

"FOOTBALL FOES!" Amazing School Yarn of **HARRY WHARTON & CO.,** the Chums of Greyfriars, **By Frank Richards**

The Magnet ^{2^D}



**Bunter
Hunts
Cover!**

FOOTBALL FOES!

By FRANK RICHARDS



—FEATURING HARRY WHARTON & CO., THE CHEERY CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hobby's Party!

"**S**OME cake!" said Bob Cherry.
"Topping!" said Frank Nugent.

"The topfulness," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, solemnly, "is terrific!"

Hobson, of the Shell, beamed.
"Not so bad—what?" he said genially.

There was rather a crowd in Hobson's study, in the shell passage, at Greyfriars. Hobby and his study-mates, Hoskins and Stewart, of course, were there. Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, were there!

Evidently it was a great occasion.

The study was unusually tidy—newly swept and garnished, as it were. There were flowers in the jampot on the mantelpiece. A spotless cloth was on the table. There were chairs for all the visitors—which was not always the case in a junior study.

But the centre of attraction was the cake!

It was, as Bob declared, "some cake." It was a large cake. It was a handsome cake. It was, in fact, a birthday cake! Around it, in decorative lettering, was the legend:

"MANY HAPPY RETURNS!"

Many Greyfriars fellows knew that it was Hobson's birthday. Dozens of times that day Hobby had been wished many happy returns. Some fellows, who knew that the enormous cake had arrived for Hobby, were particularly effusive in their good wishes. Billy

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Bunter, in fact, had wished him many happy returns, not once, but many times, during the day—with ulterior motives.

But it booted not. Bunter was not among the guests for the birthday celebration.

Hobby, in fact, had to limit the party. Space had to be considered. His guests were selected with care. Chairs could be borrowed from other studies, but the question was where to put them. It was not a small study, but eleven fellows filled it almost to overflowing. And there were twelve chairs. One guest was still to come!

Harry Wharton & Co. had been at football practice, and had come in with keen appetites, fully prepared to do justice to the birthday celebrations.

The fact that they were sometimes on scrapping terms with Hobby of the Shell was politely forgotten now. There were times, as Bob Cherry had remarked, when fellows in different Forms ought to remember that they were all Greyfriars fellows, wearing the same school tie! And a time when there was a birthday feed, with a big cake, was obviously one of those times!

Everybody was on his best behaviour, nice and polite. Friendly and amiable smiles adorned all faces. Even when Hoskins of the Shell remarked that after tea he would play a little thing of his own, on the violin, politeness stood the strain! Temple of the Fourth, indeed, declared that he would be delighted to hear it. Temple was generally a truthful chap; but something was due to good manners!

But, polite as they all were, there was little doubt that the party were rather keen to begin. It was rather late for

tea, and football practice in a keen November wind made fellows prefer tea early, rather than late. They had sat down, but they were still waiting for Hobby to give the signal for the onslaught. And the twelfth chair was still empty; the latest guest seemed very late.

Complimentary remarks filled in the time. But these began to pall. After all, a fellow can't keep on wishing Hobby many happy returns, over and over again, or telling him, more than twice or thrice, how decent it was of him to ask a fellow to the spread. There was a lag in the conversation. Hobson kept on glancing at the door. But the door did not open.

"Another man coming?" asked Harry Wharton, breaking a silence that began to be a little heavy.

"Well, yes!" said Hobson. "I hardly like to start without him, as he's a senior, you know."

"Oh!" said the juniors. They were rather surprised to hear that a senior was coming. Seniors did not usually attend junior celebrations. It was rather a distinction, perhaps—but a distinction that most of the juniors could have dispensed with without any great sense of loss.

It rather looked, too, as though that senior, although he had accepted Hobby's invitation, was treating the affair with some carelessness. At all events, he was certainly very late.

"Sixth Form man?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No. Fifth!"

"Oh!" said the juniors again. "It's that ass, Coker!" remarked Stewart of the Shell. "Hobby was ass enough to ask him. I advised him not."

"Well, we used to be pals in the Shell before Coker got his remove into the Fifth," said Hobson. "I thought I'd ask him."

Some of the juniors smiled.

Coker, in the Fifth, had dropped Hobson, in the Shell, like a hot brick. Hobby had often been heard to make bitterly sarcastic remarks about fat-heads who put on airs when they got a shove up.

But old Hobby was all good nature. On this great occasion, with a record cake to dispose of, he had forgotten all offences and asked Coker. And Horace Coker, it seemed, had accepted.

But the other guests were no longer surprised that the twelfth guest was so late. They had no doubt that Horace Coker was regarding the affair in a lofty, patronising way, hardly worthy of his attention. They would not have been surprised if Horace had affected to forget it entirely, and failed to turn up at all.

"What about cutting the cake?" murmured Fry of the Fourth.

A fellow wanted to be decent, of course, but, on the other hand, a fellow was hungry, and did not see sitting about waiting for a swanking ass in the Fifth till that swanking ass chose to arrive.

"Well," said Hobson uneasily, "he can't be long now. He knew the time. He's only a quarter of an hour late."

"Only!" murmured Bob.

"Look here!" said Stewart. "Cut Coker out! You were an ass to ask him, Hobby, as I told you!"

"Well, I did ask him," said Hobby. "It wouldn't look civil to begin without him."

There was a heavy tread in the passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Hobson looked relieved. Even good-natured and unsuspecting old Hobby was beginning to think that the Fifth Form man wasn't treating him decently. It was a relief to hear a sound in the passage like a coalman delivering coal in large sacks—the unmistakable tread of Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form.

Hobby opened the door politely for the late-comer.

"Trot in, Coker, old chap!" he said hospitably.

Coker of the Fifth gave him a look. It was, of course, a friendly occasion; still, Coker did not like "old chap" from a Shell fellow!

However, he let it pass. Coker of the Fifth was not a whale on manners, but he was not wholly destitute of them. He trotted in.

"Oh, many happy returns, Hobson!" he said, carelessly. "I believe you said it was your birthday, or something, didn't you?"

Hobby breathed rather hard.

"Yes; here's your chair, Coker. Sit down."

Coker, instead of sitting down, stared at the numerous party already gathered round the table. He seemed surprised to see so many guests. And not one of them could fancy that he looked pleased. Coker looked very restive.

"Look here, Hobson—" he began.

"Yes, sit down!"

"I said I'd come!" said Coker, in an aggrieved tone. "A Fifth Form man needn't mind teeing in the Shell once in a term. But I'm bound to say that I didn't expect to be asked to sit down to tea with a gang of fags from the Fourth and the Lower Fourth."

Hobson crimsoned. Stewart shrugged his shoulders. Coker was annoyed, and saw no reason for concealing his annoyance. Cecil Reginald Temple glanced

at Dabney and Fry, and rose to his feet.

"Frightfully sorry, Hobson, old bean!" said Temple, in his most graceful manner. "But I've just remembered that I have lines to do for Loder of the Sixth! I shall really have to cut!"

"By gum!" exclaimed Fry. "I haven't done my lines for Capper! I—I shall have to cut!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "My lines for—for Wingate! I'd better come with you men!"

"I—I say, don't go!" stammered Hobson. Even the unsuspecting Hobby hardly believed that this sudden crop of lines was genuine.

"Awfully sorry—"

"Rotten rough luck!"

"Can't be helped—"

Temple, Dabney, and Fry faded out of the study.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another. In spite of the great attractions of the cake, they were strongly disposed to follow the example of the Fourth Formers. In sheer compassion for poor old Hobby, they refrained. It would have been altogether too bad to muck up Hobby's party at that rate.

So they sat tight, after an exchange of glances. Hobson was red with discomfort. Stewart was shrugging his shoulders as if they were going by clock-work. Hoskins was looking intensely annoyed. Time was being wasted, and

Having concluded his feud with Stephen Price, Jim Warren—the boy with a borrowed name—is up against a more powerful enemy in Gerald Loder, a scheming rascal who is after his place in the first eleven footer team!

Hosky was anxious for tea to be over, so that he could begin on that little thing of his own on the violin. Coker sat down.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Rivals at Soccer!

"GOAL!"

"Loder!"

"By Jove!"

There was a general exclamation among the seniors who were standing round on Big Side, watching the football in progress.

It was a Form match, between Fifth and Sixth; not an important game in itself, but important from the fact that the footballers were being put through their paces, with a view to the final selection of men for the first eleven in the fixture with Rookwood.

Wingate, the captain of the school, captained the Sixth Form side; but when Warren of the Fifth put the pill into his goal, he grinned with satisfaction. He was thinking of Warren as a rod in pickle for Rookwood. Nobody was surprised to see Jim Warren capture goals. Although new at Greyfriars that term, he had already become conspicuous in games, and was a great goal-getter. But when Loder of the Sixth landed the ball in the Fifth Form goal, fellows stared and ejaculated.

Loder was such a slacker that Wingate had been rather doubtful about putting him even into a practice match. Everybody knew that Loder was keen to play when Rookwood came over; but

nobody supposed that he had the smallest chance of wedging into the eleven.

But, to the general surprise, Loder had shown uncommon form all through that match; and now, almost on the stroke of time, he had potted the pill—much to the satisfaction of the Sixth. For the Fifth were one ahead, and even in a practice game the Sixth did not like being beaten. Loder had at least made it a draw.

"Good man!" exclaimed Wingate heartily, and he gave Gerald Loder a clap on the shoulder—a thing he had never been seen to do before. There was, as a rule, no love lost between the captain of Greyfriars and the bully of the Sixth.

When the footballers came off the field, Loder joined Wingate, going back to the House. He was flushed, and rather breathless after the game. But he did not look, as he often did after games practice, as if he needed taking home on an ambulance. He was uncommonly fit.

Wingate was with his friends, Gwynne and Sykes. But he gave Loder a very genial look. If the slacker of the Sixth was adopting new manners and customs, and taking up games seriously, instead of smoking cigarettes in his study, Wingate was the man to encourage him.

"A ripping good goal, Loder!" he said. "You're coming on!"

"Not so bad, I hope!" said Loder, with a rather furtive look at the captain of Greyfriars. "You're picking the men for Rookwood after this match?"

"Yes."

"I hope there's a chance for me."

"Well, no," said Wingate. "There was only one place that was at all doubtful, and that will have to go to that new chap, Warren. If he keeps up his present form we simply can't leave him out."

Loder's eyes glinted.

"I think I've done as well as Warren, at least, in this game," he said sullenly. "He bagged a goal, and so did I."

"One swallow doesn't make a summer, Loder!" said the Greyfriars captain, rather dryly. "Warren's a keen man on Soccer—"

"I'm keen enough!"

"Lately, yes!" admitted Wingate. "But—if you'll excuse me, Loder—it's rather new, isn't it? Keep it up, and I'll be jolly glad to give you a chance when the time comes. But I've settled on Warren for Rookwood."

Loder's sullen temper blazed out.

"Look here, Wingate! I want fair play!"

"You're getting it!"

"No good a man doing his best!" snapped Loder savagely. "You mean that you're going to play Warren, because you like the chap—and we've never been friends. That's the long and short of it!"

"Neither the long nor the short of it, Loder!" said Wingate. "I like the fellow—everybody likes him; he's a likeable chap! But I'm not going to play him in the first eleven because I like him, Loder, and you know it!"

"I don't know it!" sneered Loder.

"Then you'd better drop the subject!" said Wingate sharply.

"A new man who hasn't been here a term yet!" muttered Loder. "And a fellow that there's all sorts of queer rumours about!"

"Oh, cut that out!" snapped Wingate. "I've heard that from you before, Loder, and I don't want to hear any more of it!" And the Greyfriars captain turned his back on Loder, without

ceremony, and walked away with Gwynne and Sykes.

Loder stood looking after him, with a black and bitter brow. He was disappointed, and he had a sense of grievance.

Slacker as he was, he was very keen to figure as a member of the first eleven in a big fixture. There was only one way to effect that, while Wingate was skipper—to get into first-class footer form!

And since he had been left out of the St. Jim's match, Loder had pulled up his socks, as it were, and bucked up very considerably. He was going to prove that he was good enough for the first eleven.

Now, he considered, he had proved it, and still he was left on the shelf, in favour of that new fellow, Warren.

But for the fact that Warren was available, there was little doubt that he would have gained his point. He had always disliked Warren, but never so intensely as now. The fellow had done him out of his place in the team that played St. Jim's; now he had done him out of his place for the Rookwood match. That was how Loder looked at it—or chose to look at it.

A handsome, fair-haired fellow passed him, as he stood scowling—and his eyes turned, with deep animosity, on Jim Warren. Warren, swinging along in coat and muffler, did not notice him—but Loder stepped into his way, and the Fifth Form man had to stop.

In his disappointment, and savage, sulky temper, Loder was ripe for a row. Jim glanced at him, with a faint smile. He was aware of Loder's feelings towards him, but was not greatly worried thereby.

"You rotter!" muttered Loder. "You've got away with it!"

"What's biting you now?" asked Jim good-humouredly.

"You've greased up to Wingate pretty successfully," said Loder. "Your name will be up for the Rookwood match! At least," he added, with a bitter sneer, "the name of Warren will be up! There seems to be some doubt whether that's really your name or not."

"Is that what you've stopped me to say?"

"According to a lot of talk that's going round, your name is no more Warren than mine is Robinson!" sneered Loder.

Warren's handsome face flushed.

"That's enough, Loder!" he said.

"Will you let me pass?"

"When I choose!" answered Loder coolly. "You've pinched my place in the first eleven—but that doesn't alter the fact that I am a Sixth Form prefect, and you're nobody—outside the eleven, at any rate!"

"It's rather against the rules to punch a prefect," remarked Warren. "Is that what you're trying to make me do?"

Loder's eyes gleamed. He would have liked nothing better than a good pretext for coming down on the Fifth Former with his prefectorial authority. That would have been worth even a punch from Warren's hefty arm. But the handsome Fifth Former kept his hands in his overcoat pockets.

"A fellow in a false name!" jeered Loder.

"You'll be getting an audience soon," said Jim Warren. "There's about a dozen fellows staring at you now, and one of the beaks. Do you want all Greyfriars to see you losing your silly temper?"

Loder glanced round. His aggressive attitude, barring Warren's way, had drawn a good deal of attention in the

open quad. Potter and Greene and Hilton, coming along from the football field, were looking at him—Temple, Dabney and Fry, who had just come out of the House, had paused to look on. Billy Bunter was gazing with great interest through his big spectacles. Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, was passing—and he paused in passing; his keen, penetrating eyes fixed very curiously on Warren. Perhaps Hacker had caught Loder's words.

The fact that a dozen fellows were looking on, rather in expectation of a "row," did not influence Loder, in his angry, sulky temper. Indeed, he was rather pleased for so many ears to hear him.

"Is your name Warren?" he sneered. "I've heard that young Wharton of the Remove knows the Warrens at home, and says you're not James Warren at all."

"I've said that that's enough, Loder!" said Jim Warren, very quietly. "Now shut up and let me pass, or I'll shift you!"

"Will you!" said Loder, between his teeth. "Try it on, you cur, and—"

He had no time to finish. Warren not only tried it on, but tried it on with sudden and complete success. He whipped a hand from his overcoat pocket, gripped Loder by the shoulder, and spun him out of the way.

Loder whirled, staggered, and almost fell down. There was a general grin on the faces of the onlookers and a squeak of merriment from Billy Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

Loder righted himself, and came back at Warren, with clenched fists and flaming face. Mr. Hacker made a step forward.

"Loder!" he rapped. "You forget yourself, I think!"

Loder stopped. Enraged as he was, he realised that it would not do for a prefect to enter into fisticuffs in the quad, in view of the House windows and in the presence of a master. He choked back his rage.

"I shall report this, Warren!" he gasped.

"Do as you please, only let me alone!" answered Jim disdainfully.

Gerald Loder, red with rage, stalked away.

Jim walked on to the House, followed by many curious looks. The strange story that was told about him, up and down the school, found few, if any, believers; but Loder's words had revived it in the minds of the Greyfriars fellows.

Mr. Hacker dropped into step by his side, going to the House, and Jim glanced at him with far from a welcoming look.

Being in the Fifth, he had little or nothing to do with the master of the Shell. Indeed, he had come into contact with him only once, when he had been spotted using Hacker's telephone without leave. Mr. Hacker, who had an acid tongue; had spoken some cutting words on that occasion.

Jim had wondered whether the rumours about him had reached as far as Masters' Common-room. More than once he had been aware that Hacker's keen eyes had been fixed on his searchingly. Now, it was clear, Mr. Hacker was curious—which a Form-master ought not to have been.

Hacker, who had an acid temper and a sarcastic tongue, was known also to be a rather interfering gentleman—not to say an inquisitive one, and he was far from popular.

"I heard Loder's remarks, Warren!" said Mr. Hacker.

Jim breathed hard. He wanted no

meddling from Mr. Hacker. But he answered civilly:

"Did you, sir?"
"I did, Warren! It is very singular that such a story should have been spread about a Greyfriars boy. Very singular indeed! Can you account for it, Warren?"

Jim did not answer.
He walked on in silence, the master of the Shell walking by his side.

Potter and Greene and Hilton, who had been going to join him, walked behind, so long as he was with a beak.

Mr. Hacker coloured a little. Jim's silence amounted to a snub, and Hacker did not like being snubbed, though he often asked for it.

"I asked you a question, Warren!" he said, at length.

"I've nothing to say about it, sir."

"That also is very singular!" said Mr. Hacker. "I would suggest, Warren, that a frank discussion of the matter would be more advisable—much more advisable."

"I don't care to discuss it, sir!"

Mr. Hacker shut his thin lips hard, a pink spot glowing in either cheek. It was a snub direct; and he knew, without looking round, that the three Fifth Form fellows behind were grinning. He drew a deep, deep breath, and, without saying more, walked quickly into the House.

THE THIR D CHAPTER

Not a Happy Party!

HORACE COKER was not a bad fellow. He was indeed, in many ways, quite a good fellow. All Greyfriars agreed that he was the biggest ass ever; but they also agreed that he wasn't a bad ass—in his own way, of course.

But while Nature had provided Coker with many sterling qualities, she had been rather stingy with him in the matter of brains, and had quite forgotten to furnish him with graces of manner.

Coker was hardly the man to shine at a party. Least of all was he the man to shine at a junior tea-party, in a junior study, where he regarded all the company with a contempt he did not feel called upon to conceal.

In a lofty, patronising way, he had consented to come to Hobson's birthday spread. He had not—as he had stated—expected to meet a "crew" of fags there, and he was annoyed. But he had expected to be treated as a distinguished guest—a fellow whose Olympian presence was an honour and a distinction. Nobody in Hobby's study, however, appeared to regard Coker in this light.

The departure of Temple, Dabney and Fry pleased him. He gave the five Removites an expressive look, which plainly intimated that he rather wanted them to follow suit. As Harry Wharton & Co. were absolutely indifferent to the opinion of Horace Coker, they gave no heed.

However, Coker sat down with a grunt.

He felt that he had been rather a fool to come! These Shell fellows were not deserving of such an honour—did not, in fact, seem to comprehend what an honour was being done them. Still, there he was, and, in point of fact, he wanted his tea.

His friends, Potter and Greene, were at the football, and they were going to tea with Warren when they came in. Coker did not want to tea in solitary state in his own study, and he did not want to go to tea with Warren, because

he barred Price, who was in Warren's study. So he was going to make the best of this function in a junior study.

He had his own inimitable way of making the best of it.

Poor Hobby, feeling that he had, as the canny Stewart had warned him, made a mistake in asking Coker, was red and uncomfortable. He hardly hoped now for a jolly and jovial party. His hopes now were limited to hoping that it would pass off without a row!

Stewart made the tea. Hobson handed up the dishes of poached eggs and toast, which were to precede the magnificent cake. Really, it was quite a handsome spread—up to the best traditions of the Shell.

But conversation had completely died away. Coker sat with a rugged brow,

strain. They thought—but they did not say—that it was ghastly. But Coker stared at Hoskins, and then stared harder, and then snorted.

"What a fearful row!" said Coker. "Dash it all, Hoskins, don't tune the fiddle now!"

Hoskins left off fiddling; and gazed at him. He seemed incapable of speech for a moment. Then he gasped:

"I wasn't tuning the fiddle, you idiot! I was playing my Rhapsody in F."

"Well, don't!" said Coker. "And don't call me names, either! I haven't come here to be cheeked."

Claude Hoskins opened his lips. Not only was he going to call Coker names, but he was going to call him many names—all of them emphatic. But Hobby hastily interposed.

toast and poached eggs. The Famous Five dealt with their provender in dispirited silence. Coker was not, perhaps, conscious of being a wet blanket. But he was—very wet!

"Don't shuffle your feet like that, Cherry!" said Coker.

"Eh?"

"Deaf?" snapped Coker irritably.

"You cheeky ass!" said Bob.

It was one of Bob's little failings, that he never could keep his feet still. Mr. Quelch, in the Remove Form Room, had sometimes snapped at him for that very reason. But it was not for Coker to snap at him on that subject, at tea in Hobson's study. Coker, however, fancied that it was.

"What?" Coker ceased to transfer toast and poached eggs to a capacious



"Call me a pig, would you?" roared Coker. He reached across the table, grabbed Claude Hoskins by his hair, and crumpled his face into a dish of poached eggs. "There!" gasped the angry Fifth Former. "Take that—and that—and that!" "Urrrgh!" gurgled Hoskins, wildly. "Yurrrrgh!"

obviously ashamed of his company. The company were not disposed for conversation with Coker. Hoskins, rather unfortunately, picked up his violin, and drew the bow across it, while the tea and the toast and the poached eggs were getting ready.

Perhaps Hoskins believed that music had charms to soothe the savage breast. Perhaps he thought it a good idea to break the silence. At a "heavy" party, when things are going slow, there is nothing like a little music to liven things up. Perhaps that was Claude Hoskins' idea.

But only Hoskins believed that he could extract sweet music from that fiddle. To other ears, it was like unto the serenade of a particularly shrill tom-cat on the tiles.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come there to be polite. Their politeness stood the

"Shut up, Claude, old man! For goodness' sake! I say, tea's ready! I say, help yourselves, you fellows! Sit down, Hobby! We'll have the music after tea."

"Music!" said Coker. "Ha, ha!"

Hobson fairly shoved Hoskins into his chair. Old Claude was a musician and very sensitive, especially about his music. Hobby was in dread of seeing him hurl the fiddle at Coker!

"Poached eggs, Coker, old chap!" said Hobson, breathlessly hospitable. "Toast, old fellow."

"Thanks!" said Coker. "But don't call me old fellow, Hobson! I don't like it from fags!"

Hobson opened his mouth—not to call Coker old fellow!—and shut it again. What he had been going to call Coker that time remained unknown.

Coker condescended to partake of

mouth and glared at Bob across the table. "What did you say?"

"Hem!" Bob remembered his company manners. "Nothing!"

"If you can't behave yourself decently when you're sitting down to tea with a Fifth Form man, Cherry—"

Bob rose to his feet. He did not want to let old Hobby down after good old Hobby had asked him to the spread. But he really felt that he could stand no more of Hobby's distinguished guest.

"I—I say, if you don't mind, Hobby, I'll cut down and see the finish of the Form match," he said.

"That's over by this time," said Hobson. "I say, sit down, old chap! You haven't had any cake yet!"

"Grin and bear it, old man!" said



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Stewart. "We're told that we ought to suffer fools gladly, you know."

Bob grinned and sat down again.

"For goodness' sake, move without rocking the table, you clumsy young ass!" said Coker. "You've made me spill my tea!"

"My esteemed Coker—" began Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"You can shut up!" said Coker.

"Have some more eggs, old chap!" said the worried Hobby. "There's lots! I say, have some more toast! I say— Another cup of tea, Bull!"

"He hasn't finished guzzling that one yet!" said Coker sarcastically.

Johnny Bull set down his tea-cup and glared at Coker over it.

"You cheeky fathead!" he bawled.

"Johnny, old man!" gasped Wharton.

"I've had enough of Coker!" roared Johnny Bull, jumping up. "Sorry, Hobby, old man, but there's a limit! I'm off!"

"And the sooner the better," said Coker. "I've a jolly good mind to kick you out of the study, you cheeky young tick. And I can tell you, Hobson, it was too jolly thick having these rowdy fags here, when you ask a Fifth Form man to tea! I don't like it!"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed the goaded Hobson.

"What?" gasped Coker.

"Shut up!" hooted Hobson. "If you don't like the company, which is too good for you, get out, and be blowed to you!"

Hobby's company manners had failed him with a crash!

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Hoskins. "Pig!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five. The expression on Horace Coker's speaking countenance, as he gazed at Claude Hoskins, made them yell.

"D-d-did you call me a pip-pip-pig?" stammered Coker.

"Yes, I jolly well did—P-I-G, pig!" retorted Hoskins, making it quite clear. "Got it plain now? Pig!"

The next happening was unexpected, even from Coker. He reached across the table, grabbed Claude Hoskins by his hair, which he wore rather long, and crumpled his face into the dish of poached eggs!

"There!" gasped Coker. "Take that—and that—"

"Urrrrggh!" gurgled Hoskins wildly. "Yurrrggh!"

Then the whole study acted as one man. It was a case of seven souls with but a single thought; seven hearts that beat as one. The Famous Five and Hobson and Stewart grabbed Coker at the same moment. He was dragged off Hoskins, and his head was banged on the floor.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Hacker Comes Down Heavy!

BANG! Crash! Yell! Fellows in the Shell passage jumped and stared.

The uproar that came from Hobson's study was tremendous.

Bump! Bang! Crash!

Having banged his head on the floor, the juniors would have booted Coker from the study, and let it go at that. But Coker was not content to let it go at that.

There was only one idea in Coker's head now—to mop up that study. The odds he utterly disregarded.

And at close quarters, there was no doubt that the brawny, beefy Coker was a hard man to handle. His leg-of-mutton fists, when they landed, landed hard. Bob Cherry found himself strewn on the carpet; Hurree Jamsset

WAR in the AIR

PART ONE — ON SALE TODAY

Ram Singh rolled under the table; Frank Nugent sat down by the window, with a heavy bump. Wharton and Bob Cherry, clinging to Coker rather like cats, were dragged and swung hither and thither. Hobson had Coker by the back of his collar, striving to whirl him doorward—instead of which, Hobby was dragged off his feet by the brawny Horace. Not till Stewart captured his legs did Coker go down again.

But with his legs jerked away, Coker was left with no visible means of support—and Coker went down! Wharton and Bob went over him; Hobson went over Wharton and Bob. Stewart, catching one of Coker's feet under his chin, staggered back against the table, and set it rocking, with a crash of crockery, to the floor. Nearly all the chairs had already been overturned, and they rolled and crashed right and left, amid and around the struggling heap of combatants.

Hobby's birthday party could not, as a birthday party, be called a success. But it was exciting.

Coker struggled and heaved and rocked and roared. The whole party of juniors rallied, and hurled themselves on Horace. Even then he rocked and roared.

The door opened, and a fat face and a big pair of spectacles blinked in.

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Billy Bunter.

"I'll smash you!" roared Coker. "Yoop! Ooop! Gerroff my neck! Whoop!"

"Boot him out!" roared Hobson.

"I say, you fellows, Hacker's coming!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, you can be heard all over the House. I say, 'ware beaks!"

But warnings were wasted! With Horace Coker going so strong, the juniors had to deal with him, whether the uproar was heard all over the House or not.

Coker made another terrific effort. Chairs rolled and crashed right and left, as the struggling heap surged.

Billy Bunter, in the doorway, blinked across the study at the table, where the great cake still lay uncut. But to reach that cake, Bunter had to plunge through a sea of struggling figures, thrashing legs, whirling furniture. He blinked longingly, but did not make the venture. And already a sharp step told that authority was arriving on the scene.

Bunter backed away from the door as Mr. Hacker came rapidly up the passage. That terrific disturbance in his Form had brought the master of the Shell on the scene.

Hacker was not a good-tempered man at the best of times. And he had come into the House in a very bitter frame of mind after being snubbed by Warren of the Fifth. That outrageous uproar in a shell study gave the final touch to his angry temper. His sharp face was grim with wrath as he whisked up the passage to Hobson's study.

Plenty of fellows were gathering in the passage, drawn there by the sounds of strife. They hastily made way for Mr. Hacker. He reached the door and stared in with glinting eyes.

Coker had got as far as his knees, in another wild effort to shake off his many foes. But he went down again, crashing, as Hacker looked in.

"Boys! Hobson! Hoskins! Stewart! Boys! What—Cease this riot instantly!" shrieked Mr. Hacker. His voice was always a little shrill, and now it sounded almost like a train whistle.

"Oh crikey! Hacker!" gasped Hobson.

"Look out!" panted Stewart.

Shell fellows and Removites relaxed their grasp on Horace Coker. They staggered breathlessly away from the sprawling Horace.

Coker sat up, gurgling. "I'll smash you—I'll spifficate you—I'll—gurrghh!"

"Is that a Fifth Form boy?" shouted Mr. Hacker. "Upon my word! Is that Coker, of the Fifth Form?"

Horace blinked round at him, becoming aware of his presence. He heaved breathlessly to his feet. He gurgled for wind.

"What are you doing in this study, Coker?" snapped Hacker.

"Urrrgh!" gurgled Coker.

"Answer me!"

"Gurrghh!"

"Hobson, what does this riot mean? What is Coker doing here? What are these Remove boys doing here? Explain at once!"

The Famous Five stood gasping for breath. They realised that there must have been a terrific din, and that it was natural for Hacker to be angry. Still, they did not see that they were to blame in any way. It had been impossible to refuse to give Coker that for which he asked so earnestly.

"If these boys came here to make a disturbance—" Hacker's sharp eyes gleamed at the chums of the Remove. He did not like those cheery juniors.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Hobson. "They—they're guests, sir—"

"What?"

"It's a spread, sir—my—my birthday party!" groaned Hobson. "I—I asked all these fellows, sir—"

"Upon my word!" snorted Mr. Hacker. "If this is how Mr. Quelch's boys behave when they are asked to tea—"

The Famous Five looked at Mr. Hacker as if they could have eaten him. That was not how they behaved when they were asked to tea—except in very exceptional circumstances.

"This riot," said Mr. Hacker, "will be severely punished. I will not allow a Shell study to be turned into a bear-garden. I will not allow Remove boys to make disturbances in my Form."

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Bob Cherry.

"You need not speak!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "Leave the study at once—all you Remove boys, go! Go, I say!"

Harry Wharton & Co., in silence, and with deep feelings, trailed past Mr. Hacker into the passage. Coker, still gurgling for breath, glared at them as they went.

"I shall report your conduct to Mr. Quelch!" snapped Hacker. "Coker, I shall report you to Mr. Prout! Leave this study!"

"Look here, sir—"

"Go!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

"These cheeky young rotters—"

"If you do not leave this study instantly, Coker, I shall eject you with my own hands!" roared Mr. Hacker.

Coker gave him a look. Coker was brawny enough, and beefy enough, to handle the long, thin master of the Shell. Hacker, probably, would have crumpled up in Coker's brawny grasp—indeed, the hefty Horace could have shut him up like a pocket-knife! Fortunately, Coker refrained from doing so.

With a snort, expressive of the deepest indignation and scorn, Coker tramped out of the study.

Mr. Hacker's glittering eye fixed on Hobson, Hoskins, and Stewart. Those unfortunate members of his own Form were at his mercy. Hoskins was still rubbing fragments of poached eggs from his features and his ears and hair. Hobson, crimson, was gasping for breath. Stewart had a handkerchief to his nose,

where Coker's knuckles had tapped the claret.

"Disgraceful!" snarled Mr. Hacker. "Outrageous! A tea-party—ending in a general fight! Shocking! I presume that you quarrelled over the food? Disgusting!"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Hobson. "We—"

"Silence! The food will be confiscated!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "Take that cake to my study, Hobson."

"Wha-a-t?"

"Do you hear me?"

"But, sir—" stammered Hobson. He was quite overcome. It was his birthday cake—and it was not even cut!

"I have told you to take that cake to my study, Hobson! It is confiscated. I shall send it to the housedame's-room. Take it to my study at once. Each of you will take a hundred lines for this riot! Now, take that cake away at once."

Hobson looked at him—in silence! Speech could not have done justice to his feelings! Silently he picked up the big cake, and carried it out of the study. Mr. Hacker followed him with a grim and frowning brow. Fellows in the passage gave him sympathetic looks. But, under Hacker's gleaming eye, they did not express their sympathy in words.

One fellow detached himself from the crowd, and followed the hapless Hobson and the master of the Shell to Hacker's study. It was Billy Bunter. Bunter seemed unable to take his eyes off that cake.

But he had to take his eyes off it when Hacker's door closed on it.

Hobson, with a glum and gloomy face, went away without his cake! Billy Bunter remained in Masters' Passage, his eyes and spectacles fixed on Mr. Hacker's door. Like a fat Peri at the gate of Paradise, Bunter thought of the joys within—and was unable to tear himself away from the spot.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

"H!" gasped Billy Bunter. Mr. Hacker's door opened suddenly.

Bunter had been standing there about ten minutes, wondering whether Hacker was likely to leave the study. Bunter hoped that he would.

If he did, Bunter had designs on that cake! As it had been confiscated, Hobson was done with it—it was no longer Hobby's. And it seemed to Bunter an awful waste for such a big, lovely, luscious cake to be sent to the housedame for general use—which was the fate of tuck when it was confiscated. That seemed, to Bunter, a sin and a shame.

Hacker was not likely to take that cake to Mrs. Kebble himself. He would give word for it to be fetched from his study. But if it was left unguarded for even a few minutes, it was not likely to be still there when sent for. Bunter's capacious mouth watered at the thought of that cake. It was not going to be wasted, if Billy Bunter could help it.

But he was rather startled when the study door opened and Mr. Hacker came out. The master of the Shell gave him a sharp, irritated glance.

"What are you doing here, Bunter?" he snapped.

"Oh! N-nothing, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Does Mr. Quelch allow his boys to loaf about this passage?"

"Oh! Yes! I mean, no, sir."

"Go away at once!"

Billy Bunter rolled slowly up the

passage. Juniors were not allowed to loaf about masters' studies—neither, as a rule, had that quarter any attraction for the fat Owl of the Remove. But circumstances alter cases. There was an attraction now—a very strong attraction.

Bunter went as far as the nearest corner, round which he rolled. Then he put his head round the corner, and blinked back through his big spectacles. Hacker, happily, was going—and as soon as he was out of sight—

The Owl of the Remove saw Hacker tap at the door of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. No doubt he was going to report Coker to his Form-master. He went in.

Prout's door closed on him.

That was enough for Bunter!

Swiftly he scudded back down the passage to Hacker's study. Hacker had ordered him off, but without a suspicion why he was there. It had never occurred to Hacker that a junior might have the nerve to raid a confiscated cake from his study.

Few, indeed, would have had that nerve. And Bunter was far from famous for nerve. But if anything could make Billy Bunter reckless, it was the lure of tuck.

He whipped into Hacker's study.

There on the table lay the big cake; just as Hobson had left it. Bunter grabbed it up breathlessly.

He peered out into the passage, cake in hand. Hacker was still in Prout's study; the coast was clear!

Bunter scudded down the passage with the cake.

Bunter's usual rate of progress was more like that of the tortoise than the hare. Now he understudied the hare. He was out of Masters' Passage in a twinkling.

In another twinkling, he was up the stairs. On the big landing, he paused a second for breath. Then he panted and puffed up the Remove staircase, with the big cake under his fat arm.

On the landing above he paused. His first thought had been to get that cake to his own study, No. 7, in the Remove. But there was a crowd of fellows in the Remove passage. Harry Wharton & Co. were there—relating to a grinning crowd what had happened at Hobby's birthday party. Bunter did not want all the Remove to see his plunder.

Herbert Vernon-Smith came up the stairs with a grin on his face. He stopped at the sight of Bunter with the big cake under his arm, and grinned.

"Oh, you've got it!" ejaculated Smithy.

"I say, keep it dark, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "I'll let you have a whack in the cake, Smithy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder.

"I mean it, old chap!" gasped the fat Owl. "I—I'll get it along to your study, old fellow."

"You jolly well won't!" grinned Smithy. "They're after that cake already. I don't want it found in my study!"

"After it!" exclaimed the fat junior, in alarm. "Who's after it? Hacker never saw me bag it from his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder. "He saw you hanging about his study when he went to speak to Prout. I've just heard him tell Loder, so—"

"Oh crikey!"

"He missed the cake at once," chuckled Smithy. "I wondered what he looked so shirty about, and then I heard him tell Loder—"

"Oh lor'!"

"Better hunt cover!" howled the Bounder. "Ha, ha, ha! Hacker's told Loder to find you at once!"

"Oh scissors!"

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Smithy glanced over the banisters. From there he had a view of the top of Loder's head as the prefect came up the lower stairs.

Bunter stood gasping with dismay. That brute, Hacker, could have stayed hardly a minute with old Prout. Bunter realised that he had had a narrow escape of being caught in the act. Hacker must have discovered that the cake was gone, only a few seconds after he had turned the corner of Masters' Passage.

"He's coming," grinned Smithy.

"Who?" squeaked Bunter.

"Loder. After you, old fat bean!"

"I—I say, Smithy, if—if you'd like a—a—a cake, I—I'll give you this one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Smithy—"

"Cut, you fat idiot!" grinned the Bounder. "Keep clear of the Remove. Loder will draw the Remove studies for you. Cut along by the Fifth."

"Oh dear!"

That advice was too good not to be taken. Bunter scudded across the wide landing to the Fifth Form studies.

He whipped into that passage, only a second before Loder's head rose into view above the level of the Remove landing.

Luckily for Bunter the prefect, as Smithy predicted, drew the Remove studies for Bunter. It was not likely to take him long to learn that Bunter was not there; but the fat Owl had a breathing space.

In the Fifth Form passage he halted, out of sight for the moment, but quite at a loss. The passage was deserted. The Fifth Form footballers were in the changing-room after the Form match. There might be two or three seniors in the studies; but there was no one in the passage, which was a relief. Bunter had a minute or two to think.

Loder would be looking for him soon. So would Hacker. That suspicious beast had jumped to the conclusion that Bunter had the cake, simply because he had seen the fat Remove hanging about his study. Bunter had the lowest possible opinion of such suspiciousness.

Still, there it was; he was suspected and hunted for. And Hacker, very likely, had told other prefects as well as Loder. Lovely and luscious as that gorgeous cake was, Bunter had no leisure to take a single bite at it. If he was caught with that cake—

He trembled at the thought. He almost wished that he had left it in Hacker's study. He almost decided to leave it lying on the floor of the Fifth Form passage, and scud. But not quite.

There was a better idea than that. He had to get rid of it before he was spotted. But it might be left in a safe place, and retrieved afterwards. Even Billy Bunter's fat brain could work swiftly, under the stress of danger—danger of a whopping, and danger of losing the cake. There was nowhere to hide it, but in a Fifth Form study—taking his chance of getting it back later. He listened at the nearest study door, to ascertain whether the room was vacant.

A sound of snorting and grunting came from within. It was Coker's study, and the great Horace was there doctoring the extensive damages he had received at Hobby's birthday-party.

Bunter hurried on to the next—Study No. 4.

Study No. 4 would be all right. Hilton and Warren, he knew, had been in the Form match, and the footballers had not yet come up from the

changing-room. Price, the third member of the study, was out of gates. Bunter had seen him go out some time back. There would be nobody in Study No. 4. He could shove the cake into some recess where it would be safe till he had a chance of coming back for it.

To make sure the fat Owl opened the door a few inches and blinked in. The study was empty.

He pushed the door open and rolled in. As he did so there was a sound of a footstep down the passage. Bunter hurriedly closed the study door. He laid the big cake on the table and blinked round the study, in search of a safe spot. If it was Loder in the passage, he was not likely to look into a study for him.

But the footsteps came right on up the passage. Bunter blinked at the door, in fear and trembling. Was it someone coming to that study?

"Oh crikey!" gasped the hapless Owl.

A newspaper lay on the table—the "Courtfield Gazette," which Jim Warren had for the football reports. Bunter clutched it up and threw it over the cake. The next second he was crouching out of sight behind the high back of the armchair. A few seconds more, and he was deeply thankful that he had hunted cover; for the footsteps stopped at the door, and it opened.

Had it been Mr. Hacker, or Loder, or anyone in search of Bunter, a glance into the study would no doubt have satisfied him, and he would have passed on—neither Bunter nor the cake being visible. But it was no one in search of Bunter. It was Jim Warren coming up to his study; and Warren of the Fifth walked in, and threw the door shut after him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

JIM WARREN was humming a tune; he seemed to be in very cheery spirits. He had thoroughly enjoyed the Form match in the keen wintry wind, and he was certain of his place in the first eleven to meet Rockwood. Wingate had told him so in the changing-room, and almost every fellow there had congratulated him.

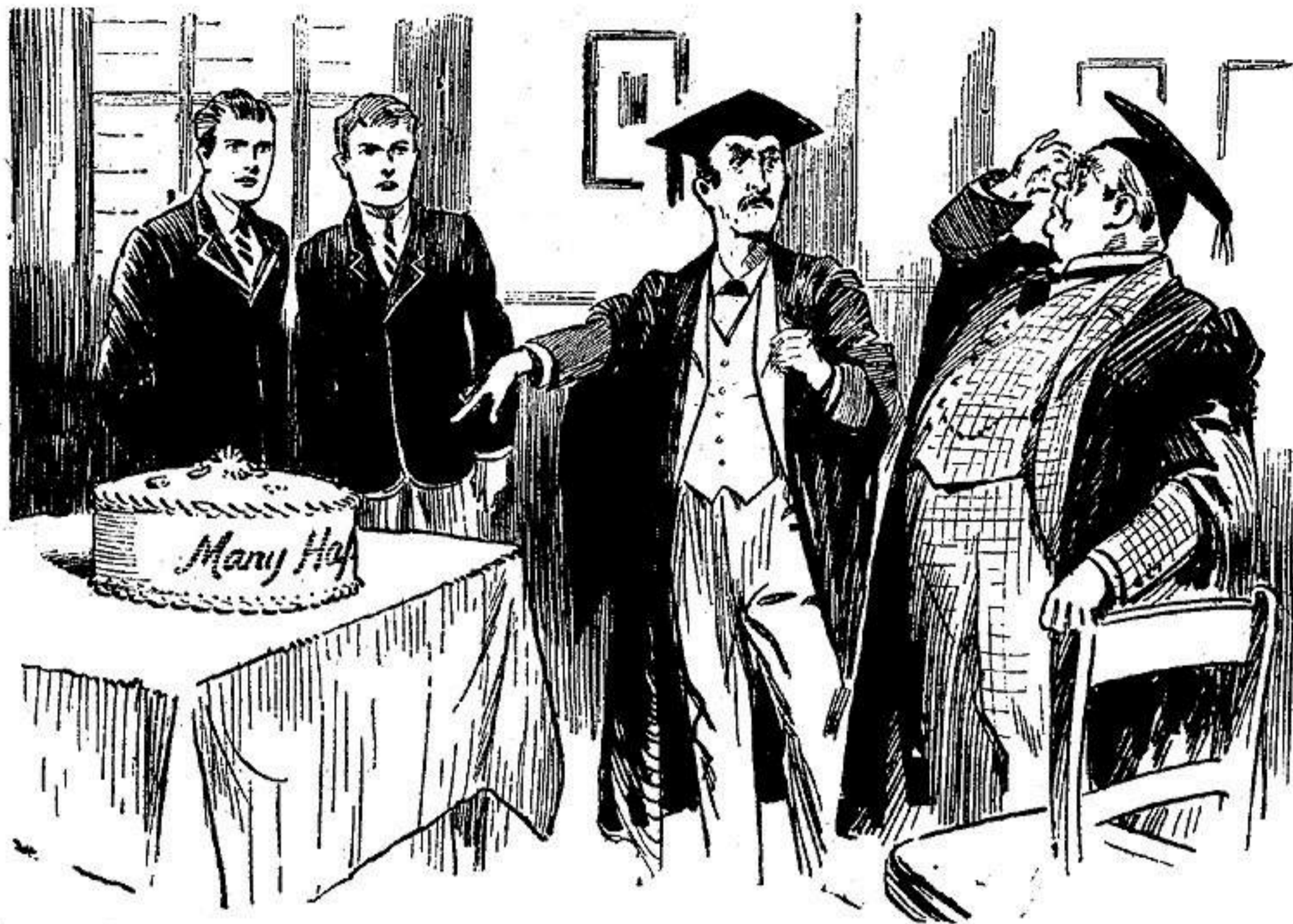
Fit as a fiddle, fresh as a daisy after a hard game, with bright prospects before him, Warren was enjoying life—for the time, at least. He had plenty of troubles—more, certainly, than fell to the lot of the average Greyfriars fellow—but they were dismissed from his mind. For Loder's enmity he cared nothing. And he had almost forgotten that disagreeable exchange of words with Mr. Hacker in the quad. He had left his friends in the changing-room, and come up first to the study, because he had a few little preparations to make for tea. Potter and Greene were coming to tea, and it was rather late already.

Humming a tune, his handsome face bright and ruddy, he stepped across to the grate and picked up the poker. It was a cold November day, and the fire was nearly out. He poked the fire into a blaze.

He was not aware, so far, that anyone else was in the study. The armchair stood beside the fireplace, turned with its back partly to the wall, and behind that high back the fat Owl of the Remove crouched out of sight, palpitating.

Bunter could really have groaned.

He understood now that it was one of the three fellows to whom Study No. 4 belonged who had come in,



"This cake, sir, was taken from my study a short while ago," said Mr. Hacker icily. "And Warren, of your Form, is the guilty person!" "Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Warren! I—I am amazed—I am—am astounded! If you will permit me to deal with the matter in my own Form, sir, I shall hear Warren's explanation, if any."

though he did not know which it was. He had not, after all, made a happy selection among the Fifth Form studies.

The beast was poking the fire, which meant that he was not going. Which beast was it?

If Price had come in he might go halves in the cake, and keep it dark. Price was needy, and not over scrupulous. If it was Hilton, Bunter had only a booting to expect from the dandy of the Fifth. He hoped that it was Warren, who was generally a fellow of unfailing good temper, and extremely easy-going. Still, he did not want even Warren to spot him, if it could be helped.

But it couldn't.

Having poked the fire, Warren was going to put coal on it. The coal was in a box behind the armchair.

Laying down the poker Jim put his hand on the top of the chair back, and twirled it aside on the castors.

"Oooogh!" gasped the startled Owl. Warren jumped.

The sudden shifting of the chair revealed a fat junior crouching there, blinking with startled eyes through a big pair of spectacles. Naturally, that unexpected and surprising discovery made Warren jump.

"You young ass!" he gasped. "What the thump are you doing there?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm not here—I—I mean, nothing, old chap! I—I mean— Oh dear!"

"Come out of it, you fat duffer!" said Jim.

Bunter rose to his feet, eyeing him uneasily. Warren was not, fortunately, the chap to kick a fellow without reason. But it was clear that he wanted to know why Bunter was hiding in his study.

"Now, what's this game?" demanded Warren.

"I—I—I—"

Bunter's eyes lingered for a second on the newspaper that hid the birthday cake on the table. The cake was completely concealed; Warren, obviously, had not the faintest idea that it was there. Then he blinked at Warren. He wondered whether the Fifth Form man had heard of the row in Hobby's study, and the purloining of the cake from Hacker's. It was unlikely, as he had come fresh from the changing-room.

"Well?" rapped Warren sharply.

"Have you been pilfering here, you fat young rascal?"

"Oh, really, Warren—"

"You were grub-hunting in Coker's study the other day! Is that what you came here for?"

"Oh! No! I—I— You see, I—I was—"

Warren stepped to the study cupboard and looked into it. When Billy Bunter was discovered in another fellow's study it was a natural supposition that he was there after tuck.

And there were rather unusual supplies in that cupboard, as Warren was having two fellows to tea, as well as Hilton. Not that the supplies were very lavish, for Warren had a very moderate allowance, and kept within it.

It rather surprised some of the Fifth Form men that the son of Sir Arthur Warren, of Warren Croft, a rich baronet, did not spend money more freely.

But Warren, though there was nothing stingy about him, was careful with his money; as, indeed, he had to be, for reasons quite unknown in the Fifth Form.

A glance into the study cupboard

showed that Bunter had not been there. Warren turned to him again, puzzled.

"Look here, what have you been up to here?" he demanded.

"I—I came in—" stammered Bunter.

"I know that, you young ass! What for?"

"I—I thought that beast Loder was after me!"

"Oh!" Warren laughed. "I see!"

He was not surprised to hear of a junior keeping out of the way of the bully of the Sixth.

"All right," he said good-naturedly. "You can cut! You can't hide in senior studies, you young duffer—but it's all right! Hook it now—I've got some fellows coming!"

Bunter crossed slowly to the door.

"Cut!" repeated Warren, as Bunter's fat hand lingered on the door-handle. "What are you hanging about for? Waiting to be kicked?"

"Oh! No!" gasped Bunter. He opened the door quite quickly.

But he lingered in the doorway. If Warren was going to have tea, he would clear the table—and inevitably discover the cake. Bunter did not want to take it away with him—he dared not risk being caught with it. But he did not want to leave it for Warren to find.

Warren threw lumps of coal on the fire. Then, glancing round, he stared at the fat Owl lingering in the doorway.

"Get out!" he rapped.

"I—I—I say, Warren, I—I think your Form-master wants you!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"In—in fact, old Prout called me as—as I came up here, and—and asked me to tell you to go to his study!"

Warren stared at him. Bunter eyed

him hopefully. If he could get Warren out of the study, even for a few minutes, he would be able to hide the cake, and all would be well.

But if Bunter hoped to see Warren rise to a bait like that, he was doomed to disappointment.

Warren came across to the door.

"I don't know why you're telling silly whoppers, Bunter," he said. "But I know you are!" He caught the fat Owl by the collar. "Now, did Prout say he wanted me?"

"Ow! Yes!"

Tap!

Warren tapped Bunter's bullet head on the door.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

"Now, did Prout tell you—"

"Ow! No!"

Warren laughed.

"I thought not! Now cut!"

He twirled Bunter round in the passage and gave him a gentle application of boot-leather. Bunter yelled—and cut! Warren, laughing, went back into the study and slammed the door.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled dismally away. Almost he wished that he had taken the risk of grabbing the cake from Warren's table and carrying it off. But a few moments later he was glad that he hadn't.

As he rolled across the landing, Loder came out of the Remove passage, and, at the same time, Mr. Hacker's angry face rose into view on the Remove staircase. Both of them sighted Bunter at the same moment.

"Oh! Here's Bunter, sir!" called out Loder.

"Oh crikey!"

Mr. Hacker came quickly up.

"Bunter! Did you abstract a cake from my study?"

"A—a—a cake, sir?"

"A large cake—a birthday cake! I saw you on the spot only a few minutes before I missed it—"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Answer me!" snapped Mr. Hacker. He had felt absolutely certain that Bunter had the cake. Now he was doubtful. Certainly there was no sign of a cake, large or small, about the fat junior. From the bottom of his fat heart, Billy Bunter was glad that he had landed it in a Fifth Form study and left it there.

"I—I—I don't know anything about a cake, sir!" gasped Bunter. "You—you can search my—my pockets, if you like!"

"Pish!" snapped Mr. Hacker irritably.

"I've looked in Bunter's study, sir!" said Loder. "It's certainly not there. Perhaps one of the Shell boys—"

Mr. Hacker compressed his lips. After all, it was possible, even probable, that Hobson had got that cake back when his Form-master's back was turned. The master of the Shell nodded, and went down the Remove staircase again, much to Billy Bunter's relief.

"Old ass!" muttered Loder, when he was gone. "Wasting a man's time over his silly cake!"

Billy Bunter grinned as he caught those muttered words. He rolled on into the Remove passage—safe, though cakeless!

Loder of the Sixth gave him no heed. He scowled at Hacker's disappearing head on the stairs. Loder had been intending to go and smoke a cigarette with Price, his pal in the Fifth, when Hacker had called on him to search for Bunter. Smoking cigarettes, certainly, was not a wise way to keep fit for football—and Loder still hoped to wedge somehow into the eleven for Rookwood day. But it was Loder's way.

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He tramped up the Fifth Form passage to Price's study. He supposed that Price would be there, being unaware that the black sheep of the Fifth had not yet come in. He did not care whether Warren was there or not. Warren generally cleared off when Price's Sixth Form pals came to see him.

Loder threw open the door of Study No. 4 in the Fifth.

The next moment he gave almost a yell of astonishment.

He was not thinking of the lost cake. But it was recalled to his mind.

Jim Warren of the Fifth was standing at the study table with a newspaper in his hand, and on the table, in full view, lay an enormous birthday cake.

Loder, utterly amazed, stared at it with almost unbelieving eyes.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Reported for Pilfering!

"YOU!" gasped Loder.

He could hardly believe it.

But there it was; he had to believe his eyes.

Warren looked round at him.

There was a perplexed expression on Warren's face. He had lifted the newspaper to clear the table for tea. He was amazed to see a large birthday cake lying under it. He had only just made the discovery, and he was staring at the cake, wondering how on earth it had got there, when Loder threw open the door.

Knowing nothing whatever about the Hobson affair, he did not know that a cake was missing. He had never heard of that cake before. He was simply amazed to find it in his study.

"You!" repeated Loder, fairly gasping. "You! A Fifth Form man—by gad! Well, this beats it!"

Warren only stared at him. He had not the remotest idea to what Loder was alluding.

"You, by gum!" said Loder.

His eyes danced. It was amazing enough to find that a Fifth Form man had purloined a cake from a master's study. But it was a very welcome discovery—when the Fifth Form man was Warren!

"What the dickens are you burbling about?" exclaimed Warren. "If you've come here to see Price, he's not in. You don't want to see me, I suppose—and I certainly don't want to see you, Loder! Shut the door after you!"

"No—I fancy you don't want to see me, or any prefect!" grinned Loder. "But here I am—and I've bowled you out!"

"Bowled me out!" repeated Warren.

"I shall report this to Hacker, of course."

"Eh?"

"You don't expect me to keep it dark, I suppose?" asked Loder, with great amusement.

"Keep what dark?" gasped Warren.

Loder pointed to the cake.

"Didn't you know it had been missed? Perhaps not; but I may as well tell you that Hacker missed it at once! He was as mad as a hatter—he asked two or three prefects to get after it—"

"After that cake?" howled Warren.

"Yes; and now—"

"What utter rot are you talking?" exclaimed Warren impatiently. "Mean to say that that cake belongs to Hacker?"

"You know it does."

"I know it doesn't, and can't! Fancy Hacker with a sugary birthday cake!" Warren laughed at the idea.

"Don't be an ass, Loder!"

"I don't know what you're getting at, Warren!" said Loder. "I believe Hacker confiscated that cake in a Shell study. Anyhow, he's missed a big birthday cake from his study, and that's it. You're not going to tell me that it's your birthday, and that your people have sent you a cake?" added Loder sarcastically.

"Hardly!"

"Well, then— But there's no need to jaw—that's the cake, and I'm going straight down to Hacker to report you for pilfering it!"

"You silly ass!" roared Warren, as Loder turned away. "I've only just found the cake on my table, and I haven't the least idea how it got here."

"Tell that to Hacker, and see if he believes you!" chuckled Loder, and he walked down the passage in great spirits. If he could not beat his rival in football, he could, at least, land him in a row with a beak—and all was grist that came to Loder's mill!

He lost no time in getting down to Mr. Hacker's study.

Neither had Hacker lost time; for Hobson, of his Form, had been sent for, and was now standing in his Form-master's presence, angry and resentful, and sulkily denying that he had done anything with the cake.

Mr. Hacker was sharp and suspicious. As Bunter had been cleared, his suspicions had turned on Hobby—and the more resentful Hobby looked, the more Hacker believed that his resentment had led him to recapture the cake.

It was, perhaps, rather fortunate for Hobby that Loder arrived. Mr. Hacker did not always wait for complete proof before handing out punishments.

"I've found the cake, sir!" said Loder.

His manner implied that he had been busily and dutifully searching for that missing comestible all the time. He did not intend to mention that he had found the missing cake, entirely by chance, and greatly to his own surprise.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Hacker.

"Was it a Shell boy?"

"No, sir; a Fifth Form fellow had it!"

"A Fifth Form senior!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker, in astonishment; and Hobby stared at Loder with wide-open eyes.

It was the first time Hobby had ever heard of a Greyfriars senior grub-raiding.

"Yes, sir," said Loder.

"Impossible, Loder!"

"I found the cake in his study, sir, and it's there now!" said Loder. "I came at once to report to you, sir. A large birthday cake, with 'Many Happy Returns' on it—that was what you described to me, sir—"

"Most certainly," said Mr. Hacker. "But I cannot believe—I can scarcely believe—that a Fifth Form boy— His name, Loder?"

"Warren, sir!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Hacker. His sharp, steely eyes glinted. Warren had snubbed him in the quad that day! Mr. Hacker pounced on the name of Warren like a cat on a mouse. "Oh!" he repeated. "Warren!"

"Yes, sir. I found the cake in his study—Study No. 4 in the Fifth!"

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Hacker. "You may go, Hobson!" he added.

Hobby went—in a state of great wonder. Hobby liked and admired Warren of the Fifth, as a splendid fellow and a tremendous footballer. He did not believe for a moment that Warren had snaffled that cake

But he knew that Loder disliked his rival in Soccer, and he had no doubt that that dislike had caused the bully of the Sixth to make some idiotic mistake.

That was not Mr Hacker's impression, however. He, too, disliked Warren, and, astonished as he was, he was by no means displeased to catch him in a delinquency. He only wanted to be sure.

"If you are absolutely certain, Loder—" he said.

"Absolutely, sir! I found Warren alone in his study, with the cake on his table—just going to cut it when I spotted him." Loder added that detail, feeling that if it was not true it was as good as true. He had no doubt that Warren had snaffled the cake, and was going to cut it.

"I am greatly surprised—and shocked!" said Mr. Hacker. "Such an act would be serious enough in a junior—it is more than that in a senior. It is an act of pilfering, pure and simple—such excuses as might be made for a small boy cannot possibly be made for a boy of Warren's age and standing. I fear that the matter will have to go before the Head!"

Loder's eyes glittered.

Mr. Hacker reflected for a moment.

"I shall speak to Mr. Prout," he said.

"I shall ask him to accompany me to Warren's study and ascertain the precise facts. The purloined comestible, if there, will settle the matter beyond question!"

"It is certainly there, sir."

"Quite so, Loder! Mr. Prout can scarcely refuse to place the matter before Dr. Locke—in fact, I shall insist upon it!" said Mr. Hacker firmly.

"In a case of pilfering—actual pilfering—the headmaster must certainly judge! I am much obliged to you, Loder."

"Not at all, sir!" said Loder.

He left Hacker's study, with a smiling face.

Hacker went along to Prout's study at once. His cold eyes, rather like a fish's, glinted as he went. He had heard strange rumours about that new fellow, Warren, in the Fifth, which had made him suspicious—he was a man easily stirred to suspicion. Now, it seemed, the fellow was not honest—he had been guilty of pilfering, as well as of snubbing a fussy, interfering gentleman of the name of Hacker. He was going up to the Head!

Loder strolled away, feeling pleased with himself and things generally. This affair meant trouble for Warren—if it actually came up to the Head it might mean the sack!

Loder's prospects of a place in the first eleven on Rookwood day seemed to have brightened considerably!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Guilty Man!

"YOUR birthday, old man?" asked Hilton.

Jim Warren laughed.

"No!"

"Looks like it!" said Potter.

"Topping cake, anyhow!" said Greene.

They had arrived at Study No. 4 a few minutes after Loder left. They found Warren standing by the table, staring at an enormous birthday cake.

Warren had come up to the study first, to get tea going; but he had done little towards it, so far. First there had been Bunter—then Loder—now the mystery of the cake.

Thinking it over, after Loder had

gone, it did not take Warren long to guess that there was a connection between Bunter's presence in the study and the presence of the cake.

"It's not mine!" explained Warren. "I found that young ass, Bunter of the Remove, in the study, and booted him out, and then found this cake hidden under the Courtfield paper. Loder barged in, and said that a cake had been snaffled from Hacker's study—so putting two and two together—"

Hilton chuckled.

"What the thump did Bunter park it here for?" he asked.

"He said Loder was after him—any port in a storm, I suppose," said Jim. "That idiot Loder saw it here, and seems to have fancied that I snaffled it—"

"Oh gad!"

"The silly ass!" exclaimed Potter.

"He's gone to report me to Hacker!" said Warren, with a laugh. "The sooner it's gone, the better. Bunter brought it here, and he will have to take it away again. If he takes it straight back to Hacker, it may save him a whopping."

"He jolly well ought to have a whopping!" said Greene. "Cheeky young tick, parking his loot in a Fifth Form study!"

"If you fellows will fetch that young idiot, I'll have tea ready by the time you get back," said Warren.

"Right-ho!" answered Potter. And he left the study, with Greene, to look for the Owl of the Remove.

Cedric Hilton sat in the armchair. Although he had, under Warren's influence, taken up football that term, and played quite a good game, he was still much the same slacker as of old, in other respects. Sitting in the armchair, with one elegantly trousered leg crossed over the other, he lazily watched Warren getting busy.

Warren lifted the cake to the shelf, out of the way, to wait for Bunter's arrival. Then he set the table, and proceeded to crack eggs for poaching over the study fire.

He was thus engaged, when a ponderous tread was heard in the passage.

"That's Prout," said Hilton.

"Unless an elephant's got into the House!" agreed Warren.

It was Prout! His portly and majestic form appeared in the doorway—with the meagre figure of the master of the Shell at his elbow!

Mr. Prout was

looking annoyed and disturbed. Already, that afternoon, Hacker had brought him a complaint of Coker, for kicking up a shindy in the Shell. Now he had brought him a still more serious complaint about Warren—no less than a charge of pilfering!

Prout was angry and indignant. In his anger and indignation, he had gone to the length of telling Mr. Hacker that it was nonsense—utter nonsense!

Still, he could not refuse to inquire into the matter. Hacker was prepared to go over his head, as it were, and call in Dr. Locke, if he did. Prout did not want the headmaster intervening in affairs pertaining to his Form.

"Warren!" he boomed.

"Yes, sir!"

"What is this I hear?" boomed Prout. "I repeat, Warren, what—what is this I hear?"

Jim did not answer that question—which was rather a difficult one, as he did not know what Prout might have heard.

Mr. Hacker broke in.

His sharp, penetrating eyes, scanning the study, spotted the big cake on the shelf at once. He pointed with a bony finger.

(Continued on next page.)

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"There is the cake, sir!" he barked. "What?" boomed Prout. "What?"

He stared at the cake. There it was—right before his eyes—an enormous birthday cake—proof of guilt! Prout's eyes almost popped out of his fruity face at the sight of it.

That a fellow in his Form—a senior man of Greyfriars—could have snaffled a cake, like some grubby fag, seemed impossible to Prout. But there was the cake. Prout fairly gaped at it.

"That, sir, is the cake, taken surreptitiously from my study a short while ago," said Mr. Hacker icily. "A prefect reported to me that he had found it here. There it is, sir! This boy of your Form, sir, has been guilty of pilfering—I can use no other word—pilfering!" Hacker repeated the word with relish. "I leave the matter in your hands, sir, as this boy's Form-master—but I take it for granted that it will be placed before the Head for judgment!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout, still staring at the cake. "Warren, I—I am amazed! I am—am astounded! How do you explain this, Warren?"

"Warren can hardly explain facts that speak for themselves!" said Mr. Hacker acidly. "Personally, I desire to hear nothing from Warren. I desire the headmaster to deal with this matter!"

"You will permit me, sir, to deal with a matter in my own Form, sir!" boomed Prout. "I shall hear Warren's explanation, if any!"

"I should prefer, sir, Warren's explanation to be made to his headmaster!" snapped Hacker.

"Nothing of the kind, sir!" boomed Prout. "Warren's explanation will be made to me, as his Form-master!"

Mr. Hacker set his thin lips hard. "Very well, sir; but I shall insist upon the matter ultimately going before Dr. Locke," he said. "I shall assuredly insist upon that!"

"Pray let me speak, sir! Warren, I am waiting to hear your explanation. This—this comestible was, it appears, abstracted from Mr. Hacker's study. It has been found in your study. What have you to say?"

"I found it here, sir, when I came up from the changing-room," answered Jim. "It was on the table, covered by a newspaper, and I found it when I was going to clear the table for tea."

"Bless my soul!" said Prout. Mr. Hacker's sharp eyes gleamed at Warren.

"Do you imagine for one moment, Warren, that such a statement as that will find credence?" he snapped.

"Yes, sir," answered Jim quietly. "I believe that my Form-master will take my word. He knows that I should tell him the truth, sir!"

"Undoubtedly!" said Prout. "It is very extraordinary—very strange indeed—very odd—but—"

"I do not believe a single word of it," said Mr. Hacker, with acid bitterness. "I regard Warren's statement not only as an untruth, but as a very clumsy and foolish untruth!"

"Really, Mr. Hacker—"

"Yes, sir!" barked Hacker. "I shall not believe, sir, that the boy who stole—yes, stole—that cake brought it to Warren's study, unless the thief—yes, sir, the thief—was Warren himself, or one of his friends, at all events!"

Cedric Hilton smiled. "Not guilty, sir, if you're referring to me!" he drawled.

"Loder of the Sixth, sir, found Warren alone in his study, about to cut the cake when he was discovered."

"That's not true, sir," interposed Jim quietly.

Mr. Hacker's face flamed. "Mr. Prout, I will not be given the lie by this boy of your Form!"

"I did not mean that, sir," said Warren. "I meant that what Loder said was untrue. I've no doubt he told you so, as you say so; but he was not speaking the truth. I had no intention whatever of cutting the cake, as it does not belong to me!"

"I prefer to believe Loder on that point!" said Mr. Hacker bitterly.

"You may please yourself about that, of course, sir," said Warren. "I am sure that my Form-master will believe me!"

"Assuredly," said Prout—"assuredly! It appears, Mr. Hacker, that some boy—probably some thoughtless junior—abstracted this cake from your study, and—placed it here."

"Nothing of the kind, sir! If you take that view—"

"I do, sir—I certainly take that view!" boomed Prout.

"Then I shall refer the matter to the headmaster," said Mr. Hacker, "and I insist upon Warren coming immediately to Dr. Locke, to answer a charge of pilfering—I should say theft!"

"Nonsense, sir!" boomed Prout. "Nonsense or not, sir, I insist!" said Mr. Hacker firmly.

There was a pause. Prout breathed stertorously; Hacker stood with compressed lips, thin and acid and bitter. And in that pause sounds of scuffling footsteps were heard in the passage, as if someone was being propelled unwillingly along; and a breathless, squeaking voice penetrated into the study:

"I say, you fellows, leggo! I say, I'll come all right if you'll let go my collar, Potter! Leggo my arm, Greene, you beast! I'm coming, ain't I? I never left the cake in Warren's study. Besides, I should have taken it away again, only that brute Loder was after me! I tell you, it ain't Hacker's cake at all! It's my birthday, and I had that cake from Bunter Court! Leggo! Old Hacker pinched it from Hobson, and I only got it away to give it back to old Hobson—honest Injun! I say, leggo!"

Hilton smiled. Warren grinned. Mr. Prout's face had an extraordinary expression on it. Hacker looked thunderstruck. The next moment Billy Bunter was propelled into the study, followed by Potter and Greene.

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter—"I—I say, I'll take the cake away, if you like, now Loder's gone, if you're sure that old beast Hacker ain't anywhere about! Oh—" Bunter broke off with a squeak of horror as he saw Mr. Hacker in the study. "Oh crikey! Oh lor'! Oh crumbs!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Loder!

BILLY BUNTER stood rooted to the floor.

His eyes and his spectacles were glued on Mr. Hacker's furious face.

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance and backed to the doorway. They had had no idea that beaks were in the study when they propelled Bunter in.

Mr. Prout found his voice. "Bunter!" he boomed.

"Oh crikey!" "Bunter, did you place that—that cake in Warren's study?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I've never seen it before!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't hiding in the study when Warren came up, sir, and he never kicked me out. I—I never touched the cake, sir! I haven't been near Mr. Hacker's study at all, sir! Mr. Hacker knows—he saw me, sir—I—I—I mean—"

"You abstracted that cake from Mr. Hacker's study and brought it here—to a Fifth Form study?" roared Mr. Prout.

"Oh, no, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I don't know how it got here, sir! I certainly never went into Mr. Hacker's study while he was speaking to you in your study, sir! Never thought of such a thing! I never knew he went to your study at all, sir. I wasn't watching him round the corner!"

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout.

"Besides, sir, I was just going to take the cake back again," said the fat Owl eagerly. "Potter and Greene came and told me—"

"You young rascal!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "I suspected you, in the first place, and now it appears—"

"Oh, no, sir! I hadn't left it in Warren's study when you met me on the landing, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I hadn't been in the Fifth Form passage at all, sir, when you saw me coming away from it."

"Silence!" boomed Prout. "Silence! Bunter, you are an untruthful young rascal!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Mr. Hacker, are you satisfied now that it was this Remove boy who abstracted the cake and concealed it in this study?" demanded Prout.

Hacker breathed hard. There was only one reply he could make, unwilling as he was to make it.

"It—it would certainly appear so," he breathed.

"Do you still desire to take Warren to the headmaster, sir, on a charge of pilfering?" demanded Prout, pushing his victory home, as it were.

"N-n-no, sir," stammered the wretched Hacker. "In the—the—the circumstances, c-c-certainly not."

"I am glad of it, sir!" boomed Prout. "I am very glad to hear it, sir. And I should be glad, sir, to hear you express something in the nature of regret, sir, to this boy of my Form, for your very unjust and unworthy suspicions, sir!"

Mr. Hacker snapped his teeth.

"The matter ends here, so far as Warren is concerned," he said. "I shall take this boy, Bunter, to his Form-master—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Come with me!" snarled Hacker, and he grasped the Owl of the Remove by a fat shoulder.

"Oh lor'!"

Mr. Hacker was glad to get off the scene. Potter and Greene were grinning, Warren very nearly laughing, Hilton smiling a mocking smile. Prout was lofty and scornful. Never had the master of the Shell felt so thoroughly defeated and humiliated. He whisked out of the study, hooking Bunter after him.

"One moment, sir!" boomed Prout.

"I have nothing more to say, sir!" almost hissed Hacker.

"The cake, sir!" boomed Prout. "I cannot allow your comestibles to be left in this study, sir. Kindly take your cake away with you, sir."

Hacker, in his confusion and discomfort, had forgotten the cake. He twirled Bunter into the study again.

"Bunter! Convey that cake back to my study!" he snarled.

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter took the cake from the



As Wharton staggered up, an electric torch was switched on, and the light flashed in his face. The visibility being good, he discovered it was ink with which he was drenched, and that three startled faces were staring at him. "What have you done this for?" asked Wharton. "Awfully sorry!" gasped Hobson. "We meant it for Hacker!"

shelf. He marched out of the study with it, followed by Hacker. Prout was booming again.

"Warren, I am sorry for this. Mr. Hacker does not see fit to express his regret. But I am sorry, Warren, that you should have been subjected to these unworthy aspersions—these unjust suspicions—I may say, these foolish, thoughtless, and absurd suspicions."

This was said for Hacker's benefit, as he went. Then Prout, triumphant, rolled out of the study.

The Fifth Formers were left grinning. "Dear old Hacker!" murmured Potter "Did you see his face?"

"Worth a guinea a box!" drawled Hilton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was tea, at last, in Study No. 4, in the Fifth. Warren and his friends sat down to it, with smiling faces.

The hapless Owl of the Remove was not smiling as Hacker marched him away, first to his study, to deposit the cake there, then to Mr. Quelch's study, to be reported to his Form-master.

It was no smiling matter for Bunter. Hacker drew some consolation from the sound of a swishing cane in Quelch's study. Bunter drew no consolation from it whatever.

Bunter yelped dolorously as the cane swished.

Mr. Hacker went back to his study in an extremely bad temper. It dawned on him that in his dislike of Jim Warren he had rather made a fool of himself. True, he had acted on a prefect's report, but that prefect had made a fool of himself, too. Loder ought to have ascertained the facts—the real facts. Hacker was thankful, at least, that the matter

had not, after all, come before the Head! But that fool, Loder—

There was a tap at his door and Loder of the Sixth looked in. Loder was rather anxious to know how matters were going.

He was surprised by the glare of concentrated wrath that Mr. Hacker fixed on him.

"Oh! You, Loder!" said Mr. Hacker.

"Yes, sir. You found the cake in Warren's study?"

"You are a fool, Loder!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I cannot understand how the Head can allow you to remain a prefect, Loder, when you are so obviously unsuited for the position."

"Eh?"

"Such stupidity—such unthinking stupidity—"

"But, sir—" gasped Loder.

"Leave my study!"

"B-b-b-but—"

"Leave my study!" roared Hacker.

Loder left!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Mistake in the Dark!

HARRY WHARTON yelled.

It was enough to make any fellow yell.

The captain of the Remove had been out of gates. He had returned exactly half a minute late.

Gosling had closed the gate. True, he was prepared to open it to let in a late-comer—but only at the cost of that late-comer having his name taken, for subsequent report to his Form-master.

Which was not good enough, if it could be helped. Had Wharton been half an hour, instead of half a minute late, it could not have been helped, for he would have missed call-over, as well as "gates." But half a minute did not matter—if he could get in unseen.

There were ways and means of doing these things. Getting in over the Cloister wall was one way; over the masters' private gate was another. So Wharton, whose object was to save time, tried that gate, which came nearest, got over it successfully, and dropped inside.

The November dusk was thick, especially on the path from that gate, where trees over-arched. Lights were already gleaming from the windows of the House afar.

Wharton hurried up the path. He was in ample time. Lots of fellows were not yet in the House. But—

There was a sudden scuffling and rustling sound under the dark trees by the path. Wharton, surprised, stopped, and looked about him. Somebody was there in the deep shadow; he wondered what

Then it happened!

Swoooooosh!

Something liquid struck him, and splashed over him. It was then that he yelled. Any fellow would have yelled. It was so utterly surprising and disconcerting.

He staggered as he yelled, and sat down. Something wet was streaming over him—all over his face and his collar. He realised dizzily that he had been the recipient of the contents of a garden squirt.

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(Continued from page 13.)

He heard a faint chuckle in the dark—a sound of retreating, scampering feet. He spluttered, yelled, and roared: "You silly asses! You blithering idiots! What sort of a game do you call this? I'll jolly well punch you! Ooogh!"

The scampering sound of retreat ceased. There was a startled voice—the voice of Hoskins of the Shell.

"I say, that ain't Hacker!"

"Oh crumbs!" That was Hobson's voice.

"What silly ass?" came Stewart's voice.

Wharton staggered up.

Footsteps approached him in the gloom. A little electric torch was switched on and the light flashed in his face. Then—the visibility being good—he discovered that it was ink with which he was drenched. He stood in the glare of the torch like an Abyssinian of the deepest dye.

Three startled faces were staring at him.

"Is—is—is that Wharton?" stuttered Hobson.

"You shrieking idiot!" gasped Harry. "What the thump have you done this for? Look at me!"

They looked. They chuckled. They seemed to regard the aspect of the captain of the Remove as funny.

"Awfully sorry!" gasped Hobson. "We were waiting for Hacker!"

"You blithering ass!"

"You know he grabbed my birthday cake yesterday—"

"You howling ass!"

"He's gone out, and we knew he was coming oack for call-over—"

"You benighted bandersnatch!"

"We're going to give him something for bagging that cake!" said Hobson.

"We can't boot him, you know—a Form-master—"

"Hardly!" murmured Stewart.

"So we got Gosling's garden squirt from the woodshed, and filled it—it up with ink!" grinned Hobson. "Rather a lark, what? Sorry you got it—"

"You dangerous maniac!"

"Safe enough in the dark, you know, and, of course, we never thought a Remove kid would be coming in this way—"

"You footling fathead!"

"Well, it's your own fault!" said Hoskins. "What do you mean by coming in at masters' gate?"

"You fozzling frump!"

"Well, it's no good being ratty," argued Hobson. "You got it by mistake, and it was all your own fault—you must admit that fellows never come in this way—"

"You gabbling dunderhead—"

"Now the ink's wasted," said Hobson crossly. "We shall have to get a fresh lot to fill the squirt for Hacker! You've mucked up the whole thing, Wharton! Just like a fatheaded Remove fag—"

"Barging in at the wrong place, at the wrong moment!" said Hoskins.

"Silly ass, and no mistake!" said Stewart. "I say, shut off that light, Hobby—if Hacker comes in—"

Hobson shut off the light.

Wharton, in the gloom, gave the three Shell fellows an inky, infuriated glare. Hacker, no doubt, deserved punishment for grabbing that birthday cake. Wharton had no objection to Hacker getting punishment. But he had a strong objection to getting it in the place of Hacker!

"You fatheaded, frabjous, footling dummies!" he gasped. "Look at me! I'm soaked with ink—"

"We shall have to get some more ink—"

"Smothered with it—"

"Yes, yes, but do shut up, Wharton!" said Hobson impatiently. "The question is, getting some more ink in time for Hacker—"

"No time," said Stewart. "Better fill it with water at the fountain. Water will do for Hacker."

"Well, I'd rather let him have ink!" objected Hobson. "After he snaffled my birthday cake, you know—"

"You blithering idiot!" hissed the captain of the Remove. "You dangerous lunatic, you needn't worry about getting any more ink—you're going to have some of this!"

"Eh? Oh! Leggo!" yelled Hobson, as Harry Wharton grasped him, and grabbed him, and clutched him, transferring a considerable quantity of the ink from his own person to Hobby's.

"There, you fathead—there, you ass!" gasped Wharton.

"Gerraway! Gurrgh! Gerraway! I'm all inky! Dragimoff, you men!" gurgled Hobson frantically.

Stewart and Hoskins grasped Wharton, to drag him off. He let go Hobson, and grappled with them. More ink was transferred.

"Oh!" gasped Hoskins. "The brute's smothering me—"

"Here, leggo!" howled Stewart. "I tell you, leggo! You're getting it all over me! You inky brute, leggo!"

They hurled Wharton away. He rolled over, picked himself up, and cut off to the quad inky, but hardly more inky than Hobson & Co. He wanted a wash before call-over; and he lost no time. So did they!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Hobson. "The cheeky brute— Croogh! I'm all inky! I say, I'm smothered with ink!"

"Urrgh!" gasped Hoskins. "Same here! Oogh!"

"The brute's inked me all over!" gurgled Stewart. "I say, shove on that torch, Hobby—let's see—"

The torch gleamed again. It revealed three untidy and inky fellows to one another's view. They gazed at one another. It had been an unfortunate mistake—for Wharton. It had turned out equally unfortunate for the three avengers.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Hobson. "I—I say—"

"Hark!" breathed Stewart.

There was a click of a key in a lock. Someone was opening the gate from outside. Promptly, Hobson shut off the torch again.

"That'll be Hacker!" whispered Hoskins.

"Cut!" breathed Hobson.

They cut, as the gate opened, and Mr. Hacker came in. Smothered with ink, and with the squirt empty, they were not prepared to deal with Hacker. On that occasion, at least, the acid-tempered master of the Shell was not booked to suffer for his sins.

Mr. Hacker caught a sound of scampering feet. He started, peering into the gloom of the shadowed path.

"Who is that?" he exclaimed. "Who is there?"

But answer there came none. Hobby & Co. faded away in the dusky distance. Mr. Hacker peered about him, as he came up the path. But he saw no one and he remained completely and happily unaware of his narrow escape.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Jolt for James!

LODER of the Sixth breathed hard.

His face was white; but there was an expression of bitter, almost savage determination on it.

It was a fine afternoon, for November; there was a glimmer of sunshine on the river. Loder was standing among the trees by the towpath, and through the openings he saw the glimmering Sark. And he was listening for a footfall.

As he listened he glanced about him, with stealthy furtiveness.

There was no one at hand—no eye to see him. He knew that Jim Warren was coming up the towpath—he had seen him from a distance. But the Fifth Former was strolling in a leisurely way, and he was not at hand yet.

Loder had a large and heavy stone gripped in his hand. The thoughts that were in his mind would have startled any Greyfriars fellow—even the fellow that liked him, least.

The date of the Rookwood match was close at hand now. Loder was definitely out of the team—Warren was in it. Loder had done his best—even to the extent of throwing aside his slacking ways, and even giving up his smokes. But that reform had come a little too late—Warren was in the eleven, and he was out! Wingate had been both surprised and pleased by the improvement in Loder, and had willingly put him down as a reserve—if, at the last moment, a fellow dropped out, Loder was going in!

Certainly the captain of Greyfriars never dreamed for a moment what black thoughts that put into Loder's mind.

Warren had his place. Loder was convinced of that. Warren had ousted him. Warren had done him down. There was nothing at which the bully of Greyfriars would have stopped to get his own back, as he regarded it, on the fellow who had taken his place.

And his first idea had been an "accidental" kick in games practice. But he knew that it would hardly do. Just before the St. Jim's match, a short time ago, he had crooked Warren with an "accidental kick."

Warren had taken it as an accident—most of the fellows had. But some fellows had made rather pointed remarks on the subject.

If it happened again, it would obviously be a little too palpable. He could not let it happen again. He dared not.

But there were more ways than one of killing a cat. A hard knock on the knee, for instance, would put a fellow off footer for a week or so. Not any serious damage, of course—just enough to crook him for footer.

Even Loder, at more normal times, was hardly capable of such an act. But in his bitterness and resentment and rage, he let the idea germinate in his mind, till it became a determination. All he wanted now was an opportunity

—and the opportunity had presented itself. Warren would be passing him in a few minutes—the stone would fly—and Loder would disappear off the scene, long before the Fifth Former had a chance of seeing him. It was safe—and Loder, in his present mood, was thinking only of that. Later, he might feel the sting of shame and remorse—at the moment he was bitterly and savagely determined. And his hand closed convulsively on his missile, as footsteps came along the towpath.

But he paused. The footsteps came from the other direction, that of Courtfield Bridge.

He scowled through the trees. He did not want witnesses on the scene.

A beefy, hulking fellow, with a pug nose and a square jaw, stopped on the towpath, almost opposite the spot where the bully of the Sixth was in cover. Loder, staring at him, remembered that he had seen him before. The fellow had looked in at the school gates, a week or two ago, and Loder had seen him then—he had heard that he was Warren's cousin, of the same name.

It was, in fact, James Warren—and James halted, and stood with a grin on his ill-favoured face, as he saw Jim coming up the path. Quite unaware of Loder, only ten feet from him in the trees, James grinned at his approaching cousin—a disagreeable grin.

"James, you rotter!" Loder heard Warren's voice, as he came up. He sighted the handsome, fair-haired Fifth Form fellow now; but he did not think of hurling the stone. James, quite unconsciously, was stopping Loder's cowardly game.

"Jim, you cad!" retorted James. Warren of the Fifth came to a halt, facing his cousin. His face had been cheery and careless when Loder had spotted him ten minutes ago, on the bank. Now it was dark and angry and contemptuous.

"What are you doing here, James?" he asked.

"Guess!" grinned James. "I can guess. Are you going to the school again?"

"Guessed it in one!"

"You rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared James. "You rotter!" repeated Jim. "Why are you here at all? Why are you sticking so near Greyfriars?"

James chuckled, a jeering chuckle. "I never knew that Popper Court was near Greyfriars when my pal Cook asked me to join his party there!" he said. "I was quite surprised when I heard it from young Wharton the day I met him. Not that I care!"

"We'd better have this out!" said Jim quietly. "I've been thinking of coming to Popper Court to see you about it—"

"Better not!" sneered James. "I'm not introducing my poor relations to my friends there."

"You cheeky fool!" Loder's eyes gleamed as he heard. If Jim Warren really was the son of Sir Arthur Warren, a rich baronet, what did his cousin mean by calling him a "poor relation"?

Was it possible that there was, after all, something in that strange rumour about Warren—that he was not the fellow he pretended to be?

"Will you keep clear of Greyfriars?" muttered Jim.

"No, I won't!" answered James coolly.

"What's your game then, you rotter? I'm asking no favours at your hands, as you jolly well know!"

"I know," grinned James. "My game, my dear Cousin Jim, is to make you sit up! If you don't like it, you'd

better learn to keep your paws to yourself."

"You rotter! I stopped you bullying that chap Price, you bullying brute, and I'd do it again."

"And you'll sit up for doing it!" grinned James. "And I'll make you sit up, you beggar on horseback! I'm going to look in at Greyfriars now! Like to walk in with me, and show me the sights of the rotten hole that my pater wanted to send me to—a rottener hole than Oakshott, I believe."

"I want you to keep clear of Greyfriars!" said Jim, in a low, tense voice. James nodded.

"I know! That's why I'm going there!"

"You're not!" said Warren, between his teeth.

"Who's going to stop me?" jeered James.

Warren clenched his hands. It was

easy to read, in his face, that he was thinking of knocking James spinning. James, grinning defiance, slouched past him.

Loder set his lips. This was his chance, if he was going to take it at all.

He hesitated a moment—something like shame holding him back. But it was only for a moment. His hand came up, and the heavy stone whizzed—aimed at Warren, as he stood on the towpath.

But at that same moment Warren made a grasp at James, caught him by the collar, and swung him back.

"You're not—" he was beginning. Crash!

The whizzing stone landed—not on Jim Warren! It landed on James, who was between Warren and Loder as he was jerked back by the collar.

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Our clever rhymester is certainly long-haired, but it's very doubtful—when one considers the hard knocks he gets—whether he'll be long-lived! He doesn't fare quite so badly this week, however, with **CEDRIC HILTON**, of the Fifth Form.

(1)

Last Tuesday, which was Guy Fawkes' Day—

"Sez you!" sez you. "You're telling me!"

We had a very grand display
Of fireworks, with admission free!
Alas! A shilling cannon brought
A sudden end to all I'd planned;
Because, you see, I kind of thought
I had to hold it in my hand!

(3)

'Twas thus I called at Hilton's den.
The Fifth Form fellow was within.
And he, with several other men,
Observed me with a hearty grin!
"This ain't a hospital," he said.
"Buzz off, and take that face away!"
But I politely shook my head,
And told him I had come to stay.



(6)

He had ambitions, it appeared,
To play at footer for the School
(At which confession Pricey sneered,
And told him not to be a fool.)
But Hilton, turning rather red,
Declared that footer was top-hole.
"It must be thrillin'!" Pricey said,
"To push a ball inside a goal!"



(2)

It seemed that this was not the case.
The thing went off—and so did I,
With holes blown in my handsome
face!
In fact, they said I looked a Guy!
Now bandages and bits of lint
Conceal my manly form from view,
My arm is in a kind of splint,
And both my eyes are turning
blue!

(4)

Then Price, his study-mate, looked grim.
(He always does! That's nothing new!)
But I, without a glance at him,
Asked Hilton for an interview.
Then Hilton seemed to be in doubt
(That's nothing new! He always does!)
He looked at Price, who then rapped out
The single, solid statement: "Buzz!"



(7)

He told me he was reading hard
To take some horrible Matric.
And Pricey yawned, and said he barred
Exams and things—they made him sick!
"I like debating," Hilton said.
"I speak at all our Form debates!"
While Pricey groaned and clutched his head.
Such things, of course, Price always hates.



(8)

I left the study much impressed
With Hilton's calm good-
humoured tone.
"He'd be," said I, "among the best
If he would leave that beast
alone!"
But, sometimes decent, sometimes
wrong,
He'll go his strange uneasy way
Till Price is sacked—it won't be long!
The dog has nearly had his day!

James gave a fearful yell as the stone crashed on his leg. He yelled, and yelled again. Jim, in his surprise, jumped almost clear of the towpath.

"What—who—" he gasped. Loder was already running through the trees. He dared not linger. His one thought was to get clear, undiscovered.

James, yelling wildly, stood on one leg, clasping the other with both hands. The whizzing stone had caught him just above the knee, and it hurt. James yelled and yelled.

Jim Warren stared at him, stared at the stone that had fallen in the grass on the towpath, and made a leap towards the trees. But he turned back to James, concerned for the fellow's injury, little as he liked him.

"Oh! Ow! Ooogh!" James was howling. "Oh, gad! I'm lamed! Who threw that stone? Oh crumbs! Oooh!"

"Somebody in the trees!" gasped the amazed Warren. "I—I think it must have been thrown at me—but you got it!"

"Hang you!" roared James. "You rotter! Ow! Oh, my leg! Wow!"

It was clear to both of them that the stone had been flung at Jim. James, who had passed him, had been jerked back by the collar at the precise moment that the stone crashed; but the thrower could not have foreseen that. The missile had been aimed at Jim, and James had interposed—unluckily for himself, though luckily for Warren of the Fifth.

"Oh! Yow! Wow!" howled James, almost dancing on his sound leg. "Oh, you rotter! Oh, you cad! Ow!"

"Not my fault!" gasped Warren. "You grabbed me, you rotter!" yelled James. "Ow! Oh! Ooogh!" He put his bruised leg to the ground, and limped, and yelped: "Ow!"

"Let me help you—" "Leave me alone, hang you!" snarled James.

And, still yelping with pain, James started up the towpath—limping on his way back to Popper Court.

With that damaged leg, James was not disposed to carry out his intention of paying a visit to the school. He limped, and yelped, and disappeared up the river, Warren staring after him for a few moments, before he plunged into the trees, in a rather belated search for the unseen fellow who had flung the stone. But that fellow was gone. Loder of the Sixth was already at a safe distance.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Waiting for Coker!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Loder's in a hurry!" said Bob Cherry.

The juniors glanced round. On that fine half-holiday, the Famous Five of the Remove were out of gates. For reasons best known to themselves, they were grouped under the trees on the roadside, at a little distance from the school gates.

They were looking towards the school; but a sound behind them in the wood drew their attention. The wood extended from the road, about a hundred yards, to the towpath on the Sark. From the direction of the river, a fellow came running—and they were surprised to see that it was Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form.

It was rather unusual for a prefect of the Sixth to be scuttling among the trees like some festive fag. The chums of the Remove regarded him curiously.

Loder did not see them till he was close on the road. Then he suddenly spotted the five, and dropped into a walk.

With a rather transparent assumption of carelessness, he affected to saunter on, like a fellow who was not in a hurry at all. That assumption did not deceive the juniors for a moment.

They did not know, and did not care, anything about Loder's business; but they were quite well aware that he had been scudding away from the riverside in a great hurry, and that he did not want anyone to observe that he had been in a hurry.

He scowled at them as he reached the roadside.

"What are you doing here?" he snapped.

It was very annoying to Loder to run into a party of Lower School fellows just then, especially as he was not sure whether Warren might be hunting through the wood for the thrower of the stone.

Had that missile damaged Warren, as intended, no pursuit would have been practicable—Jim would have been limping on a lamed leg. But Loder knew that it had hit James, and that Jim was able, and probably keen, to look for the fellow who had flung it.

Remove fellows were not wanted on the spot, and Loder was surprised and suspicious at finding them there. In summer days fellows might loaf under the wayside trees; but in November it was not attractive. Obviously, they were there for some purpose, and a guilty conscience made Loder uneasy and suspicious. If they had been watching him—

"Oh, just admiring the scenery, Loder!" answered Bob Cherry cheerily. "Well, don't loaf about here—clear off!" growled Loder.

The juniors looked at him. Loder, watching their faces, could see that they knew nothing of his proceedings—they had not been spying on him, as he had dreaded for a moment. But he did not want them there if Warren came through the wood looking for his unseemly enemy.

They did not stir. True, Loder was a prefect; but ordering fellows about on a half-holiday, for no perceptible reason, was rather "thick." So far as the chums of the Remove could see, there was no reason why they should not linger under the roadside trees, if the spirit moved them so to do.

"Do you hear me?" snapped Loder. "The hearfulness is terrific, my esteemed Loder!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But—"

"What are you doing here, anyhow?" "Just waiting for somebody to pass!" answered Harry.

He did not add that they were waiting for Coker of the Fifth, with hostile intentions. That was not a detail to mention to a prefect.

"Rot!" grunted Loder. "Get out of it! Now then, sheer off!"

The Famous Five exchanged glances with deep feelings. It seemed sheer bullying tyranny to them. But Loder was a prefect; he could—and would—whop, and he could hand out lines.

"Come on!" said Harry curtly; and the Famous Five left the spot and walked up the road towards Courtfield Common.

Loder watched them for a few moments, to see that they were well started. He did not care to wait and watch them out of sight, in case Jim Warren appeared from the wood. Having seen them to a distance of a dozen yards or so, Loder hurried on towards the school gates.

The juniors had started at a good

pace; but they dropped into a slow walk. When, looking back, they saw that Loder had disappeared, they turned.

They had not, in fact, the slightest intention of clearing off. They had only given Loder time to get clear of the spot.

"That rotter's gone!" said Nugent. "Get back!" said Harry.

And the Famous Five walked back to the spot where they had encountered Loder, and once more parked themselves under the trees.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes some other silly ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as there was a rustling in the wood behind them.

"Only Warren!" said Johnny Bull.

They looked at Jim Warren as he came through the wood. He seemed to be searching among the trees as he came; and they wondered whether his presence there had anything to do with Loder's flight.

He gave a start at the sight of the juniors, and came hastily up. They greeted him with cheery grins.

"Have you kids been here long?" he asked. "Have you seen anybody come out of the wood on this side?"

"Only Loder!" answered Harry Wharton.

"Loder!" repeated Warren.

"Jolly old Loder!" said Bob Cherry. "He ordered us off, but we got back again. Looking for Loder?"

Warren did not answer that. Loder's name had given him a shock. It seemed impossible to suspect a Sixth Form prefect of having played that miserable and cowardly trick. The juniors regarded him very curiously. They wondered whether Warren had been having a row with Loder, and if that was the reason of Loder's flight.

"How long ago did you see Loder?" asked Warren, at last.

"About ten or twelve minutes."

Warren was silent again. That would be the time. The juniors, wondering more and more, waited till he spoke.

"Did Loder seem in a hurry when you saw him?" he asked, at length.

"The hurryfulness was terrific!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Yes, rather," said Harry. "He was running. Have you been scrapping with a jolly old prefect, Warren?"

"Oh, no! You haven't seen anybody else about?"

"Nobody," answered Harry.

Warren gave the juniors a nod, and walked back through the wood towards the riverside. There was no doubt in his mind now.

It was Loder who had flung that stone! Loder was his enemy; but that was not the reason—the reason was plain enough. Jim had not forgotten how Loder had crooked him for the St. Jim's match—by an accidental kick. There had been a lingering doubt in his mind whether that kick had been wholly accidental.

That stone had crashed on James' leg, and James would be limping for a week. It had been intentionally aimed low. But for that happy chance—happy for Jim, if not for James—it was Warren who would have been limping, and incapable of playing in the Rookwood match on Wednesday!

It was clear enough to him now, and his brow was dark as he walked through the wood to the river and turned up the towpath.

He knew now, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that his football rival had deliberately set out to "crook" him for Rookwood day, and that he would stick at very little to effect his purpose.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one



As Gerald Loder let fly with the stone, Warren made a grasp at James, caught him by the shoulder, and swung him back. Crash! The whizzing stone landed—but not on Jim Warren! It landed on James! "What—who—" yelled James.

another when Warren was gone. Something had happened, they knew; but they could not make out what it was.

"What the dickens has Loder been up to?" asked Nugent.

"Something rotten!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Blessed if I make it out!" said Harry. "Hallo, here comes somebody on a bike! If it's Coker—"

From the distant school a cyclist appeared on the road. But at the second glance they saw that it was not Coker of the Fifth. It was Loder of the Sixth.

"That brute again!" exclaimed Bob. "Get out of sight! It means trouble if he sees us here!"

That was clear to all the Co. Promptly they backed behind the trees, invisible from the road.

The bike came whirring on.

Loder evidently had lost no time after getting back to the school in getting out again—on his bicycle. The fact was that Loder was due at the Three Fishers that afternoon, and the affair by the tow-path had delayed him on his way there.

He glanced keenly at the wood in passing, wondering whether Warren was there searching for his assailant.

If so, Loder rather hoped that Warren would see him now. A fellow coming away from the school on his bike could hardly be suspected of being the fellow who had been lurking in the wood by the river.

He saw nothing of Warren, who was long gone; and he saw nothing of the juniors, who were carefully in cover. The whir of the bike died away up the road.

As soon as Loder was gone, the Famous Five emerged from cover again. They resumed watching the road towards the school gates.

It was not till more than a quarter of an hour later that they were rewarded

by the sight of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form coming up the road.

"Here comes jolly old Horace!" said Bob.

"Ready!" said Harry.

Coker came swinging on—with his usual manner of being monarch of all he surveyed and undisputed possessor of the entire earth.

He gave the juniors a disdainful stare in passing.

He did not seem to guess why they were there. But he knew a few moments later. There was a rush of feet, five pairs of hands were laid on Coker of the Fifth, and the great Horace came down on the county of Kent, with a thud that almost made that county shake!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Sat Upon!

"YOOOOOOOO!" roared Coker as he landed.

"Hook him into the trees!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Whoo-hoop! I'll—Yoo-hoop!"

Coker roared and struggled. But four juniors had an arm or a leg each, and one had Coker's ears in a firm grip. Thus held, even the beefy and brawny Horace was powerless.

He was whisked off the road into the leafless trees, and dumped down out of view of passers-by. But he was still held. It would have been hardly safe to let Coker loose.

"I—I—I'll—" gurgled Coker, wriggling. "Wharrer you up to, you little ticks! What—"

"We've been waiting for you, old bean," said Bob Cherry affably. "We heard you tell Potter and Greene you were going to Courtfield. You've kept us waiting rather a long time, Horace!"

"I'll smash you!" roared Coker.

"You've rather wasted our time—on a half-holiday, too!" said Bob. "Prout ought to teach you to be more punctual, Coker."

"Punctuality is the politeness of esteemed princes!" remarked Hurreo Jamset Ran Singh.

"Leggo!" hissed Coker.

"You were late for Hobby's birthday party, Coker! Now you're late again! You seem to be making a habit of it. Still, better late than never!" said Bob cheerfully. "We've got you, and that's the chief thing!"

"Will you leggo?" shrieked Coker.

"Not at all! You'd get violent if we let go—I can see it in your eye! Don't you fellows think that Coker looks rather shirty?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll spifficate you! I'll—I'll— If you bang my head again, you little beast, I'll—Yarooooooop!"

"Hold him!" said Bob. "He looks absolutely bad tempered."

There was no doubt about that. Coker did.

"Now listen to me, Coker! You mucked up Hobby's birthday-party the other day with your bad manners—"

"I'll pulverise you—"

"Not at present, I think. Hobby lost his cake, and got lines from Hacker. Bunter snaffled the cake, and got a whopping from Quelch. That old ass, Hacker, fancied that Warren had bagged the cake, and made a row with him and Prout. All this trouble from your bad manners—"

"I'll slaughter you!"

"Later," said Bob cheerfully. "At present you're not the slaughterer—you're the slaughteree—if you know what I mean. Having considered the matter, Coker, and feeling that it is

the duty of the Remove to teach the Fifth Form manners—"

"I—I—I'll—" gasped Coker.

"We have decided that you are too bumptious, Horace, and that you ought to be sat upon."

"Will you leggo?" raved Coker.

"You've asked me that one before. You're beginning to repeat yourself. Cheeky fellows, Horace, have to be sat on for their own good. You see that?"

"Oh, you wait till I get loose!" gasped Coker.

"Sentence having been passed by the Remove," continued Bob, "it only remains to carry it out. You're going to be sat on, Coker!"

There were plenty of fellows in the Greyfriars Fifth who considered that Horace Coker ought to be sat on at times. But there was more than one way for an obstreperous fellow to be sat on.

The way selected by the Removites was perhaps the least comfortable way. Bob Cherry sat on Coker's waistcoat.

"Gerroff!" shrieked Coker.

"Sentence is now being carried out," explained Bob. "You're going to be sat on, Coker!"

"You little idiot!"

"And I'm sitting on you!"

"Urrgh! Gerroff my waistcoat!" gurgled Coker.

Bob settled down comfortably. Bob was not a light-weight. Coker was getting winded.

He struggled frantically. But with his arms and legs held in a firm grip by four sturdy juniors, he struggled in vain.

"Urrrgh!" he gasped. "Wurrgh!"

"Is that Dutch or Czecho-Slovakian?" asked Bob.

"Gurrgh!"

"I don't quite follow you, Coker! Say it again!"

"Wurrgh! Yooogh!"

"Still I don't get your meaning," said Bob gravely. "Sing it over again to me."

"Oooogh!" gurgled the hapless Horace.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gug-gug-gug!" Coker gurgled horribly. "Ug-wug-ooogh!" He wriggled and squirmed. "Moooh!"

"Keep still, old man," said Bob.

"With all your faults I love you still!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co.

"I hope," said Bob, "that this will do you good, Horace. Nothing like a cheeky fellow being sat on for his cheek. But you can't expect a fellow to keep on sitting on you if you wriggle about like that. Be reasonable!"

"Urrrgh!"

"Look here, Coker! If you don't keep still, I shan't sit on you any longer," declared Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gurrgh! Urrgh! Wurrgh!" Coker wriggled spasmodically.

"I'm afraid we can't waste any more time teaching you manners, Coker. If you hadn't been so late we could have given you longer," said Bob Cherry. "As you can't be punctual, this will have to do. It's your own fault."

"Urrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you men!" said Bob, rising from Coker's waistcoat. "We shall never get to Courtfield at this rate."

The Famous Five, chortling, cut through the trees to the road. Coker sat up, gurgling wildly.

It was a full minute before Coker was able to get going. Then he went, gasping, to the road after the Famous Five.

There was only one thought in

Coker's mind—he wanted vengeance, and he wanted it hot, and strong, and he wanted it at once.

He glared along the road for the juniors.

Five fellows, going at a trot, were disappearing round the bend of the road towards Courtfield. Coker rushed in pursuit.

Bob Cherry glanced back at the bend of the road.

"He's after us!" he remarked.

"Buck up!"

The Famous Five trotted on round the bend; then left the road, and parked themselves behind a mass of hawthorns by the roadside. Through the hawthorns they watched, with grinning face.

A minute later Coker of the Fifth came charging round the bend. He was still gasping, but he was going strong. With crimson face and gleaming eyes Horace charged on.

It did not occur to his powerful brain that the Removites had stopped, in cover, and were watching him pass, with great entertainment.

Coker's belief was that they were still ahead of him, fleeing for their lives. Gasping, but fiercely determined, Coker charged on, and disappeared up the road at a great speed.

"Dear old Horace!" murmured Bob, as the juniors came out from the hawthorns. "I wonder how long it will be before he finds out that we're not ahead of him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now we can get back to footer practice," said Harry Wharton, laughing; and the juniors walked back to the school, leaving Coker of the Fifth to cover the road to Courtfield at something under 60 m.p.h.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Another Mistake in the Dark!

"QUIET!" whispered Hobson.

Hoskins and Stewart were quiet—quiet as mice.

In thick November gloom they were blotted from sight behind the trees that shadowed the path at masters' gate.

It was several days since they had caught Harry Wharton of the Remove in mistake for Hacker, and now that they were on the warpath again, they did not want to make another mistake. Other masters, as well as Hacker, used that gate, and all the Sixth Form prefects had keys to it. And, as they knew only too well, a fellow out of bounds might climb over that gate to get in.

It was past lock-up, and Hobby & Co. had to be careful. Not only were they taking a big risk in planning to ink Hacker, but they were out of House bounds.

After lock-up every fellow had to be in the House. And Hobson, Stewart and Hoskins were supposed to be in the study at prep. So long as they were not seen it was all right. Nobody would guess that they had slid from the study window on a knotted rope, under cover of November darkness. But if they were spotted, there was bad trouble to come.

So they were very, very careful, and at a sound that came from the gate they did not, as on the previous occasion, weigh in at once with the squirt of ink. That squirt was ready, crammed with ink; but this time Hobby was going to make sure that it got to the right address.

Hacker was out—they knew that. He

was at a lecture at Courtfield Hall, which was over early; but exactly when he would come in, they did not know. They could only watch and wait. So far as they knew no other masters were out; but prefects might be coming in late—in fact, they had noticed that Loder of the Sixth was absent at call-over—as the great and glorious prefects of the Sixth had a right to be, if it seemed good to them. Getting the bully of the Sixth with the ink would have been gratifying, in a way, but it was not what they were after.

Hobson peered round a dark trunk, trying to pierce the gloom. The gate was opening, unlocked from the other side. Was it Hacker?

There was a tiny gleam of light. Whoever had come in had flashed on a pocket torch. He had the gate open, and seemed to be fumbling with the lock.

It was not Hacker. Hobson had a glimpse, and he recognised Loder of the Sixth.

But what was Loder doing?

In the ordinary way he would have come in, snapped the gate shut behind him, and walked on up the path under the branches. Instead of which he was fumbling with the lock.

In great amazement the watching Shell fellow realised what Loder was doing. It was a Yale lock on the gate. Once snapped shut, it was only to be opened from outside with a key. Loder was fixing the catch so that it would not lock when shut.

He was deliberately leaving the gate unfastened.

Having done so, and closed the gate, Loder shut off the light and walked on, passing the hidden Shell fellows without dreaming that they were there.

"Not Hacker?" whispered Stewart, when the footsteps died away in the quad.

"No; Loder."

"What was he up to?"

"He's fixed the catch—the gate's shut, but not locked!" breathed the astonished Hobby. "Must have left it like that for somebody to come in who hasn't got a key!"

"Price of the Fifth, perhaps—he's pally with Loder."

"Price was at call-over. Nobody's out that I know of, except Hacker! It beats me."

It was rather a mystery to the Shell fellows. But they could only conclude that some pal of Loder's—not a prefect, and therefore keyless—was out of bounds, and that Loder had left him that easy way in.

This peculiar incident made the ambushed three more wary than ever. Mr. Hacker was, apparently, not the only person who was booked to come in at that gate.

They waited.

The chime of the hour came from the clock-tower through the misty night.

Hoskins gave a start.

"I say, Hacker's late! That's the end of prep."

"Can't be helped!" said Hobson.

"What I mean is, we may be missed from the study. Fellows may be going in to speak to us—"

"They won't sing out over the banisters that we're missing."

"If a prefect looked in—"

"A prefect won't!"

"Oh, all right," said Hoskins, "I'll chance it if you will."

"We're not going in without bagging Hacker!" said Hobson stubbornly.

"That birthday cake of mine went to the housekeeper! Hacker's going to sit up for snaffling my birthday cake."

And they waited.

"Here comes somebody!" whispered Stewart.

It was a sound of footsteps in the quad. They came on at a regular trot!

After prep, no one was supposed to be out of the House without leave. Hobson & Co., rather alarmed, peered out to ascertain who it was.

"Only that ass Warren!" said Hobby, with a breath of relief, as he glimpsed a figure in the open quad at a distance dim, but visible, beyond the shadow of the trees.

"Oh, that Fifth Form ass!" muttered Stewart. "Doing his trot! Bother him he made me jump."

The trotting figure passed. It was Warren of the Fifth, in running shorts, taking a trot round the quad.

That was Warren's custom, every evening after prep, as most of the fellows knew. As regular as clockwork after prep, Jim Warren took that trot, thrice round the quad.

The figure passed on, and disappeared.

"Bother him!" murmured Hobson. He liked Warren; but he did not want anybody barging about out of the House just then.

"I say, if he's still going it when Hacker gets the ink, he will hear him yell, and come up!" muttered Hoskins.

"He won't see us in the dark! Anyhow, he wouldn't give a man away."

"Bless that man Hacker!" grunted Stewart. "I wish he'd come in and get it over."

"Hark!"

It was a sound at the gate. Hobson & Co. concentrated on the gate at once.

In Hobby's grip was the big garden squirt, crammed with ink. He was ready to let fly—if it was Hacker! Was it?

The gate opened and shut. Straining their eyes in the gloom, the Shell fellows made out a man's figure.

It was a man in hat and overcoat, with a stick under his arm. Hacker always carried a walking-stick. Hobby had no further doubt.

Silent, breathless, the three Shell fellows waited on the edge of the dark path under the trees. The figure came up the path from the gate.

Whizz—squish!

The squirt shot its contents. With a deadly swoop, a gallon of ink shot into the face under the hat-brim.

There was a yell—a gurgle—and a heavy fall. The man staggered back and fell.

Taken utterly by surprise, he bumped over, and wild splutterings and howls and yells came from him.

"Hook it!" breathed Hobby.

They ran.

"Ooogh! Urrgh! Oh! Ah! Oooooosh!" came spluttering under the trees. And to the amazement and startled consternation of the juniors, a string of wild and fierce oaths followed!

It was not Hacker!

That was impossible!

It was a man—a man with a stick—but it was not Hacker; it was, to judge by the flow of lurid language, some brutal hooligan! What such a man could be doing at Greyfriars was an amazing mystery. Hobson of the Shell had made another error in the dark. Really, he seemed to be having no luck at all in his great scheme of inking Hacker.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Hobson.

"Who—"

"What—" stuttered Hoskins.

"That's not Hacker!"

"It's some rough," gasped Stewart.

"But how—why—"

They stopped, staring back. A running figure loomed up out of the gloom.

"What's this row?" came a startled voice.

It was Warren of the Fifth.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.
Warren's Luck!

JIM WARREN peered at the three Shell fellows. They blinked at him. From the path under the trees by masters' gate came the wild spluttering and howling and spitting oaths.

"Is that Hobson?" Jim Warren peered at Hobby's face in the gloom. "What are you doing here? Who's that under the trees?"

"Ask me another!" gasped the astounded Hobby. "I don't know! I know I've got him with a squirt of ink—"

"What?"

"I thought it was Hacker!" gasped Hobson. "Keep it dark, Warren! We were after Hacker! My birthday cake, you know—"

"You young ass!"

"Well, keep it dark," gasped Hobby. "The other night we got Wharton of the Remove, and now we've got goodness knows who. I—I say, Warren, think it's a burglar or something?"

"I'm going to see who it is," said Jim.

"Any of you got a light?"

"I've got a torch! But I—I—say, we don't want to be spotted out of the House! We should get into a fearful row."

"It's all right—they can't hear from the House!" said Stewart. "All right unless Hacker comes in! I'm going to see who that is."

Jim Warren ran under the trees by the gate. Hobby & Co., keenly curious to see who could possibly be there, followed at his heels.

In the gloom could be seen a sprawling figure.

The man had dropped his stick, and his hat had fallen off. His face was drenched with ink, and he was clawing at it wildly. Ink was in his eyes and nose and ears, drenching his collar and his coat. He was conscious at the moment of nothing but ink.

"I say, I've seen that chap!" gasped Hobson. "His name's Sanders—he's at the Three Fishers! Soapy Sanders, he's called."

From his language and his looks, the man was evidently a public house loafer. And in spite of the ink, Hobby recognised him.

Warren stared blankly at the ruffian.

"What can he be doing here?" he exclaimed. "What the dickens—"

"Burgling!" suggested Hoskins.

"You young ass! Burglars don't butt in before anybody's gone to bed. And how the deuce did he get in—that gate's always locked—"

"Loder left it unfastened!" said Hobson.

Warren started.

"Loder!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, we spotted Loder coming in half an hour ago or more, and he fixed the lock so that it wouldn't lock—"

"Loder did?"

"Leaving it for some pal of his who's out of bounds, I suppose," said Hobson.

"Then this brute came along—and found it—"

A strange expression came over Warren's face. Soapy Sanders sat up, still clawing ink, and blinked.

He was pulling himself together a little now. He made a movement to rise.

"Stop where you are!" said Jim Warren. He picked up the fallen stick—a heavy, knobby cudgel; nothing at all like Hacker's walking-stick now that Hobby saw it in the light.

"Stick there, you rotter! I'll crack your nut if you move till I give you leave."

Soapy gave him an inky glare.

"You!" he muttered. Evidently he knew the Fifth Former of Greyfriars.

Jim's eyes gleamed at him.

"You know me, it seems, though I don't know you," he said quietly.

"Take my tip, and don't stir. You'll get hurt if you do!"

Soapy did take the tip. He remained sitting, clawing ink and eyeing the Fifth Former of Greyfriars with inky, uneasy eyes.

"I—I say, he ought to be run in, Warren!" said Stewart. "He's here for no good, you can bet on that!"

"That's all very well," said Hoskins.

"But we don't want to be spotted out of House bounds!"

"You kids cut off!" said Warren.

"I can deal with this brute. Leave him to me!"

"I—I say, if you're sure!" said Hobson.

"I'll crack his head if he asks for it! Cut off!"

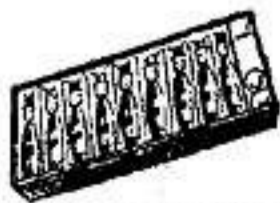
Hobson & Co. were glad to cut off.

The gate might have opened any moment to admit Mr. Hacker.

The Shell fellows disappeared across the quad.

(Continued on next page.)

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THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Lesson for Loder!

Warren stepped a little nearer to the ruffian. The Greyfriars senior's brow was grimly knitted. Soapy stirred again, but a motion of the stick kept him where he was.

"Don't move!" said Warren, in a low, menacing voice. "I'd crack your rascally head as soon as look at you!"

Soapy did not move.

"What are you here for?"

No answer.

"You knew that gate was unlocked—it was left unlocked for you!" said Warren, in the same low tone.

Soapy eyed him evilly, without speaking.

"You had a reason for coming here," Warren watched the evil, stubbly face intently. "The gate was left unlocked for you—and you came in with this stick—at the time when I take my trot round the quad. What were you going to do with that stick?"

Soapy did not speak. Warren lifted the stick and took aim at the tousled inky head. Then Soapy spoke—in a hurry!

"Old on, sir—old on! You seem to know all about it. I—I wasn't going to 'urt yer—on my davy I wasn't! A knock, p'r'aps!"

"Quite," said Warren. "Just a knock in the dark—enough to put a fellow off his form for a football match, for instance!"

Soapy did not answer. But no answer was needed. Warren's face grew harder and grimmer. It was plain enough; though but for the episode of the stone he had so narrowly escaped, Warren would never have suspected it.

"You rotten ruffian!" he said, between his teeth. "How much were you paid for this rotten trick?"

"A quid!" muttered Soapy huskily, with his eye on the stick. "On my davy I wasn't going to 'urt yer! Jest a tap—"

"You're going to earn that quid!" said Warren grimly. He set down the torch. "If you'd taken me by surprise in the dark, you'd have got away with it. Now you're going to have a lesson!"

He gripped the ruffian by the back of his coat collar and twisted him over in the path.

Soapy howled in anticipation.

The next moment he had reason to howl in earnest. The stick went up and came down—hard and fast!

Soapy howled and squirmed and wriggled. But the grip on the back of his neck was like iron.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

The gate opened. Mr. Hacker stepped in—and jumped. He blinked at the startling scene in the light of the electric torch.

"What—what—what—" stuttered the master of the Shell.

Warren started, too. He had forgotten Hacker. He let go Soapy's collar.

"Warren—who—what—"

"I found this fellow here, sir!" said Warren. "I was giving him a lesson not to trespass in the school grounds!"

"Upon my word! He must be given in charge!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "He must be detained for the police! Hold him—hold him, Warren!"

But Warren was no longer holding Soapy, and the ruffian made a bound for the open gate. Mr. Hacker could have stopped him—instead of which he dodged aside from the rush. Soapy leaped out into the road and vanished.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,448.

"O H, get out!" snapped Loder. Price of the Fifth stared at him.

Price had dropped into Loder's study after prep to smoke a cigarette, and talk "gee-gees"—a favourite topic with both of them. Loder's new keenness as a footballer had made no difference to that. Generally, the black sheep of the Fifth was welcome in that study. So the greeting he received from Loder rather surprised him.

Loder was walking restlessly about his study when Price came in. His face was a little pale, and had a strained look. He gave quite a jump as his door opened—proof that his nerves were in a rattled state—and he fairly barked at the Fifth Form man.

"What the dickens—" began Price.

"Oh, leave me alone!"

"I'll leave you alone fast enough!" growled Price. And he went out of the study and closed the door after him with a bang.

Loder resumed his restless pacing of the study.

He was in a jumpy state—in expectation and fear every moment of hearing some sound from the quad. He was in no mood for company of any kind. To do him justice, his conscience was far from easy.

Loder had a wide limit—but he had a limit—and he had gone rather beyond it this time.

There was no danger of detection—he was sure that there was no danger. How could there be any danger? No one knew that he had been to the Three Fishers—and if anyone had known, certainly no one could have guessed the dastardly scheme he had laid with Soapy Sanders!

No one could have seen him leave masters' gate on the latch for the ruffian to enter. No one could, or would, know anything. Even Warren would know, and could know, nothing—suspect nothing.

All he would know was that in the dark, as he was taking his usual trot round the quad, he had got a knock from a stick—a crack on the knee that would do him no real harm—Loder was very particular about that—but would force him to stand out of the Rookwood match. Warren would not have the remotest idea who had given him that crack—still less would he dream that a Sixth Form prefect was at the bottom of it. If his thoughts turned to Loder—his rival in football—it would be easy for Loder to prove that he had been in the House.

There was no danger—none.

Yet Loder's nerves were jumping, and every minute seemed to drag itself by on leaden feet.

When was the fellow coming in? When he came in—limping, most likely—there would be excitement at once. The House would buzz with it. But there was no sound of excitement, so far. If Soapy failed to get him in the dark, or—or—Loder shuddered—if Warren spotted him, tackled him, and got hurt—badly hurt—He wondered why that possibility had not occurred to him sooner. As it came into his mind, Loder wished from the bottom of his heart that he had never laid that miserable scheme to oust his rival from the first eleven. But it was too late to wish that—the die was cast now!

He fancied he heard a sound of voices. He went to his study door, and opened it a few inches. Voices came

from the lighted hall. He heard the sharp, shrill tones of Mr. Hacker.

"A tramp, I suppose—certainly a ruffian of some kind—a negro, I believe. I had only a glimpse of him, but he looked like a negro!"

What the dickens did Hacker mean? Had he come in and seen anything? Loder had to know. He went down the passage, his heart beating fast.

Two or three masters and two or three dozen Greyfriars fellows had gathered round Mr. Hacker. Prout was there—booming.

"And a boy of my Form caught him?"

"Warren seems to have been out of the House," said Mr. Hacker. "He had hold of the man when I came in at the gate. Very foolishly, he allowed him to escape!"

"Really, sir!" boomed Prout. "That boy of my Form seemed to have caught the rascal and prevented him from carrying out his purpose—whatever it may have been. Very much credit is due to Warren, in my opinion."

"But how could the man have obtained admittance?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"That is the extraordinary thing!" said Mr. Hacker. "I found that the lock on the gate had been adjusted so that it would not lock. Someone who has used that gate recently has been very careless!"

"Very careless indeed!" boomed Prout.

Loder stood at the back of the crowd, listening. Warren was not to be seen. What had happened to Warren? Had anything?

"The rascal should certainly have been detained and given in charge!" went on Mr. Hacker. "However, he should be easy to trace—a negro—a black man. I saw that he was a black man!"

Loder felt as if his head was turning round. Obviously, it was Soapy Sanders of whom Hacker was speaking—equally obviously the affair had not gone according to programme. But why did Hacker fancy that he was a black man? Loder knew nothing of Hobby's exploit with the ink. Still, Hacker's extraordinary mistake made it all the safer—nobody was likely to spot Soapy if a black man was looked for.

"Warren was not hurt, sir?"

It was Wingate of the Sixth who asked that question, rather anxiously. He liked Warren; but probably he was thinking chiefly of his rod in pickle for Rookwood—and the Rookwood match was coming off on the morrow.

"No—I think not!" said Mr. Hacker. "He seems to have taken the ruffian's stick away and thrashed him with it—"

"Good old Warren!" chuckled Bob Cherry, and there was a laugh.

Loder went back to his study.

He closed the door, and stood quite still, his lips set, his eyes glinting. He had failed again.

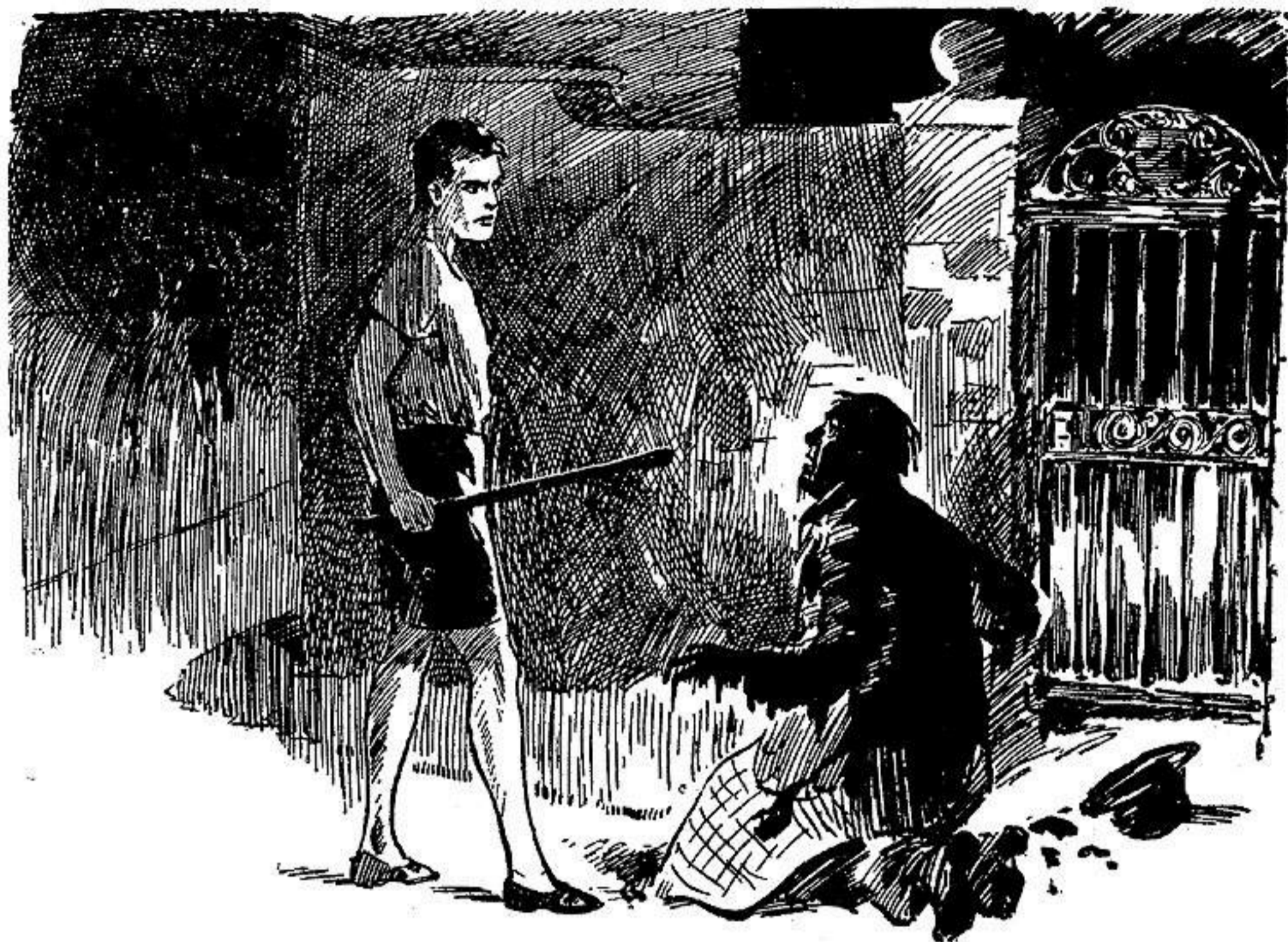
He clenched his hands

Ten minutes ago Loder's conscience had been troubling him—remorse and fear had mingled to torment him. But that was when he had had no doubt of success. Conscience was still now. He had failed—in some amazing way, Warren had come through unhurt—and on the morrow the Rookwood match would be played, with Jim Warren in the ranks of Greyfriars, Loder left out in the cold.

He gritted his teeth savagely.

"Never!" he breathed.

There was still time—he would find a chance yet! Even if he had to take the risk of giving the fellow a hack—as he had done before the St. Jim's match!



Jim Warren's brow was grimly knitted as he stepped nearer to the ruffian. "Don't move!" he said, in a low, menacing voice. "I'd crack your rascally head as soon as look at you!" "'Old on, sir!" said Soapy. "'Old on! I—I wasn't going to 'urt yer! On my davy, I wasn't!"

It was risky—it was altogether too palpable. But rather than let his football foe beat him all along the line, he would take the risk—anything sooner than Warren's triumph!

Tap!

His door opened.

He stared round savagely. To his amazement it was Warren of the Fifth who stepped in.

It was the first time Warren had ever visited his study. He was the last fellow Loder would have expected to see there. His heart almost missed a beat as it came into his mind why Warren was there. What did he know—what did he suspect?

Warren stepped in and shut the door after him. Loder made an attempt at bluster.

"What the dickens do you want here, Warren? I don't remember asking you into my study."

"I've come unasked," said the Fifth Former quietly. "I want a few words with you, Loder."

"The want's all on your side, then!" sneered Loder. "I want nothing to do with you—a fellow in a false name!" He almost spat out the taunt. "Your name's up in the list for Rookwood. Is it your name?"

"Never mind that now," said Warren, in the same quiet tone. "I've come here to tell you to stop it, Loder."

"To stop what?"

"When you crooked me for the St. Jim's match, I took it as an accident. I know now what it was."

"Are you raking that up again—after weeks? You know that it was an accident."

"I know—now—that it was not! And I know that nothing of the kind is going to happen again—unless you want to be kicked out of the school for the rotten blackguard and scheming scoundrel that you are!" said Warren.

Loder panted.

"Is that how you talk to a prefect?"

"You wouldn't be a prefect long if I chose to go to the Head!" answered Jim contemptuously. "Neither would you stay at Greyfriars long, I think. I've said nothing about your stone-slinging game on the tow-path the other day—"

Loder gave a violent start.

"I—I never— What do you mean?" he gasped.

"You know what I mean," said Jim Warren coolly. "I've said nothing about it—and don't mean to, if I can help it! I'm rather more particular about disgracing the school than you are! But it's got to stop, see? Your friend Soapy—"

"My—my—my friend Soapy—" stuttered Loder.

"Your friend Soapy!" said Warren, with a nod. "Hacker thinks he was a black man, because he got some ink that a gang of fags intended for somebody else. Let him go on thinking—so long as you chuck it, here and now!"

"I—I know nothing—I—"

Loder was utterly taken aback.

"You left masters' gate on the latch for him—"

"I did not!" panted Loder.

"You were seen!"

"Seen?"

Loder hardly breathed.

"Yes; by three fellows."

"It's a lie!" hissed Loder. "I came

in at that gate—I don't care who knows that. But—"

He broke off, panting.

Warren gave him a look of cold contempt.

"You deny it, then?" he asked.

"Of course I do—every word! Do you think you can come here and bluff me?" hissed Loder. "By gad, I'll have you up before a prefects' meeting for your check—"

"That does it!" said Warren. "If you admit it, and promise to chuck it, I'm willing to say nothing. But I'm not going about in danger every minute of getting crooked by a scheming rascal who's after my place in the first eleven! You got away with it over the St. Jim's match—you're not getting away with it again!"

"Get out of my study!"

Warren turned to the door.

"I'm going! I warn you, before I go, that I'm going to lay the whole facts before Wingate! That's all! I'd rather avoid a disgrace in the school; but if you choose it, have your way."

His hand was on the door when Loder panted:

"Stop!"

Warren stopped.

"It's all lies!" muttered Loder huskily. "I—I deny every word! But—but what have you got to tell Wingate?"

"I shall put it before him, as head of the games, and captain of the school. He can decide whether to take it to the Head. That a stone was flung at me from the wood by the tow-path—and a number of Remove kids saw you running out of the wood. They can be

called up to prove it. That you left the gate unfastened for that brute Soapy Sanders—three Shell fellows saw you and can prove it. That you tipped the brute a quid to lay for me in the dark—and when the police go to the Three Fishers for Soapy. I fancy he won't be long in giving you away!"

Loder stared at him almost wildly.

He had told himself that he was in no danger—that, whatever happened, he was safe! This was his safety! Warren, the fellow against whom he had schemed and plotted, held his fate in the hollow of his hand. He had only to speak, for his rival to be kicked out of Greyfriars.

"Well?" rapped Warren.

Loder only stared at him—dumb. The Fifth Former turned to the door again, his lips set. Then Loder found his voice:

"Stop! Stop! I—I—I own up! For goodness' sake—for mercy's sake, keep it dark! Keep it dark—think of the disgrace—Warren, for mercy's sake, give me a chance!"

"That's enough!" said Warren. "No more of it, Loder—but I think that's pretty certain now! Leave it at that!"

He left the study. Loder, panting, sank weakly into his armchair. No more of it, Warren had said. There was not likely to be any more of it.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Goal!"

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Coming down to see the match, Bunter?"

"Eh? What match?" asked Billy Bunter.

The Famous Five gazed at him.

It was Rookwood day; and every fellow at Greyfriars—every fellow, but William George Bunter, at all events—was thinking or talking about the big fixture. Fellows had been fearfully careful in class that morning to avoid detentions—which would have kept them from witnessing the great game.

Harry Wharton & Co., perhaps, attached greater importance to their own matches. But they were going to turn up in force to see Greyfriars First play Rookwood First—and especially to cheer Jim Warren's goals! They had no doubt that Jim was going to bag goals. Bob Cherry said that it was a dead cert; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh declared that the deadfulness of the cert was terrific!

Everybody was going to see that match. Everybody was in a state of great excitement and anticipation. And Billy Bunter asked—what match? The chums of the Remove could only gaze at him.

More important matters, it seemed, occupied Billy Bunter's fat mind. He blinked rather irritably at the Famous Five through his big spectacles.

"What match?" repeated Bob Cherry, finding his voice at last. "You blithering, bloated, benighted bloater—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You footling, fozzling, frumptious fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh really, Bull—"

"Come on," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "They'll be starting."

"I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!" roared Bunter. "I say, never mind football now! I say, it's rather important—I say, hold on—" He grabbed Harry Wharton by the arm. "I say—"

"Let go, you fat ass! What is it, then? Buck up!"

"My postal-order hasn't come!"

"What?" roared Wharton.

"I told you I was expecting a postal-order, old chap! Well, it hasn't come! I say, you fellows, which of you is going to lend me half-a-crown till my postal-order comes?"

The Famous Five did not answer Billy Bunter in words. They grasped him and sat him down in the quad.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter.

Leaving the fat Owl of the Remove to roar, the Famous Five cut off for the football ground. Everybody was gathering there—Remove and Fourth, Shell and Fifth, Second and Third.

Loder of the Sixth stood in the crowd, watching as the players came into the field. His eyes followed Jim Warren—looking very handsome and fit in football garb. But Jim did not glance at Loder. He had forgotten Loder's existence.

All Greyfriars watched as the Greyfriars footballers faced Rookwood. And Bob Cherry's prediction that Jim Warren was going to bag goals was verified. For the first goal in the game came to Greyfriars, and it was Warren of the Fifth who put the pill in.

"Goal!" roared Bob Cherry, his powerful voice loudest in the general roar. "Good old Warren! Good old Jim! Goal!"

"Well kicked!" roared Hobson of the Shell.

"Bravo, Warren!"

"More to come!" said Bob.

"The morefulness will be preposterous."

But the next that came, came to Rookwood, Bulkeley putting the ball into the home goal. Then it went on ding-dong till half-time.

The second half was thrilling. A Rookwood man captured another goal—two to one! Then Wingate put the pill home—and equalised! And then fellows began looking at their watches, and up at the clock-tower! Ten minutes to go—five minutes—

"Not a draw!" groaned Bob. "For the love of Mike, not a draw!"

The next moment he was yelling:

"Warren! Warren!"

Jim Warren had the ball, speeding down on goal! He was about to pass to Wingate, when the St. Jim's skipper went over under a charge! Two Rookwooders were right on Warren—and he kicked! A murmur, a buzz, rose to a deafening roar, as the ball, almost grazing the goalie's finger-tips shot into the net—goal!

"Warren! Warren!"

"Goal! Goal!"

Bob Cherry hurled his cap into the air! It came down on the head of Loder of the Sixth! And Loder only laughed! Loder was shouting "Goal" as loudly as any fag! There was, after all, something of the sportsman in him. Anyhow, he forgot at that moment that the man who had kicked the winning goal was his rival and foe—and he roared with the rest!

"Goal!"

Pheep!

The whistle sounded for time, and the spectators swarmed on to the field. They gathered round Jim Warren, gripping him by the hand and slapping him on the back in their excitement.

Greyfriars had won the match, and Jim Warren had come through with flying colours!

THE END.

(Once again has Gerald Loder failed to oust Jim Warren from the first eleven! But the schemer of the Sixth is not one to give up trying! Watch out for: "BUNTER GETS HIS OWN BACK!" the next yarn in this ripping fine series, chums.)

WELCOME
BIGGLES!



—Biggles, the
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DAN of the DOGGER BANK!

By David Goodwin.

Buck Loses His Temper!

THROWN overboard by enemies of his father—Donald Graham, a millionaire shipowner—young Kenneth Graham is picked up off the Dogger Bank by the Lowestoft fishing trawler, Grey Seal.

His past life blotted from his brain, the youngster is given the name of "Dogger Dan," and signed on as fifth hand under Skipper Atheling, Finn Macoul, Wat Griffiths, and Buck Atheling.

Aware of his nephew's fate, and knowing that he will be heir to the shipowner's money when his brother dies, Dudley Graham conceives a plan to get Kenneth out of the way for ever.

Engaging the services of Jake Rebow, skipper of the Banshee and commander of the Black Squadron, a fleet manned by men whom no honest trawler would take on board, he pays over a hundred pounds, and promises a further four hundred pounds on receiving proof of Kenneth's death.

A fruitless attempt on the part of Jake's son, Dennis, to dismast the Grey Seal, follows, after which Dan and Buck Atheling launch the foot-boat and go cod-hooking.

Losing their bearings in the fog, the two boys board the Banshee by mistake.

Before Jake can harm Dan, however, a huge steamer strikes the Banshee, cutting her in halves, and hurling her crew, together with Dan and Buck, into the sea.

The hiss of frothing water filled Dan's ears as he came to the surface, and he gasped for breath and glanced round him. Close by, something like a thick clothes-prop with a knob on top and a piece of bunting hanging to it lurched sideways and disappeared. It was the end of the trawler's topmast, and Dan had the last glimpse of it before it disappeared. Above the boy's head passed a long line of gleaming portholes, and as the stern of the liner roared past he saw an arm flung up through the foam and heard a wild shriek.

"Great heavens! What's become of Buck?" he cried.

Treading water, he looked round him wildly. The fog was less dense now. His arms were free, for the smash had come before he was bound. Suddenly, about ten yards away, he saw something rolling and twisting in the water. He struck out towards it, and a great shout burst from his lips.

"Buck!" he cried.

No answer came. The struggling swimmer turned his eyes upon Dan—and, sure enough, it was Buck Atheling. He was nearly exhausted, and was sinking as Dan caught hold of him; for his hands were tied behind him.

In a twinkling Dan drew his sheath-knife. Buck himself had given it to him the day before, and it was concealed under the side of his jersey.

A moment later and Buck was free. He turned on his back and floated, regaining his breath.

"Dan," he said at last, "you have pulled me out o' the jaws of Davy Jones, an' I'll never forget it!"

"Oh, skittles!" said Dan. "I owe the



"Good-bye, ye blazing gin-shop!" shouted Atheling, as the couper careered before the blast, a living tower of flame.

whole crew of you more than I'll ever be able to pay back, even if we get out o' this alive. What's to be done? We can't keep afloat all night, an' my clothes are dragging me down like lead."

"You must get 'em off," said Buck. "'Tain't the first time I've been overboard, by long chalks. I'll hold you up while you get out of your jersey an' pilots, an' then you can do the same for me."

Under Buck's instructions Dan managed to rid himself of the heaviest of his clothes, and found that he could keep up the better, for he was a strong swimmer; then he assisted Buck.

"That's better," said Buck, as his sodden jersey slowly sank. "Pity to lose those good duds, but there's plenty more aboard. Now, gather your grit together, old boy, for unless luck comes

our way we'll never live to see the sun rise again!" The loneliness and chill, the dreary pall of fog, and the darkness began to tell on the boys, and Dan felt a gruesome numbness creeping over him.

Since the collision with the liner there was a constant ringing of bells and hooting of the little foot-bellows foghorns that trawlers carry, but all distant and faint.

The currents of the banks were carrying the boys backwards and forwards, and the deadly hopelessness of it depressed them more than the worst of the active dangers they had passed through.

"Buck, I'm done!" gasped Dan at last. "I'm chilled through to the marrow! Can't keep up any longer!"

"Don't give up!" said Buck, though he was numbed and nearly sinking himself. "Lie on your back and paddle. I'll give you a hand."

But Dan's endurance had reached its breaking-point, and his eyes were dull and listless. The water began to close over his lips.

With a groan of despair, Buck tried to hold him up, but it made little difference.

"We're to lose our mascot, after all," he thought, with a gulp of misery. "An' I never liked a mate so well. It's the luck o' the sea, an' I shan't outlast him. I'm near done myself, so— Ah! What's that?"

A few yards away, almost within reach, a shining black object came bobbing past. It was the Seal's foot-boat, that had been made fast to the Banshee. The shock of the collision had snapped the painter, and now it was drifting along on the current, keel upwards.

"Hold up, old boy!" cried Buck. "Just ten seconds more! Here's the old foot-boat!"

Dan heard as in a dream.

Striking out as best he could, Buck reached the boat and clung to it. In a very short while he recovered enough to clamber across the keel, and help Dan up after him.

No sooner had the two boys perched themselves there than the dawn began to break, cold and grey, and a westerly wind sprang up, driving the fog before it.

Eagerly, pale and wan with the hardships they had gone through, the boys peered round.

Nearly a mile away the Grey Seal was pointing her nose to the sky as she

rose to the lift of a swell. Before she swooped into the hollow, however, the keen eyes on board had seen the foot-boat, and the trawler came running down to the castaways.

"Thank Heaven!" said Dan. And then he swooned.

Twenty minutes later the boys were lying between hot blankets in their berths, drinking draughts of steaming coffee. And John Atheling's eyes grew red as he listened to what the boys had to say.

"Ah, well, they've paid the price!" said Buck. "We never saw 'em after the smash. The Banshee's gone to her reckoning, an' it's black enough without our adding our word. But Dan saw more'n me."

"What d'ye think, Dan?" said Atheling, turning to the boy.

Dan made no reply for a moment.

"I don't know," he said slowly; "but somehow I think the Rebows are alive. They weren't born to be drowned."

"Ho vos right," said Macoul, the Finn, quietly, nodding towards Dan.

"Dey are above water yet."

"Say you so?" returned Atheling grimly. "We'll go an' look for them."

But the Seal, though she searched thoroughly, found nothing. The boys, much against their will, were kept in bed all day.

Next morning, however, they were on deck, and fit as fiddles again.

For the next three days the Seal trawled diligently, taking some good hauls, and always working her way up towards the principal fishing grounds of the Dogger.

Dogger Dan lived up to his new title, and grew smarter and handier at the rough toil of the sea.

On the fourth day the Grey Seal set her big topsail and made a long berth to the northward.

As evening fell, she joined the main fleet—a moving town of trawlers, tacking and working on the grey seas at peril of each other, and of all the winds that blow. The Seal brought the luck with her, as the fleet soon found out.

"Seal-oh!" the skipper of the Yantlet—a smart, red-sailed Yarmouth smack—hailed. "Ye're too early for the fish! They ain't up yet!"

"I think I shall find a fin or two," said Atheling. "What couper is that lying out by the Tail there?"

"That's a new 'un," said the skipper, in disgust. "One o' the Black Squadron, just fitted out. She's been doin' a roarin' trade, an' several boats have spent all their money aboard her!"

"Bad luck to her!" muttered Atheling, as he steered the Seal downwind. "Another o' Rebow's lot. It's the likes o' her that sends good ships to the bottom."

The Seal laid-to soon afterwards, and as the night closed down upon the sea, boat after boat rowed off from the smacks, and their crews boarded the couper, that lay like a huge spider in the centre of the fleet, drawing her victims towards her as if by invisible threads. She was a great, black, high-sided, bulky-looking schooner, of Belgian build, floating like an ark upon the seas. She was swift and handy, for all that, as she had need to be, to dodge the gunboats, whose business it is to hunt down the likes of her.

Before long, night was made hideous by songs and hoarsely bellowed choruses. Oaths and the sound of strife floated over the sea. There was hardly any wind, and the noise of the carousing reached everybody within a mile of the couper; for sound travels far over the still water.

The boys of the Grey Seal stood on deck and watched.

"There go some of the boats back," said Buck. "Look how the men are rowin'—more like trippers than seamen. They're full up wi' rotten spirits. It's a cryin' shame! What wi' hard work an' cold, poor food, can ye wonder that many o' the men go to those drink-shops? It's a hard life on the Banks, an' little to make, except by the lucky ones."

"Sometimes, when a trawler's taken a bit o' a haul, an' got her money from the fish-carrier that takes the fish to Hull or Billingsgate, her crew gets full up with rot-gut stuff that would turn a stone image's head. Up comes a black squall from the nor'-west—gear all anyhow—crew fuddled—trawler on her beam-ends—an' down she goes wi' all hands. Many a good craft has been lost like that. A couper's no more'n a floating gin-palace, manned by the scum o' the seas, an' growin' fat on other people's trouble—that's what she is."

"And she's one o' the Black Squadron, too!" said Dan.

"Ay," said Buck. "But there's something more. D'ye see that slick black trawler beyond her? That's the Adder, another o' the fleet, an' the fastest of them all, now the Banshee's sunk. They're always around in pairs. It's long odds she picked up the Rebows, and if so, Jake'll make her his flagship most likely."

"Ah," said Dan between his teeth, "we'll lower that flag before we've done!"

"Shake on that!" said Buck.

The boys clasped hands.

"Dan," said Buck, after a pause, "there's only three boats fast to the couper; the rest have gone back. About this time o' night the crew o' those coupers, bar one or two men, are mostly as full as their customers. Let's go off an' see if we can find out anything about her. We're up against the Black Squadron now."

"Right!" said Dan. "Come along!"

The two boys slipped into the boat and rowed off quietly. Oily and still was the sea, and a million stars were reflected in its dark depths.

Silence reigned on the couper as the boys pulled up close under her stern. There, in small black letters, hardly to be read more than a yard or two away, was the name "Bargreave," of Osd.

"She's a Belgian, for all that," said Buck. "Her name's English, but she



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used to be the Zuydcote. I've seen her before."

Dan and Buck made the foot-boat fast to a length of rope that was trailing overboard for the purpose—a trick many Dutch coupers use—and went quietly up a little gangway-ladder that was hooked on the rail for the convenience of customers, who generally found going back more troublesome than coming aboard. Stepping on deck, they looked round them.

"Pig-sty!" said Buck, under his breath. "And not a single hand to keep watch!"

A subdued mutter and the sound of stertorous snores came up from below. The boys looked down the companion-way, and saw a great, roomy cabin, so filled with rank tobacco-smoke that one could scarcely make out the shape of it. It was fitted like a bar. Bottles and spirit-kegs lay about anyhow, pewter measures and pots, many of them overturned, were strewed over the table and floor, and the air was as foul as that of a disused coal-pit. Over a dozen men, lounged or lay about the cabin in jerseys and sea-boots, nodding and muttering drowsily.

"Pah!" said Buck, in disgust. "I've never seen even a couper with every hand laid out like this. Isn't there a man in his senses aboard at all? There's bad weather brewin', too."

They went down into the fetid saloon, and Buck violently shook two of the men. He was answered by a grunt, but no movement resulted. Then an angry light began to shine in Buck's eyes, and he forced his way round the cabin, trying to rouse the men.

"Up, you animals!" he cried. "Haven't you any decency that you make such beasts of yourselves? There's a squall brewin' to windward. Get up and go on deck!"

Jim stared at his chum. He, too, was disgusted at the sottishness and squalor around him. But Buck was seized with cold, biting wrath, and was almost beside himself.

"Help me wake them, Dan!" he cried. "I've seen the ruin these coupers work too often. Up on deck, and let's find the skipper!"

The two boys went aloft into the pure air again, and, as they emerged, the figure of a man came up through the fore-hatch—a lanky creature with a mop of red hair. He started on seeing the boys.

"Who are ye? An' what do ye want?" he snarled, striding forward.

The glow from the skylight fell full on his face. It was Foxey Backhouse!

Good-bye to the Couper!

THERE, straight before Dan, were the same cunning eyes, the same angular face of the man who had helped Dennis Rebow to fling him into the sea from his father's liner ten days before. But all remembrance was blotted from Dan's brain.

As their eyes met, a feeling of vague surprise crept over Dan. He had seen those eyes before. But where? The curtain that shut out his past life still shrouded his memory.

Very different was the effect on Foxey. In an instant he recognised his victim; astonishment and fear seized him.

How had Dan escaped? He knew nothing of the rescue, having had a message from Rebow to go straight to Rotterdam in the Vulture and bring out the couper.

That fear changed instantly to determination to stop the boy's mouth for ever. Once he had failed; this time he would make sure. He whipped a

long French knife from his belt and rushed at Dan.

The boy, taken by surprise, had barely time to dodge.

Quick as lightning, Foxey was round again.

Furious at the cowardly attack, and wondering at the sudden ferocity of the man, Dan hit out with all his force, and Foxey received a left-hander between the eyes that sent him rolling along the deck.

He was up again in a second. But, as Dan turned to face him, his foot slipped, and he came down at full length.

With a cry of triumph, the couper's skipper sprang at Dan; but Buck, whose rage was now at its height, threw his arms round Foxey, whirled him off his legs, and cast him down heavily. The man lay still, groaning.

"You carry cutthroats, then, as well as bad liquor!" cried Buck. "You cowardly skunk! What harm has he done that you should pull a knife on him?"

He snatched up the knife and sent it whizzing overboard. Then, running his hands round the man's belt, he found a cheap Belgian six-shooter, which followed the knife.

Foxey lay motionless where he had fallen.

"Come on, Dan! I'm going to finish this!" cried Buck.

He dashed below, with Dan at his heels. His eyes gleaming and his teeth clenched, Buck seized bottles and jars, and flung them about like a madman till the cabin was littered with broken glass and reeking with spilt spirits.

Dan looked at him in amazement. Then the excitement seized him, too, and, with a shout, he flung himself into the work of demolition.

In a few minutes there was not a drop of unspilt spirits in the saloon.

"Whoop!" cried Dan, as he rushed on deck. "Whore's the main store, Buck? Scour her out to the last pint!"

"Here you are!" returned Buck. He tore off the hatch of the lazarette. "Here's all the stuff in kegs! They're too heavy to lift out! Rig a derrick, and heave 'em up on deck!"

The Bargreave's gaff—the upper spar of a fore-and-aft sail—hung high above the hatch, the sail flapping it to and fro. In a twinkling Buck routed out a double block-tackle—an arrangement of wooden pulleys and ropes—from the raffle on deck, skipped aloft, crawled out along the gaff, and whipped the upper block on to the end of the peak.

Thus they had a capital pulley-tackle. Dropping down into the lazarette-hold, Buck made the lower block fast to a large keg.

"Haul away!" he cried.

Dan hauled on the rope, and the keg swung up on to the deck. Seizing an oar, he up-ended it, and brought the butt down on the keg's head with all his force. At the second blow the lid smashed in. Dan kicked the keg over, and the liquor gushed out and flooded the deck.

The boys hauled the other kegs up in turn; then, wielding an oar apiece, they broke them open and upset their contents.

As the couper heaved and fell on the smooth swells, spouting raw liquor from her scuppers, three boats pulled up from the fleet, and two men from each came aboard.

The strangers were gloomy-eyed and melancholy, for they had come to fetch their skippers and mates, who lay in drunken torpor below.

They stared in astonishment at first; but when they understood what the boys were doing, they nodded grim approval.

(Continued on page 28.)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

HERE'S a question to make you think. What is

THE LONGEST MILE IN THE WORLD?

Most people think that a mile is the same length no matter where you are. But they are wrong. Even in this country there are two different miles. There is the ordinary mile which is used ashore, and there is also the nautical mile, which is 266 2-3rd yards longer. Foreign countries also use miles as measurements of length. In Spain the mile is nearly three times as long as an English mile: in Austria, Denmark, and Germany it is considerably over four times as long. Norway, however, holds the record for the longest mile. Her mile is equivalent to 7 miles and 37 yards of our measure. I don't think there are many people who would like to go for a ten-mile hike in Norway!

Some time ago I asked my reader chums to let me know of any curious objects there were round about their homes. This week I have received a letter from a Sheffield reader concerning

A CURIOUS MILESTONE.

There is, he tells me, a very ancient milestone on the old Roman road between Ringinglowe and Fox House. The moors round about there are wild and desolate, and in the good old days coaches used to rumble over this road. There were highwaymen in that part of the country, and they hit upon the bright idea of taking cover behind the big milestone. If they showed themselves too soon on a moonlight night, however, the coachmen turned back. So the highwaymen promptly bored a hole right through the stone, with the result that they could remain there in cover, but could watch the approach of the coach until the time came for them to emerge with their demand to "stand and deliver"!

The ancient milestone is still there—complete with "the highwaymen's peep-hole"!

Now for

NEXT WEEK'S SPECIAL FEATURES!

The Greyfriars yarn by Frank Richards is one that I am confident will gain your interest from beginning to end. It is entitled:

"BUNTER GETS HIS OWN BACK!"

so the subject of this topping tale needs no explanation. All I need say is, that "Magnetites" are quite justified in anticipating that this story will prove to be extra-specially good!

You'll enjoy, too, the rib-tickling edition of the "Greyfriars Herald," the nerve-tingling chapters of "Dan of the Dogger Bank!" and the Greyfriars Rhymester's snappy verses written around James Hobson, of the Shell.

Be sure and order your copy early, chums!
YOUR EDITOR.

"Why, it's the cubs from the Grey Seal!" said one. "Well done, youngsters! Broach every drop she's got, an' send her home! She worked ruin enough to the likes o' us! We'd help ye, but we're under orders to clear an' quit. There's weather a-coming!"

"We can finish her ourselves!" said Buck. "Up with 'em, Dan!"

The newcomers took their mates away, handling them with none too much tenderness.

As they left, the second and larger boat rowed off from the Seal, with Atheling and Wat Griffiths at her oars.

They came aboard, Atheling fierce with anger at the shame the couper had brought upon the fleet.

"What under the sun are you doing?" he cried, addressing Dan and Buck. "Broachin' her liquor stores? Ye'll come to a bad end, ye whelps! But it's a fine stroke, an', by the bull o' Barney, they deserve it! Who's that in the waist, lyin' on his face?"

The boys told him of Foxey's attempt to knife Dan, and the skipper's face grew sterner.

"The Blacks again!" he said. "Ruin they bring wherever they go! Here's half the crews laid out! They've asked for war, an' they shall have it!"

Four of the Bargreave's crew, recovering from their carouse, came on deck. As soon as they saw the state of affairs, they rushed at the intruders.

Griffiths, whose sinewy arms were aching for a fight, gripped one of the men and flung him aside like a baby. A second sprang at Atheling with a splicing-knife, but a strong left-hander took him under the chin and sent him sprawling.

A look of beast-like hatred transformed the man's face. He drew a pistol as he lay, and, with an oath, fired it at Atheling.

The bullet sang past the skipper's head. At the same instant a tongue of flame shot along the deck, spreading far and wide over the planks. The cartridge had spurted a shower of burning sparks out of its muzzle. These caught the spirit that was welling over the decks, and set it aflame. In ten seconds the whole waist of the ship was flaming with liquid fire.

"Haul both the boats alongside, Wat!" roared Atheling. "We've got to save

the swabs, though they don't deserve it!"

He gripped the man who had fired, dragged him clear of the flames, and rolled him over in a sail-cover. This put out the burning spirit on the man's clothes, and he, more frightened than hurt, ran up into the bows, bellowing.

Down into the cabin went Atheling, and in a couple of minutes he had all the snoring, tipsy crew on deck. They were bundled into the big boat that belonged to the couper, and their more sober mates, now thoroughly cowed, were hustled in after them.

Atheling and Wat cast the Bargreave's boat off, and jumped into their own, the two boys following in the Seal's foot-boat.

A rush of wind swept up from the north-west, and the great, black couper, now a mass of fire, crackling and roaring, careered off before the blast. She lurched away down the North Sea, a living tower of flame, and spouting cataracts of living fire from all her scuppers.

A great shout went up from all the smacks around.

"Good-bye, ye floating gin-shop!" shouted Atheling, as though the blazing hulk could hear. "Never another sailorman will ye send to the bottom!"

"It's her!" said Dennis Rebow. "I ken her fine! She carries four ventilators on the afterdeck!"

"Ay, it's Dudley Graham's craft," said his father. "I suppose he'll be wantin' news. Aweel, he must wait an opportunity. Though there's nothin' I wouldna give to have my fingers on that cub Kenneth, I'll no do it in broad daylight an' swing for it! It must be done quiet."

Jake Rebow's lip drew back fiercely, and showed his yellow teeth. He and his son, having made the Adder, which had picked them up, their new flagship in place of the lost Banshee, were watching a high, black steam-yacht that came steaming up through the night and hove-to, smartly as a naval dispatch-boat, close to the Adder.

Dudley Graham came down the gangway-ladder and stepped into a boat that was lowered.

In less than a minute he had boarded

the smack. He greeted Rebow shortly, and was taken down into the cabin. The men eyed each other furtively.

"Well," said Dudley, "have you done it?"

"No," returned Jake sourly, "not yet!"

"Why, dash it all, man, have you and your precious squadron taken all this time to hunt down one stray cub? I thought you had more sand in you!"

Jake bit the end off a Dutch cigar. "Ye'll just ha' to wait for a fittin' opportunity," he said coolly. "Yon cub has the luck o' the deevil. I'd hae ye to know that he's cost me mair than the bit siller ye're offerin' a'ready. He an' his mates ha' lost me my auld Banshee, burned the Bargreave, that had barely left port three days, and nigh put the necks o' some o' my best men in the halter. I'm e'en as anxious as yoursel' to see him thrown to the crabs, but I'm no gau'n to rush at the job, an' swing for it!"

"But, confound it all," said Graham irritably, "he'll slip through our fingers! I made sure you'd find him and do the job at once. I can't understand why he hasn't got the vessel that picked him up to put him ashore by now. It's worth a fortune to them."

"Ay," said Jake, "it puzzled me a bit, too. But I've learned he doesn't ken wha he is, or aught about himself. He got a bit welt o' the head i' fallin' o'erboard, an' his memory's clean gone."

"Great Scott!" said the visitor. "Is that so?" He was silent for a moment. "Well, that's a piece of luck for us! They've given him up for dead ashore. The coastguard has had orders to wire any news of him, and Donald has been advertising hither and yon. But they've abandoned hope now, and, of course, nobody connects him with a derelict smack's boy. Nobody ashore has heard of—what's his name now?"

"Dan!" said Rebow viciously. "Dogger Dan they call him!"

"Dogger Dan, is it? Well, see here, Jake Rebow, you go right ahead and do the job, and I'll raise the price to a thousand pounds!"

(Dudley Graham means business, doesn't he, chum? Be sure and read next week's chapters of this thrill-packed yarn!)

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