

"BILLY BUNTER'S BARGAINS!" By Frank Richards

(Full o' laughs School Story of Harry Wharton & Co.—Inside)

The MAGNET 2^D

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INSIDE



BILLY BUNTER'S BARGAINS!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Sale Now On!

"Go away!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Go away!" roared the Famous Five of the Remove with one voice.

"But, I say—" protested Billy Bunter.

Slam!

The door of Study No. 1 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars closed almost on the fat little nose of Bunter.

Bunter jumped back.

As he jumped there was a shower of small articles from an open cardboard box the fat junior carried in his podgy hand. They scattered on the passage floor round Bunter.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

He stooped to pick up the fallen articles, blinking round anxiously through his big spectacles.

The total number of the articles was twenty.

They had been in Bunter's possession for days—ever since he had received them from an advertising company in exchange for a remittance of one pound.

The big idea was that a fellow sent a pound for that set of articles, and sold them among his friends for half-a-crown each.

Bunter considered that a paying proposition.

The first part had been carried out. The pound, a borrowed one, had been sent and the articles received. Selling them was the second part of the programme, but this appeared less easy.

Not a single article had been sold so far, although Bunter had gone to the trouble of hawking his wares on a wooden tray, suspended round his neck, all over the school.

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Nobody seemed to want them. Nobody had any use for a penknife of which the blades had the consistency of rubber, or for a fountain-pen which exuded ink at the wrong end, or a pencil-sharpener or even a shabby imitation of a yo-yo!

Up and down the Remove Billy Bunter had hawked his articles, and hawked them in vain. Fellows were really beginning to dread the sight of Bunter and his articles. Fellows would turn corners, or slam doors, or break into a run when Bunter appeared in the offing. These were the polite fellows. Less polite fellows would tell Bunter to go and eat cake, or would even up-end his box of articles and scatter them far and wide. He had even had them crammed down the back of his fat neck.

"Beasts!" repeated Billy Bunter, as he gathered up his articles once more and stacked them back in the box. "Rotters!"

A junior came up the Remove staircase and grinned at the sight of Bunter and his occupation. It was Jim Valentine, the new fellow in the Remove.

Bunter blinked round at his footstep.

"I say, Valentine—"

"Not to-day, thanks," grinned Valentine.

"Look here, old chap, if you'd like this alarm-clock—"

"The rising-bell is good enough for me. I don't want an alarm-clock to kick up a row in the morning."

"This alarm-clock doesn't kick up a row, old chap. The fact is, the alarm doesn't go off!" explained Bunter.

"Oh, my hat! Then what's the good of it?"

"Well, it keeps time, you know," said Bunter. "It goes like anything if you give it a bit of a jerk every time it stops. And it doesn't keep on gaining, like some clocks. It loses as often as it

gains, and is slow quite as often as it's fast. And— Beast!"

Jim Valentine went into Study No. 1 and shut the door without waiting to hear the whole list of that alarm-clock's attractions.

Billy Bunter drifted rather dismally up the Remove passage with his box of articles.

He was beginning to get fed-up with those articles, though not so fed-up as the rest of the Remove.

They seemed to be a drug in the market. The advertisement stated that they were all useful and valuable, and that a fellow would have no difficulty in disposing of them among his friends. Bunter was finding it frightfully difficult to dispose of them. He was losing his faith in the bona fides of that advertisement.

"I say, Smithy!" He spotted the Bounder at the doorway of Study No. 4, and rolled up to him. "Smithy, old chap—"

"Sheer off!" grunted Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Look at this protractor," said Bunter, holding it up. "You'll want a protractor for geometry with Las-cells this afternoon."

"I've got one, fathead!"

"Well, it's rather a good idea to have two, in case you lose one," said Bunter. "It's half-a-crown, really, but I'll let you have it for two bob, Smithy."

"Thanks," said Smithy sarcastically. "It's worth about twopence, I suppose, if it's worth anything at all. You've been done over that rubbish, you ass!"

"It's a jolly good protractor," protested Bunter. "It keeps quite flat on the paper if you keep it pressed down carefully all the time. It doesn't really curl up very much, Smithy."

"Doesn't it?" said Smithy. "Look here." He took the protractor and twisted it round his fingers and tossed it back to Bunter in a tubular form. "What about that?"

"Why, you beast," roared Bunter, "you've ruined it now! You'll have to pay for that protractor, Smithy!"

"I don't think!" grinned Smithy. "Look here—"

Bunter broke off as Vernon-Smith lifted his right foot. Evidently his articles were going to be scattered again. The Owl of the Remove beat a hasty retreat up the passage, leaving the Bouncer chuckling.

Skinner gave him a cheery grin from the door of Study No. 11.

"Sale now on?" he inquired. "Going like hot cakes, what?"

"Well, the fact is there's rather a rush for the things, old chap," said Bunter. "But I've got a few left. Like to look at them, Skinner?"

"Certainly! Bring them into the study."

Billy Bunter brightened up. This looked like business!

Skinner was the only fellow, so far, who had shown any desire even to look at the precious articles.

Bunter rolled into Study No. 11 with his box.

Snoop and Stott, Skinner's study-mates, stared at him.

"Take that rubbish away!" said Snoop.

"And be sharp about it!" added Stott.

"Hold on, you men," said Skinner. "Let's look at the things. The fact is, I'm jolly interested in these articles."

"What rot!"

"I say, you fellows, you shut up and let Skinner alone!" exclaimed Bunter. "Skinner knows a good thing when he sees it. Look at this alarm-clock, Skinner. It doesn't make a row like common alarm-clocks. What about two bob?"

"Put it on the table," said Skinner. "Good! And this protractor. You can easily flatten it out. That beast Smithy twisted it up like this!"

"How much?" asked Skinner.

"Only a couple of bob to a pal like you, old fellow."

"Put it along with the alarm-clock," said Skinner, and Billy Bunter put it along with the alarm-clock.

Snoop and Stott stared at Skinner. Skinner closed one eye at them, and they grinned. Bunter, unaware of the wink, and heedless of the grin, sorted out article after article, with a beaming face. For each article in turn Skinner expressed the greatest admiration, and stated his opinion that it was cheap at the price. Everything seemed to please Skinner. At all events, he told Bunter to put each article in turn on the study table. Bunter beamed. He almost purred with satisfaction. This was something like business! After being a drug in the market for days and days his articles were going like hot cakes. It looked like being a case of "sold out."

Quite a stack of articles accumulated on the study table. Snoop and Stott continued to grin. Skinner remained perfectly grave. The box was emptied at last, and Bunter's fat face shone with satisfaction.

"That's the lot, old chap," he said. "But, look here, I'll get a fresh lot along this week, Skinner, if you want some more bargains."

"Do!" said Skinner.

"I'm letting you have them cheap," said Bunter. "Really, they ought to be two-pound-ten the lot, but I'm letting you have them for just two pounds."

"You're taking two pounds for that little pile?" asked Skinner. "I'm surprised to hear it."

Billy Bunter rather regretted that he had made reductions in price to a customer like this. Skinner seemed quite to have changed his character. He was very careful with money, as a rule. Indeed, he had a reputation for being rather stingy. Now he seemed as careless about cash as Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, I said two pounds, and I stick to it," said Bunter. "I'm taking two pounds for the whole lot, Skinner."

"And who's going to give it to you?" asked Skinner innocently.

Bunter blinked at him. "Eh? You are!" he answered.

"You've bought them, haven't you?"

"Not that I know of," answered Skinner cheerfully. "What on earth put that idea into your head, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop and Stott.

Billy Bunter's fat face ceased to beam with satisfaction. He glared at Harold Skinner through his big spectacles.

"Warrer you mean?" he hooted. "You've bought them. You told me to put them on the table."

"Oh, quite!" yawned Skinner. "I've no objection to your putting them on the table, I'm sure, so long as you take them off again before I want to use the table."

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had gone out, and Smithy, having watched him out of sight, naturally expected to find his study untenanted. The Bouncer was in need of a telephone, and his Form master's phone was at his disposal, while Mr. Quelch was safely off the scene.

But the study was not, as the Bouncer expected, untenanted. A junior sat at the table, working at a Latin paper. He glanced up in surprise at the Bouncer, and Smithy gave a start, and stared at him.

It was Jim Valentine, the new fellow in the Remove. Smithy was startled, but only for a moment. It was not uncommon for Valentine to take "extra toot" in his Form master's study.

"Oh, you're here!" said Smithy, his lip curling in a sneer.

Valentine nodded. "I'm here," he assented. "If you want Quelch, he's gone out."

"I don't want Quelch—thanks! I'm not a swot and a sap, greasing up to a beak," sneered Vernon-Smith.

"Neither am I, I hope," answered Valentine, unmoved. "I'm not up to the Form work yet, and I've a good deal of leeway to make up. Like to sit down and help me with this Latin?"

"You can do your own swotting. Getting it ready for Quelch to see when he comes in?" sneered the Bouncer.

"Exactly! If you don't want anything here, clear! You're interrupting me!"

"I'll please myself about that."

Valentine shrugged his shoulders, and bent over his task again. Smithy stood watching him for a few moments, the same sneering expression on his face.

Jim Valentine had made no enemies at Greyfriars, excepting the Bouncer. But in Herbert Vernon-Smith he had made a bitter enemy.

"We never finished our scrap," said the Bouncer, after a few moments' silence.

"I don't want to finish it," answered Valentine, without looking up.

"I mayn't give you any choice about that."

"Please yourself."

"Cold feet—what?" sneered Smithy.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Valentine impatiently. "What is there to scrap about?"

"I'm down on a nobody, from nowhere, who shoves himself into a school where he has no right to be," said Vernon-Smith, with unpleasant distinctness.

"I haven't forgotten what happened at Lantham a week or two ago. A pick-pocket robbed me, and I got hold of him. And you had the cheek to lay your hands on me, and get him loose, and let him scud. An old friend of yours, I dare say."

Valentine did not answer that.

The colour deepened in his cheeks, but he kept his eyes steadily on his task, and did not look up.

His handsome profile was turned to the Bouncer, who watched it with a bitter look on his own hard face.

"Nobody knows where you came from," continued Vernon-Smith. "You seem to have met Wharton and his pals last hols. And they've taken you up here, but they know nothing about you. You've got no people, no connections. Goodness knows who pays your fees here! Quelch himself, perhaps. He seems awfully fond of you. You grease up to him pretty thoroughly."

"That's not true," said Valentine quietly. "I like and respect Quelch, but that's not greasing, as you call it. A fellow can be grateful."

"Then it's Quelch who foots your bill here, is it?"

"That's no business of yours."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Jim Valentine's Foe!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH quietly opened the door of Mr. Quelch's study in Masters' Passage and stepped inside, quickly closing the door behind him.

"Not at all," sneered the Bounder, "if you hadn't put it up to me to show you up in your true colours. Do you fancy you can handle a fellow like me, and nothing said? Tell me why you handled me and let that thief escape at Lantham—if you can, and dare?"

"Find out!"

"I'm going to find out," said Vernon-Smith venomously. "I'll make you sorry for it. I've spotted a good many things since then. Inspector Grimes of Courtfield is watching the school. Fellows who have seen him rooting about, think it's because there have been a lot of burglars round here lately. I happen to know that he's watching you."

"Ablativo absoluto!" murmured Valentine, apparently deep in his task. "Don't talk while a man's working."

"Half a dozen burglaries, at least, since you've been here," went on the Bounder. "And it's said that there was a boy mixed up in the one at Highcliffe. Got any idea who that boy might be?"

"Teucro duce!" murmured Valentine. "There was one burglary here, and they got the man, and locked him up for the police to call for. He got away before they came. Got any idea who helped him out?"

Evidently suspicion was running strong in the Bounder's keen, suspicious mind, since his hostile attention had been concentrated on the "boy with a past."

"Et auspice Teucro," murmured Valentine.

Vernon-Smith bit his lip hard. Valentine seemed engrossed in the exercise Mr. Quelch had set for him, and deaf to the gibes of his enemy in the Remove.

The Bounder made a step nearer to him, his hands clenched. Valentine looked up at last.

"Chuck it, Vernon-Smith," he said quietly. "If you want a scrap, I'll meet you any time you like in the Rag, or in the gym. We can't scrap in a Form master's study. Get out, and leave me alone!"

"I've come here to phone. Are you going to tell Quelch when he comes in?" sneered the Bounder.

"That's no bizney of mine; but I wish you'd clear."

"Go and eat coke!"

Vernon-Smith crossed to the telephone, and took up the receiver. The number he gave was that of Courtfield Garage.

Valentine sat, with an idle pen in his hand, his handsome face clouded. He had shown no sign while the Bounder was speaking; but the gibes had gone deep. Jim Valentine of the Remove could not forget that a few weeks ago he had been Dick the Penman in Nosey Clark's gang of crooks. Hard as he tried to wash it out of his mind, he could not forget. The shadow of the underworld was still over him. Nosey Clark would not let him go, if he could help it. Again and again the master-crook had striven to drive the boy back into the mire of crime. The boy's strange and dangerous skill with the pen made him too valuable for Clark to let him go.

Haunted by the crooks from whom he had fled, suspected and watched by the police inspector, who did not however dream of his real identity, Jim had not found Greyfriars the peaceful refuge he had hoped for, when Mr. Quelch's kind generosity placed him there.

But he had found firm friends, and no foes, until the Bounder became his foe. And bitter and unforgiving as Smithy was, Jim could not deny that he had some cause for his enmity.

With a clouded face the "boy with a

past" sat, while Vernon-Smith stood at the phone, and talked through to the garage at Courtfield. Valentine could not help hearing what was said within a few feet of him—not that the Bounder cared whether he heard or not.

"Ten-thirty, at the corner of the Oak Coppice," Vernon-Smith was saying into the transmitter, and Valentine started. "Yes, to-night! Don't let the car be late—ten-thirty sharp—and wait for me till I come. Right!"

Valentine stared round at the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith was using his Form-master's telephone to make arrangements for breaking bounds at night, an hour after lights-out. The Bounder's nerve astonished the new fellow. Smithy met his eyes, looking at him with a sneer, over the telephone.

"Right!" he repeated, and put up the receiver.

"That's a tale for you to tell Quelch, when he comes in, if you like!" said the Bounder contemptuously.

"If you believed that I should tell tales, you wouldn't have put that call through," answered Valentine dryly. "You'd get a Head's flogging if it was known."

"I'm not asking you to keep it dark."

"Because you know I shall say nothing! What's the good of talking rot?" said Valentine. "If you're done, get out, and leave me to work."

"To swot, you mean?" sneered Vernon-Smith.

"Just as you like! Get out, anyhow!"

Vernon-Smith stood looking at him, his eyes glinting, evidently more than half inclined to begin trouble, even in the sacred precincts of his Form-master's study. He thought better of it, however, and tramped out, shutting the door after him. Jim Valentine sat for several long minutes, in thought, but he resumed his task at last, dismissing Smithy and his enmity from his mind.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Art of Salesmanship!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Go away!"

"Look here—"

"Shut up!"

"But I say—"

"The sayfulness is too much and too often, my esteemed idiotic Bunter," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh; "the dry upfulness is the proper caper."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"What about collaring him, and his jolly old articles, and dropping the lot out of the landing window?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Well, that would give us a rest!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As the landing window was thirty feet from the ground, there was no doubt that if Bunter and his articles had been dropped therefrom, he would have ceased from troubling, and the weary would have been at rest!

Really, it seemed that some such drastic measure was needed if the Greyfriars Remove were ever to get a rest from Bunter and his "articles."

It was just on time for prep, and the Remove fellows were in the passage or their studies. Harry Wharton & Co. were grouped by the doorway of Study No. 1, talking football, when Bunter arrived, box in hand.

"This pair of compasses—"

Bunter, holding up one of the articles,

"Buzz off!"

"I can tell you it's a splendid pair of compasses—a little wiggly, perhaps, but really first-class," urged Bunter. "It's really the best of the articles, and I've been keeping it for you, Wharton."

"Keep on keeping it!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Valentine wanted it," said Bunter. "But I told him he couldn't have it—it's for you, old chap."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Come out and bag those compasses, Valentine, while you've got a chance."

Jim Valentine, who was in Study No. 1, glanced out.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter. "I didn't know you were there, you beast! I mean, it was Toddy wanted the compasses—offered me three bob for them. I'm letting you have them for half-a-crown, Wharton."

"I think not!" answered Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, which of the articles would you like?" asked Billy Bunter. "You might give the thing a start, you know."

"Will it do if we give you a start?" asked Johnny Bull, drawing back his right foot.

"Beast!" Bunter backed out of reach. "I say—"

"If you want to say anything more," said Frank Nugent, "talk in Latin."

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"You silly ass! Why should I talk in Latin?" he demanded.

"Because in Latin there are no articles!" explained Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chump!" roared Bunter. It was a serious matter to Bunter, and he had no use for little jokes.

"Run away and play, old fat bean," said Harry Wharton. "It's time for prep."

"Never mind prep! I say, Bob, old chap, would you like this powder-puff?"

"I've got a lot of use for a powder-puff!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, will you take this ruby ring off my hands?"

"Nein!" answered Bob solemnly.

"Nein, das will ich nicht."

"You blithering idiot, what are you talking German for?"

"Because in German one can decline the article," explained Bob, developing Nugent's little joke, as it were.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I've spent a pound on these articles—"

"Well, you got them cheap," said Bob.

"You got the pound from Inky."

"The fact is, it's because I'm keen to square Inky, that I'm anxious to sell these things," explained Bunter. "I hate being in debt, as you know—"

"My only hat!"

"You fellows aren't so particular in such matters, I know," said Bunter, shaking his head. "But it worries me to owe a fellow anything."

"Then the worryfulness of the esteemed Bunter must be terrific," chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"When I've sold these articles, I'm going to square up a lot of little sums I owe in the Remove! What about this alarm-clock, Nugent?"

"Rats!"

"What about this penknife, Bull?"

"Does it cut?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather!"

"Then you do the same!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Billy Bunter did not "cut."

Neither would that penknife, as a matter of fact.

"It's a splendid penknife," urged Bunter. "Real imitation silver handle—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Will it shut up?" asked Johnny.

"Of course it will!"

"Then you do the same!" again suggested Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder of the Sixth came up the Remove staircase. He was the prefect in charge of the Remove that evening.

Immediately the fellows in the passage scuttled into the studies, excepting Bunter. Loder, the bully of the Sixth, had his ashplant under his arm, and he

before rising-bell," said Loder, staring at him.

"I mean, suppose a fellow was going out after lights-out, or anything like that!" explained Bunter. "It will wake you up any time you like, see?"

Loder gazed at him.

Fellows in the Remove studies who heard Bunter at his salesmanship, fairly gasped.

It was true that Loder of the Sixth sometimes went out of bounds after lights out, and more than one fellow in the Remove knew, or suspected, as much. Possibly an alarm-clock might have been useful to the black sheep of the Sixth, for that reason. But it was improbable that Loder would take

Loder, you'll have to pay for that, you know."

Loder slipped his ashplant down into his hand.

"Bend over!" he snapped.

"Oh crikey! I—I say, Loder—"

gasped Bunter.

"Bend over!" roared Loder.

"Oh lor!"

Loder of the Sixth seemed annoyed about something, Bunter did not know what. The fat Owl bent over dismally.

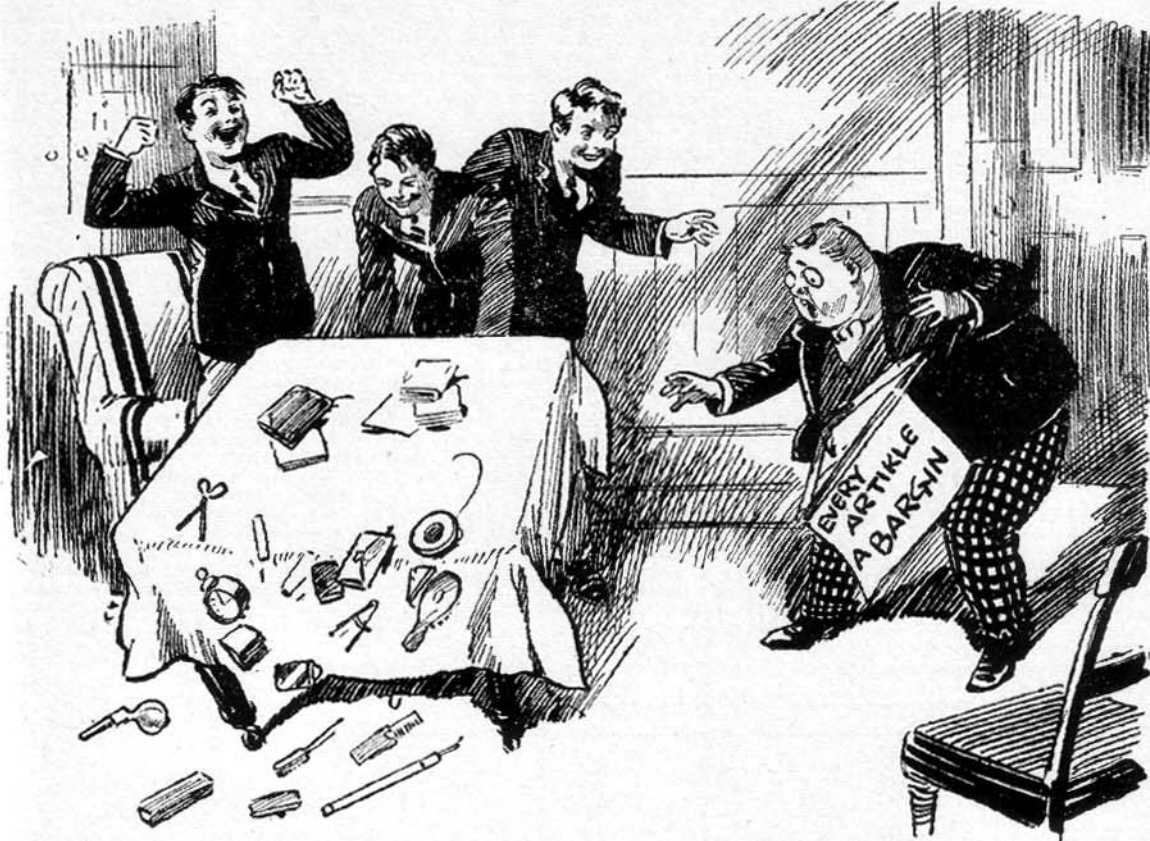
Whack, whack, whack!

"Wow, wow, wow!"

"Now get into your study, you young idiot, and begin prep!" growled Loder.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Bunter got into his study in a bound.



"You fellows coming, now Bunter's done his funny turn?" asked Skinner. "Clear that rubbish away before we come up for prep, won't you, Bunter?" "Ha, ha, ha!" "I'll help you before I go," added Skinner. He took hold of the end of the table and tipped it, and the pile of articles shot off and scattered on the floor.

was never slow to use it. The Removites lost no time in getting to prep. But William George Bunter waited for Loder. So far, he had not tried to sell any of his articles in the Upper School. This was a chance to try it on.

"I say, Loder, look at this, will you?" asked Bunter.

Gerald Loder stared at him.

"What the thump have you got there?" he demanded.

"A few articles," explained Bunter. "All of them are useful and valuable. I've kept back this alarm-clock, Loder, because I thought you might like it."

"You young ass!"

"It's a really splendid alarm-clock, Loder, made in America, and keeps time if you jerk it a bit. It's awfully useful, you know, to a fellow who wants to wake up before rising-bell."

"Well, I don't want to wake up

Bunter into his confidence on such a subject.

He gazed blankly at Bunter, as if the fat Owl of the Remove had taken his breath away, and deprived him of the power of speech.

"Jolly useful to a chap like you, Loder," rattled on the happy Owl. "You might oversleep yourself any time, you know, and miss some appointment at night, what? With this alarm-clock, you—"

Loder jerked the alarm-clock from Bunter's fat hand.

He dropped it on the floor of the Remove passage, and set his foot on it. There was a horrid sound of crunching. That alarm-clock was never going to sound an alarm again; never going to keep time any more, if jerked ever so much. That useful and valuable article was completely done for.

"Oh, I say!" gasped Bunter. "I say,

Loder tucked his ashplant under his arm again and walked away. There was a ripple of laughter in the Remove studies.

One of Bunter's "articles" had now been disposed of—completely! Nineteen still remained on his hands—and seemed likely to remain there.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds!

HARRY WHARTON & CO., in the Remove dormitory, were sleeping the sleep of healthy youth when a bed creaked and a fellow crept out quietly.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was dressing swiftly in the dark when the half-hour chimed out from the clock-tower. The February night was cold and dark;

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hardly a glimmer showed at the high windows of the dormitory. Hardly a hundred yards from the school a car was waiting for the Bounder.

Smithy glanced, in the shadows, at the next bed, where Tom Redwing lay fast asleep. Had Redwing been awake, no doubt he would have made an attempt to restrain his reckless chum, and the Bounder was glad that he was sleeping so soundly. An expedition like this could not be kept too secret. A Head's flogging, and perhaps the "sack," awaited the reckless breaker of bounds in the case of discovery.

But there was one fellow in the dormitory who was awake as well as the Bounder. Jim Valentine sat up in bed and peered towards him through the gloom.

"That you, Vernon-Smith?" His voice was a faint whisper.

The Bounder started.

"Quiet, you rotter!" he hissed. "Do you want to give me away?"

"I'd rather save you from giving yourself away, if you're bent on playing the fool!" answered Valentine contemptuously. "I suppose it's no use advising you to chuck it and go back to bed—"

"Mind your own business!"

"You're going out of bounds—"

"Does that concern you?" sneered the Bounder.

"Not in the least! But—"

"Then shut up and don't wake the fellows!"

"I'm going to give you a warning," answered Valentine quietly. "Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, is keeping watch on the school!"

"And I know why!" gibed Smithy. "He's not interested in me!"

"If you run into him you'll get landed, all the same. If you're bound to play the goat, take care that you don't!"

With that Jim Valentine laid his head on the pillow again.

The Bounder stood silent.

The "tip" was a useful one. In his keenness on the blackguardly excursion he had planned for that night he had

forgotten about Mr. Grimes. But he knew, as most of the fellows knew, that the Courtfield inspector was keeping Greyfriars School under observation; that he had a key to Masters' Gate, and that he was sometimes within the school precincts at night. There was a very real danger that a fellow sneaking out of bounds at a late hour might run into the very arms of that police officer.

In which case, certainly he would have been marched back to the House at once, with dire results.

Why Valentine had taken the trouble to give him that warning the Bounder could not guess. He was the fellow's enemy, and made no secret of it. Twice they had come to blows. The Bounder's hard, cynical mind was not likely to believe that a fellow could be good-natured even to an enemy. He wondered whether Valentine himself had something "on" for that very night, and whether that was his reason for not wishing the police officer to take the alarm.

He shrugged his shoulders and crept quietly to the door, and let himself out of the dormitory.

In a few minutes he was dropping from the lower box-room window and creeping away in the dim shadows of the wintry night.

With Valentine's warning fresh in his mind—little enough gratitude as he felt for it—Vernon-Smith was very wary and alert as he crept away.

Lights were still gleaming from many windows in the House—among them the study window of his own Form master, Mr. Quelch.

But the House had long been closed and locked for the night, and the quadrangle was dark and deserted, and heavy with mist from the sea.

Vernon-Smith wondered whether Mr. Grimes was on the scene that night—as he had been before on several occasions. His eyes and ears were keen as he crept through the shadows.

But there was no sound, nothing was to be seen stirring, and he was relieved when he reached the old Cloister wall and felt safe at last.

He clambered over the old stone wall and dropped lightly into the dark lane outside.

Even as his feet touched the ground he heard a faint sound close to him, and the blood thrilled to his heart.

Instantly it flashed on him that the watcher was not within the school precincts, but without, and that he had fairly dropped on him.

From the darkness a swift hand fell on his shoulder.

Who it was—whether it was Inspector Grimes or not—the Bounder could not see in the darkness, neither did he dream of staying to see. Even in that moment of terrifying alarm the cool-headed Bounder did not lose his wits. As the hand closed on his shoulder his arm came up, knocking off the grasp before it had fairly closed, and the next instant he twisted like an eel, dodged, and darted away.

It was impossible to climb back over the wall; he would have been seized at once. He ran for it.

He heard an angry, breathless exclamation behind him, and a light flashed out. It glimmered for an instant on the back of the Bounder's overcoat as he vanished.

Then there was a tramp of hurried, heavy footsteps.

Whoever it was that had grabbed at him in the dark was running in pursuit.

The Bounder grinned.

In the darkness and the mist the pursuer was not likely to run him down. But he did not head for the car waiting at the corner of the coppice. He ran down Friardale Lane, and the heavy footsteps came tramping rapidly after him.

"Stop!"

He knew the voice that called. There was no doubt now that it was Inspector Grimes of Courtfield who was after him. After the Bounder, but no doubt fully under the impression that he was pursuing Jim Valentine—a thought that made the Bounder chuckle.

Smithy was not likely to stop! Thrice the Courtfield inspector called, and his call fell upon unheeding ears.

Well ahead of his pursuer, Vernon-Smith suddenly left the lane, and clambered up the grassy bank, and dodged into the trees of Friardale Wood.

There he stopped, breathing hard and peering down into the lane.

A few seconds later the heavy tramp of footsteps and the flashing light passed by, and died away in the direction of Friardale.

The Bounder chuckled softly.

As soon as the road was clear he descended into the lane again, and retraced his steps to the coppice that lay between the road and the river.

The car was waiting there, with a chauffeur who eyed the breathless junior curiously as he came up.

The Bounder was in the car, humming away through the night, when Inspector Grimes, breathless, angry, and crimson with exertion, stopped at Friardale, realising that he had lost his quarry.

Either the runner had out-distanced him, or dodged him in the darkness; anyhow, he was lost, and Mr. Grimes was beaten.

With a grim face the inspector turned and tramped back to the school.

He knew what he was going to do! Not the slightest doubt was in his mind that it was Jim Valentine whom he had chased in the darkness.

Night after night he had watched Greyfriars, patient as a lynx, assured that sooner or later he would spot the boy in communication with his former

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associates. If there had been a doubt in his mind, it was gone now. It was Jim Valentine who had fled from him in the darkness, and he was going to get proof of it.

Ten minutes later Mr. Grimes was tapping at the lighted window of Mr. Quelch's study at Greyfriars.

An astonished Form master pulled back the blind and opened the window, staring at the portly figure without.

"Inspector Grimes!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch in amazement. "What—"

"Is the boy Valentine in the House, sir?" asked Mr. Grimes grimly.

Mr. Quelch uttered a sound resembling a snort. He had heard more than enough of Mr. Grimes' suspicions of the boy, in whom his own faith was complete.

"The boy Valentine is in bed in his dormitory, and has been there since half-past nine, sir!" he rapped.

"You are sure of that?" asked the inspector sarcastically.

"I am quite sure of it!"

"Kindly admit me to the House, and we will ascertain the fact together," said Mr. Grimes.

"Really, sir—"

"Some boy, Mr. Quelch, has quitted the House, hardly more than twenty minutes ago, and I very nearly caught him as he dropped from the Cloister wall," said the inspector. "The young rascal was too sharp for me, and he got away. I require to know for certain whether Valentine is in the House, and whether he has left it to-night."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"If a Greyfriars boy has broken bounds, sir, I am convinced that it was not a boy of my Form, and least of all Valentine!" he answered.

"We shall see!" grunted the inspector. "If the boy is out of the House, there can be no doubt of his object, and I must be satisfied."

"You shall be satisfied, sir. I will admit you at once, and I have not the slightest doubt that Valentine will be found fast asleep in bed!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"We shall see!" repeated Mr. Grimes.

In a few minutes the Courtfield inspector was admitted, and Mr. Quelch, taking a lamp, led the way to the Remove dormitory.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Saving an Enemy!

JIM VALENTINE lay with his head on the white pillow after the Bounder had gone, but he did not close his eyes.

It was odd enough that the boy who was the object of the Bounder's bitter hostility should feel concerned about him, but he did.

Sure in his own mind that Inspector Grimes, or some of his men, kept the school under observation, Valentine knew how likely it was that the breaker of bounds would be spotted.

To Vernon-Smith it had seemed simply a matter of getting away uncaught, as, in fact, Smithy had succeeded in doing.

But Valentine looked further than that. If Mr. Grimes spotted a junior boy leaving the school at night he would jump to it that it was Valentine, and collar him if he could, or at least shadow him where he went; and, so far, no doubt, the wary Bounder could be relied on to take care of himself. But, having lost him, what would Mr. Grimes do? Believing the breaker of bounds to be the boy he watched and suspected, he would come into the school, to prove to himself and to Mr. Quelch that the former associate of crooks was still in touch with Nosey Clark & Co.

Valentine felt certain of it.

Personally, of course, he had nothing to fear—he was not out of bounds. He would be found in bed in his dormitory, if the police officer and the Form master came. But Smithy?

Once in the room, Mr. Quelch would not fail to note the empty bed. That was what was troubling Valentine now.

Through him—for it was on his account that the inspector watched Greyfriars, Herbert Vernon-Smith would be found out, and either flogged or sacked—perhaps both, for there were already a good many things against the Bounder.

It troubled the boy, as he lay sleepless and thinking. Smithy was his enemy—but he had cause. Valentine had been to blame in the dispute at Lantham, though he had not been able to help himself. But even if he had returned the Bounder's bitterness in full, he would have been unwilling to be the cause of any Remove man being "sacked."

For a good many minutes he lay thinking it over, and wondering whether, after all, Smithy had been spotted going out.

He sat up in bed at last.

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There was one way he could help the reckless truant if the dormitory was visited after lights out.

If they came, they would come on Valentine's account, and give no special attention to anyone else. If a bed looked as if it had a sleeper in it, it would be good enough—any bed but Valentine's.

Quietly the boy slipped out of bed.

He gathered a rug, a coat, and several other articles, groping in the deep gloom, and proceeded to arrange a dummy in Vernon-Smith's bed.

When his work was finished, and the bedclothes replaced, he turned on, for a second, the gleam of a pocket torch, to look at the result.

Smithy's bed looked exactly as if Smithy was in it. Only a careful scrutiny would have revealed the deception, and no bed except Valentine's was likely to be scrutinised.

Satisfied, the junior turned off the light, and crept back quietly to his own bed, and turned in again.

He had done all he could, and he thought that it would save the Bounder from detection if a visit was made to the Remove sleeping quarters.

It was nearly eleven o'clock now, and he was sleepy. He closed his eyes, and in a few minutes more glided into the land of dreams.

He was as fast asleep as the rest of the Lower Fourth when the dormitory door opened, and a lamp glimmered in.

Mr. Quelch stepped into the long, lofty room, and held up the lamp. He was unwilling to switch on the electric light and wake up all his Form at such an hour. He was frowning very un-

pleasantly, deeply annoyed by the Courtfield inspector's suspicions, and convinced that they were groundless. Inspector Grimes had a sarcastic expression on his ruddy, portly face. He, on his side, was convinced that Valentine's bed would be found empty.

He followed Mr. Quelch into the slumbering dormitory.

"Which is the boy's bed?" he asked.

"Follow me, sir. And kindly be quiet. I do not desire my boys to be awakened at eleven o'clock."

Grunt from Mr. Grimes.

However, he moved quietly, as he followed the Remove master across to the beds.

Mr. Quelch glanced along the row.

"He did not, of course, doubt the inspector's statement that a boy had slipped out of bounds. He doubted whether that boy was in his Form. But he desired to make sure—and that glance along the row of white beds made him sure. Every bed had, or appeared to have, a sleeper in it.

It was fortunate for Smithy that the fellow he loathed had foreseen that inspection and taken measures. Had the Bounder's bed been empty, certainly Mr. Quelch's glance, cursory as it was, would have spotted it at once.

He stopped at Jim Valentine's bed and held up the lamp. The light showed the outlines of a sleeping form under the blankets.

"Well, sir?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Look!"

"That is Valentine's bed?"

"It is!"

Another grunt from Mr. Grimes.

"I have heard of such things as dummies arranged in beds by truant school-boys," he said. "I must see the boy."

"Very well, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, through his compressed lips.

He moved along the bedside, and allowed the light to fall on the sleeper's face, pressing the white pillow.

Jim Valentine was fast asleep.

His handsome profile showed clearly against the white of the pillow, as he lay sleeping, and breathing quietly and steadily.

Inspector Grimes stared down at the unconscious face.

That he was mistaken hardly admitted of doubt. There was the boy he suspected, obviously asleep in bed, where his Form master had believed him to be. Had he dodged back into the House, and returned to bed, after escaping the inspector in Friardale Lane? It was possible—he had had plenty of time, if it came to that. And yet—

Valentine's eyes opened. No doubt the light gleaming on his face awakened him, and he was a light sleeper. He stared and blinked in the light.

Mr. Quelch shifted the lamp at once.

"I am sorry to have awakened you, Valentine," he said. "Do not be alarmed, my boy, it is only your Form master."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" murmured Valentine. He sat up in bed.

Inspector Grimes scanned him.

"Have you been out of the House to-night, boy?" he asked.

"I have not, sir."

"Have you left the dormitory?"

"No."

"I trust, sir, that you are satisfied?" said Mr. Quelch unpleasantly. "I had no choice but to satisfy you. But I trust, sir, that you are satisfied now?"

"The boy had ample time to return before I arrived here, if he gave up his game for the night," grunted the inspector, intensely annoyed.

"Probably the boy you saw, sir, did so, and is now asleep in bed," said Mr. Quelch. "But the boy certainly was not

Valentine. Do you admit, sir, that you have been mistaken?"

"No, sir," grunted Mr. Grimes. "I admit nothing of the kind. I admit that I have been unable to find the proof I hoped to find, and that is all."

"We had better go, I think!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Good-night, Valentine, and please remember that I had not the slightest doubt of you."

"I am sure of it, sir," said Valentine earnestly, "and I thank you, sir. Good-night!"

"Who the thump's that up?" came a grunting voice from Bolsover major's bed. "Can't you let a fellow sleep?"

"What the deuce—" came from another bed.

The murmuring of voices had awakened some of the juniors. Several fellows sat up, blinking at Mr. Quelch's lamp.

Tom Redwing gave a swift, scared glance at Smithy's bed. He had been aware that his chum had some reckless stunt on for that night. He was deeply relieved to see that there was a sleeper in the bed—to all appearance, at least. Smithy had had another of his narrow escapes!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's on?" Bob Cherry sat up. "My hat! It's Quelch!"

"The esteemed Quelch—"

"Anything wrong, sir?" asked Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch frowned with vexation. Six or seven fellows were awake, and at this rate the whole Form would soon be sitting up and taking notice.

"Nothing is wrong, my boys," said the Remove master. "Pray compose yourselves and go to sleep. Some boy has broken bounds, and it was my duty to ascertain whether he belonged to this dormitory. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Inspector Grimes was already outside, and Mr. Quelch followed him out and shut the door. His frown was more unpleasant than ever.

Not a single word was spoken as they descended the stairs, and the Remove master let Mr. Grimes out of the House. The inspector did not even say good-night as he went; neither did Mr. Quelch. The latter gentleman gave a sniff as he walked back to his study; that sniff expressing his opinion of Inspector Henry Grimes and all his works.

Out in the cold, misty air of the February night Inspector Grimes grunted. He was angry and dissatisfied. Who was it that had dropped from the Cloister wall and had been for a moment in his grasp? It was a boy of about Valentine's size; that was all he knew for certain. But deep in his mind was the assurance that it was Valentine, and that the wary young rascal had dodged back to bed in anticipation of an inquiry.

If that was the case, had he given up his game, whatever it was, for the night? Or was he waiting till the coast was clear to steal out again and carry out his original intention—perhaps a meeting with his old associates; perhaps taking a part in some robbery! If the latter was his intention, Mr. Grimes grimly resolved that the boy he suspected should not escape him a second time. In the dim and damp February night the inspector watched and waited, and the hawk waiting to swoop on his prey was not more watchful and wary.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Midnight Adventure!

"SILLY ass!" grunted Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder was speaking to himself.

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning.

A light drizzle was falling, and the wind that blew from the sea was cold and chilly.

Vernon-Smith was starting for home. He had spent a couple of hours at the Three Fishers, in a smoky atmosphere, with cards and money on the table. There was a kink of black-guardism in the Bounder's nature that made him enjoy that sort of thing. Perhaps the risk he ran in indulging in it was one of its attractions. Tom Redwing's influence had often held him back, but sooner or later the black sheep of the Remove was sure to break out again, and now he had broken out once more.

But "after taking" differed from "before taking," so to speak. Now that he had left his disreputable associates behind and was starting for home, with a headache and a general feeling of tiredness and rottenness, Smithy realised what a fool he had been, and he called himself a silly ass in perfect sincerity. That was what he was, and he knew it. He had lost a good deal of money at billiards and poker, but he cared little for that. He was aching from want of sleep, and on the morrow he knew that he would be tired, peevish, quarrelsome—a nuisance to himself and everybody else. If he had had sense enough to go to sleep at bed-time like the other fellows—

It was rather too late to think of that. With a scowl on his face the Bounder turned up his coat-collar against the wind and tramped away from the disreputable resort he wished that he had never entered.

The car was waiting in Oak Lane to take him back. He tramped across the

damp, weedy, dismal gardens of the Three Fishers to the gate on the lane. That gate was only at a short distance from the great gates of Popper Court, the residence of Sir Hilton Popper, a governor of Greyfriars. The baronet's mansion was in sight over the trees, looming dimly in the mist. Vernon-Smith would not have given it, or its owner, a single thought, but as he tramped towards Oak Lane he saw a flashing of lights in the windows of the distant mansion, and wondered what was going on there.

They did not keep late hours at Popper Court as a rule. The house had been dark and silent when the Bounder passed it a couple of hours ago.

It was neither dark nor silent now. From a dozen windows in the great rambling building lights were flashing, and a distant sound of shouting voices came through the mist.

The Bounder stopped and stared. Something was going on, that was clear. Something was disturbing the repose of Sir Hilton Popper's household in the middle of the night. There was no sign of fire—it was not that.

Vernon-Smith whistled softly. "Burglars!" he murmured.

It could scarcely be anything else. It was a burglary at Popper Court, and the alarm had been given. Smithy could see lights flashing outside the building as well as in the windows, and from the great doorway of the mansion light streamed into the mist.

The Bounder stopped still for a minute or two, staring. Then he hurried on. It occurred to his mind that the sooner he was off the scene the better.

In ordinary circumstances no one would have been likely to observe him or his car at one in the morning in a lonely lane. But with Popper Court wakeful and alarmed, and the police coming, and excited servants searching the grounds, observation was only too probable.

The Bounder broke into a run. In a few minutes he was out of the Three Fishers gate and in Oak Lane, on the other side of which stretched the dim and dusky expanse of Courtfield Common.

The car was waiting in the direction of the Popper Court gates, and Vernon-Smith hurried in that direction.

He stopped suddenly. From the direction of Courtfield blazing headlights came streaming through the night as a car raced up the lane.

Smithy guessed at once that it was a police car from Courtfield, called by telephone to Popper Court.

He wondered whether Inspector Grimes was in it, or whether that portly gentleman was still hanging about Greyfriars, ignorant of what was going on a few miles away.

Anyhow, the Bounder did not want to be seen. He dodged into a hedge and stood in deep shadow, watching.

The gates of Popper Court were open and the police car swung in and hummed on to the mansion. Smithy was about to emerge from his cover in the hedge when the thicket rustled close by him and he stood very still. He squeezed against the trunk of a beech in the hedge, enveloped by black shadow, and hoping that he was invisible. Whoever it was that was pushing through the hedge the Bounder did not want to be seen.

Two dark figures groped through a gap not a yard from him as he stood stilling his breath. They stepped out into the lane, and there, as they stood clear of the hedge, he had a glimpse

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The two dark figures stepped out into the lane, and Vernon-Smith, squeezed against the trunk of a beech, had a glimpse of them before they cut across the common. The Bounder's heart throbbed. It flashed into his mind that the two figures were those of escaping burglars stealing quietly off the scene!

of them, himself invisible. One was a thin man with a nose like a vulture's beak; the only feature the Bounder could make out in the gloom, but a prominent feature not to be mistaken. Had he been acquainted with Nosey Clark he would have known the man at once. The other was a slim figure in black of whom he saw no more than a shadow for a moment. The two stood only for a second glancing up and down the lane, and then cut across to the common and vanished.

The Bounder's heart throbbed.

It flashed into his mind that the two figures he had glimpsed had been those of escaping burglars, stealing quietly off the scene.

Had he realised it as they passed him the Bounder was courageous enough and reckless enough to have made some attempt to stop them and call for help to seize them. But they were gone now—swallowed up in the darkness of the shadowy common; and, after all, he was not sure.

He had himself to think of. The police would be searching the vicinity soon, and if he was seen his escapade would be known at the school. He stepped out of the hedge and hurried along to the spot where his car had been left without lights. The chauffeur loomed up in the gloom and peered at him with an anxious face.

"Thank goodness you've come, sir!" he breathed. "I'd have had to cut soon. There's a burglary or something at the house yonder. They might fancy I was mixed up in it, hanging about here with a car."

The Bounder chuckled.

"Shouldn't wonder," he said. "Get going!"

"We'll have to go round the common, sir. If we pass the gates yonder the car will be stopped for a cert, and you don't want that."

"No fear!" grinned the Bounder.

He sat in the car, watching from the window. The chauffeur started the engine without switching on the lights. The car glided away in the opposite direction from Popper Court. It could not have been seen, but the hum of the engine was evidently heard, for there was a loud shout from the direction of Popper Court, and a sound of running feet.

The Courtfield chauffeur put on speed. Whether the car was pursued or not, the Bounder never knew. It fairly raced away up the lane, turned into a track across the common, and flew. Not till Popper Court was a mile behind did the chauffeur venture to switch on the lights.

Herbert Vernon-Smith settled down comfortably in his seat, with a grin on his face. That exciting midnight adventure was quite in the Bounder's taste; he had enjoyed it, and he was feeling bucked and elated.

As the car hummed on through the night Smithy's thoughts were busy. He was thinking of his enemy in the Remove. Again and again there had been robberies in the vicinity of Greyfriars since Jim Valentine had been at the school. Was it a coincidence? The Bounder did not believe that it was—any more than Mr. Grimes did.

Now there had been another. And in the Bounder's suspicious mind was the warning Valentine had given him when he left the Remove dormitory. The fellow had been anxious that he should not run into Inspector Grimes if he was on the watch. Why? He did not want

the police officer to be put on the alert. That, as it seemed to the Bounder, was it. Had Valentine had a hand in this affair at Popper Court? Had he left the dormitory after the Bounder? Had he been one of the two slinking figures Smithy had seen stealing away in the dark? One of them had been a very slight figure, and Smithy had only glimpsed it—it might have been a boy. It was said that a boy had been mixed up in the affair at Highcliffe a few weeks ago.

Vernon-Smith set his lips.

If Valentine was out of the dormitory when he got back—

The car raced on.

It stopped at last a hundred yards from the school, and the Bounder jumped out. The car glided away to Courtfield, and Herbert Vernon-Smith tramped on to Greyfriars and swung himself over the Cloister wall.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Touch and Go!

INSPECTOR GRIMES started and listened.

As the night grew older the mist from the sea thickened over Greyfriars School, and a light drizzle of rain dropped through the mist.

Mr. Grimes was weary, more than weary, of his vigil; but he was sticking to it with grim patience.

The boy he suspected had outwitted him—deceived his Form master, but not Mr. Grimes. That was how the inspector looked at it. The chances were that, when the coast was clear, Valentine would leave the House again; that

was the fixed opinion of Mr. Grimes. And he was watching—tired, cold, irritable, but implacably patient.

But, at half-past one in the morning, even the resolute Mr. Grimes was beginning to wonder whether it was worth while to keep on the watch any longer. But he kept on. It was some time after the half-hour had chimed that Mr. Grimes heard a sound in the gloomy, misty night, and pricked up his ears like a fox at the sound of the hounds.

In the deep silence, broken only by the faint murmur from the distant sea, a slight sound was heard. From somewhere in the gloom a light footfall had reached his ears.

Mr. Grimes breathed hard and deep. He had been right, after all. He was glad that he had kept on the watch. Someone was out of the House! Who but the boy he suspected?

Had Mr. Grimes' suspicions been less stubbornly fixed on Valentine, he might have guessed that the breaker of bounds was another fellow, who was now returning. But he did not think of that for a moment. The boy who had once been the associate of Nosey Clark was his game.

Silently and swiftly, portly gentleman as he was, Mr. Grimes hurried in the direction of that faint footfall.

He had a glimpse for a second of a dim figure—the figure of a boy in coat and cap. But the next second that figure broke into a run.

Cautious as Mr. Grimes was, the boy had heard him or glimpsed him, and was in flight.

Throwing aside caution now, the plump inspector ran hard in pursuit of the shadowy, flitting figure.

It vanished in the shadows of the building.

It was, as a matter of fact, Herbert Vernon-Smith, who crouched low in black shadow by an old stone buttress, his heart throbbing wildly, as the heavy footsteps of Mr. Grimes passed him.

Smithy had almost forgotten the existence of Mr. Grimes; but he had been suddenly and alarmingly reminded of it.

He realised that the Courtfield inspector was still on the watch, and for

the second time he had narrowly escaped falling into his hands.

Mr. Grimes passed within a yard of him as the Bouncer crouched in the black shadow of the jutting buttress, hardly daring to breathe.

The inspector's footfalls died away. "Oh, my hat!" murmured Vernon-Smith.

He waited and listened.

At a distance he heard footfalls again. The inspector was searching for the boy of whom he had had an instant's glimpse.

The Bouncer strained his ears, and he heard the footfalls die away in the direction of the Cloisters.

He was puzzled for a moment or two; then he grinned. He realised that Mr. Grimes believed that he had seen a boy leaving the House, not seeking to enter it. That little mistake of the inspector's left the coast clear for Herbert Vernon-Smith.

He crept out of his hiding-place, and swiftly scudded round the House and clambered up to the leads below the box-room window.

A minute more, and he was in the box-room, and closing and fastening the window after him.

He chuckled softly, thinking of Mr. Grimes rooting about in the misty darkness for someone who was not there.

But he wasted no time. He stole on tiptoe out of the box-room and groped his way to the Remove dormitory. The House was deep in slumber; there were no wakeful ears to hear the truant's stealthy footfalls.

Silently he let himself into the dormitory, and breathed more freely when he found himself safely there.

From the silence came the deep snore of Billy Bunter.

Vernon-Smith felt in his pocket for his torch, and stepped towards Jim Valentine's bed. He was intensely curious to know whether Valentine was there.

He was there. The beam of the torch glimmered on a sleeping face, and the Bouncer stared at it.

He shut off the light at once.

The fellow was there, and asleep. Had he been out of the House? Was he only affecting slumber? Could he have got back before the Bouncer if he had been at Popper Court that night? Likely enough, if the thieves had had a car at hand—which doubtless was the case.

Anyhow, there he certainly was, and the Bouncer's suspicion, strong as it was, remained only suspicion; he could not be certain.

Vernon-Smith threw off his clothes and crept to his bed. The next moment he gave a violent start as he felt the outlines of a sleeper under his hand. There was someone in his bed!

"What the thump—" ejaculated the Bouncer.

The next moment he understood. It was a "dummy" in his bed—evidently placed there in his absence, for he had taken no such precaution before he went.

In wonder, the Bouncer removed it, and turned in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sleepy voice. "My hat! Is that Quelch again?"

Bob Cherry sat up and peered round. "Only little me," answered the Bouncer quietly. "Don't wake the House with that megaphone of yours, Cherry!"

"Fathead!"

"Has Quelch been up here to-night?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Didn't you wake up when he came?"

"Eh—didn't I wake up?" repeated the Bouncer. He had been miles away

when Mr. Quelch visited the dormitory. "What do you mean? What did Quelch come up for?"

"Old Grimey was rooting about, and he seems to have spotted some ass breaking bounds. Quelch came up to see if it was a Remove man."

"Oh gad!" breathed the Bouncer.

"Luckily, it wasn't," yawned Bob. "Lucky for you you weren't playing the goat to-night, Smithy—what?"

"Oh, frightfully lucky!" grinned the Bouncer.

Bob Cherry was asleep again in a couple of minutes, but the Bouncer did not sleep so soon.

He realised that, after missing him at Friardale, Inspector Grimes must have come to the school and seen Quelch. But for some friendly hand rigging that dummy in his bed, Quelch's gimlet eyes would certainly have detected the fact that his bed was empty. The Bouncer's escape that night had been narrower than he had fancied.

His heart throbbed.

Who had done him that good turn? Redwing, of course. He had woken up and found that his chum was missing, and had taken the precaution that Smithy had neglected to take. That must be it.

If he had been missed—

The Bouncer had a cold shiver as he thought of the scene in the morning in the Head's study; of Dr. Locke's grim face, of his Form master's implacable frown; of the sentence of the "sack" which would have been almost a certainty! A friendly hand had saved him from that!

It did not cross his mind for a moment that that friendly hand had been Jim Valentine's. The Bouncer was not the fellow to help an enemy; and he judged others by himself.

"Good old Reddy!" he murmured; and he fell asleep at last.

Meanwhile, Inspector Grimes was not enjoying life. Up and down and round about, in mists and shadows, the inspector went rooting; but he saw nothing more of the boy of whom he was in search. Had the young rascal gone out of the school, or had he dodged back into the House for safety? In the latter case, Mr. Grimes was beaten—but

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in the former case he might yet "lag" the young rascal when he returned. Grim and resolute, Mr. Grimes remained on his weary watch till the wintry dawn glimmered in the sky. But his vigil was not rewarded; and at last the disappointed officer trudged away, with feelings that could not have been expressed in words.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Birthday Present!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Bow-wow!"
"Anything for me?" demanded Billy Bunter.
"Expecting a postal order, old bean?" inquired Skinner.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was in break the following morning, and some of the fellows had gathered round the rack where the juniors' letters were put up.

Billy Bunter, for once, turned up without his box of "articles" in his fat hands. Nineteen of those articles were still for sale, and were still a drug in the market. Bunter was beginning to feel rather hopeless about that consignment of useful and valuable articles; and to wish that he had expended Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's quid on tuck instead. Still, he was now in a hopeful state with regard to his celebrated postal order. Every time the post came in Bunter hoped afresh that his postal order had come. He had told the fellows so often that he was expecting one that he believed it himself.

But there was nothing for Bunter. There were letters for several fellows, but for W. G. B. there was nothing. Generally, one fellow was in the same state as Bunter—Jim Valentine, who never received letters or remittances. But on this particular morning there was something for Valentine—the first he had had since he had been at Greyfriars, so far as any fellow had noticed. It was a small parcel, wrapped in brown paper and neatly tied with string, and bearing the postmark of Courtfield.

Bob Cherry took it down.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he called out.
"Where's Valentine?"

"Not here," sneered Vernon-Smith.
"He never turns up for letters—he never gets any."

"I say, Cherry, I think very likely that's for me," said Billy Bunter. "You know jolly well that Valentine never gets anything—he's got no people! Look here, you gimme my parcel!"

"Is your name Valentine, fathead?"
"Well, I dare say you've read the name wrong—you know what an ass you are!" argued Bunter. "Look here, if it's Valentine's, I'll take it to him—we're rather pals, you know."

"Might fail to reach its address," said Bob, shaking his head. "Might be tuck in it, and in that case, you'd nose it out, old fat man."

"If you think I'd open a fellow's parcel, you beast—"

"You wouldn't?"
"Certainly not!" said Bunter with dignity. "I hope I'm incapable of such an action. You might, perhaps—"

"Why, you fat villain—"
"But not me! Gimme that parcel, and I'll take it to Valentine. I'll find him, wherever he is. I don't mind how much trouble I take for a pal."

Bob Cherry chuckled. The parcel was small, and felt like a wooden box; but evidently Bunter fancied that there might be tuck in it; and in Bunter's fat hands it was very likely to come open, by sheer accident, of course; in which case the contents, if eatable, were

certain to perform the vanishing trick on the spot. However, Bob handed the fat Owl the parcel.

"Good man," he said. "It's ripping to be so obliging, Bunter! Take that parcel to Valentine—and I'll walk along with you—"

"You needn't trouble, old chap—"
"I rather think I need!" chuckled Bob.

"Look here, Cherry, I don't want your company, if you make a fellow speak plainly. Go where you're wanted."

"I'll go where I'm needed, instead. Come on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I—I say, is that Wharton calling you, Cherry?"

"I don't hear him! Come on!"
"I remember now, Quelch told me to tell you to go to his study in break—"

"I'll let Quelch wait! Come on."

Bob walked out into the quadrangle with Billy Bunter, who eyed him morosely. In Bob's company it was hardly possible for Bunter to let that parcel come open by sheer accident! Never had Bob's cheery company been so unwelcome.

"I say, old chap, there's Wingate beckoning to you," said Bunter.

"Let him beckon!" said Bob cheerily.

HAVE YOU WON A LEATHER POCKET WALLET YET?

No? Then send in a winning Greyfriars limerick and you'll have the pleasure of receiving one!

When Mauly's dressed up to attract,
His clothing is neat and compact.
He lounges and struts,
He's one of the knuts.
A "nut" which appears somewhat cracked!

The author of the above winning effort is J. Gardner, 43, Strathord Street, Glasgow, E.2.

"I mean, it's Loder! He just beckoned to you—over there by the Sixth Form green! I wouldn't keep a bully like Loder waiting, if I were you."

"My dear man, it's quite amusing to keep a bully like Loder waiting! Let's go and find Valentine."

"Look here, you beast, sheer off!" roared Bunter. "I can find Valentine without your help! I don't believe there's any tuck in a little parcel like this, and if there was, I suppose you don't fancy I should touch it. I'm pretty certain it's not one of those flat boxes of preserved fruits—it doesn't feel like it."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, you men, seen Valentine?" bawled Bob, as he sighted Harry Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Inky in a group.

"I think he's on the Elm Walk," said Wharton. "What—"

"Parcel for him—Bunter's taking it to him! Come on, Bunter! Bunter's taking care of the parcel, and I'm taking care of Bunter!" explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The carefulness of the esteemed Bunter is a terrific sine qua non!" chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

And all the Famous Five followed on, grinning. Billy Bunter gave them a blink of the deepest wrath. He had hoped to dodge Bob somehow, but obviously he could not dodge five of them.

"I say, you fellows, you can jolly well take the parcel to Valentine yourselves, and be blown to you!" growled Bunter. "I've got to speak to Mauly."

"Not at all," said Bob coolly, taking hold of Bunter's fat ear. "You offered to take the parcel to Valentine, and you're going to take it. This way!"

"Leggo my ear!" yelled Bunter. "I tell you I've got to speak to Mauly! I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"You're going to be disappointed about a peer of the realm, too! Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Beast!" roared Bunter.

But he came on! As Bob had possession of his fat ear, the Owl of the Remove really had no choice in the matter. His ear had to go—and Bunter had to go with it; a parting would have been painful.

It was some minutes before Valentine was found. He was seen at last, walking up and down a secluded path in the trees, his hands in his pockets, a rather moody expression on his face, which was unusual there. In spite of the shadow of the past that haunted him, the new fellow in the Remove was generally as merry and bright as any fellow at Greyfriars School. But on this particular morning he seemed in rather a thoughtful and clouded mood.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Enjoying life, old bean?"

Valentine started, and looked up with a smile.

"Eh! Oh! Yes! You fellows looking for me?" he asked.

"Bunter is—he's taken a lot of trouble to find you, to hand you that parcel!" explained Bob. "If there's tuck in it, it's still there—but that's not Bunter's fault."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here you are, old fellow," said Bunter. Now that Valentine was found Bunter was anxious to see the parcel opened, in the hope that it contained tuck, of which some portion might fall to his lot. "Open it, old fellow! I fancy somebody's sent you a box of preserved fruits. It feels like it."

Valentine stood with the parcel in his hands, a strange look on his face.

"This is jolly odd," he said. "I can't imagine who should send me a parcel to-day—unless it's Quelch. Nobody else knows that it's my birthday."

"Oh, it's your jolly old birthday, is it?" said Bob. "Many happy returns, old thing."

"The wishfulness for the ridiculous and happy returns is preposterous," declared Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five understood, then, the clouded and thoughtful expression on Valentine's face when they had found him. It was his birthday; and he had not been expecting to hear from anyone; he had no relatives, unless his uncle, who had been lost long years ago in the wilds of Brazil, was still living. On that day, it was natural that he should feel his loneliness in the world.

"Somebody knows, and has sent you something," said Harry. "It looks like it, at any rate."

"It must be Quelch, I suppose," said Valentine, puzzled. "But this has been posted in Courtfield early this morning, from the postmark. It's odd that Quelch should take the trouble, instead of handing it to me."

"He's a rather thoughtful old bean," said Frank Nugent. "He might think it would please you to get something by post, like other fellows."

Valentine's handsome face softened.

"That would be like him," he said.

"But—but I never dreamed that he would remember my birthday at all. I've not mentioned it to him, of course; only I told him when he asked me my age, when I was coming to Greyfriars at the beginning of the term. If this is a present from Quelch, it's awfully kind of him."

"Looks like it," said Johnny Bull. "The address is typed, and Quelch always does that sort of thing on his typewriter."

"I say, you fellows, what's the good of wasting time jawing?" asked Billy Bunter peevishly. "There may be something to eat in the parcel."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jim Valentine cut the string with his penknife and unwrapped the paper.

A small wooden box was revealed. But it was not a box of preserved fruits, as Bunter hoped; it was of polished wood and fastened by a brass catch.

Valentine opened it, and Bunter gave a snort of disgust. Even Bunter did not feel disposed to eat the contents of that box—a set of instruments for geometry. Inside the box lay a typed slip of paper bearing the legend:

MANY HAPPY RETURNS!

It was not an expensive set, being much the same as those used by the fellows in the Remove, only the box itself being a little larger and more solid in construction.

"Well, if that's from Quelch, he's a good old bean—but a little thoughtless," said Bob, with a grin. "You've got a geometry box in your school outfit, haven't you?"

Valentine laughed.

"Yes; but I'm glad to have this, all the same. Bunter borrowed my compasses a week or two ago, and I've never seen them since."

"Oh, really, Valentine—"

"From Quelch a fellow might have expected a Latin dictionary, or a Greek lexicon," said Harry Wharton, laughing; "so he's let you off easy, Valentine."

"Of all the silly idiots!" said Bunter in deep disgust. "Even an old ass like Quelch ought to know that a fellow would like tuck. Doesn't he know that fellows have cakes on their birthdays?"

And Bunter snorted and rolled away, his interest in Valentine's birthday present entirely evaporating. The bell rang, and the Remove went in, Valentine taking the box with him into the Form-room.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

MR. QUELCH dismissed the Remove after third school, and called to Valentine as the Form went out.

Jim came up to the master's desk with the box in his hand. He supposed that the Remove master was about to speak to him on the subject of his birthday, and it was an opportunity to thank him for the present, which he had no doubt had come from his kind friend and protector.

Mr. Quelch gave him quite a benevolent smile over the desk.

"My dear boy," he said, "possibly you did not expect me to remember the date, but, as a matter of fact, I made a note of it at the beginning of the term. To-day is your birthday, Valentine."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch rummaged in his desk.

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"I have here," he said, "a small gift for you, Valentine. I hope that you will—if not now, perhaps later—take great pleasure in it."

The Remove master handed over a small morocco-bound volume to the astonished junior. It was a very nice little volume of Horace's "Odes"—in which, it was safe to say, few Remove fellows at Greyfriars would have taken pleasure! They did not "do" Q. Horatius Flaccus in the Remove—and very, very few members of that Form had any desire to "do" him.

Jim took the volume. No doubt he would have preferred a "Holiday Annual," but he was grateful for a kind thought and a kind action. But he was utterly astonished. He had taken it for granted that the geometry set came from his Form master, but that apparently was not the case.

"Th-thank you very much, sir!" he stammered.

"Not at all, my boy!" said Mr. Quelch benevolently. "Not at all! I will take this opportunity of speaking to you about another matter, Valentine. In view of the—hem!—disagreeable connections of your earlier life, it is judicious for me to exercise some superintendence over communications that reach you here. A parcel came for you this morning—"

"Yes, sir," stammered Jim.

"I have allowed it to reach you unopened, but I have no doubt that you will desire to acquaint me with its contents," said Mr. Quelch.

"Here it is, sir."

Jim placed the box on the Form master's desk.

Mr. Quelch glanced at it.

"A birthday present, it seems," he remarked. "From a thoughtful person, I should say; it is a useful present. From whom did you receive this, Valentine?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You do not know?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir. There was only that typed slip in it. I suppose somebody whom I've forgotten must have remembered me."

Mr. Quelch's face became grave.

He took up the little box and examined it very carefully.

Nosey Clark & Co. had not been seen near Greyfriars for a long time, but Mr. Quelch had not forgotten their attempts to get into communication with the boy who had fled from them.

His examination of the box was very thorough.

"This box contained nothing that you have not shown me, Valentine?" he asked.

"Nothing, sir."

"No letter of any sort?"

"No, sir."

"It occurred to my mind, Valentine, that it might be a device of that bad and lawless man Clark to get into touch with you again. If any kind of a letter had been enclosed—"

"There was nothing of the kind, sir; only the box as you see it now," answered Jim.

"Then it can scarcely have come from that quarter," said Mr. Quelch, relieved. "No doubt it is from some friend whom you do not recall."

"I had friends at my prep school, sir," said Valentine. "But—but I don't see how anybody I knew can know that I am at Greyfriars. I can't make it out. If you think I ought not to keep it, sir—"

"I hardly see how you can do otherwise, as you do not know whence it came and certainly cannot return it," said Mr. Quelch, with a smile. "There

can be no harm in your keeping a geometry set, which will be useful to you in your lessons with Mr. Lascelles."

"Very well, sir, then I will keep it."

Valentine left the Form-room in a very puzzled mood. That unexpected birthday present had not come from Quelch. From whom had it come?

Hardly from one of the friends he had known before he fell into the hands of Nosey Clark. They could not know where he was; neither were any of them likely to be in Courtfield, where the parcel had been posted only that morning. Such a fellow, too, would surely have signed his name.

The absence of the name, and the use of the typewriter, seemed to indicate that the unknown sender desired to remain unknown. But why?

Valentine took the box up to Study No. 1 and made an even more careful examination of it than Mr. Quelch had made, but there was nothing about it of a suspicious nature. It was a good, solid box, with a set of instruments useful to a schoolboy; not a sign of any kind of communication, except the typed slip, "Many Happy Returns!"

Was it from some member of the gang who remembered him with kindness? At the headquarters of Nosey Clark he had come into contact with many, and, bad men as they were, they were not all bad; some of them had been kind to the forlorn lad in their own way.

Was that it? Or was it a present from some fellow in the school who compassionated the lonely fellow who never received letters or presents or remittances like other fellows? The local postmark favoured that theory, which explained the sender's desire to remain anonymous.

Valentine flushed a little at that thought. He did not feel in any need of compassion, and had no desire whatever to be pitied. Still, if some Greyfriars fellow had done this, it was a kind action, and Jim had no thought of taking offence at it.

Anyhow, there the thing was; and it was useful enough, since Bunter had borrowed the compasses from his old set—things that Billy Bunter borrowed seldom being seen again by the owner.

He gave up the puzzle at last and went down, leaving the box on the study table in Study No. 1.

It was not, after all, a matter of very great consequence, though it was puzzling, and he very soon dismissed it from his mind.

When the Remove fellows went in to dinner most of them observed that Mr. Quelch's face was exceedingly grave. Skinner whispered that somebody was "for it"; and when, after dinner, Mr. Quelch stopped Valentine to speak to him the juniors concluded that it was the new fellow who was "for it." But Mr. Quelch's face, though very grave indeed, was as kind as usual as he spoke to Valentine in low tones.

"You did not, by any chance or for any reason whatsoever, leave your dormitory last night, Valentine, after I saw you there?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered Valentine, in wonder.

"I am sure of it," said Mr. Quelch. "It is, indeed, rather a fortunate circumstance that I visited the dormitory after lights-out, as it proved beyond question that you were within bounds."

Jim felt his heart beat.

Something evidently had happened the previous night, though he could not guess what.

But the Remove master made no explanation. He dismissed Valentine, who



"Yaroooooooh!" yelled Bunter, as Bob Cherry opened the compasses and gave him a gentle lunge with the sharp end. "Now get going," said Bob, "or we shall be late for class. I'll help you along, you fat fraud!" "Wow! Beast! Wow!" Bunter made a wild bound for the door. After him went Bob, compasses in hand.

went out after the other fellows, wondering. The Bounder lounded up to him in the quadrangle.

"You got back before me last night," he said.

Valentine stared at him. "I never went out last night," he snapped. "Whatever you may think of me, Vernon-Smith, you can't think that I am a pub-haunting rotter like yourself."

The Bounder laughed mockingly. "Not at all—something worse, perhaps! I wonder what's missin' at Popper Court!"

"Popper Court!" repeated Jim. "What do you mean?"

"You don't know what I mean?" sneered Smithy.

"Not in the least." "None so blind as those who won't see!" grinned the Bounder. "I dare say Grimey will come along and tell you."

And Smithy lounded away again, leaving Valentine staring and with a feeling of uneasy apprehension in his breast. What had happened in the night—which Mr. Quelch knew, and which, apparently, the Bounder knew also? Jim Valentine, so far, knew nothing—though he was soon to know.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Startling News!

"THE Moonstone!" "The jolly old Popper diamond!"

"Poor old Popper!" "This," said Skinner, "will make old Popper pop!"

"The popfulness will be terrific."

It was after tea that day, when Harry Wharton and Nugent and Jim Valentine strolled into the Rag together, and found an excited discussion going on there. News had reached Greyfriars during the day, which was now spreading over the whole school.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You fellows heard?" called out Bob Cherry.

"Which and what?" asked Harry.

"Burglary at Popper Court last night," said Bob.

"Oh, my hat! Another!"

"There's some gang giving this neighbourhood their special attention lately," said Peter Todd. "Time the police nabbed them!"

"I fancy the police have got their eye on one of them, at least," remarked Vernon-Smith, his own eye on Jim Valentine.

Valentine compressed his lips. This, then, was what had happened in the night, which made Mr. Quelch glad that it was proved that he had never left his dormitory. He could guess what thoughts would be passing in the mind of Inspector Grimes. He looked at Vernon-Smith, and his hands clenched as he looked at him. Smithy's remark fell on heedless ears, however—and even the reckless Bounder did not care to come more out into the open with his suspicions.

"They've bagged the moonstone!" said Frank Nugent. "You've heard of it—seen it, in fact—Popper's jolly old diamond—"

"Family heirloom," said Skinner. "Popper hasn't sold it to pay his income-tax because he can't! I wonder if it was insured?"

"Bound to be," said Bob Cherry. "It was worth hundreds of pounds—it was a famous stone."

"Then dear old Popper will score!" grinned Skinner. "H. can't sell a jolly old heirloom. But the insurance money will pay off some of his mortgages. I've heard that there's more mortgages than trees on his estate."

"Oh, don't be a rotter, Skinner!" said Wharton. "That diamond was pinched once before, and old Popper was as mad as a hatter about it."

"Because it was found, perhaps," suggested Skinner. "I fancy he'd rather collect the insurance. Things have been wangled before now, my beloved 'earers, in this wicked world."

"Oh, rot! Shut up, Skinner!"

"It seems that the burglars were seen," said Johnny Bull—"two of them. And some of the servants woke up and got after them, and there was a regular hullabaloo. A car was heard driving away soon after the police got there."

The Bounder grinned. He knew whose car had been heard driving away, but he said nothing of what he knew. He did not want his midnight exploits to become the talk of the Remove. Sooner or later something might have reached the ears of authority.

"Any description of the men?" asked Valentine, speaking for the first time.

"Precious little," said Peter Todd. "One of them is said to have been a man with a beaky nose—that's all."

Valentine's heart sank.

He needed to hear no more than that to know that Nosey Clark had been at work again. The Bounder's eyes were on him, and he noted the change of colour in the boy's face. He noted, too, that Harry Wharton gave a little start. The thought of Nosey Clark had come

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(Continued from page 13.)

into Wharton's mind at once at the mention of a man with a beaky nose.

"They got away with the Popper diamond," went on Bob Cherry. "They don't seem to have bagged much else."

"There wasn't much else to bag unless they bagged the mortgages," remarked Skinner, "and I dare say there was a stack of unpaid bills if they'd wanted them. And perhaps a summons from the income-tax inspector."

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

"I say, you fellows, I've seen that diamond," said Billy Bunter. "It's jolly valuable—almost as valuable as one we have at Bunter Court—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Popper won't see it again this time," said Vernon-Smith. "They'll whisk it off to Amsterdam and get it cut into smaller stones. I dare say it's across the water already."

"Poor old Popper!" said Harry. "He's rather an old griffin, but I'm sorry for this! I hope he will get it back!"

"They say he's hopping mad about it," said Toddy. "I hear that he slanged Inspector Grimes this morning—called him an ass, or something. Old Popper's not polite when his back's up."

"After all, there's a chance of getting it back," said Bob. "It would be known at once if it was seen, and it wouldn't be easy to get it abroad in a hurry. Poor old Popper!"

Jim Valentine left the Rag. The discussion, which was a matter of interest to the other fellows, gave him a sickening feeling. It was some time since he had seen or heard from any of the old gang, and he had begun to hope that he was at long last done with them. But it seemed that Nosey Clark was determined to haunt him.

It was not without a reason that the gang were concentrating on the vicinity of Greyfriars. They knew that Inspector Grimes suspected and watched the "boy with a past." He could hardly fail to connect in his mind this outbreak of crime with the presence of the boy at Greyfriars who had once been the associate of crooks. Even Mr. Quelch's faith in him had been put to a hard test. The master-crook, working in the dark, was weaving his web round Jim Valentine, whom he was determined to drive back to the task of "Dick the Penman."

Harry Wharton, looking from the window of the Rag, saw him walking in the quad, and noted the droop of his head, and guessed the feelings in the boy's heart. The captain of the Remove would have been glad at that moment to have been within hitting distance of Mr. Clark's beaky nose.

He looked round at a touch on his arm. Vernon-Smith was beside him. The Bounder was smiling sourly.

"Looks down in the mouth, what?"

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murmured Smithy, with a gesture towards the figure in the quad.

Wharton made no reply.

"You met Valentine before he came here," went on Smithy. "Did you happen to know whether he knew a man with a beaky nose?"

"Don't be a silly ass!" growled Wharton.

"You're not saying no," grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, rats!"

"I saw that Johnny getting away from Popper Court last night," went on Vernon-Smith, in a low voice. "There was another fellow with him—a small fellow. Might have been a boy!"

Wharton stared at him.

"You're talking rot!" he answered.

"You were asleep in bed when Quelch came to the dormitory, anyhow. Quelch would have spotted it like a shot if there had been an empty bed."

"A pal rigged up a dummy in my bed, and saved my bacon!" grinned the Bounder. "Rather a narrow escape, what?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton, taken aback.

"This is for your jolly old ear, of course—not to be shouted out all over the Remove," added the Bounder.

"I don't want to hear your shady secrets," grunted Wharton. "And I don't want the bother of keeping them, either."

"Why not?" said the Bounder, unmoved. "I fancy you're keeping shady secrets for somebody else." He gave a nod towards the junior outside. "You're a fool, Wharton, to get mixed up with that fellow. It won't be nice for you, when he's found out and shown up. Take a tip from me."

"I'll ask for it when I want it."

"Hoity-toity!" grinned the Bounder. "You were always an obstinate ass. That's what landed you in so many rows with Quelch last term."

"Oh, cut that out!" snapped Wharton. He did not like reminders of his scapegrace days the term before, as the Bounder well knew.

"Did you wake up last night?" asked Smithy.

"When Quelch came—"

"Not afterwards?"

"No."

"Then you don't know whether Valentine went out?"

"I know that he did not," answered Wharton curtly.

"How do you know, if you were asleep?"

"Because I trust him," answered Harry, looking the Bounder directly in the face. "Because I'm not a suspicious, spying, malicious fool, which is what you are, Herbert Vernon-Smith!"

And with that the captain of the Remove turned on his heel and walked away, leaving the Bounder biting his lip.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Tip for Bunter!

WHERE'S my compasses?" growled Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I know!" said Mark Linley.

"The wherefulness," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, "appears to be terrific."

"I left them in the box," said Bob. "Some silly ass has borrowed my blessed compasses, and now I want them for Lascelles. You had them, Wun Lung?"

The little Chinese in Study No. 13 smiled.

"No hawce nicey ole compass belong Bob Chelly," he answered.

"I'll lend you mine in class," said Mark.

"That's all very well," said Bob. "But a fellow wants his things—see? Lascelles is particular about it, too. Has that fat villain Bunter been borrowing them? He borrowed Valentine's a week or two ago, and lost them."

"Oh, really, Cherry—" A fat face and a big pair of spectacles blinked in at the study doorway.

"Oh, there you are!" grunted Bob. "Have you bagged my compasses, fat-head? We're up to Lascelles in five minutes from now, and he rags if a man borrows another fellow's instruments in class. You got them, fish-face?"

"I've got a pair of compasses here," said Bunter. He held out his celebrated box of "articles." "If you've lost your compasses, I'm the chap you want to see, old fellow. Half-a-crown—"

"You silly owl!" roared Bob. "Think I've got half-crowns to blow, because some ass has pinched my compasses."

"Well, to a pal like you, I'll make it two bob," said Bunter. "Nothing mean about me, I hope. Look what splendid compasses they are! They don't bend very much, if you hold them carefully, and if little pieces and things come off, you can soon get them on again, and—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"What about eightpence?" asked Bunter. "Mind, these compasses cost me a bob. Look here, Cherry, you've no time to find your compasses before we have to go in to maths. Better bag these while you've got the chance."

"Ass! They must be in the study somewhere!"

"You'll never guess where to look for them," said Bunter, shaking his head. "I say, old chap, Lascelles hates a fellow being late for class. You know what he is. He thinks fellows ought to take an interest in maths. Silly idiot, you know! You may get lines, or problems to do, if you're late."

"B-r-r-r!"

"Look here! Are you going to buy these compasses?" demanded Bunter.

"No!" roared Bob. "Get out, or I'll shove them down the back of your neck!"

"Beast! And people say there's such a thing as gratitude," said Bunter bitterly. "I take all the trouble to come up here, because you've lost your compasses, and you can't even be civil to a fellow."

Bob Cherry gave a jump. "How did you know I'd lost my compasses?" he demanded; and Mark Linley, Hurree Singh, and Wun Lung all grinned together.

"Oh, I—I didn't know, of course!" said Bunter hastily. "I never knew anything about your silly compasses, of course. Still, after all the trouble I've taken for you, I think you might take these splendid compasses off my hands for one-and-six. Dash it all, fifteen-pence! There!"

"You fat villain!" bawled Bob, red with wrath. "You've had my compasses, or you wouldn't have known they were missing, and butted in here with your rubbish."

"Oh, really, Cherry, I never knew you'd lost them, I tell you!"

"Then why did you butt in here?"

"Out of sheer good nature," said Bunter indignantly. "I knew you'd want a pair of compasses for geometry this afternoon. Lascelles always rags a man who forgets to bring in his instruments."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mark Linley. "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Billy Bunter warmly. "Here I come fagging up the stairs, just to

do Cherry a good turn, and all he can do is to yell at a chap, and make out that I knew he'd lost his compasses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You potty porpoise!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "If you didn't know the compasses were gone—"

"I jolly well didn't! Never dreamed of such a thing," asserted Bunter. "What should I know about your things?"

"But you came up because you knew I'd want compasses."

"Exactly! Sheer good nature," said Bunter. "I don't expect gratitude—I never get it—but dash it all, you might be civil! Lots of fellows would have let you go into maths without compasses at all, and get ragged."

"Why did they send him to Greyfriars, instead of to a home for idiots?" gasped Bob. "You fat, frajious, frowsy fooler, where are my compasses?"

"How should I know?"

"You've borrowed them!" yelled Bob.

"I haven't!" howled Bunter. "Why should I borrow your compasses, when I've got my own, and this splendid pair among my articles?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Linley and Hurree Singh; and Wun Lung chuckled like a series of Chinese crackers exploding. But Bob Cherry was not feeling disposed to chuckle. He wanted his lost instruments.

Bob made a jump to the door, grasped Billy Bunter by the collar, and jerked him bodily into the study.

There was a howl from the fat junior as his box of articles lurched, and six or seven useful and valuable articles went clattering to the floor.

"Ow! Beast! Leggo!"

"Where's my compasses?" roared Bob.

"Wow! Leggo! I don't know! I haven't seen them! Never touched

them! I never came up to the study while you were punting about that footer after dinner, and I can jolly well say— Yarooooop!"

Bang!

Billy Bunter's bullet head tapped on the study table. There was a yell from W. G. B.

"Whoop!"

"Now where's my compasses?" roared Bob. "I'll bang your head till you tell me, if I knock the table to smithereens!"

"Ow! Wow! I haven't had them!" wailed Bunter. "You beast! Do you think I'd hide your compasses because there's maths this afternoon and I had a pair to sell? Nothing of the kind! I dare say Linley's got them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Bob. "Is that the latest thing in salesmanship, to hide a fellow's things so that he has to buy new ones? My hat! Hold

(Continued on next page.)

WAS THE "REF" RIGHT?

IT is well over fifty years since people started making rules under which the game of football should be played. Since then there has been so many additions, alterations, and explanations of the various rules that one would imagine that by this time every contingency would be provided for. Such, however, is not quite the case. Occasionally incidents arise, and questions are raised which have to be settled, not so much by reference to what the rule-book says, as by thinking over what the rule-book means.

I have a question from a London reader, J. H., which inspires the foregoing note. In a recent game in which he played, many players on both sides were in position in the penalty area while a wing man prepared to take a corner-kick. After the ball had been placed ready for the corner-kick, but before the whistle had sounded or the kick taken, one of the full-backs of the defending side elbowed an opposing forward—that is, fouled him. The referee awarded a penalty kick. Was he right? I am assured that there was much argument afterwards, and I can well believe it, because after the most careful consideration of the point it is difficult to say definitely whether the referee was right or wrong. How much more difficult then, for a referee to decide on the spur of the moment.

One point in connection with this incident is clear. It is not necessary for the ball to be in the penalty area for a penalty-kick to be given if a player is fouled "in the box."

The rule-book plainly states

"that a penalty kick can be awarded irrespective of the position of ball, if in the field of play at the time the offence is committed."

I want you to note carefully the words I have underlined. They are important. Now we come back to the question. The point on which the decision hangs is whether, when a ball is placed in position for a corner-kick to be taken, it is in the field of play? Literally, the ball was in the field of play, and if the literal interpretation is accepted, then the referee was correct in awarding a penalty kick against the full-back who elbowed an opponent.

THE MOST IMPORTANT POSITION!

THE captain of a football team in Guernsey is worried as to what can properly be considered the most important position on the football field. Apparently he has a player on his side who is a better footballer than the others, and my captain reader thinks that if this best player could be put in the

SOCCER QUERIES ANSWERED HERE.

"LINESMAN CALLING!"



"Linesman," who is an expert on Soccer, will be pleased to hear from MAGNET chums who have problems to solve. Write to him at the Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

most important position the fullest use could be made of his football skill.

I think this interesting question should be tackled from two points of view. In the first place there is the question of what is the most important position on the football field. That is not easy to decide. It used to be accepted as a principle that the centre-half was the most important player. The managers whom I used to know a little time back always started team-building on this assumption. They tried to find the ideal centre-half, and then build the team round him. I could tell you of many football teams which have been "made" by a super-player in the centre-half position—Manchester United when they had Charlie Roberts, for example.

Ideas have changed a bit, however. The centre-half, generally speaking, does not play the same sort of game as he used to play. He has become more a defender and less an attacker.

I express the view now that the most important players in the average football team are the inside wing men—the inside-right and the inside-left. There are two footballers for each of whom a transfer fee of ten thousand pounds has been paid—the inside-right and the inside-left of Arsenal, Jack and James. I think I should make the best all-round footballer in my team an inside wing man.

On the other hand, even the best footballer may not be suited to an inside forward position, or even to the centre-half position. And I think that to decide the position a player shall occupy by the process of deciding which is the most important position is the wrong way to tackle the problem. Where will any particular player be of the greatest use to the side? That is the really important point to decide. The defence of a side

may be weak. The strong player, if he is adaptable, should be used to strengthen the weak place. The attack may lack "punch." If the outstanding player is the sort to supply that punch, then he can be used in the attack. Junior football teams have to be made up with a view to solving their own particular problems, and oft-times experiments must be made with a view to discovery of the most effective make-up of the side.

THE ONLY WAY!

WHILE on this point I have a question, in some ways similar, from a Leicestershire reader. Because of the team make-up difficulties he has to play at inside-left, though he himself does not consider that he is a good inside-left. His left foot is weak, for football purposes. So this reader, like many others, wants to know how he can get over the difficulty of the weak left foot. There is only one way—to keep on using the left foot. Even here, however, there is a difficulty. As the result of my experience I am prepared to state that there are plenty of quite good footballers, many of whom are in first-class sides, who will never be two-footed footballers. Some of us are right-footed, naturally. Some of us are left-footed. Others, of course, use either foot almost equally well. Again, there are some who learn to make effective use of the "other foot" by practice. But it doesn't follow that even practice will make a footballer two-footed.

So to my Leicester friend I would say practise with the left foot. If experience proves that you can't use it effectively, then there is only one other alternative: to get a position where the right foot strength can best be used.

"LINESMAN."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,306.

that table steady, Inky, while I crack Bunter's nut on it!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, in anticipation. "Will you leggo, you beast? I don't know anything about your rotten compasses. If they're hidden behind the bookcase, I don't know anything about it. How should I?"

"Look behind the bookcase, Marky, old chap!"

Mark Linley, chuckling, looked behind the bookcase, and drew out the missing compasses from their hiding-place.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob. "That fat villain—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now leggo!" yelled Bunter. "You've found your compasses, you beast, and it was jolly careless of you to let them drop behind the bookcase."

"You put them there!" roared Bob.

"I didn't. I never knew they were there. I haven't seen them before, that I know of. Leggo! I think you might thank a chap!" gasped Bunter. "You might have hunted for those compasses for hours and hours, if I hadn't told you where they were. Not that I knew they were there, you know. I know nothing whatever about that. I hope you can take my word."

"Oh erikey!"

Bob Cherry released the fat Owl, and Bunter stopped to gather up his scattered "articles." Bob opened the compasses, and gave the Owl of the Remove a gentle lunge with the sharp end.

Billy Bunter leaped up as if he had been electrified. The yell that came from Bunter awoke every echo of the Remove passage, and almost drowned the bell that was ringing in the distance for class.

"Yaroooooooh!"

"Now get going," said Bob. "We shall have to cut to get in on time. I'll help you along, you fat fraud. I'll give you a tip about hiding a fellow's things to make him buy your rubbish. I'll race you—"

"Wow! Beast! Wow!"

"If you don't beat me I'll jolly well stick these compasses into you all the way to Lascelles' class-room!"

Billy Bunter forgot even his precious articles scattered on the floor. He made a wild bound out of the study.

After him went Bob, compasses in hand. The other fellows followed, yelling with laughter.

Salesmanship is a great modern art, no doubt; but Bob was of opinion that William George Bunter was carrying that great art to too great a length. He felt that it was time to give Bunter a tip on that subject. So he gave him one—the tip of the compasses.

It was a sharp tip!

Bunter, letting out a yell like a Red Indian at every bound, bounded along the Remove passage like an active kangaroo.

After him rushed Bob Cherry, jabbing.

Bunter did the passage in record time. He flew down the Remove staircase; he bounced down the lower stairs; he went along the corridor as if it was a cinder-path. Bunter was no great sprinter as a rule, but lunging compasses behind him caused Bunter to put on a really remarkable burst of speed. There were great persuasive powers in the sharp end of a pair of compasses.

Bunter hated maths. But he was glad to get into Mr. Lascelles' class-room that afternoon.

But several times during the geometry class Mr. Lascelles had to reprimand Bunter for wriggling and shuffling and

never keeping still on the form for a moment.

But for once Bunter was not to blame. He really could not help it!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Some Salesman!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH stared.

After class that day the Bounder was lounging at the school gates, with his eye on the Courtfield road.

With the suspicion firmly fixed in his mind that Jim Valentine had been mixed up in the affair at Popper Court of the night before, Vernon-Smith fully expected that Inspector Grimes would share that suspicion and would be coming to the school sooner or later to see the "boy with a past." He was anxious to see the inspector's portly form in the offing.

But for the moment he forgot Inspector Grimes as Billy Bunter came rolling through the gateway.

Bunter had his coat on, and one of his fat hands was pressed to his side, as if he had a pain there. Obviously something was hidden under the coat, and Bunter was anxious that it should not slip down into view.

Every moment or two the fat Owl glanced back over his shoulder, as if in dread of pursuit.

Looking back apprehensively as he rolled through the gateway, he nearly rolled into Vernon-Smith, who stretched out a hand, grasped a fat ear between finger and thumb, and brought Bunter to a halt.

"Wow!" squeaked Bunter.

"You blithering bloater," said Vernon-Smith, "what's this game?"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"What are you hiding under your coat, you fat villain?"

"Nothing," answered Bunter promptly.

"If you think I've bagged anything from a fellow's study, Smithy, to take out of gates, you're a suspicious beast. That's you all over—you're suspicious!"

"Somebody's cake?" asked Smithy.

"Certainly not! I've got nothing here. Besides, it isn't yours. And if a fellow wants things for prep to-night I've some that I can sell him. Cheap, too. You mind your own bizney, Smithy!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Beast!"

Possibly Vernon-Smith might have pushed the investigation further, but at that moment he spotted a portly figure on the road coming with quick strides from the direction of Courtfield. His eyes glinted. He had been right in his surmise. Inspector Grimes was coming to Greyfriars.

Smithy forgot Bunter's existence on the spot, and the fat Owl, glad to escape, rolled hastily out of gates. He passed Mr. Grimes on the road, that official gentleman hardly noticing him. Bunter was not the Greyfriars fellow in whom Mr. Grimes was interested.

Bunter grinned as he rolled onward.

Bunter the salesman was at work again. William George Bunter had considered it quite a masterly stroke of salesmanship to hide Bob Cherry's compasses behind his bookcase in order to sell him a new pair. It had not worked, unfortunately. But one swallow does not make a summer. If it did not work the first time it might work the second time. But this time Bunter was judiciously leaving Bob's property alone. The tip he had received on that subject was enough for Bunter. Jim Valentine was the victim the fat

Owl had now selected for his special salesman attentions. And this time Bunter was taking more precautions.

Valentine, being now in possession of a handsome new box of mathematical instruments, had given his old set away to a fellow who wanted one. Bunter was aware of that.

Valentine, therefore, had only his new box, and there was geometry in Remove prep that evening. He would want that box of instruments.

He was likely to continue to want it, the astute Owl having bagged it from Study No. 1, Valentine's birthday present, in fact, being the article that was now bulging under Bunter's coat.

Bunter, of course, had no intention of "pinching" the thing! Bunter had his limit, though it was a wide and extensive one. He was simply going to hide the box till he had sold Valentine the instruments that were included in his list of useful and valuable articles.

This, from Bunter's wonderful point of view, was salesmanship. Really, he was going to do the fellow a good turn, turning up with the necessary instruments when the chap wanted them in prep! Next day he was going to disinter Valentine's box from its hiding-place and return it to Study No. 1. There was nothing dishonest about William George Bunter—not at all! He had to sell his articles somehow, and that was that.

This time he was making sure of the thing. He was going to hide the box out of gates, where Valentine certainly was not likely to look for it. It would be safe enough in the hollow tree in the coppice.

Bunter rolled into the path through the coppice which led towards the river. He knew of a tree there with a hollow in the ancient trunk, and he grinned as he threaded his way towards it.

It was rather unfortunate for Bunter that Loder of the Sixth had strolled into that secluded spot to indulge in a forbidden cigarette. Loder of the Sixth was leaning on the old beech that had a hollow in the trunk, with a cigarette in his mouth, when the fat Owl came through the trees.

Instantly Gerald Loder snatched the cigarette from his mouth and put his hand behind him. It was not judicious for a Sixth Form prefect to allow a Lower School fag to see him smoking.

He scowled at Bunter, who blinked back at him.

"What do you want?" growled the bully of the Sixth.

"I—I—nothing!" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't know you were here, Loder. It's all right. I never noticed that you were smoking—"

"What?" roared Loder, his hand still behind him, with the cigarette hidden in the palm.

"I can't smell baccy here, Loder," said the fatuous Owl. "It's all right. Besides, I shan't tell any of the fellows." Loder glared at him.

"You young scoundrel! If you dare to hint that I was smoking—"

"Oh, no! Nothing of the kind!" gasped Bunter. "Besides, I wouldn't give you away. You wouldn't be a prefect long if the Head knew! He, he, he! I—I say—"

"Yaroooh!" came a sudden yell from Loder. The cigarette in his hand had burned down to his fingers, and it gave him a sudden shock.

"Wow!" roared Loder, dropping the stump in a great hurry.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter.

This struck Bunter as funny. But the next moment something struck Bunter that did not seem at all funny. It was Gerald Loder's heavy hand.

Smack!



"You young scoundrel!" roared Loder. "If you dare to hint that I was smoking, I'll— Y-wooooh!" He broke off suddenly as the cigarette in his hand burned down to his fingers and gave him a sudden shock. "He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. It struck him as funny! The next moment something struck him that did not seem funny. It was Loder's heavy hand. Smack!

"Whooop!" yelled Bunter, as he went spinning.

Smack!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Bunter sat down, roaring.

Loder of the Sixth bestowed a kick on the hapless Owl, and Bunter roared like the bull of Bashan.

"Come to my study, Bunter!" yapped Loder, and he stalked away.

"Oh lor!"

Loder of the Sixth disappeared through the trees.

Billy Bunter sat up, gasping.

"Beast!" he groaned.

He scrambled to his feet. Bunter was hurt. Two heavy smacks had landed on his fat ears; and the toe of a boot in his podgy ribs. Bunter could not help feeling hurt. Worse still was the command to go to Loder's study. Bunter knew what awaited him there—six from Loder's ashplant! Really, the Greyfriars salesman was having rotten luck.

The box had slipped from under his coat. He picked it up, and now that Loder was gone, jammed it into the hollow in the beech. That was that, at all events.

Billy Bunter rolled away from the spot.

But he did not roll back to Greyfriars. He did not want to see Loder again. He was very anxious not to see Loder. Billy Bunter did not intend to turn up at the school until call-over; hoping that by that time, Loder might have forgotten him. Gerald Loder had rather a good memory in such matters; still, you never knew your luck. At any rate, a whopping was no worse for being postponed. So Bunter rolled away, hoping for the best.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

In the Toils!

INSPECTOR GRIMES glanced at the Bounder as he went in at the gates; and Smithy eyed him, with a curious glimmer in his eyes.

Smithy was heart and soul in accord with the police-officer in his tracking of the "boy with a past"; more than willing to give him any help he could. But he wondered what Mr. Grimes would have thought, if he had known who it was that had nearly fallen into his grasp the previous night. Evidently, the inspector had no suspicion whatever that it was Smithy. There was a glimmer of mockery in Smithy's eyes, as his glance followed the official gentleman on his way to the House.

Mr. Grimes was shown into the Remove master's study.

Henry Samuel Quelch met him with frosty politeness.

But Mr. Quelch's politeness was wearing thin. He was fed-up to the back teeth, so to speak, with the police-officer's suspicions of the boy he had taken under his protection. Again and again, some apparently promising clue had led Mr. Grimes to the boy with a past; and every time, it had turned out a mare's nest. Mr. Quelch was of opinion that it was time that the inspector "chucked" it—though he would not have expressed his opinion in those words.

"I trust, sir," said Mr. Quelch, "that this call has no reference to the boy Valentine?"

"Most certainly it has, sir!" answered the inspector.

"Then I am bound to say, sir, that

you are wasting my time and your own," said the Remove master acidly, "and I doubt whether I am justified in listening to anything further on this disagreeable and futile subject."

Mr. Grimes grunted.

"You may please yourself about that, sir," he answered. "If you prefer it, I will deal with the headmaster. It is for you to decide that."

"If you have anything to say, apart from groundless suspicions of a boy who, in my opinion, is worthy of all faith and trust—"

"I have first to ask a question, sir, which you, as the boy's Form master will be able to answer. Has the boy received any packet by post to-day?"

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"As a matter of fact, he has!" was his answer.

"I thought so," said the inspector grimly, "and no doubt you, as his Form master, made some examination of it."

"As I have complete faith in the boy, and desired to let him know it, I did not!" answered Mr. Quelch. "But he showed me the packet of his own accord. It was a birthday present—to-day being his birthday."

"You have seen it then?"

"Certainly. It was a box of mathematical instruments."

"Where is it now?"

"Doubtless in the boy's study."

"There is no objection, I presume, to my seeing it and examining it?" asked Mr. Grimes with a touch of sarcasm.

"None whatever; though what your interest in such a thing can be, I cannot imagine! Neither can I guess how you

are aware that the boy received a packet by post to-day."

"I will tell you, sir!" said the inspector. "Last night there was a burglary at Popper Court; and the famous Popper diamond, known as the Moonstone, was stolen."

"I have heard of it."

"Two men were engaged in the business, one of whom appears to have entered the house, while the other waited outside for him, no doubt keeping watch. Both escaped—but they were seen—and one of them is described as a man with a beaky nose."

"Well, sir?"

"Well, sir!" retorted Mr. Grimes. "It is very well known that the boy, whether an honest lad now or not, was once associated with a crook known as Nosey Clark. I have no doubt whatever that it was the boy's former associate who was concerned in the robbery at Popper Court."

"Possibly! I understand that the man is an abandoned rascal!" said Mr. Quelch. "But that Valentine has any connection with him is inadmissible for a moment! You had the evidence of your own eyes that he was in his dormitory last night."

"Which, I fancy, he left later," said Mr. Grimes. "Certainly there was a boy out of the House at one in the morning; I was on the watch, sir, and can state that as a positive fact."

"If you state it as a fact, sir, I must accept it as a fact; but certainly I do not believe that the boy was Valentine."

"We shall see! I have the case of the burglary at Popper Court now in hand," said Mr. Grimes, "and you may be sure that I have not been idle. A man with a beaky nose was seen in Courtfield this morning—at the post office."

"I fail to see—"

"At the post office," said Mr. Grimes deliberately, "I learn that he posted a packet, apparently a small wooden box."

Mr. Quelch started.

"He made some inquiry as to when the packet would be delivered," went on Mr. Grimes. "In one way or another, he attracted some attention—fortunately, as it turns out. The clerk who dealt with the packet remembers

him quite clearly, and remembers that the box was addressed, in typewriting, to J. Valentine at Greyfriars School."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch, quite taken aback.

"From this, sir, you will see that the packet that reached Valentine this morning, came from his old associate, Nosey Clark, who had been concerned in a burglary only the night before."

"It—it would appear so," stammered Mr. Quelch. "Perhaps—doubtless—the man is a rascal, but he may have had some kindly thought of the boy on his birthday, and remembered him—"

Mr. Grimes almost snorted. He was not likely to believe in kindly thoughts in the minds of desperate crooks.

"Come, sir!" he said, impatiently. "The box of instruments, or whatever it was, was obviously the cover for some communication between the two."

"I examined it, sir—"

"After it had been in the boy's hands!" said Grimes. "Such an examination was worth nothing."

"Valentine showed it to me of his own accord—"

"No doubt, as you knew that the packet had come, concealment would not have served him. Mr. Quelch, the famous Popper diamond is missing! Its value is over a thousand pounds. It is a stone known and noted—it could not be offered for sale in this kingdom, without immediate detection. The game of the thieves will be to cut it into smaller stones, to be disposed of separately, which would diminish its value by more than half—or—" Mr. Grimes paused.

"Or what?" snapped Mr. Quelch, guessing what was coming.

"Or to keep it hidden in a safe place, till it can be smuggled abroad, and sold to some unscrupulous collector in a foreign country. And the fact that the thief posted a packet within a few hours of the burglary, and before leaving the neighbourhood, points to the latter conclusion."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"In short, sir, you suspect that this boy is acting in collusion with the thief, and that this school, Greyfriars, has been chosen as the hiding-place of a thief's plunder!" he exclaimed.

"I am not prepared to make a definite charge to that effect—yet," said Mr. Grimes. "But that is what I am here to ascertain, Mr. Quelch. You appear to meet me in a spirit of hostility, but you would scarcely prefer me to come here armed with an official search warrant."

The Remove master shuddered. "I am convinced—absolutely convinced—that there is nothing in this," he said. "But most certainly, I desire most earnestly to avoid anything like a sensation in the school. The box shall be placed in your hands at once—though I can assure you that I examined it, and it contained nothing but mathematical instruments such as are used by every schoolboy."

"It had been in Valentine's hands before yours—"

"The boy could not have anticipated that, neither could the man, Clark. It was very probable that I should have opened it first."

Mr. Grimes nodded.

"Admitted! But while you were examining the box, did you look for a secret receptacle of any kind?"

"Certainly I did not! Such a thought never crossed my mind—or the boy's either, I am convinced."

"Well, sir, it has crossed mine—and I shall look for it!" said Mr. Grimes. "Let me see the box at once."

Mr. Quelch stepped to the study

window. Outside, a number of Remove fellows could be seen in the distance, punting a footer. Among them were the Famous Five and Jim Valentine. The Remove master threw up the sash.

Mr. Quelch called to Valentine, who left his companions and came across to the study window at a run. His happy, healthy, cheery face changed its expression as he discerned the portly figure of Inspector Grimes in the room.

"Valentine!" said Mr. Quelch. "Where is the box you received this morning by post?"

"In my study, sir."

"Mr. Grimes desires to see it."

"He is very welcome, sir," answered Valentine, in utter wonder. "I will cut up to the study and fetch it at once."

"You will do nothing of the kind!" broke in the inspector gruffly. "You will remain where you are, while I go to your study."

"Remain, Valentine!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir!"

"You know your way to the Remove, Mr. Grimes," said Mr. Quelch. "If you will kindly lose no time—"

Mr. Grimes grunted and left the Form master's study. The Remove master turned a troubled look on the wondering face of the junior below the window.

"Valentine! You were not aware that the box was sent you by the man Clark?" he asked.

"No, sir! Was it?"

"Mr. Grimes seems to have obtained proof that it was."

"I can't understand it then! I don't see why Nosey should send me a birthday present. But what does it matter, sir?"

The Remove master's gimlet eyes searched the boy's face. That keen scrutiny read nothing but wonder there.

"You have examined the box, Valentine?"

"Yes, sir. I've looked through it carefully."

"Did you find anything in the nature of a secret receptacle?"

Valentine started.

"No, sir! I never thought of it!"

"You found nothing in the box but mathematical instruments?"

"Nothing, sir!"

"Very well, Valentine; you may rejoin your friends. But remain in sight of my window for the present," said Mr. Quelch.

Valentine stood looking up at him for a long moment, the colour draining from his face. Vaguely, dimly, but with a terrifying assurance and certainty, he realised the position in which he was placed, and saw the net that the cunning crook had woven round him. Nosey Clark had failed many times; but this time was he to fail? He turned away at last, and with faltering steps and drooping head, and something like despair in his heart, went back to his friends.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Arm of the Law!

HARRY WHARTON touched Valentine lightly on the shoulder. The captain of the

Remove had caught the look on his face as he came back from Mr. Quelch's window, and left the punt about. Jim was passing him, blindly, unseeing, when Wharton brought him to a halt.

It was clear that there was trouble—black trouble; and as Wharton had caught a glimpse of Inspector Grimes as he went in, he guessed that it was in

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connection with that gentleman.

Valentine looked at him dully. "For goodness' sake what's up?" muttered Wharton.

"I'm done for this time!" muttered Valentine. "Don't touch me! Don't speak to me! You won't want to—in a few minutes! You'll turn me down, and think me not fit to touch."

"Don't be an ass!" said Wharton, almost roughly. "Tell me what's happened. Don't let all the fellows see you looking like that. You're as white as chalk!"

He drew Valentine away; but the boy stopped at a short distance, mindful of his Form master's instructions.

"I'm not to go out of sight," he muttered.

"Why not?"

"In case I hide the Popper diamond while I'm out of sight, I suppose," said Jim bitterly.

Wharton stared at him blankly.

"Are you mad? What do you know about the Moonstone?"

"Nothing!"

"Then what—?"

"Grimes is in our study now—looking for it."

"Looking for Sir Hilton Popper's stolen diamond in our study!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in utter amazement. He wondered for a moment whether the boy's brain was wandering.

"Yes! He suspects that it was sent in that box this morning. It seems that he's found out that it was sent by Nosey Clark—"

"Good heavens!"

"And he's right," said Valentine. "I know that! As soon as Quelch spoke, I saw it all! The Moonstone is worth more than a thousand pounds, but it's worth more than that for Nosey Clark to get 'Dick the Pentan' back again!" He laughed, almost wildly. "Nosey's got me at last! Got me hard and fast! Any minute now, Grimes may come down with the diamond in his hand—found in my geometry box. Fat lot of good for me to say I never knew it was there!"

Wharton looked at him. For one instant a hideous spasm of doubt struck him, like a cold shudder. It was Nosey Clark's gang that had stolen the diamond at Popper Court. Nosey had posted it to this boy, hidden in a harmless box of instruments, it seemed. What did it look like? It looked as if the master-crook had sent it for safe keeping till it could be disposed of. What else was anyone to think?

But Harry Wharton drove that doubt from his mind, like a thing unclean. It was not so—it could not be so! He knew what Mr. Grimes would believe, what he could not help believing, if he found the diamond in the box in Study No. 1. But Wharton would not, and could not believe it.

"Leave me alone!" breathed Valentine. "Chuck me before it comes out! You don't want to be found talking to a thief!"

"Fathead!" said Harry, as lightly as he could. "If—if you're sure—"

"I'm sure! I see it all now as if I'd seen Nosey at work."

"But—but that diamond's awfully valuable. Is it really worth so much to Clark to get you turfed out of here?"

Valentine gave him a strange look.

"If I'm kicked out of Greyfriars, Nosey calculates on getting me back. If he gets me back to Dick the Penman's work it would be worth ten times as much as that, before the end of the week."

He laughed again.

"I'm a schoolboy now, with no more pocket-money than Bunter! If I liked to go back to Nosey Clark, I could handle more money than Smithy—more than Lord Mauleverer—twice as much—thrice as much! Nosey would hand me hundreds where he made thousands. I've got a fortune in the fingers of my right hand—if I were what Inspector Grimes believes me to be. When you first saw me, and helped me away from those rogues, I had a motor-bike of my own, and a hundred pounds in my pocket. Grimes would believe in me, if he knew I'd thrown it all aside; but he believes I'm playing a game here, hand in glove with Nosey! I can't blame him—I can't prove otherwise! How can he doubt when he finds the diamond in my box?"

"Perhaps—perhaps he won't—"

"He will—it's there—I tell you there's no doubt of it! Even Quelch will have to turn me down—even you, and your



Officer (addressing raw recruit): "Now, my man, I want you to regard the regiment as a big band of brothers and me as the father of the regiment. Are you sure you understand?"

Recruit: "Yes, dad!"

Congratulations to Mas. G. W. Harris, of 61, Russell Street, Gisborne, New Zealand, who wins a useful prize for sending in this joke.

friends! You may try to keep on believing in me, but you won't be able to! I'm done for—Nosey has got me this time."

The unhappy boy groaned aloud.

Wharton stood in dismayed silence. His own face was pale.

"Do you mean that the inspector will arrest you?" he asked, at last, in a low voice.

"More likely not! More likely to let me run loose, and keep me shadowed, to get on to Nosey! He couldn't prove that I knew what was in the box. It would be proved enough for him, but not enough for a judge. I don't think it means that—I don't think Nosey meant it to mean that!" Valentine gritted his teeth. "If I went to prison, I'd see that Nosey went, too. He's as much in my hands as I'm in his! No, he dare not go so far as that! That's not his game! All he wants is to disgrace me here and drive me out—and once thrown on the world, what is there for me but to go back to the gang, or starve?"

"But you wouldn't—"

"Never! But that's what Nosey

counts on! He doesn't believe that any fellow would starve rather than steal. He drove me into crooked work once, and he thinks he can do the same again. He's mistaken, but he will never believe that till he's done me all the harm he can. I'd die first—a thousand times!" The boy spoke with passionate vehemence. But his voice faltered and broke. "What's the good of saying all this? When the diamond's found, you won't believe a word of mine—you can't!"

"I can—and will!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "I'm standing by you, old fellow. Hallo, there's Quelch beckoning from his window. Come on, I'm going in with you."

"Keep clear of me, you ass! You'd better!"

"Rats!"

Harry Wharton went into the House with Jim Valentine, and they reached Mr. Quelch's study together. Inspector Grimes was standing in the room, with a black look on his face.

Mr. Quelch glanced at the captain of the Remove.

"Why are you here, Wharton?" he asked.

"I've come in with Valentine, sir, because he's my friend, and I know what's on!" answered Harry. "Whatever Mr. Grimes may have found in our study, I want to tell him and you that I'm certain that Valentine knows no more about it than I do."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch, and his look was quite grateful. "That is my own belief exactly."

"Thank you, sir," said Jim Valentine. "It is a trick of that villain Clark to ruin me here; but, of course, there's only my word for that."

Grunt from Inspector Grimes.

"Where is the box?" he snapped.

"I told you, sir," answered Jim. "Haven't you got it?"

"I have not!" said Mr. Grimes, raising his voice a little. "It is not on your study table, or, so far as I have been able to ascertain, in your study at all. What have you done with it?"

Jim's eyes opened wide.

"I left it on my study table," he said. "That's all I can say."

"Mr. Quelch, if this boy refuses to show the box—"

"Valentine, please tell Mr. Grimes at once—"

"I have told him, sir," said Jim, "and, so far, I can prove what I say. Wharton came up to the study after class, and I showed him the box and the things in it. We went down together, leaving it there. We've been punting about a footer since, and I've been under the eyes of a dozen fellows."

Another grunt from Mr. Grimes. "You may not believe me, sir," said Jim quietly. "But you cannot refuse to take Wharton's word."

"I hope not," said Harry, with a curl of the lip. "What Valentine says is quite correct. We came down together, leaving that box on the study table, and Valentine has not been out of my sight since."

"Then where is the box?" growled the inspector.

"If it is not where we left it, I suppose some fellow must have borrowed it," answered Harry. "Fellows borrow one another's things in the Remove. Some fellow may have something to do for Mr. Lascelles."

"No doubt that is what has occurred," said Mr. Quelch. "In fact, it appears to me the only thing that can possibly have happened. Wharton, you

will at once make an inquiry for the box, and bring it here when found."

"Certainly, sir!"

Wharton left the study.

Valentine remained.

Inspector Grimes stood by the window, gnawing his lip. Mr. Quelch drummed restlessly on his desk while he waited, with nervous fingers. Valentine stood like a statue, pale, and with little hope in his heart.

The game was up—Nosey Clark had "got him," as he had expressed it—the delay in finding the box only postponed the inevitable.

He felt an unerring certainty that the stolen diamond was hidden in some secret place in the wooden box—that it had been sent to him to ruin him—that Nosey had deliberately allowed himself to be spotted posting the packet, in order to furnish the necessary clue—it was all part of a cunning scheme, and he was caught in the snare like a helpless bird!

When the box was brought to the study it was the end of things for him at Greyfriars, even if he did not leave the school in the official custody of Mr. Grimes.

Wharton was a long time gone. The drumming of Mr. Quelch's fingers grew more restless; the inspector stirred and grunted. Mr. Quelch's time was of value, and doubtless Mr. Grimes' also, and long minutes followed minutes. It should not have taken the head boy of the Remove long to find a fellow who had borrowed a set of mathematical instruments—such a fellow would naturally be in the House. He seemed long in finding him, however.

But there was a tap on the door at last.

Harry Wharton entered, with a perplexed face.

"The box!"

Inspector Grimes made a forward movement.

"I can't find it, sir," said Harry. "I've asked every Remove man within gates, and nobody's had it, so he says. Fellows out of gates can't have borrowed a geometry set to take out, I suppose. The thing seems to have vanished."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch, quite at a loss.

Valentine felt his heart throb. Had some strange chance interposed, after all, to save him?

Mr. Grimes' face set like iron.

"Obviously, the boy has concealed the box!" he said.

Harry Wharton looked at him.

"Certainly not, Valentine has done nothing of the sort!" he exclaimed. "I have told you that Valentine left Study No. 1 with me, leaving the box on the table, and I will swear to it in a court of law."

"Mr. Quelch, if that box is not placed in my hands—"

"That box, sir, shall be placed in your hands as soon as found!" said Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, Valentine, you may leave the study."

Mr. Grimes had a look rather like a bulldog whose jaws had snapped and missed. It was his prey that was escaping as Jim Valentine left the study with the captain of the Remove. But he was powerless; and he felt that he had been beaten once more, somehow, by the suspected boy—and certainly it never crossed his mind that the fellow who had, quite inadvertently, beaten him, was Billy Bunter!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Sale at Last!

"H O-U-M-M-M!" yawned Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that your alarm-clock going off, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, where does the cackle come in, fathead?" asked Bob, staring at the fat Owl of the Remove. "Nothing funny in prep, is there?"

"Far from it, I should think," said Nugent. "There's geometry in the programme this evening."

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter chuckled again.

Apparently he found something funny in geometry, as well as prep. If so, he was the only fellow in the Remove who did. Into most heads in the Greyfriars Remove, mathematical knowledge had to be driven—almost like nails into wood.

The Remove had gathered in their passage for prep; but it was not till a prefect was seen on the stairs that they dispersed to their studies to begin. This evening it was Wingate, which was a relief to Bunter. He had stayed out till call-over, and had not paid his visit to Loder's study—and hoped that Loder had forgotten him. But he felt far from sure, and he did not want to see Loder.

Wingate of the Sixth strolled up the passage, glancing into a study here or there, and wherever his glance fell he found Remove fellows quietly and industriously at work.

After which the Greyfriars captain walked back to the staircase and then quite a lot of fellows ceased, as if by magic, to be either quiet or industrious.

Billy Bunter blinked out of the doorway of Study No. 7, to see if the coast was clear. Then he picked up his celebrated box of "articles."

"You fat duffer!" said Peter Todd. "Get on with your prep, and give the fellows a rest from that rubbish."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"If you interrupt fellows at prep with that rot, you'll get booted," warned Toddy.

"I'm going to help a fellow get on with his prep," answered Bunter, with dignity. "We've got some rotten geometry to do, Peter—and how can a fellow do his geometry without his rotten instruments? I don't want Valentine to get into a row with Lascelles to-morrow."

"Has Valentine lost his instruments?"

"Oh! Not that I know of!" said Bunter hastily. "Still, he might have, you know, and if he has, he will be jolly glad to see me with this lot, see?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Toddy.

And Bunter, having ascertained that the coast was clear, rolled out with his articles, and arrived at Study No. 1. He found Wharton and Nugent and Jim Valentine at work there.

Bunter blinked in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Prep, fathead! Cut," said Wharton, without looking up.

"You've got some geometry to do," said Bunter. "Valentine will want compasses and things. I say, Valentine, old chap, if you care for these—"

"I wouldn't!" answered Valentine briefly.

"Well, I don't see how you're going to make triangles without compasses—I mean, circles and things," said Bunter. "I'm only asking half-a-crown for these

splendid compasses—I've been keeping them for you, Valentine. Smithy offered me three shillings for them, but I said 'No, they're for old Valentine, Smithy—I'm not going to let a pal get into a row with Lascelles because he's lost his things! My very words!'"

Valentine looked up.

The story of Bob Cherry's compasses had been told and chuckled over in the Remove that afternoon. So when Bunter arrived in Study No. 1, with geometrical instruments to sell, it did not take the fellows there long to put two and two together. The disappearance of Valentine's box was a mystery that had not yet been elucidated; they had not thought of Bunter the Salesman! But they thought of him now!

"You fat villain, it was you!" exclaimed Valentine.

"Oh, really, old chap—"

"You!" roared Wharton. "I remember I couldn't find you when I was going up and down after that blessed box! You were out of gates!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, and he burst into a laugh. "It was Bunter, of course—his trick on Bob over again! I never thought of that!"

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

"What have you done with my box, Bunter?" asked Jim Valentine, with a very curious look at the fat junior.

"Nothing!" answered Bunter promptly. "Haven't seen it! It was only a lark with Bob's compasses this afternoon, you know—only that fathead can't take a joke! I never came to this study this afternoon, after you fellows had gone down. I wasn't watching you from the door of my study, either—"

"Where's that box?" roared Wharton.

"I don't know where that box is! How should I know? If you think I'd take a fellow's box of instruments out of gates, it shows that you're a suspicious beast! You can ask Smithy!"

"Smithy! What does Smithy know about it?"

"Well, he was at the gates when I went out, and he can tell you whether I had anything hidden under my coat or not!" said Bunter warmly. "He asked me what it was, and I told him there wasn't anything—see? Ask Smithy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"As I was out of gates at the time, I never knew that Valentine's box was lost at all," said Bunter. "I came here to let him have these instruments, because he would need them for prep. It's pretty sickening to meet a fellow with a lot of rotten suspicions when he comes along to do a kind and good-natured thing! I must say that! Look here, Valentine, what about two bob for this splendid pair of compasses?"

Valentine smiled.

"Done!" he said.

Bunter almost jumped with joy.

It was a sale at last!

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Nugent, as Jim felt in his pocket for cash. "Those rotten compasses aren't worth a tanner!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! You let Valentine alone!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "Valentine knows that I never got his box out of this study and hid it out of gates—he's not suspicious like you and Wharton! As a matter of fact, I haven't been in the coppers today at all, and I never saw Loder of the Sixth there smoking. Valentine's a clever chap, and knows when he's getting value for his money, don't you, Valentine?"

"Quite!" said Jim.

"What about this protractor?" asked



There was a gasp from the chums of the Remove as the box flew to pieces and something rolled in the grass, gleaming and glittering and shining as it caught the rays of the sunlight. Harry Wharton picked it up and placed it in the palm of his hand. "My hat!" said Bob Cherry, in a hushed voice. "It's the jolly old Popper diamond!"

Bunter eagerly. "Smithy rather twisted it up the other day, but it can be flattened out, and I can tell you it's jolly useful as well as valuable. Two bob—what?"

"Yes, if you like."

Bunter beamed.

His salesmanship was succeeding. His "articles" were beginning to "go." He laid the compasses and the protractor on the study table, and picked up the four shillings that Valentine laid down.

"You benighted ass!" said Frank Nugent, in withering tones. "What are you chucking away your money for? That protractor is a rotten bit of tin, and it wasn't worth twopence before Smithy twisted it."

"You shut up, Nugent!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Valentine knows what he's about, don't you, old chap?"

"Oh, quite!" said Jim, with a smile.

"You'll want a square, too," said Bunter. "I've got one here among my articles. Two bob, old fellow—"

"It might be worth a penny!" snorted Nugent.

"Will you shut up?" roared Bunter, deeply indignant at this uncalled-for intervention between him and his prey. "Look here, Valentine, I'll make it eighteen-pence to a pal!"

Valentine laughed and shook his head.

"Four bob's the limit," he said. "I've got only one left."

"Then I'll take a bob—you being a pal—"

"You won't!" said Valentine. "Take the rest of the rubbish away, old fat bean, and be thankful that you're not kicked for playing rotten tricks on a fellow."

Billy Bunter grunted. The sale was now evidently "off." Still, the fat junior had bagged four shillings, which was probably about the total value of the whole set of "articles" which had cost him Hurree Singh's pound.

Billy Bunter felt that he had reason to be satisfied with his methods of salesmanship. Hiding a fellow's things and selling him new ones to replace them was a bright and original method of salesmanship, of which Bunter felt that he had some reason to be proud. He was sure that no other salesman had ever thought of this bright method before, and on that point no doubt he was right! Certainly it was a quite uncommon method!

"And now," added Valentine quietly, "where's my box?"

"Of course, I don't know anything about your box," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I haven't even seen it. In fact, I never knew you had a box. It will turn up all right to-morrow—take my word for that! He, he, he!"

Jim Valentine rose, and grasped the fat Owl by the collar.

"Where's that box?" he inquired.

"Yow-ow! Leggo!"

"Hand me that lives bat, Nugent!"

"I—I say, old chap, your box is safe enough!" gasped Bunter. "I say, I—I believe it's in the hollow tree—that old beech, you know—in the coppice. I never put it there. I wasn't going there with it when I saw Loder, but—but I—I've got an idea you'll find it there."

"You fat idiot!"

Valentine spun the Owl of the Remove to the door, and sat down again. He knew where to look for the box now.

"Bunter!" It was the voice of Loder of the Sixth, as the fat Owl emerged into the Remove passage. "Bunter!"

"Oh lor!"

Loder wished his cane. Evidently he had not, after all, forgotten Bunter! Though lost to sight he was, so to speak, to memory dear! As Bunter had not gone to the Sixth to see Loder, Loder had come up to the Remove to see Bunter! The fat junior blinked at him in dismay.

"I—I say, Loder, I—I never saw you smoking in the coppice!" gasped Bunter. "And—and I haven't told anybody—"

"Bend over!" said Loder, swishing the cane.

"I—I say, I—I jolly well won't!" gasped Bunter. "You're not going to cane me because I saw you smoking cigarettes, Loder! I'll jolly well tell Quelch if you do, so there!"

The juniors in Study No. 1 grinned.

Loder looked grimly at the fat Owl.

"I don't quite understand you, Bunter," he said. "If you have the nerve to accuse a Sixth Form prefect of smoking cigarettes I shall take you to the Head! Is that what you want?"

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

That, it appeared, was not what Bunter wanted!

"I don't remember seeing you in the coppice at all," continued Loder calmly. "In fact, I don't know what you are talking about!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh! Then what are you going to whop me for?" he gasped.

"For being out of your study in prep, of course!" said Loder. "You know, I

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suppose, that juniors are not allowed out of their studies in prep."

"Oh crikey!"

"Bend over!" said Loder pleasantly.

Billy Bunter groaned and bent over. Loder had him there. He was out of his study in prep, there was no doubt about that. That was what Loder was going to cane him for—perhaps! Anyhow, he was going to cane him! There was no doubt about that—not a possible probable shadow of doubt!

Whack, whack, whack!

"Wow, wow, wow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yarooooooop!"

"Now get back to your study," said Loder, with a grin, "and if I catch you out of it again in prep—"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Bunter bounded back to his study. Loder tucked the cane under his arm and walked away smiling. The juniors in Study No. 1 chuckled, and resumed prep.

When they came to geometry Jim Valentine had to borrow the necessary implements from his study-mates. Those he had bought from the Remove salesman were not really serviceable.

"What did you give Bunter four bob for that rubbish for, you ass?" asked Nugent.

"I think he earned it," answered Valentine. "The fat idiot's silly trick saved my bacon."

"Oh!" said Frank. He understood now.

"I know where to find that box tomorrow," said Jim quietly, "and—"

"And the Popper diamond?" said Harry, in a low voice.

Valentine nodded, and nothing more was said on the subject.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. walked down to the gates after morning school the following day. They strolled out of gates with a casual air; and certainly no one, observing them, would have guessed what their mission was.

Jim Valentine did not accompany them.

The Co. had discussed the matter, and it was agreed that the less Valentine had to do with the matter the better. And he was more than content to leave it in the hands of his friends.

The Famous Five sauntered down the road to the copple and turned into the path through the trees. A few minutes later they reached the old beech where the fat and fatuous salesman of the Remove had hidden the box the previous afternoon.

Harry Wharton thrust his arm into the hollow in the old trunk and groped. In a few moments he drew out the box of instruments.

The Co. gathered round it eagerly.

They turned out the contents and examined the box with great keenness. So far as they could see there was no secret receptacle or hiding-place in it. They regarded it with dubious eyes.

"According to Grimey, that villain Clark sent the diamond in this box to Valentine for safe keeping," said Harry Wharton. "That's what Grimey believes. But—"

"And according to Valentine, Clark sent it in this box, to be found and finish him at Greyfriars!" said Nugent.

"But—"

"According to both of them the diamond's in this box!" said Johnny Bull. "But—"

"The buffalness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "The visibility of the esteemed and ridiculous Moonstone is not terrific."

"If it's here, it's here," said Bob Cherry oracularly; "and if it's here, we can jolly well find it!"

And the wooden box was examined and re-examined and examined over again, and pressed and punched and pulled, but if it had a secret it refused to give it up. The hiding-place of the diamond, if it existed, was well hidden. Still, that was a foregone conclusion, for if the sending of the "birthday present" to Jim was a scheme of Nosey Clark's, he would have been very careful to take no risk of the boy discovering the hidden diamond before the box passed into the hands of the police; as it certainly would have done, but for Billy Bunter's fatuous trickery.

"There's only one way," said Bob at last, "and, as the sportsman says in the play, it's the only way."

"What's that?" asked Frank.

"Smash the beastly thing! If there's anything hidden inside it, it will show up if we smash it to bits."

"The smashfulness is the only caper," agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"The jumpfulness on the ridiculous box will solve the absurd difficulty."

It was the only way, and the juniors proceeded to get on with it. The box was placed on a stone, and Bob Cherry lifted the heaviest foot in the Greyfriars Remove and brought it down with a crash.

The wooden box was strongly made, but it could not resist an attack of that kind. It flew into pieces.

Fragments of polished wood fell on all sides, and something rolled in the grass that gleamed and glittered and shone as it caught the rays of sunlight through the branches overhead.

There was a gasp from the chums of the Remove.

"The Moonstone!"

"The jolly old Popper diamond!"

"Great pip!"

Harry Wharton jumped at it and caught it up. All the juniors had seen the famous heirloom of Popper Court and they knew it at once. It lay in Wharton's palm, gleaming and glistening, almost dazzling the eye with its brilliance.

"My hat!" said Bob in a hushed voice. "We've got it!"

"The gotfulness is terrific!"

Bob picked up the fragments of the box. Now that it was in pieces the secret was easy to read. There had been a false bottom to the box, carefully fitted in and fastened with rivets, and in that small enclosed space the diamond had been hermetically sealed. It was no wonder that the hidden Moonstone had not been found by examining the box.

The juniors stared at the blazing stone. In Wharton's palm lay a jewel worth at the very least a thousand pounds, probably much more. It was a proof of Nosey Clark's intense desire to get Dick the Penman back into the gang that he was willing to sacrifice such a prize to gain his ends. But as it had turned out the crook had sacrificed the prize without gaining his ends; the Popper diamond was not in the hands of the police, but in those of the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove.

"The villain!" said Harry Wharton, at last, in a low voice. "This would have done for Valentine, as the poor chap said, if—if—"

"It was a jolly narrow escape for him," said Nugent, "and not the first, either, since he got away from that crew! He's been lucky."

"Rogues never get by with their roguery in the long run," said Johnny Bull, shaking his head. "Who ever heard of a rogue who really made a success of things? They can't possibly calculate on every chance; and there's always a chance that turns up against them."

"That's so," agreed Harry Wharton. "I believe if a fellow keeps straight he can't have much to fear from rogues, and Valentine's luck looks like it. Well, we've got the Moonstone, and it's going back to old Popper without Valentine seeing it or touching it. He's left it to us, and we know what to do."

"Get on with it," said Bob.

Harry Wharton & Co. had not by any means felt certain of finding the Moonstone in the box, but they had come prepared for finding it. Now that they had found it they lost no time. Wharton took a small cardboard box from his pocket, wrapped the great diamond in tissue paper, and placed it in the box. The cardboard box was wrapped in paper. Nugent produced a stump of sealing-wax, and Bob struck a match, and the packet was safely sealed. Then it was addressed to Sir Hilton Popper, at Popper Court, near Courtfield, Kent, in capital letters which gave no clue to the hand that wrote them. Wharton carefully "printing" the letters with his fountain-pen.

"That's that!" said the captain of the Remove at last.

"Now to get it posted!" said Frank. "The farther from Greyfriars the better, of course."

"I can get the motor-bus to Lantham and be back in time for dinner," answered Wharton.

"Good!"

Harry Wharton left his chums with the packet addressed to Sir Hilton Popper in his pocket. The Co. walked back to the school, Bob carrying the fragments of the geometry box and the instruments it had contained under his coat. While the captain of the Remove was speeding away to Lantham on the motor-bus his friends strolled into the quad and into the House.

Jim Valentine met them with one questioning glance. Bob gave him a nod and a grin which told him all that he wanted to know. But he followed them eagerly up to the Remove passage, and they went into Study No. 1.

"You found it?" Valentine almost gasped.

"The foundfulness was preposterous!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"And—" breathed Valentine.

"Old Popper will get it back by registered post from Lantham this afternoon!" said Nugent.

Valentine drew a deep breath.

"Thank goodness!" he said.

"And here's what's left of your box and the jolly old instruments," chuckled Bob. "The giddy instruments are as good as ever, but you'll have to get a new box for them, I fancy. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put this one together again."

Valentine laughed.

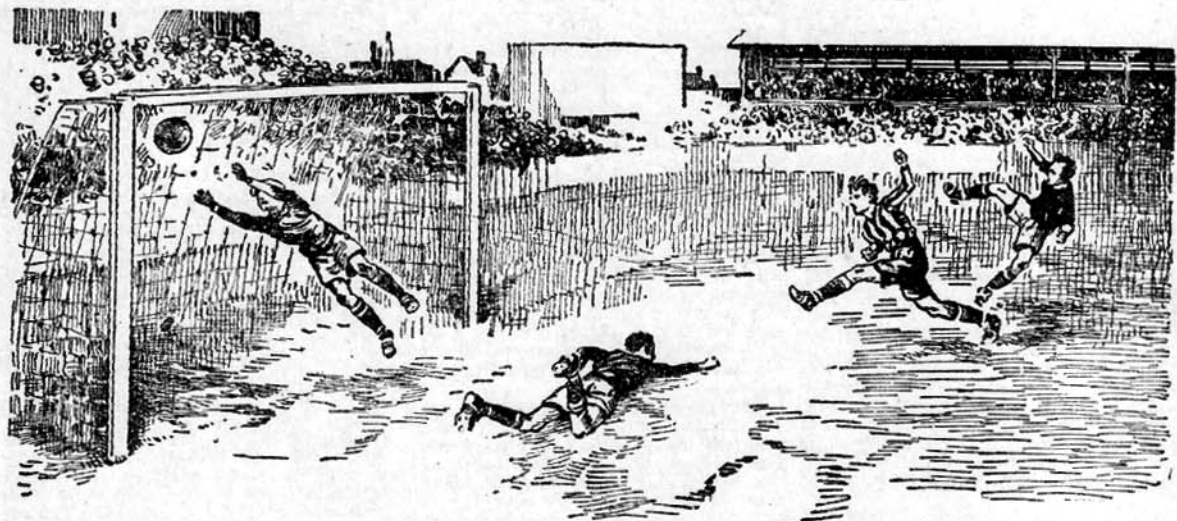
The blow that the master-crook had struck had been a deadly one, but it had passed him harmlessly by. He was feeling happy and elated.

"Grimey will be pleased!" chuckled Bob. "He's after the jolly old Moonstone, to get it back for Popper. Well, Popper will get it back, and that's all Grimey wants! Think he'll be pleased?"

And the juniors chortled. No doubt Mr. Grimes would be pleased by the recovery of the lost diamond of Popper

(Continued on page 28.)

NOBBY, the 'Shooting Star'!



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

Having run away from Don Carlos' circus, Nobby, a sixteen-year-old waif, meets Ferrers Locke, the detective, who introduces him to Lord Douglas Weatherstone, chairman of the Perriton Rovers F.C. From ground-boy, Nobby very soon becomes professional. Later, he falls foul of Lord Douglas' nephew, Daniel Willoughby Thundersley, who, in league with the Don, determines to bring about his downfall. On the day of an important fixture, Nobby is kidnapped, but thanks to Ferrers Locke, succeeds in making good his getaway and notching two brilliant goals by which the Rovers lead Blampton Wednesday at half-time.

(Now read on.)

Ordered Off!

NOBBOY tried to "lose" himself among the twenty-one other players as they trooped off, but the crowd in the grand stand rose like one man and gave him another rousing chorus of cheers directly he reached the small passage-way which led to the dressing-rooms.

Once inside the dressing-room, Nobby noted two things, almost in one glance. First the thin face of Sandy Macfarland, wrinkled in unfamiliar smiles; next, the deadly, scowling countenance of Thundersley, with hatred written in every line of it.

While these things imprinted themselves upon his memory, the door of the dressing-room opened afresh, and in walked Lord Douglas Weatherstone—limped, perhaps, would be more in keeping with the truth, for his lordship was in the throes of a bad attack of gout.

"Nobby, my lad," was his lordship's unaffected greeting, "I am proud of you! Mark you, I thought old Sandy was mad playing you in an important fixture like this. But Sandy, I might have remembered, knows more about football than any man in the country. I think your two goals were wonderful, Nobby!"

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said Sandy severely. "Ye dinna' see the laddie score two goals. Ye only arrived ten minutes ago!"

His lordship smiled and winced almost in the same second.

"You are a particular old humbug,

Sandy," he said. "But you know I would have been here earlier, but for this rotten gout. Still, Sandy, I did see Nobby score his second goal—and what a beauty it was, too!"

He turned and limped towards his nephew, and was quick to note the black look that settled on Thundersley's face, despite the smile that suddenly flickered there in place of it a second later.

"What's the matter with you to-day, Daniel?" asked his lordship. "Up in the stand Sandy was calling you all sorts of names. Feel off colour, or something?"

Thundersley lied glibly.

"Was up late last night, uncle. Swotting, you know. The exams come along in a month or two's time. And—and—" He trailed off into silence, dropped his eyes, and actually blushed.

Lord Weatherstone mistook the signs. His hand went out to his nephew's shoulder and gripped it hard.

"The trouble with you, my lad," said his lordship severely, "is that you're jealous—jealous of young Nobby, what?"

Thundersley's blush departed. His scowl returned.

"Jealous?" he cried shrilly. "Jealous of that nameless nobody? You're talking out of your hat, uncle!"

So saying, he turned his back and sauntered away.

Lord Weatherstone stared after him in amazement. He was hurt, for this was the first time the nephew for whom he had done so much had ever openly been rude to him. In that moment his lordship began to suspect the true character of the man; began to realise that his idol had feet of clay.

Bitterly disappointed, he turned abruptly, gasped, as the sudden movement gave him a painful twinge in his gouty foot, and swore under his breath.

The break-between uncle and nephew had started—Fate ordained that it would never be healed.

The rumble of fifty thousand people indulging in conversation, the strains of the local police band—to which latter, he it said, few folk paid much attention except to guy the aged conductor whose heart obviously was not in

football—the occasional din provided by a number of "fans" who sported some hideous garb to attract attention, and whirled ratchet rattles as if their very lives depended upon it, created a modern Tower of Babel during the brief interval.

As young Nobby emerged from the dressing-room, together with his fellow-players, he involuntarily recoiled, for the vast crowd of spectators caught sight of him and set up a thousand roars. Through the clamour it became very apparent that the vast crowd thought well of their new player. Furthermore, they urged him stridently to "Get more goals!"

Nobby grinned in reply, and doubled out on to the pitch.

Daniel Willoughby Thundersley, his handsome face dark with rage, trailed at the end of the queue of players. The crowd were quick to take note of that scowling countenance and to remark upon it according to their kind.

"Cheer up, Dan!"

"Looks as if he's going to a funeral, don't he?"

"Got your shootin' boots on this time, Dan?"

And so on. To all of which good-natured chaff Daniel Willoughby Thundersley turned a blacker face than ever. Football was far from his mind. He was aware that he had overstepped the bounds of decency—and caution—in speaking to his uncle as he had done. But so warped was his mental judgment that he ascribed the whole miserable business to young Nobby.

In his cunning way he realised that he would have to rehabilitate himself; and that same cunning prompted him to use Nobby as a means to that end. In this half of the match he would use all his football skill and guile to humiliate the newcomer—the unknown waif who had stolen the glory which previously had been his.

While he pondered these things he mechanically lined up, failed to hear the referee whistle the game into action, and for his omission to concentrate upon football received a smashing blow in the face from the opposing forward who had slammed the ball directly at him.

Down went the amateur inside-left in a soft patch of mud as if he had been poleaxed—a circumstance which did not improve Thundersley's ugly temper.

As he sprawled there, gasping, his blurred sight focused on the opposing forward who leapt clean over him. Obeying a sullen, unsporting instinct, Thundersley reached up, grabbed hard at one of the flying legs, and tugged.

Down came the visiting forward in a smother of arms and legs, and simultaneously with the infringement, came the shrill blast of the referee's whistle, and the heated comments of the crowd.

"Dirty dog!"

"Chuck him off, ref!"

Whether the packed masses on stands and terraces were faithful to the Perriton Rovers' colours or not made no difference. To a man they pronounced unfavourable judgment on that dirty trick. A section, more unruly than most, set up a constant booing which could be heard when the visiting centre-half took the free kick. That booing became swollen to alarming dimensions when, from that mighty kick, the Blampton Wednesday outside-right received a short pass from his centre-forward, cut in, and with one terrific burst of speed and uncanny shooting power, netted the ball before the dazed custodian caught even so much as a glimpse of it!

"GOAL!"

The Rovers came back to mid-field for the kick-off with faces that plainly expressed their disgust. Daniel Thundersley was the recipient of those glances, for, through his outburst of temper, the visiting team had reduced the lead by one goal!

Nobby, in particular, kept his face averted. He fancied he knew just how Thundersley must be feeling, and in his heart Nobby was downright sorry for him.

Blackguard and waster as he knew the amateur to be, there was a something deep down in Nobby's youthful heart—a something which he could not explain—that prompted a liking for him, and always provided an excuse for his manifold failings. There and then Nobby decided that he would provide Thundersley with a chance to redeem himself just as soon as football skill and opportunity presented itself.

The chance for which Nobby schemed came with startling suddenness a minute from the kick-off. Sid Short, the Rovers' right-half, cleverly tricked his attacker in a mix-up near the half-way line. A quick glance round the field and the ball came sailing across to the young centre-forward. Nobby kept moving, controlling the ball with the ease of a veteran, and drawing the defence away to his right wing. Then, just as he made to pass the leather to Campbell, his outside-right, he altered his mind, and with a lightning move of his foot, sped the ball across to Thundersley in a clever ground pass which rolled the leather just a few inches in front of the amateur's foot.

Across the field, at full gallop, raced the defence, conscious now that they had been duped by the red-headed "tenderfoot." Meanwhile, Thundersley had made ground in a rapid sprint, swerved into shooting position, and kicked the ball yards clear of the cross-bar!

What a yell of derision greeted that effort. Thundersley blushed to the roots of his hair as he heard it. Nobby unselfishly had presented him with a "gift" goal in football parlance, and

all he had done with it was to throw it away. No look of gratitude appeared on Thundersley's face as he came within a yard of Nobby. No softening of expression in response to Nobby's murmured "Hard luck." Instead, rage, unmasked, blazed in the amateur's eyes. He had planned to make a fool of Nobby, and it seemed that the Fates were using Nobby to make a fool of him instead!

"Pull yourself together, Thundersley!" It was Dixie Toddin, the captain of the Rovers, who came alongside Thundersley and plucked him by the arm. "Man, you're making a fool of yourself!"

"Who asked you to butt in?" snarled the amateur.

The Rovers' skipper bridled immediately.

"Look here, old man," he said quietly, but ominously, "you seem to forget that I am captain of this team. And as captain I've no time for play like you've been putting up, or remarks of that nature, either. Now snap into it—"

He had just time to say that before the ball landed in a scrum of jumping stalwarts.

Toddin rushed across to pick up a pass, joined in the general scrimmage when the issue looked doubtful, and it was his curly head which "collected" the ball and deflected it towards his inside-left.

Thundersley brought it under control in his old fashion, and the crowd were quick to applaud. Few could trap a difficult ball like Thundersley; few could touch him at dribbling the ball—on his best form. For a few moments that densely packed throng were treated to a dazzling solo performance of their old-time star. First a Wednesday forward, who had been lying behind his fellow forwards, making a fourth half-back, sprang at the Rovers' inside-left like a tiger.

With a deft flick of the foot Thundersley evaded him, shot the leather through the widely spread legs of the centre-half, who now doddered and dodged in front of him, raced round him, and sped on his way at a brilliant pace. Over came the right full-back—a burly fellow with an International cap on his "sideboard"—with grim determination written largely upon his bluff, healthy face. But that International had never felt so foolish in his life as when Thundersley simply waltzed round him with a clever feint and sped on.

Out of the corner of his eye Thundersley saw Nobby moving down the centre of the pitch—saw two men racing towards him, one on either side; and knowing it to be a calamitous and futile pass, Thundersley lobbed the ball just a foot or so in front of his enemy.

To the ordinary spectator it looked a grand, unselfish effort. To old Sandy Macfarland it was nothing but a deliberate attempt to bring about disaster for the slim youngster.

As Thundersley had reckoned, the two Wednesday defenders literally hurled themselves on the Rovers' centre-forward as he raced to reach the ball; and also as the villainous amateur had reckoned, they met Nobby's flying form at the same moment in a heavy double charge.

Nobby never knew quite what happened to him. One second he felt himself charged to the right, a fraction later he was being thumped to the left. All his wind seemed to be knocked out

of him. His senses dimmed, his muscles just refused to perform further, and he collapsed in an inert heap.

The ball was swung away well up field by another waiting Blampton Wednesday man, and was dancing perilously near the Rovers' penalty area before the referee realised that a man was hurt, and blew lustily on his whistle for a halt.

It was quite a minute before Nobby really came to. He felt a trifle sick and dizzy, but that feeling soon evaporated as a dripping sponge was applied to his neck and face, what time the wielder of it tugged at Nobby's ears with his free hand and slapped his face. Crude and rough methods of bringing a man round, but they answered.

The game had been resumed for less than thirty seconds when Nobby felt himself quite fit again. The youngster was tough, and his muscles were supple, and in justice to him he never suspected that the "sandwich" charge into which he had been lured was the direct scheming of Daniel Thundersley. Nobby, in fact, felt that he had missed a golden opportunity of scoring a goal from the amateur's pass, and accordingly apologised to him for not having made more of it.

Thundersley received the apology ungraciously, and thereafter gave himself up to scheming afresh. Time and again he made it appear as if he were passing "gift goals" to his centre-forward, but always those passes came Nobby's way when he was surrounded by two or more stalwart defenders.

It was Dixie Toddin who realised Thundersley's game first. He had paid close attention to the amateur during that second half, and, veteran as he was, he saw through Thundersley's cleverness.

Promptly the Rovers' skipper took the inside-left to task, during a lull in the game caused by a throw in.

"Any more of that fancy stuff, Thundersley," he said sternly, "and off you go! Understand?"

The amateur started, regained control of himself in the same moment, and stared rudely at his captain.

"I don't understand you, Toddin," he remarked airily. "I'm used to mixing with people who make themselves clear."

Toddin was hard put to it to restrain himself. As it was his big fists clenched until the whites of the knuckles showed.

"You poor fish!" he ground out. "I'll make it plain enough for you if you like. Think I don't know your game? You're out to make Nobby look foolish. None of those passes were ever intended to be taken by him, and you know it. You're playing to him the whole time."

"Isn't that what I'm supposed to do?" said Thundersley. "Aren't I supposed to feed my centre-forward?"

"Not when your wing men are unmarked, and your centre-forward is marked!" snapped back Toddin. "Any more of it, and, by thunder, I'll send you off!"

The sway of the play in their direction put a stop to that warlike dialogue. Never for a moment did Thundersley imagine that Dixie Toddin, usually the mildest-tempered of men, would put that threat into execution.

He continued to play to his crafty scheme. Again the ball travelled towards Thundersley. As before, he beat his man, darted off at a tangent, made as if to pass to his outside-left, who

had been practically "starved" during the second half of the match, and instead, swung the ball just a yard too far ahead of Nobby, who was sprinting up field for all he was worth.

A big half-back wearing the Wednesday colours smothered the flying Nobby in a vigorous shoulder charge. The youngster crashed to the turf as if he had been hit by a battering-ram.

The ball was lofted into the Rovers' half again, and it appeared as if the incident were closed. It was just another case, thought the crowd, of the inexperienced newcomer playing centre-forward, missing a golden opportunity to add to the score.

But the incident was not closed—far

from it. The Perriton Rovers' skipper caught the attention of the referee, and explained something to him in a few crisp words. The game was whistled to a standstill, and Dixie Toddin strode across to Thundersley.

"Get off, you rat!" The Rovers' skipper did not mix his words. "Get off the field at once!"

Thundersley appeared amused.

"Are you trying to be funny, Toddin?" he drawled superciliously.

But the superciliousness vanished as he caught sight of the skipper's bunched fists working spasmodically.

"Get off!" snapped Toddin. "I order you to get off the field—at once!" The crowd was bathed in horrified

silence. They could only imagine what was transpiring between these two Rovers' players, for the words of the two principals in this unusual drama, of course, could not be heard. Yet there was no mistaking the meaning of Toddin's extended arm, pointing to the grand stand. Plainly it said: "Get off the field!"

And get off the field Daniel Wil-loughby Thundersley did. He had no appeal. His captain had ordered him off!

(Thundersley's asked for trouble, and now he's got it! But he'll be more bitter than ever against Nobby now! Don't miss the next exciting chapters of this powerful serial, chums, whatever you do!)

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, London, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.



READY, chums? Right! Then fire away with your queries! Don't forget that I'm here to be "shot at"—and that I like receiving letters from my chums. If you've been having an argument with some of your pals and want the debatable point settled; if you're wondering what sort of a career to embark upon, and the best way of going about it; or if you just want a puzzling question settled—write to your Editor, and he'll do his best to put your doubts at rest!

And don't forget when you write to me to let me know what you think about the old paper! Remember, it's your paper, and my job is to make it as interesting as possible and to see that you get just exactly the kind of stories you prefer. Judging by the number of years the MAGNET has been the leading boys' paper, and the many congratulatory things you all say about it I seem to have been doing my job to your entire satisfaction. And I can assure you, chums, that the jolly old MAGNET is going to continue to hold its present position as a "top-notch"!

With this week's strip of stamps the extra supply I had arranged is now exhausted. I hope, however, that you've all been able to complete your sets.

"We can't have enough of Billy Bunter!" says a girl reader, who writes from Manchester. "He is certainly the most amusing character I have ever met in stories! More power to his elbow—and to that of his author, Frank Richards!"

Billy, of course, might have preferred her to say, "More power to his appetite!" But I am sure that Frank R. will heartily reciprocate this reader's good wishes—and those of the rest of you who have asked me to pass on sincere congratulations to him.

By the way, have you sampled our splendid companion paper, the "Ranger"? You'll thoroughly enjoy reading about

JIM DAINTY & CO. OF GRIMSLADE!

These cheery schoolboy characters appear every week in the topping tales by

your favourite author, FRANK RICHARDS. Give the "Ranger" a trial—you won't be disappointed, I can vouch for that!

Now for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES.

Playing Tunes with Water! ("Magnetite," of Worcester): If you prepare a number of glasses of equal size, but with varying quantities of water in them, you can play tunes by rubbing the tops of the glasses with moistened fingers! The note is proportional to the amount of water in the glass. Famous musicians have composed music especially to be played by means of water!

How Tall is a Pygmy? (J. H., of Wells): Anything from three to four feet in height. They are found in various parts of the world—Africa, Ceylon, Andaman Islands, Japan, South America, etc. It is also proved that pygmies existed in Switzerland, Holland, and the Orkney Isles in earlier days!

Did Claud Duval actually exist? ("Bob," of Leicester): He did. He was born in Normandy in 1643, came to England after the restoration, and set up as a highwayman, operating on the Bath and Portsmouth Roads. He was captured near Covent Garden, London, and executed at Tyburn in 1670. He was one of the most audacious and gallant highwaymen who ever existed.

Why do we put the letter "d" for a Penny? (Miss B. H., of Basingstoke): Because the Roman coin called a "denarius" was translated into the word "penny," but the "d" was kept as a symbol. Actually the denarius was worth between 7½d. and 9½d. in English money.

FROM Fred Carr, of Whitstable, comes a query concerning

THE INDIAN ROPE TRICK.

What is it? he asks. And how is it done? The legendary story of the Indian

rope trick is that a fakir throws a rope up into the air. Instead of falling back, the rope remains rigid. Then a small boy climbs up the rope—and vanishes into mid air! But when it comes to telling Fred how it's done I'm afraid he's got me beaten!

But here is an interesting thing about the Indian rope trick. The majority of people who have been in India refuse to admit that there is any such trick. They claim that no one has ever seen it done in the manner in which it is generally described. They say that certain swindlers, who are not fakirs at all, have attempted to pass off ordinary stage illusions as the "genuine Indian rope trick." In other words, they hold that there is no such thing as an Indian rope trick!

Well, the MAGNET circulates in India, and I know I have many readers out there. I wonder if one of them will write to me and see if he can give me any information on this vexed question?

I have just space for a reply to Norman G., of Sydney, N.S.W., who wants to know the average height of a boy of fourteen. Sorry, Norman, but there is no such thing as average height for a boy of that age. Some boys shoot up very early in life, others don't begin to grow properly until a few years afterwards. You will find more disparity of heights at that age than almost any other; and a great deal has to do with climatic conditions and the country in which the boy lives. One boy of fourteen might tower head-and-shoulders above another, and yet they may both be the same height in a few years' time.

SORRY to close down on the queries, but I mustn't forget next week's programme. There are thrills and chuckles galore in store for you in

"THE HUNTED SCHOOLBOY!"

which is a yarn that is bang up to Frank Richards' usual high standard. Bunter, you'll be pleased to learn, plays his usual part of an egregious ass—and doesn't quite escape scot-free! Harry Wharton and the rest of the Famous Five are well to the fore (no pun intended!).

There'll be a really ripping instalment of our magnificent serial, "Nobby, the Shooting Star!" and if you want to burst off a few buttons from your waistcoat with laughing, all you have to do is to turn to the centre pages and read the special full-of-fun issue of the "Greyfriars Herald."

The other shorter features will appear as usual, and I'll be waiting in my den to have a little chat with my chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,306.

BILLY BUNTER'S BARCAINS!

(Continued from page 24.)

Court. But it was probable that his pleasure would be a qualified one. The suspected boy, who had been almost in his grasp, had glided from his fingers like an eel, and that, it was probable, would not please Mr. Grimes. Still, in an imperfect universe, it was impossible to please everybody.

The Remove were going in to dinner when Harry Wharton came back. He showed his friends a registered receipt from Lantham post office, to which a match was then applied. The Moonstone was on its way back to Popper Court by a safe method of transit, and the chums of the Remove hoped that they had heard the last of it.

After dinner that day William George Bunter, of the Remove, might have been observed, as a novelist would say, ascending the Remove staircase in a cautious, not to say stealthy, manner.

His manner was indeed so very cautious that it was certain to attract attention if any eye fell on Bunter, and, as a matter of fact, five pairs of eyes were on him—five grinning faces watching his cautious movements.

The Remove salesman was "at it again" with his new, original, and brilliant methods of salesmanship. Four shillings had not lasted Bunter long. They had gone the way of all Billy Bunter's cash—over the counter at the tuckshop. Now Bunter wanted more, and he still had articles to dispose of, for which there was absolutely no demand in the Remove. It was time for Bunter's remarkable methods to be put in practice again, and Jim Valentine having proved an easy victim, Jim Valentine was selected once more for Bunter's salesmanship.

Almost on tiptoe the fat Owl crept into Study No. 1, happily unaware that five grinning fellows were tiptoeing up the Remove staircase after him.

Bunter was only a few minutes in the study. He came out as cautiously as he had entered—and jumped at the sight of the Famous Five waiting for him in the passage.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Caught!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The catfollowness is terrific!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I haven't been in your study—I mean, I—I only went in to borrow a Latin dic!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—"

"You haven't got anything hidden under your jacket?" asked Wharton.

"Nothing at all, old chap—" "Shako the tree, and the apple will fall," said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I say, you fellows— Leggo! Yaroooooooh!" roared Bunter, as Bob Cherry grasped him by the collar and gave him a mighty shake.

The fat Owl shook like a plump jelly. Something slid from under his jacket and clattered on the floor. It was a small clock, easily recognised as the property of Jim Valentine.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, I—I was only borrowing that clock! I—I wasn't going to hide it in the boathouse—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I hope you can take a fellow's

"Hear, hear!" "Roll him along to his study and jam all his jolly old articles down his back—especially the clock that Loder stamped on!"

"Good egg!" "I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter. "Oh, my hat! Oh lor!"

The fat Owl struggled and squirmed wildly. But he was rolled into Study No. 7, where all his remaining articles were duly crammed down his back. Last, but not least, went the clock that Loder had stamped on—and it seemed to give Bunter a pain as it was crammed down. It was in several pieces, and all the pieces seemed sharp. Bunter roared and wriggled and yelled and struggled, but it booted not, and he was left roaring and wriggling when the Famous Five departed, grabbing wildly at the collection of useful and valuable articles down his podgy back.

Which, the juniors hoped, would be a warning to Bunter that brilliant and original methods of salesmanship were not appreciated in the Greyfriars Remove!

That afternoon Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, had the surprise of his life.

The famous Moonstone arrived by registered post, safe and sound, with no clue to the sender.

Ten minutes later Inspector Grimes also had the surprise of his life when the old baronet rang him up and told him the news.

It was quite a mysterious affair, about which the chums of the Greyfriars Remove kept their own counsel. Whether Mr. Quelch would have approved of their method of dealing with the matter they did not know, but rather doubted. It was more judicious not to confide the matter to him—and they didn't.

All Mr. Quelch learned was that Valentine's box had been found, and that some fellow had trodden on it—of which he duly informed Mr. Grimes. But Mr. Grimes had lost his interest in that box since the Popper diamond had gone back to its owner.

THE END.

(There will be another exciting school yarn of Valentine and the chums of Greyfriars in next Saturday's MAGNET, entitled: "THE HUNTED SCHOOL-BOY!" Be sure and read it, chums—it's the best yarn in the series!)

Another "Magnetite" wins a useful SHEFFIELD STEEL PENKNIFE for supplying the following joke! Mr. Quelch: "Bunter, you greedy boy, you've got something in your mouth! Take it out at once!" Bunter (after study spread): "I wish I could, sir. It's tooth-ache!" A pocket-knife has been forwarded to: W. T. Thomas, 10, Ynyslywd Street, Aberdare, Glam.

word!" gasped Bunter. "I never thought of hiding that clock—never dreamed of it. Besides, I was going to sell Valentine my alarm-clock. It's jolly cheap at half-a-crown. I—I've put it together since that beast Loder trod on it, and it will keep time all right if—if it works! You can't expect a lot for half-a-crown, you know. Only two or three of the wheels are missing, and the hands are broken and the glass is gone. But it's a really good clock, you know, and—"

"Some bargain in clocks!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry, "it's time this pernicious porpoise had a lesson about bagging a fellow's things and hiding them! This is the third time—and it is going to be the last!"

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FIRE PREVENTION

Follows whose checks burn, whose eyes smoulder, who make heated remarks, who fire up quickly, who heap coals of fire on other claps, heads, or who are in the habit of "scorching," please report at once for free fire extinguishers.

—BY ORDEEN, G. WINGATE, Hon. Sec., Greyfriars Fire Prevention Committee.

No. 21 (New Series).

THE NEW Greyfriars Herald

EXTRA GOOD EDITION

February 25th, 1933.

BILLY BUNTER WANTS TO KNOW!

"Who's the fat freak Von Splitz? They tell me the swanking rotter can eat more grub than I can at one sitting."

Von Splitz, old fat tub, belongs to Gemshade School. Frank Richards writes about him in the "Ranger" every week, and if you take a tip from me you'll get the "Ranger" every Saturday. Next to the Mags, it's the best boys' book going.—HARRY WHARTON.

FLYING TO FOOTER MATCH

Wingate Rises to Occasion

On Monday last, the selected First Eleven went to go to St. Jim's on Wednesday was posted up in Hall.

The names of Loder and Walker were conspicuous by their absence.

On Tuesday, Loder and Walker were seen putting their heads together.

On Wednesday morning, the First Eleven players received this cryptic message: "MEET ME IN TOP BOX-ROOM 1.30. AND KEEP MUM ABOUT IT.—G.W."

The eleventh—George Wingate—received the same message, with the difference that the time mentioned was 1.35, and that it contained North's initials instead of his own!

At 1.30 quite a procession of seniors started up the stairs.

Arriving at the top landing they eyed each other suspiciously and waited impatiently for several minutes.

At 1.35 Wingate came flying up the stairs, looking rather puzzled. He looked much more puzzled when he found himself confronted by his entire team.

The team that was due to leave for St. Jim's in a few minutes!

Wingate walked into the box-room, a dismal room into which a single small barred window let but little light. Ten frowning footballers followed him.

Deven followed said, "Practically simultaneously, look here—"



That was as far as they got before something turned their attention to the door. That something was the sound of a key being turned in the lock!

Wingate rushed to the door and tried to open it. It wouldn't budge!

Eleven First Team players realised right then and there that they had been ditched, diddled, and done! Someone had set out to trap them so as to prevent their turning up at St. Jim's that afternoon, and that someone had succeeded admirably!

The First Eleven yelled with rage and chagrin. Unfortunately the top box-room on a fine "half" is not the best place from which to attract public attention. Even the combined yells of the entire Eleven drew a blank!

To add to the players' woes, the door was one of those solid oak affairs that are England's pride and joy—Englund's pride and joy—the sort of thing H.M.S. Victory was made of. Nothing likely to make much impression on it!

By 2.15 the seniors had given up hope. They had lost their train and it was impossible to get to St. Jim's by road in time to play the match, which was booked to start at 2.30!

Then Bunter rolled up the stairs to demolish a purloined pie in the comforting solitude of a deserted box-room! Bunter chorled quite a lot when Wingate explained

all about it through the key-hole. But he also acted, by rolling off to see if Gosling had a duplicate key.

Gosling had. And the First Eleven rolled out of the top box-room at precisely 2.30! Ten of them had not, naturally given up the idea of going to St. Jim's.

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Ostrich-Gosling

By CLAUDE HOSS

When young Kippis suggested we make a double turn, he doing the conjuring trick, I fell in with the wheeze at once as well to give your audience something to hear, though naturally I should be what they were going to hear that afternoon in due course our budding young Shakespeare turned up and the rehearsal began. The execution was perfect. Yet, despite pretty observations that the rehearsal was not the reason for this was simply SERIOUSLY IMAGINED THAT HIS JURING WAS MORE IMPORTANT.

I suppose most chaps will greet that announcement and incredulously. I assure you a word of a lie, that it was so!

Needless to say, the partnership did not hold, with an impossible follow line of the principals in the dual show? We're to meet on common ground, but Kippis to see that I was right. The end was now that I've told you all this, you will answer the question, "What do you think of the ostrich, but pointed, phrase." Not me! I have no particular objection to a common and unimpaired gang of handies known as ostriches, but when he looks on his punny, the important than my piano playing, the radically wrong with him! That's flat, think me too sharp for saying so!



SHOCK FOR GOSLING

Seeing NOT Believing

They say that seeing's believing; but if you ask Gosling what he thinks about it, he'll tell you another story.

You can hardly blame the old bean in a way, for, unlike us, he wasn't prepared for it. All Gosley knew about it was that a crowd of us rolled down to the gates with Doherty to welcome his uncle from South Africa, and requested Gosley to unlock the gates for us.

His jaw dropped, a grim, frozen look came into his eyes. It was the first time Gosley had ever seen an ostrich, and the shock of seeing it blithely trotting through the Greyfriars gateway with a man seated behind it handling the reins with elaborate unconcern was too much for him.

Gosley collapsed!

We hear that Gosley has gone off gin-and-water for a month.

He never will believe that it really was a bird!

WINGATE RISES TO OCCASION

That was how he rolled up to Greyfriars—in a one-seater ostrich-chaise drawn by a speedy old hen with a very merry twinkle in her eye!

Gosling gave one look at the unusual turn-out, then sank into a chair outside his lodge.

His pipe crashed to the floor, his jaw dropped, a grim, frozen look came into his eyes.

It was the first time Gosley had ever seen an ostrich, and the shock of seeing it blithely trotting through the Greyfriars gateway with a man seated behind it handling the reins with elaborate unconcern was too much for him.

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PRACTICAL RESULTS OF EDUCATION

We Answer Greyfriars Critic

A gentleman who hides his identity under the nom-de-guerre "Pro Patria" has been giving readers of the "Courtfield Gazette" of the views on the subject of Public School education.

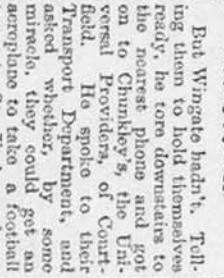
You'll hardly believe it, dear readers, when we tell you that this ill-advised instructor actually summons Public Schools of learning out fellows who are contentedly unfit to earn their own living. Nevertheless, that's actually what he does. Let us tell you that when a man leaves Greyfriars, not only is he fit to earn his own living, but in many cases he actually does earn it with credit any difficulty whatever. We'll

But Wingate hadn't. Telling them to hold themselves ready, he tore downstairs to the nearest phone and got on to Chumley's, the Universal Providers, of Courtfield. He spoke to their Transport Department, and asked whether, by some miracle, they could get an aeroplane to take a football team to St. Jim's, and get them there by three!

CHUMLEY'S DID IT!

So the St. Jim's match took place, after all, and a great game it proved to be! Greyfriars won 4-3, after a terrific tussle, so altogether it was an all-round triumph for Wingate.

Of course, as a public newspaper, we dare not accuse Walker and Loder of looking up the First Eleven, in case they start prosecuting us for libel; but if some of you chaps will wreak their retribution and get up some really ripe booby-traps for them, you'll earn our undying gratitude!



FIRST SIGNS OF SPRING

Magic in Words

On Tuesday morning we got a welcome, though unexpected, forecast of spring. For two hours almost perfect weather prevailed, and many a longing glance was turned



LONZY'S LITTLE LETTERS

Dear Editor—My aerial appendages having been recently assailed by certain critical observations emanating from our colleague Skinner and relative to the exercise of compulsion in the provision for the study of classical subjects in the school curriculum, I feel constrained to offer the following brief annotation, viz:—

"Whilst the pursuit of Latin and Greek erudition is conducive to no immediate practical purpose, it will nevertheless be conceded that notwithstanding the delicacy of apprehension in any but the scholastic sphere, an appreciative apprehension of the classics indubitably enhances one's perspective on facilities and bestows on the individual that benevolent humanism which is so requisite a characteristic of contemporary civilisation."

Yours for the Classics,
"Atoranzo Tonz."

(Well, Lonzy, if that's the best argument you can trot out in favour of sweating at Latin and Greek, you don't think much of it, whatever it is! Anyway, hic, ho, ho, and a couple of Abolitive Absolutes to you!—Ed.)

DICKY NUGENT'S WEEKLY WISDOM

The Head whipped Pegg and me yesterday for throwing a pair of soggy water over the village school-collector.

Yet only a fortnight ago he told us the best thing we could do with our present ideas was to make a clean sweep of them.



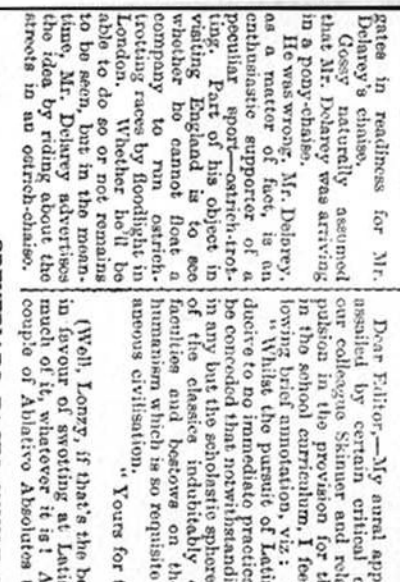
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HIS WIT DIDN'T "DESERT" HIM

Blindfold of the Fifth Games Study on a lecture in the Arabian Desert.

"Wild Life in the Arabian Desert."

"How the thump do you come to know about the Arabian Desert?" we asked him, later.

One's lot of mine has been there, he replied.

In a recent motor-bike crash at Pegg Bay, Colker fell on his face, and indignantly gulped down a mouthful of sand.

Yet there are still fellows who say that Colker's not full of grit!

MATCHES WANTED

Send a long all you've got to the Third. We hear they're thinking of going on strike soon!



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