gasped Wharton.

"Report to the Head?" asked Bob.

"No!"

"More lines?"

"No!"

"Then—what?" asked the Co. together, puzzled.

"It's beyond me," said Wharton. "Beats me hollow! Did you fellows imagine, for a moment, that Quelch would be pleased with me?"

"Well, hardly!" said Bob, with a grin. "Was he?"

"Yes!"

"Is that a joke?"

"Not at all! He was pleased—seemed frightfully pleased! Never seen him in such a jolly good temper!" gasped Wharton. "Can you fellows understand it?"

The Co. stared at him.

They had expected, as a matter of course, that Mr. Quelch would be bitterly angry. He had plenty of reason to be, after an act of intentional disobedience and defiance. But even if he was not angry, it was rather a mystery what he had to be pleased about!

"Then—then it's all serene?" asked Johnny Bull blankly.

"Quite!"

"Well, my hat! It beats me!"

"The beatfulness it terrific."

"But you never did the lines!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Never touched them!" answered Harry. "And you heard what Quelch said in the quad. He's usually a man of his word! But—but—but he talked to me like a Dutch uncle! Pleased as Punch."

"It's weird!" said Bob.

"He's appointed me head boy of the Remove again—"

"Great pip!"

"And told me he would like to see me captain of the Form—"

"Holy smoke!"

"Talked like a picture-book," said Wharton dazedly. "I don't make it out. I can't! It beats me hollow. I'm jolly glad, of course!"

"Well," said Bob, "if it pleases Quelch so much for a fellow to leave his lines undone, I'll leave my next lot unwritten—just to please him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, this is luck and no mistake," said Frank. "The only thing I can think of, is that he's determined to give you a chance, and make it as easy for you as he can. If that's the idea—"

"If that's it," said Harry quietly, "it will work! I've had a jolly narrow escape; and you can bet your Sunday socks that I shan't be such a goat again. He never said a word about the lines. Seems to have washed the whole thing out. But it's up to me—and I'm going to turn out that impot, if I perish over it, and hand it in before prep!"

"Good man!"

Wharton went on to his study, leaving the Co. with bright and cheery faces. Unexpectedly, almost miraculously as it seemed, the threatened storm had passed by. The dismal prospect of unending trouble had vanished; and all, so to speak, was calm and bright! Wharton had made a false step, but he was not likely to make another; that lesson was not lost on him.

He went into his study with a bright face. Jim Valentine was still there, and he gave him a rather curious look.

"Come into a fortune?" he asked.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No—but just as good! It's all right with Quelch! Right as rain! And I'm jolly well going to show him that I can play up."

"That's good!"

"I've been a silly ass! I can't imagine why Quelch has overlooked it."

It's not really like him! But there it is," said Harry. "Chuck over my Virgill! I've got four hundred lines to do before prep!"

Valentine started.

"How's that?" he exclaimed.

"Well, I'm bound to play up, after Quelch has been so awfully decent," said Harry. "If I take in the impot before prep, it will show him that I can appreciate it, what?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Valentine.

He stared at Wharton in dismay.

He had not foreseen that. His intervention had evidently "worked the oracle." But if the repentant rebel took in four hundred lines—which Mr. Quelch believed that he had already received—

"I—I say, is that necessary?" stammered Valentine. "If Quelch is satisfied—"

"All the more reason why I should play up," answered Harry.

"Yee-e-es; but—but probably he won't expect the lines now. If the whole thing's washed out— And— and four hundred lines is a lot—"

"My dear chap, after Quelch has been so decent, I'd write out that impot if it was four thousand," answered Wharton.

He sat down at the table with a sheaf of impot paper before him, and propped Virgil open against the inkstand. Valentine's face grew more and more dismayed. Wharton dipped his pen in the ink, and started "Arma virumque cano—"

"You—you're really—" gasped Valentine.

"Yes. Don't jaw now, old chap—I've got to do this carefully," said Harry, and "Troiae qui primus ab oris" ran from his pen.

Valentine drew a deep breath. He had intended to say nothing. Wharton was not to know—nobody was to know. He had pictured, in his mind, Quelch satisfied, on the one hand, and the rebel of the Remove satisfied, on the other, and the whole thing at an end. Evidently, however, it was not at an end—evidently the repentant rebel must not take those lines in to an amazed and astounded Form master. What the outcome might be, Valentine hardly dared to contemplate.

"Look here, Wharton—" he said at last.

"Don't jaw, old bean! Italiani fatto profugus—"

"Don't write those lines!"

"Must! Laviniaque venit litora—"

"You must not," said Valentine quietly. "You'll get me into a fearful row, if you do."

Wharton's pen stopped, and he stared at the new junior.

"You?" he ejaculated.

"Poor little me!"

"What on earth have you got to do with it?"

"Lots! You see, I butted in—"

"I don't see!"

"I wrote the lines for you!" said Valentine quietly. "Quelch found them in his study—and that's why—"

Harry Wharton rose from the table. His eyes were fixed on Valentine, in whose cheeks the colour deepened.

"You wrote the lines?"

"Yes."

"Are you potty? Quelch knows my hand as well as he knows his own! He would see at the first line that another fellow had written them! What do you mean?"

Valentine's face was crimson. But the colour faded out of it, leaving it deadly pale under Wharton's steady gaze.

"I wrote them in your hand!" he said at last, in a low voice.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,290.

"You couldn't!"

"I did!"

There was a long silence in the study. Wharton laid down the pen. It was an amazing statement from the new junior, but he had to be convinced. This accounted for what had astonished him in Mr. Quelch's study. It was indeed the only explanation. And yet—

"Let's have this clear," said Wharton at last. "Quelch found the lines in his study, and thought I had written them?"

"Yes."

"Then—you put in your half-holiday writing lines to get me out of a scrape?"

"That's nothing."

"Well, it's rather a lot," said Harry. "I've made a fool of myself, and goodness knows where it might have ended, if you hadn't done it! But—but for goodness' sake, Valentine, what do you mean? A single word in a different hand would have been enough to set Quelch on the track. He's as keen as a mustard! Mean to say you wrote four hundred lines in another fellow's hand, so that even a downy bird like Quelch was taken in?"

"Yes," breathed Valentine.

"Good heavens!" muttered Wharton.

"I'm glad I did it," said Valentine.

"You've been decent to me—Quelch has been splendid to me—and I've saved you both a lot of trouble."

"That's true. I'm grateful. But—"

He broke off.

"But," said Valentine, with a rather bitter look, "I've had to give myself away—to you. You know—now—what I'd rather have died than let any fellow at Greyfriars know—what Nosey Clark wanted me for—"

"Valentine!" gasped Wharton.

"That was it," said Valentine.

"That's why I got away from them! That's what I did—what I had to do—while they had me in their hands! You—you won't want to touch me with a barge-pole now you know. But—"

"Good heavens!" repeated Wharton, utterly agast.

It was his first glimpse of the boy's terrible secret. He had taken it for granted that the fellow was "straight"—his desperate flight from the crooks seemed a proof of it. He had hardly conjectured what the boy might have been through before he fled from Nosey Clark and his gang. Now—he knew! It gave him a shock of horror.

Valentine, reading his face, winced.

Wharton pulled himself together. Whatever the boy had been, he was straight now. It was to serve Wharton, to save him from the consequences of his own headstrong folly, that he had betrayed his miserable secret. That secret had to be kept.

"It's made you feel pretty sick, what?" muttered Valentine. "But—but you can see now that you can't take in those lines to Quelch? If he knew—if he knew! I—I couldn't stand it!" His voice trembled.

Wharton nodded.

"I understand! I—I— It's a bit of a shock to me. I never guessed—never dreamed! For goodness' sake, never do such a thing again! I suppose that sounds a bit ungrateful, as you've pulled me through a fearful row; but—but I mean it! And—not a word about this—not even to my pals—not a syllable! You can't keep it too dark!"

"If you'd like me to change out of this study—"

"Rot! We're friends, and we're going to keep friends!"

"You mean that—now you know?" faltered Jim Valentine.

"Every word!" said Harry Wharton.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER!

Nosey Clark Wants to Know!

"COP him!"

Harry Wharton started. It was Saturday afternoon, and Wharton was swinging along down Friardale Lane, with a bright and cheery face.

The new term was beginning well for Harry Wharton—the threatening clouds had rolled away.

He hardly knew whether to be glad or not that Jim Valentine had intervened in so strange a way; but there could be no doubt as to the happy result.

That narrow escape of a renewal of the old trouble had been a warning to him. His repentance, after all, had not been too late—owing to Valentine. That, at least, was so much to the good. Mr. Quelch's confidence was completely restored—and Wharton could only make up his mind to deserve it. He was head boy of the Remove again, and captain of the Form—there had been hardly a dissentient voice at the election in the Rag. The outlook was bright enough for Harry Wharton now.

He was in a happy and cheery mood as he swung along the frosty lane. His friends had gone for a ramble with Jim Valentine, to show the new fellow the old priory in Friardale Wood. Some of his duties as head boy had occupied Wharton for a time, but as soon as he was free, he followed, expecting to find them at the priory, or to meet them on their way back through the wood.

Certainly he was not thinking of danger. Mr. Compton Clark, alias Nosey, had almost disappeared from his recollection. But it was the sharp, metallic voice of Mr. Clark which had suddenly fallen on his ears, and he started and turned—as two figures leaped from the hedge and rushed on him.

One of them was the vulture-nosed man—the other a burly, muscular fellow whom he remembered as Barney Hayes. They had him, grasped by either arm, before he could think of resistance, and the next moment they had dragged him through the hedge, among the trees on the other side.

"You rotters!" panted Wharton.

"What—"

"Stow it!" snapped Barney. A threatening fist was thrust into the junior's face, and Barney gave him a savage scowl. "Quiet!"

"Look here—" panted Wharton.

"Hold your tongue, boy!" snapped Nosey Clark.

In the grasp of the two rascals, Wharton was hurried into the wood. Not till they were a couple of hundred yards from the lane did they stop.

"Safe enough here!" muttered Clark.

Wharton stood panting, with Barney's sinewy hand gripping his shoulder. He was powerless in the grasp of the muscular crook, but his eyes gleamed defiance.

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

Nosey Clark grinned sourly. "I fancy you know what we want," he answered. "We want to know where Jim Valentine is."

Wharton breathed hard and did not speak.

"Listen to me, Harry Wharton!" said Nosey Clark in a low, menacing tone. "I've been watching for a chance since you went back to school, and now I've got my hands on you. You got away last time; you won't get away this time, you can lay on that. You know where Jim Valentine is."

The black, glinting eyes of the crook searched the schoolboy's face, but he



"Help!" shouted Wharton, as the sound of whistling came suddenly through the silence of the wood. "Hel—" Nosey Clark's hand was over his mouth the next moment. But that desperate shout had reached friendly ears, for there was a rush of feet, and five juniors came crashing through the frozen bracken. "Pile in!" roared Bob Cherry.

read nothing there; Wharton was on his guard.

"You took the boy in and sheltered him when you were home for the Christmas holidays. I believed that he was still at Wharton Lodge until you left and went back to school. That was a mistake. But—" The crook's eyes glittered. "Although he was not there, you knew where he was"

"I knew nothing, as I told you at the time," answered Harry.

"You have not heard from him since?"

Wharton did not answer that.

It was evident that Nosey Clark did not know, and had not the remotest suspicion, that Jim Valentine was now at Greyfriars, and had become a schoolboy there. Wharton was not likely to tell him.

Nosey Clark waited for him to answer, watching his face the while, trying to read his thoughts. The junior did not speak.

"Will you answer me If you know nothing of the boy, and if you can prove it, I've done with you; I want to have nothing to do with you. But—"

A week ago Wharton could have answered with perfect truth that he knew nothing whatever about Jim Valentine, but he could not make that answer now.

Barney's grip tightened on his shoulder till it seemed to him that the bones would crack under it. He compressed his lips to keep back a cry of pain.

"He knows something, gov'nor," muttered Barney.

Nosey Clark nodded.

"I was sure of it! He befriended the boy. Jim has no friends—no other friends—he would keep in touch—"

He watched Wharton like a cat. "He has written to you?"

"He has not written to me," answered Harry.

"He has sent you word in some way—"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Have you seen him since the day I ran him down at your home?"

No answer.

"He's seen him!" muttered Barney.

"Where have you seen him, Master Wharton?" asked Nosey Clark.

"Find out."

"You admit that you've seen him?"

"I admit nothing."

"No need; I know you've seen him. Listen to me! You're in my hands; my car's not far away. You got away from me once by a chance visit from the police when I had you shut up in a safe place. That won't happen again. Tell me what you know of Jim Valentine—or you disappear to-day from the knowledge of your friends, and they will not see you again in a hurry!"

Wharton set his teeth.

"Have a little sense," Nosey Clark's tone was persuasive. "I don't want to be troubled with you; I don't want to give you any trouble. I only want the boy—my ward, who has run away from home. What has he told you to make you willing to help him keep away from his guardian?"

"His guardian!" Wharton's lip curled scornfully. "You scoundrel! I know, at least, what you want him for—and I'd be cut in pieces before I'd help you!"

"By gum!" breathed Barney. "Jim's been talking, gov'nor!"

"What has he told you, Harry Wharton?" asked Nosey Clark, his voice

coming from his closed teeth like the hiss of a serpent.

"Little or nothing," answered Harry. "Something came out by chance—enough to make me understand how matters stood. You want to drag the kid into crime—I know that much! Do you think I would help you?"

"I think so—after a week or two in an underground cellar, on bread and water," answered Nosey Clark. "That's what you've got in prospect. You may as well speak sooner as later."

"I've nothing to say."

"You mean you will say nothing?"

"Just that," answered Wharton coolly, though his heart was beating hard. "You've got me, Mr. Clark, as you say, and you can do as you jolly well like—but you won't get a word out of me about Jim Valentine."

"We shall see!" said Nosey Clark grimly. "You're in dangerous hands, Master Wharton—more dangerous hands than you seem to be aware. Speak, you young fool, before you're tied hand and foot, and gagged and taken away! Where is Jim Valentine?"

"Find out!"

The black eyes glinted with rage. Deep in the silent, frosty wood the Greyfriars junior was at the mercy of the two ruffians, but his look was steady and his courage did not fail.

Suddenly through the silence of the wood there came a sound of whistling, loud and cheery, though a little out of tune. Harry Wharton knew that whistle.

"Help!" he shouted. "Bob, help!"

Nosey Clark's hand was over his mouth the next moment. But that sudden, desperate shout had reached friendly ears.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

Face to Face!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! That's Wharton!"

Bob Cherry's whistling stopped suddenly, and he stared round in amazement.

"Wharton!" exclaimed Frank. "What the thump—"

The Co. were strolling back through the wood from the old priory. They were keeping an eye open for Harry Wharton, half expecting to meet him somewhere on the way. But that sudden, ringing shout for help from their chum took them quite by surprise. It was Wharton's voice, and he was near at hand in the woodland, and they stared round blankly.

"This way!" Jim Valentine rapped out the words. "This way, you fellows!"

He started at a run through the trees. "Come on!" panted Bob.

The five juniors ran hard, winding among the frosty trunks, crashing through frozen bracken. Valentine had not been mistaken as to the direction from which the shout had come; for a moment later they heard a sound of rustling and brushing which told of a struggle. In desperate haste they rushed on.

"Pile in!" Bob Cherry almost shrieked as they came, with a breathless, rush on the scene.

Harry Wharton was struggling desperately in the grasp of Barney and Nosey Clark. He had no chance in such a struggle, but for a minute or two his desperate resistance kept the crooks busy. Fiercely and desperately he struggled, and he was fighting hard as the Greyfriars fellows burst on the scene and rushed to his aid.

Bob Cherry was the first, and he came at the two crooks like a tiger. His clenched fist crashed full on Mr. Clark's vulture nose, and Nosey Clark went rolling over with a yell.

Barney, snarling an oath, turned on the newcomers, but powerful ruffian as he was, the rush of the juniors drove him back. They attacked him hotly, and the ruffian had to retreat, defending himself as he backed away.

"Give 'em beans!" roared Johnny Bull.

Barney panted. "Hook it, Nosey! Hook it!"

"My hat! It's that villain Clark!" panted Nugent. "Collar him!"

Nosey Clark scrambled to his feet. His beaky nose streamed crimson, and his eyes burned with rage. Barney was backing away, faster and faster, with Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Bob Cherry following him up. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent grasped at Nosey, but he sprang away, panting, and dabbing the streaming crimson from his nose. His eyes were fixed on Jim Valentine—in amazement. Valentine, as he recognised him, came to a dead halt.

"Collar him!" shouted Nugent.

Nosey Clark eluded the two juniors, who were grasping at him, but he did not run. His eyes hardly left the face of Jim Valentine.

"You!" he gasped. "You—Jim! You're here! Jim!"

The colour had ebbed from Jim Valentine's face. He stood rooted, at the sight of his enemy. There was utter dismay in his look. He had believed—he had dreamed—that he was done with Nosey Clark and the gang; he had not even feared that they would

ever track him out at Greyfriars School. What miserable ill-fortune had brought them here?

"Hook it, guv'nor!" yelled Barney.

The ruffian suddenly turned and ran. The odds were too great for the crooks, and Barney was seeking safety. But Nosey Clark seemed deaf to his warning voice. Even with Wharton and Nugent grasping at him, the sight of Jim Valentine's pale face seemed to fascinate him, and hold him to the spot.

"Lend a hand here!" shouted Nugent.

Barney was running like a hare. Bob and Johnny Bull and the nabob left him to run, and hurried back to help their comrades. Plenty of hands were on Nosey Clark now.

"We've got this beauty, at any rate!" panted Bob. "Hold the rotter!"

"What-ho!"

"It's that villain Clark!" gasped Nugent. "You remember him—"

"I'd know that beak anywhere!" chuckled Bob. "You're going to take

A POCKET KNIFE

is always useful. Why not set to work and win one like J. J. Moses, of 48, Flinton Street, Hull, who has sent in the following amusing ioke



Mr. Quelch: "Your essay is very good, Bunter. But it's the same as Wharton's. What shall I conclude from that?"

Billy Bunter: "That Wharton's is very good, too, sir!"

a little walk with us, Mr. Clark! They'll be glad to see you at the police station! I dare say they know a lot about you there!"

Nosey Clark hardly heeded the Famous Five. They had him safe enough, grasping him on all sides. But his black, glinting eyes were fixed on Jim Valentine's pale, dismayed face.

"Jim!" he repeated. "Jim! You're here! I've found you at last, Jim!"

Harry Wharton's face darkened. He had shouted, instinctively, for help, when he heard Bob Cherry's whistle, and help had come promptly enough, and he was rescued. But Valentine had been with the Co., and he had, naturally enough, come with them to the rescue; and now—

Now Nosey Clark knew! The penetrating eyes of the crook had not failed to note that Valentine was with the schoolboys, as one of themselves, and that he was wearing a Greyfriars cap! He knew now! In his amazement, and his satisfaction, he seemed to disregard the fact that he was a prisoner in the hands of the Greyfriars fellows.

"Who'd have thought it, Jim?" His tone was mocking. "You had me beat! I fancied that that lad knew where a finger could be laid on you—that was all that brought me here, Jim! And now—now! You're at the school—you!" He gave a laugh of savage mockery. "How did you wangle that, Jim? You—a schoolboy at Greyfriars—ha, ha! What have you told the headmaster, Jim? What does he know? Nothing, I reckon. But how did you wangle it, Jim? You were always clever!"

"That's enough!" said Harry Wharton roughly. "You'll never lay hands on Valentine again, at any rate, you scoundrel! You're going to prison on a charge of kidnapping; and once they've got you, I've no doubt they'll find out plenty of other things."

"They will—if they get me!" grinned Nosey Clark. "Not only about me, young feller-my-lad! You're taking me to the station, are you?"

"Yes, you villain!"

"Come on, Jim, we'll go together," said Nosey Clark. "The cops will be more pleased to see you than me, I'll be bound. Come on!"

Valentine groaned.

"It's all up," he said huskily. "Nosey, you scoundrel, why couldn't you let me alone? Haven't you done me harm enough?"

The crook laughed. "You're too valuable to lose, Jim! Do you want me to tell these schoolboys how valuable you are?"

The unhappy boy shuddered.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. Wharton understood; and the other fellows could not help making a startled guess. If Nosey Clark went to the police station, it was in his power to drag Jim Valentine with him! The Greyfriars fellows could not save him from that. One look at the boy's haggard face was a proof of it.

"My hat!" muttered Bob Cherry, in utter dismay, and his grasp on the crook relaxed.

"Keep him!" muttered Valentine hoarsely. "The game's up for me—I'm done for! Take him to the station. I—I'll follow."

The hands that were holding Nosey Clark dropped from him. With a mocking, sneering grin, the crook turned and disappeared into the wood. Harry Wharton, in silence, slipped his arm through Valentine's.

But the boy did not stir.

"The game's up!" he repeated dully. "You can't stick to me after this! Leave me alone—leave me to it!"

"We're sticking to you," said Harry Wharton quietly. "Come!"

"Like glue!" said Bob.

"The stickfulness is terrific, my esteemed Valentine," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh softly.

Valentine smiled faintly.

"I tell you you can't—"

"And I tell you we can—and will!" said Harry Wharton. "You're safe from that villain at Greyfriars, and we're going to see you through somehow. Come on!"

And Jim Valentine came.

THE END.

(Now look out for next Saturday's MAGNET and another grand long yarn of Jim Valentine and the chums of Greyfriars, entitled: "THE BOY WITH A GUILTY SECRET!" You'll vote it ripping, same as you will the six picture-stamps which will be presented FREE with this issue.)

HEDLEY SCOTT'S LATEST DETECTIVE THRILLER!

NOBBY, the 'Shooting Star'!



(The Opening Chapters retold on page 26.)

A New Being!
"MY shoe—my shoe!" Nobby managed to recover his power of speech at last. "I've only managed to find one of them!"

Locke smiled.
"That's all right, son. I'll fix you up with a new pair in the morning. Got the number of that car, Jack? You have! Right; get a move on to the nearest police station!"

Drake settled himself at the wheel, slipped in the gears, and the Rolls moved off like a speeding phantom.

Peering out of the small window at the back of the car, Nobby saw the two helpless bandits mouthing their rage and shaking their free fists. He laughed to himself as he looked back, but the laugh suddenly faded from his face, for along the darkened road now came a fast, open touring-car. Instinct told Nobby that it was the Don's car; instinct told him to keep away from that window and hide himself from the Don's sharp eyes.

He trembled slightly and remained strangely quiet, hardly answering the questions Locke put to him. He was glad when the blue lamp of a police station hove in sight. Somehow it split protection even from the Don. But he cried aloud his agitation when the open touring car which had followed relentlessly on the track of the Rolls crawled by, for he knew the Don had seen him.

The touring car continued on its way and turned into a bend a hundred yards past the police station.

Ferrers Locke got down, gave his report to the station superintendent, and was back again beside Nobby in less than five minutes; all the same, it had seemed an age to Nobby.

"Let her go, Jack!" said Locke. And Drake let her go.

The Rolls swallowed distance at the rate of a steady sixty miles an hour; and, looking back through the glass

window, Nobby felt relieved. There was no sign of the Don's car, although it had trailed them away from the police station. Evidently the pace was too hot for the tourer.

Nobby's face brightened and became still more animated as London was reached. He had never been to the great metropolis before. Of necessity now the pace of their progress became slower, and it was not until half an hour later that the Rolls purred to a standstill in a thoroughfare which Nobby had been quick to see was Baker Street.

"Here we are, young man," said Locke, alighting. "You're coming in with me—for to-night, at any rate. I don't need telling that you have run away from the circus. Not a word more now. Wait until we get in."

Nobby felt a friendly arm linked in his own, found himself in a warm, cosy room almost before he quite realised his luck, and good naturedly thrust into the deepest armchair he had ever seen, let alone sat in, in his life.

He started violently as there appeared, almost like an apparition, a yellow-faced individual with slanting eyes, who bowed low before Ferrers Locke, murmured Oriental greetings, and took the coat and hat of the detective.

"Don't be startled, young 'un," smiled the detective. "This is Sing-Sing—my servant. And the best servant in the world—eh, Sing-Sing?"

"Illustrious master, I am not fit to walk before thy shadow," purred Sing-Sing, obviously pleased at the compliment. "I, a son of ten thousand dogs—"

"Cut it out," interrupted Ferrers Locke, "and let's have a real tasty meal for three as quickly as you can devise it!"

Sing-Sing bowed low.

"To hear is to obey, O wonder of the universe!"

And with these flowery sentiments he departed as softly as he had come, leaving Nobby blinking his admiration.

"Oh—and, Sing-Sing!" called out the detective, catching sight of Nobby's one unshod foot which he bravely tried to hide in a stocking which was uncommonly well darned and yet still plentifully holed. "Bring me a pair of Drake's slippers."

Sing-Sing was back in a flash with

the slippers. Off came Nobby's remaining shoe, and into the slippers went his shy feet, persuaded there by Sing-Sing's deft administrations.

"Now sit back and rest yourself until the grub's ready," invited Locke. "Here comes Drake."

With noisy boisterousness Jack Drake entered the room, threw his coat and hat at Sing-Sing, and dumped himself into an armchair before the fire.

"Well, old chap," he said affably, "if you tell a fellow your name we might be able to work up a conversation until Sing-Sing arrives with the chop-suey."

Nobby blushed.

"They call me Nobby," he replied.

"Well, that's all right for a start!" exclaimed Drake. "What's the other part of the handle—Clarke?"

"There is no other," replied Nobby. "I've been called just Nobby—well, as long as I am able to remember—Nobby from Nowhere, the Don used to say."

"The Don—"

"He means Don Carlos, the proprietor of the circus," broke in Locke quietly.

"Have you been with him all your life, young 'un?"

"As far as I can remember," returned Nobby. "He calls himself my guardian, but he's never told me who my parents were. And every time I ever asked him he used to go into a royal rage and start in with his belt or a stick."

"The rotter!" said Drake.

"The truth is, Jack," said Locke, getting his favourite briar well alight, "this young friend has decided to say good-bye to the Don and his circus. He made up his mind to bolt to-night."

"That's right, sir!" flashed Nobby. "But it's not because I've done anything wrong. Believe me, sir, I didn't fire the marquee—"

"That's the blaze we saw. Remember, Jack?"

Drake nodded.

"I had made up my mind to run away, in any case," continued Nobby. "I'm getting older now—Locke smiled faintly at his earnestness—"I've tried bolting before. But every time the Don's brought me back and—"

"Walloped you?" put in Drake.

"Worse than that," smiled Nobby bravely. "But that doesn't matter. I'm clear of him now. And I'll never go back to him—or that life."

"I should think not!" exclaimed Drake. "He must be an awful rotter!"

"It's awfully decent of you, sir"—this to Ferrers Locke—"to have me here. But, really, I ought to be going!"

"But you're not, Nobby," smiled Locke. "Somehow I feel responsible for you now. After all, I brought you away from Middleham, didn't I? Let me see, what can you do in the way of work?"

Nobby's face brightened.

"I can—"

His face fell again.

"Nothing except walk the tightrope, swing on a trapeze, and— But I'm not going back to that life again! I'll manage to find something," he added bravely. "I'm young and strong—and quick to learn."

"I say," exclaimed Drake suddenly, "isn't Nobby the fellow you watched scoring goals this morning, guv'nor?"

"He is," admitted Locke. "And his shooting would make some of the pros look envious!"

Drake's youthful brow puckered into deep thought. He liked Nobby, and was all eagerness to do him a good turn.

"I say, guv'nor, I'm going to take young Nobby round to see Weatherstone in the morning."

"If you mean Lord Douglas Weatherstone, my lad," said Locke reprovingly, "why don't you say so? But what's in your mind?"

Drake chuckled.

"You remember, guv'nor, I did him a useful turn over the Marston business. The old boy told me he would return the compliment any time the chance came his way. It's going to come his way, see! Nobby and I will present ourselves at his office at nine o'clock, pronto. I'm going to persuade his nibs to give Nobby a job as ground boy with the Perriton Rovers. That'll be a start, anyway."

Nobby jumped in his chair. Perriton Rovers—Perriton Rovers! Why, they were one of the most famous clubs in the whole of the three First Leagues! Last year, Nobby recalled, they had been the runners-up in the Cup Final at Wembley.

"Oh, I say—" began Nobby delightedly.

"Leave it to me, Nobby!" chuckled Drake. "I'll wangle the old buffer. He's not a bad old stick—barks a bit in his beard, but his bite never comes off!"

Locke laid down his pipe.

"That's a happy thought of yours, Jack," he said. "Anyway, I can't suggest a better one. Meantime"—he sniffed the air—"here's Sing-Sing with something really tasty."

And tasty it was. Young Nobby had never eaten a meal like it. His overwhelming hunger got the better of him so far as table manners went, for life in the circus had been crude, and "snatch what you can" had been the general motto when meal-times came round. But, as Nobby had said, he was quick to learn.

After that first flush of healthy enjoyment, tucking away food that was perfectly cooked and perfectly served, he eyed Locke and Drake covertly. They, apparently, did not eat their peas with a knife, neither did they clomp their jaws noisily. And that snow-white piece of linen was not a pocket handkerchief—it was something that had to be placed on the lap. Nobby was quick to observe these things, quick to copy them.

Locke noted the quick change over with approbation. The improvement in

Nobby was plain to see. A lively colour came to his cheeks, his eyes glowed brightly. He looked, and felt, a new being.

Kicked Out!

WHEN Sing-Sing had cleared away, Locke motioned Nobby to the armchair.

"Better digest that little lot, Nobby, before you turn in. Drake and I are accustomed to late hours, so don't mind us."

Nobby settled himself in the armchair with a sigh of contentment. A few hours earlier he had been in the depths of despair. Now his whole life was changed. Melchior, the gipsy, had spoken truly. He thought of her with a tinge of sadness. What was she doing now? And from her his thoughts turned to Don Carlos. What was he doing?

Don Carlos, at that identical moment, was thumping the bell of Ferrers Locke's chambers in Baker Street.

Sing-Sing answered the summons and returned with the news that a very excitable alien, who answered to the name of Don Carlos, demanded an audience with Ferrers Locke.

The detective was not surprised, but Nobby was. He started to his feet in alarm.

"Don't let him take me back!"

His terror was real.

"Don't worry, Nobby," said Ferrers Locke. "Just step inside this room! I'll deal with your Don Carlos!"

With a wildly beating heart, Nobby allowed Jack Drake to escort him into the adjoining room. There, with Jack for company, he waited—listening.

Don Carlos was very much in evidence a few seconds later. His voice, upraised, demanded the person of Nobby.

"I know he is here!" he almost screamed. "I followed the car—yes. I took the number. I have traced it to Ferrers Locke, of Baker Street. You are heem? You are Ferrers Locke, the private detective!"

Nobby thrilled. Ferrers Locke! Not until then had he ever thought of asking the identity of his benefactor. Ferrers Locke, the famous detective! Nobby felt his confidence return.

He cheered up considerably, and Jack Drake no longer squeezed his arm to reassure him that all would be well.

"I am Ferrers Locke," came the detective's cool voice. "And the boy you call Nobby is under my roof!"

Don Carlos seemed to tower over Locke, who was seated in the armchair nonchalantly puffing at his briar.

"Then I demand that you give heem over to me, Mister Locke. I am his guardian. He has run away—"

"One can hardly blame him," said Locke coldly.

"He is ungrateful cub!" exclaimed Don Carlos. "For fifteen years I have looked after him like a father. Brought him up, fed him, sheltered him—"

"And beaten the life out of him," interpolated Locke, rising to his feet.

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

NOBBY, a red-headed youngster of sixteen, who has worked in a football booth belonging to

DON CARLOS' circus for as many years as he can remember, decides to run away to London by his presence of mind in throwing his shoes at an armed bandit, he succeeds in saving

FERRERS LOCKE, a detective, and Jack Drake, his boy assistant, from serious loss. In return Locke offers Nobby a lift to London in his car.

(Now read on.)

"And now you and Nobby part company. He's not going back to you or to the circus!"

"But this is monstrous, Mister Locke! I am his guardian. I have the law—I have every right—"

"Then, if you are his guardian you should know the boy's name!"

"He is my sister's—my sister's child!" spluttered the Spaniard. "He is Carlos Casanova de Rio."

"Are you sure?" asked Locke coldly.

"I swear it, Mister Locke! My heart bled for that boy!" Don Carlos fell to a wheedling murmur. "I have tried to do my best by him. My heart bleed—"

"Don Carlos," said Ferrers Locke quietly, "I have told you—that the boy has run away from you—that he will never return to you. My own opinion of you is that you are an unmitigated bully—I was tempted to add scoundrel! Now kindly leave this room."

Don Carlos turned upon the detective in a fury.

"Carama! Ten thousand thunders! I will make you sorry for this! I will entreat the law! You will be expose! I will claim the compensation! Pig! Dog!"

His words ended in a howl, for the simple reason that Ferrers Locke grabbed him by the collar with one hand and the slack of the pants with the other, and literally hustled him out of the room. Followed the trampling of feet, then a heavy crash.

The resisting Don Carlos had travelled the long staircase on the back of his neck, so to speak. Furthermore, an obliging Sing-Sing was standing in the hallway, with the door held wide open for further progress.

Don Carlos picked himself up, spitting and cursing like a wildcat. His language was unintelligible, or, at least, most of it was; but Locke, who sauntered coolly down the stairs, gattered that he was cursed sleeping, waking, walking, riding, drinking, and so on; that Nobby would rue the day he had bolted from Don Carlos; that he would be beaten till he was black and blue! In short, Don Carlos would be most amply revenged for this night's work.

He was still screaming his defiance in that passionate way peculiar to the large and fleshy bully when Ferrers Locke gripped him, swung him round into a convenient position, and applied a well-shod foot to his nether garments.

Don Carlos shot through that open door like a rocket. He landed in a heap on the pavement. Then—

Biff!

His top-hat landed on his nose, as Sing-Sing had intended it should. The door was closed, and Don Carlos, for once thoroughly humbled, gasped and panted for breath.

Up above, the curtains parted and the boyish face of Nobby peered down at the street below. Some instinct prompted Don Carlos to glance upwards at that moment.

His face became convulsed with rage as he recognised the youngster. His lips worked with savage fury, and Nobby blessed the fact that he could not hear the stinging stream of invective that fell from them.

The Don shook his fist threateningly, looked murderously at the lad he had beaten and starved all his life, and then faded away into the shadows of night.

But, although he knew the Don was gone, Nobby felt deep down in his heart

that he had not seen the last of the tyrant—and in that he was right.

Nobby turned from the window and found Ferrers Locke gazing at him.

"Don't you worry about that big mountain of a bully, Nobby," he said. "He won't worry you any more. Just you turn in. Drake will show you the spare room. To-morrow we'll talk things over afresh. And if you must dream," he added, as an afterthought, "dream of shooting goals for Perriton Rovers."

Nobby murmured his thanks, what time Jack Drake good naturedly dragged him out of the room.

Nobby slept between clean white sheets in a really comfortable bed for the first time in his life.

He did dream.

But his dreams were of Don Carlos.

Nobby Scores a Bull's-eye!

"WHAT the dickens did you say his infernal name was?"

Lord Douglas Weatherstone's rather florid face creased into a score of wrinkles, some of which indicated his perplexity, others the presence of gout in his giant frame.

"He hasn't got a name," answered Jack Drake, "other than Nobby."

"Tscah!"

That explosive ejaculation made the youngster smile. It told him much. It was a damp, raw, January morning—typical of the season—when tempers were apt to be short and faces long. But the inclemency of the weather made no difference to Drake; he was sunny in all weathers.

Faithful to his promise overnight, he had brought young Nobby to the spacious grounds of the Perriton Rovers. At the moment of the interview between the noble chairman of the club and Jack Drake, Nobby was cooling his heels in the passage adjacent to the massive oak door which carried the imposing legend: "Directors' Board Room."

"Tscah!" Lord Douglas repeated himself, shook gingerly the gouty foot which made life so unpleasant for him, and then glared at Drake's smiling face. "Now, look here, you grinning jackanapes!" he said fiercely. "Let me get this right. You tell me you've discovered a boy marvel at shooting goals, but you have never seen him kick a ball—"

"But the gov'nor has!" interpolated Drake hurriedly.

"Tscah! You bring this genius here"—there was scorn in his lordship's face and tone—"and ask me to give him a job?"

"That's right, sir!"

"And you don't even know his name?"

Drake smiled.

"Well, considering the poor kid doesn't know it himself, you can hardly expect me to know it. It might be—well, Weatherstone—or anything—"

"Enough!" snapped his lordship. "Don't be cheeky! It might be Weatherstone, indeed! Impertinent young—Confound this gout! Ooooh! Where is this—er—Nobby?"

"In the passage," replied Drake. "Sorry to worry you, sir. But you will remember that you once said—"

"That I would do anything for you," added his lordship. "I meant it at the time, and hope always to hold such a high opinion of you—cheeky as you are. Now, bring in your genius—Stop! We'll take him on to the pitch. Ask Manager Sandy for a ball."

"O.K." hurled back Drake, as he departed; and to Nobby, who eyed him

anxiously as he approached, he gave a comforting wink and grimace.

"Tscah!"

Nobby jumped as that peculiar ejaculation smote his eardrums. Turning, he found himself in the presence of a real, live lord for the first time in his life. The sight pleased him, thrilled him—actually sent a blush along his healthy cheeks.

For his part, Lord Douglas Weatherstone found the habitual frown on his face give way to a flicker of a smile. He liked the honest, open face of the red-headed youngster.

"So you are—er—Nobby, what?"

"Yes, milord!"

"Hem!" The big man ran a critical



"Caramba!" yelled Don Carlos, as Ferrers Locke grabbed him by the collar with one hand and the slack of his pants with the other and hustled him to the top of the staircase.

eye over the youngster's sturdy frame. "Not so bad for a young fellow still to see sixteen. Play football, I am told. Score goals like a—a genius, what? Well, well, we'll see. Where on earth is that grinning jackanapes Drake? Ah, here he comes! Follow me, young man!"

Nobby murmured his acquiescence, and followed in his lordship's wake like a fellow in a dream. Along the passages, and then down a flight of short steps, found the trio standing by the players' entrance. Beyond stretched the short, crisp turf of the playing pitch, oval in shape, and generously banked, to give the spectators as wide and as comfortable a view of any match as the necessary shilling gate-money permitted.

Above the trio towered the thirty-five thousand pounds double-decker grandstand, but lately completed for the benefit of those patrons who could afford more than the ordinary entrance fee of a shilling.

Lord Douglas Weatherstone was very proud of that stand, and was optimistic enough to think that the excellent play of the Rovers would draw the crowds in sufficient numbers to pay for it—one day.

Gout was forgotten as Lord Douglas Weatherstone trod the well-cared-for turf of the playing pitch. Many of his fifty years seemed to fall away from him. Football was in his blood. He loved it, supported it vigorously against the growing popularity of Rugby, and always looked back upon his Corinthian days with pardonable pride.

He took the football from Drake's hands, punted it along the grass a matter of forty feet, and then signed to Nobby.

"Let me see you kick it, my lad! Kick it straight at me—hard as you can!"

Nobby trotted forward, lifted the stationary ball with a deft flick of his right foot, which did not fail to please his lordship, and almost in the same breath let drive with his left.

Like a shot from a gun the ball sailed straight for Lord Douglas Weatherstone.

His lordship saw it coming, right enough, but his gouty foot let him down

badly when he tried to wheel sharply out of the way.

Thud!

Lord Douglas wondered whether a cannon-ball had struck him a second later, as the ball crashed against his chin and knocked him sideways.

Nobby, his face crimson with anxiety, rushed forward to voice his apologies and to assist the old peer to his feet.

Drake, stifling a grin, got there first, however. He hauled Lord Douglas Weatherstone to his feet, dusted him down with a handkerchief, and then waited for the storm to break.

"I'm awfully sorry—" began Nobby.

"What for?" barked his lordship.

"Did I not ask you to send the ball straight at me—hard as you could?"

"I—I—I didn't kick it as hard as I could, sir," stammered Nobby.

"What? The devil you didn't? Then I shouldn't like to be in the way of one of your hardest. Was that a fluke?"

"Do you mean, sir, whether or not I could do it again?"

"Yes and no!" came the "bark."

"But I am not asking for a second dose. Drake, what are you cackling at? Tell Sandy to send out the boys."

"O.K."

Drake sped hot foot for the gymnasium wherein the Rovers were exercising.

(A great future lies before Nobby—providing the razzally Don Carlos doesn't step in and spoil everything! Be sure you read next week's exciting chapters of this powerful fofter and detective story, chums!)

A HAPPY NEW YEAR WITH THE "MAGNET," CHUMS!

Come Into The Office, Boys!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.



I TOLD you I had some splendid treats up my sleeve for the New Year, didn't I, chums? Well, the New Year is with us, and here's the first of them. Would you like to

WIN A GRAND HOME CINEMA Complete With Films?

Why, of course you would! Then be sure and get next week's MAGNET, for in this bumper issue you will find full particulars of a simple one-week competition in which readers will have the opportunity of winning this wonderful prize free. If you do not bag the HOME CINEMA you will still have a chance of carrying off one of the

100 "RIGBY" SWALLOW MODEL PLANES.

which will be awarded as consolation prizes.

Ah, you will have to be to solve twelve simple words, from which one letter has purposely been left out. For example, take the letters PAP—R together, with the clue, "What you are reading now?" Obviously, the missing letter is "E," and the word "PAPER." Seasy as rolling off a form, what? Every one of the twelve words are just as simple as this example—no sitting with a wet towel round your head, no waste of time, and

NO ENTRANCE FEE!

Tell all your pals about this fascinating competition, and then go round to your newsagent and order a copy of next Saturday's MAGNET, and thus make sure of entering this fascinating competition.

HOLD him, boys, who? Why, anyone who tries to attack you and get away with it! The first of this week's fine free gift picture stamps shows you a re-

markably effective way of doing it! Get hold of him as shown, and force his elbow-joint against your right knee or shin-bone—taking care that his palm is turned away from you. You'll soon have him howling for mercy!

The two locomotive stamps illustrate two more "crack" British and Empire giants of the iron way. The magnificent L.M.S.R. loco which is pictured, serves the Caledonian section of the railway, and needs to be pretty powerful to negotiate some of the steep gradients which are found in the Highlands.

The South African Railway express pulls passenger trains through some of the wildest scenery to be found in any part of the Empire. Magnificent gorges, ravines, waterfalls, mountains, and rivers flash past in never-ending succession, and a trip on this railway is one of the finest "scenic" runs you could possibly take.

Everyone has heard of the famous Dornier Do. X, the world's largest flying-boat. This German super flying-boat, which during one of her recent test flights carried 180 passengers, is fitted with two kinds of propellers—"pullers" and "pushers." The hull and wings are constructed entirely of metal, and our illustration gives a splendid view of her as she appears in flight.

Have a look at the famous yacht "Shamrock." There have been several Shamrocks, and the first was the outstanding 23 metre British cutter in the days before the War. After the War, other "Shamrocks" took her place, and, although of recent years they have been unable to wrest the famous American cup, they have, nevertheless, carried on the tradition of the first of their line. It is rarely, indeed, that the "Shamrock" does not lead—and in one year alone one of her class had nine firsts, ten seconds, and one third to her credit.

When you realise that the Royal Canadian "Mountie" sometimes has a "beat" which is four hundred miles long, you can imagine that he has got to be an expert rider. Furthermore, he has got to be an expert at tracking, camping, snow-shoeing and canoeing. There are eighty-five officers and two thousand rank and file in this fine force, and on the Arctic patrol less than 100 troopers are responsible for patrolling and keeping order in an area as large as Europe!

J. A. (Tooting), sends in a query which I really must answer. He wants to know:

HOW MANY COUNTRIES FLY THE RED FLAG?

- No country flies a solid red flag! Every red flag has some design or symbol on it. The principal ones are: Great Britain: Red flag with Union Jack in top-left corner.
- China: Red with blue oblong and white sun in top left corner.
- Denmark: Red with white cross.
- Norway: Red with white and blue cross.
- Turkey: Red with white crescent and star.
- Russia: Red with the letters "P. C. C. P.," and small design between the centre letters.

There's a treat in store for you next week, chums! Frank Richards has written one of the best yarns that have ever come from his pen. It's entitled:

"THE BOY WITH A GUILTY SECRET!"

and is a continuation of the present series of stories featuring Jim Valentine, the new boy at Greyfriars: It will keep your interest from the time you pick it up until you put it down again. There will also be further exciting chapters of "Nobby, the Shooting Star," Hedley Scott's powerful football and detective story, another special edition of the "Greyfriars Herald," a further talk on Soccer by "Linesman," and last, but by no means least, six more FREE stamps to stick in your album.

Before closing up, however, let me again take the opportunity of passing along—from my staff and myself—all the very best of good wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

YOUR EDITOR.

GROSE'S 8, New Bridge Street, LONDON, E.C.4. **LUDGATE CIRCUS**

BILLIARDS AT HOME 1/- per week.

SIZE	Deposit	4 monthly payments	Cash
3 ft. 2 in. X 1 ft. 8 in.	10/-	3/2	25/-
3 ft. 6 in. X 2 ft.	10/-	5/-	25/-
4 ft. 2 in. X 2 ft. 3 in.	10/-	7/-	29/6
4 ft. 6 in. X 2 ft. 6 in.	10/-	8/6	41/6
5 ft. 4 in. X 2 ft. 8 in.	10/-	12/6	51/6
6 ft. 4 in. X 3 ft. 3 in.	10/-	20/-	77/6

Complete with 2 Cues, 3 Turned Balls (guaranteed unbreakable), Marking Board, Spirit Level, Rules and Chalk. **COMPLETE LIST FREE**

BE TALL Your Height increased in 14 days or Money Back. Complete Course, 5/-. Booklet free privately. —**STEBBING SYSTEM, 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.**

GALLEON Packet and Paragon Collection **FREE!** Over 60 different, scarce Charkari, large ship stamp, etc. Just send 2d. postage and request approvals.—**LISBURN & TOWNSEND (U.S.S.), LIVERPOOL.**

DON'T BE BULLIED! Learn JUIJITSU. Take care of yourself in all circumstances without weapons. Better than Boxing. Fear no man. Splendid Illus. Lessons and particulars free on application, or Large Part for 3/8. Practical Tuition at London School.—**Prof. GAREUD (Dept. A.P.), Blenheim House, Bedford Lane, Feltham, Middx.**

7 GREECE PICTORIALS (1927) FREE and 50 diff. Just send 2d. postage, requesting Approvals.—**R. P. WILKINSON, 25, Lawson Road, Colwyn Bay, Wales. (Weld, 1899.)**

FREE FUN! Ventriloquists' Instruments given FREE to all sending 9d. P.G. for latest Novelty and List. (Large Parcels 2/6, 5/-).—**A. RUSSELL, London, Wellington, Lislep.**

STAMMERING, Stuttering. New, remarkable, Certain Cure. Booklet free, privately.—**SPECIALIST, Dept. A.P., 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.**

INCREASED my own height to 6ft. 3ins.!! T.H., age 16, to 6ft.!! T.F., age 21, from 5ft. 5 to 5ft. 10! **Ross System** is Genuine. Enrol and Watch Yourself Grow! Fee £2 2s. Particulars 1d. stamp.—**P. ROSS, Height Specialist, Scarborough.**

MAGIC TRICKS, etc.—Parcels, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument, Invisible, Imitate Birds. Price 6d. each, 4 for 1/-.—**T.W. Harrison, 239, Pentonville Rd., London, N.1.**

MOUSTACHES are again fashionable. Grow a manly moustache in a few days with **MARVEL** moustache grower. 1s. 6d. posted.—**Marvel Labs., 19, Cromford House, Manchester.**

All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, **UNION JACK SERIES, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**