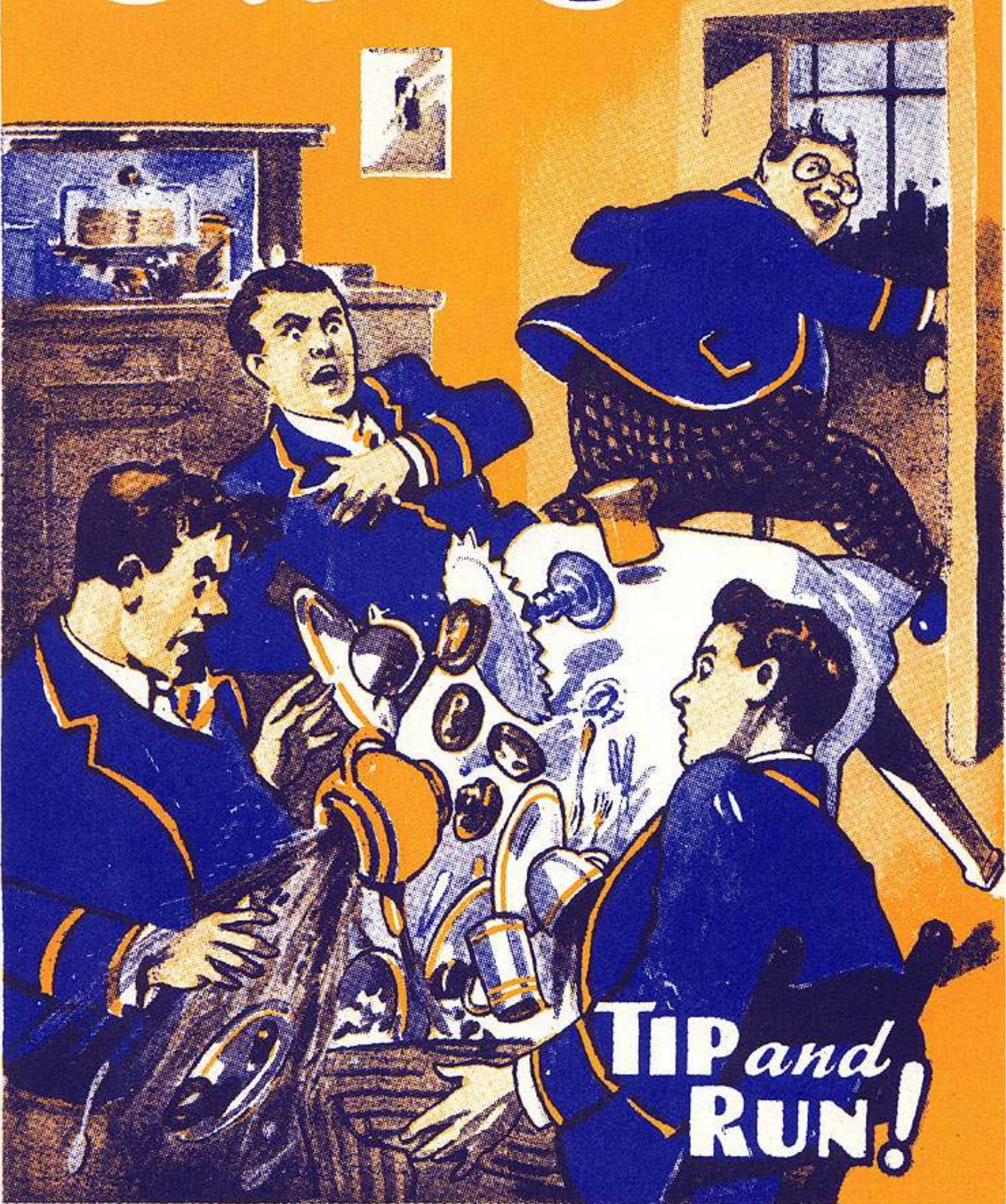


BILLY BUNTER TELLS THE TRUTH! See the Grand Greyfriars Yarn—Inside

The Magnet ^{2^d}



TIP and RUN!

Minding his own business has never been one of Horace Coker's habits. Having taken a serious view of the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Quelch's watch-chain, he resolves to look into the matter and set things right!

The HEAVY HAND! By FRANK RICHARDS



As a locked door barred him from the enraged Removites, Horace Coker was able to carry on with a heavy hand—and he did!

Amazing Yarn of Schoolboy Adventure, featuring HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS, and FRANK COURTENAY & CO., of HIGHCLIFFE.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Too Funny!

"KNOCK, knock!" said Temple of the Fourth.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove glanced round.

In morning break the Famous Five of the Remove were standing in a group in the Greyfriars quad in deep and rather worried discussion.

They were discussing a matter that was almost the sole topic in the Greyfriars Remove at present.

Whenever two or three Remove fellows gathered together they were sure to discuss that topic—unpleasant as it was.

For it was the topic of the "pinching"—or supposed pinching—that had taken place in their Form-master's study more than a week ago.

The gold watch-chain that had been missed from Mr. Quelch's study was still missing.

That was bad enough in itself. Worse was the fact that fellows in other Forms chipped them on the subject. It was awful to think of a "pincher" in the Remove. It was still more awful to be chipped by the Fourth and the Shell, and for cheeky fags of the Third to pretend to button up their pockets when Remove men came by!

However, the Famous Five dismissed that topic for the moment as Temple of the Fourth came along with Dabney of that Form.

Temple and Dabney halted quite near the chums of the Remove—Temple, apparently, being willing to let the Removites hear his funny story.

Cecil Reginald Temple winked at Dabney, who grinned.

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Then he proceeded with his funny story, which, as he developed it, was evidently intended for the edification of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Knock, knock!"

"Who's there?"

"Arthur!"

"Arthur who?"

"Arthur any pinchers about?"

The Famous Five listened to that little joke—not with relish. Dabney chortled explosively. Temple smiled like a fellow who knew that he had a pretty wit and was pleased therewith. But the Famous Five did not smile. Harry Wharton frowned, Frank Nugent frowned, Johnny Bull glared, Bob Cherry's blue eyes gleamed, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh knitted his dusky brow.

But Temple was not finished yet. Had he walked off at that point Cecil Reginald might have escaped the consequences of his pretty wit. But Cecil Reginald had another funny story to tell.

"Knock, knock!" recommenced Temple.

"Who's there?"

"Luke!"

"Luke who?"

"Luke out for pinchers!"

Harry Wharton looked round at his chums. Then, as if moved by the same spring, the Famous Five jumped at the two Fourth Formers. Whether Temple of the Fourth had any more funny stories to tell they never knew—they gave him no time to relate them. Three pairs of hands grasped Temple and upended him; two pairs grasped Dabney, and Dab bumped down on the quad.

Up to that moment the episode had seemed funny to Temple and Dabney. At this point it ceased to be funny.

"Here, leggo!" roared Dabney, as Frank Nugent sat on his waistcoat and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stood on his legs.

"Oh gad!" gasped Temple. "I say, I—Ooogh!"

Temple sprawled on his back and spluttered. Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull, taking possession of his ankles, made it quite impossible for Temple to get off his back. His hat had fallen off and Bob Cherry fixed a grasp on his hair.

"Knock, knock!" said Bob, tapping Temple's head on the quad.

"Ow! Wow!" yelled Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five. It was their turn to laugh now.

"Will you leggo?" shrieked Temple.

"What's the hurry?" asked Bob Cherry. "I'm telling you a funny story, old man. Knock, knock!"

Bang, bang! went Cecil Reginald's head on the quad. Cecil Reginald's wild yells woke most of the echoes of Greyfriars.

"Yarough! Ow! Leggo! Oh, my napper! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Knock, knock!" chortled Bob, continuing to suit the action to the word.

"Yoo-hoo!"

"Don't make that fearful row, Temple, old bean! You'll miss the funny story I'm telling you!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" bellowed Temple.

"Yow-ow! Leggo! Ow!"

"Knock, knock!" resumed Bob.

"Who's there?"

"Saul!"

"Saul who?"

"Saul your own fault!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "It's all your own fault! See, Temple? Quite good—what?"

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

"Laugh, old man!" urged Johnny Bull. "This is where you laugh, Temple!"

Cecil Reginald Temple did not laugh. He had been quite amused by his own funny stories. Bob's did not seem to amuse him at all. Instead of laughing he wrenched and wriggled and roared.

"Will you leggo? You Remove rotters, leggo! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Ware, beaks!"

The rather tall and angular figure of Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, appeared in view, walking under the Greyfriars elms.

There was no doubt, of course, that Temple and Dabney deserved to be ragged and rolled in the puddles left by April showers for their neck in chipping the Removites on the subject of the pinching in that Form. Still, the Famous Five did not expect Mr. Quelch to understand that. In such matters a schoolmaster was not likely to see eye to eye with a schoolboy.

So, at the sight of their Form-master, the Famous Five released Temple and Dabney and shot away.

They vanished like ghosts at cock-crow, chuckling as they vanished, leaving Temple and Dabney sprawling and gasping and spluttering.

The two Fourth Formers sat up dizzily.

"Oooogh!" gasped Temple.

"Urrrgh!" gasped Dabney.

"Ow! My napper!" groaned Cecil Reginald. He clasped both hands to his suffering napper, which Bob had knocked on the quad not wisely but too well. Temple did not even observe at the moment that he was sitting up in a puddle. He was very particular about his bags, but he forgot even his elegant bags.

Temple and Dabney staggered to their feet, spluttering, breathless, considerably muddy, and perhaps wishing that they had not been so funny.

They stood in full view of the Remove master as he came along. Harry Wharton & Co. had vanished—the two Fourth Formers remained to meet the surprised and disapproving eyes of the master.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch, coming to a halt and staring at them. "Temple—Dabney, what are you doing in that dirty—that disgusting state? Upon my word! You should be ashamed of yourselves!"

"I—I—" stammered Temple.

"We—we—" stuttered Dabney.

"Pah!" said Mr. Quelch. "If you were boys of my Form I should cane you severely for appearing in the quad-rangle in that dirty, untidy, dishevelled state—that indescribably slovenly state! Go into the House at once! Wash yourselves—"

"Look here, sir—" gasped Temple.

"I am not your Form-master," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "but I will not allow any Greyfriars boy to appear in public in that untidy, that disgusting state! You are a disgrace to the school! If you do not immediately go into the House and wash yourselves and make yourselves tidy I shall report you to your Form-master. Go!"

Temple and Dabney exchanged a look of inexpressible fury. Then they trailed off to the House.

For Cecil Reginald Temple, the most fastidious fellow in the Lower School, to be told to go in and wash himself was really too much. Still, there was no doubt that he was badly in need of a wash and a brush-up.

and Dabney started for the House, and they heard the Remove master give a contemptuous and disgusted grunt as they went.

It was probable that Cecil Reginald would think twice, if not three times, before he was so funny again with the Famous Five!

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hot for Horace!

"BUNTER!"

"Eh? Yes, Coker?"

"Come in here!" said Coker of the Fifth.

Billy Bunter, the fat ornament of the Remove, blinked in surprise.

Bunter was in the school shop. He had been rather busy for some minutes, and looked a little sticky.

From Lord Mauleverer, after class, Bunter had extracted a loan of half-a-crown. He had, therefore, just expended cash on jam tarts to the exact value of two shillings and sixpence.

Breathing a little hard after his exertions, the fat Owl of the Remove wiped traces of jam from his large mouth with his sleeve in the elegant way he had, making that sleeve rather sticky, but leaving the fat face still sticky also. Bunter was feeling better after those jam tarts.

He was not, of course, satisfied. He would have been glad to follow up the tarts with a few doughnuts, the doughnuts with a few eclairs, and the eclairs

~~~~~  
Only heavy-handed methods will wring the truth out of Billy Bunter, the world's champion "fibber." And if anybody has a heavy hand—it's Horace Coker!  
~~~~~

with a big sultana cake. In matters of tuck Bunter was like the great Alexander—he sighed for new worlds to conquer.

There were other fellows in the tuckshop, both in the inner and the outer room, and Bunter would willingly have joined any of them in disposing of anything of an edible nature.

So he was pleased as well as surprised when Coker of the Fifth looked out of the inner room—sacred to seniors—and told him to come in.

Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth were teasing in that inner room—and Coker's teas were always lavish. Billy Bunter would have jumped with both feet at a chance of joining in, but he had never expected a swanking Fifth Form fathead like Horace Coker to offer him such a chance.

Bunter rolled at once to the door connecting the tuckshop with the inner and more aristocratic apartment reserved for Fifth and Sixth.

"All right, old chap!" gasped Bunter.

Coker stared at him.

"Did you call me old chap?" he inquired frigidly.

"Eh? Yes, old fellow."

"Well, don't!" said Coker. "I don't like it from fags!"

Billy Bunter did not call Coker an old chap again; he did not even call him a silly fathead. He was tempted to do so—that being his opinion of Coker—but tea was the first consideration. If Coker was going to stand tea, Bunter could stand Coker's swank.

He rolled in. Coker stepped back to the table, where he had left Potter and

Greene, who were grinning. Bunter rolled after him eagerly. Several senior men in the room stared at Bunter disapprovingly. Great men like Greyfriars seniors did not want grubby and sticky fags there.

"Here, look here, Coker," called out Price of the Fifth, "what are you bringing fags in here for?"

Coker stared round at Price.

"Find out!" he retorted.

"Well, look here—" began Hilton.

"Don't jaw, Hilton," suggested Coker.

Hilton and Price gave Horace Coker expressive looks; then Blundell of the Fifth called out:

"Here, Coker, fags aren't to tea in here!"

Coker stared at George Blundell.

"What the dickens do you mean, Blundell?" he roared.

"I mean exactly what I say! You can't have your fag friends to tea in the senior room—and you jolly well know it!" said Blundell.

"Oh, really, Blundell—" protested Bunter.

It was pretty awful, Bunter thought, if he was to miss Coker's spread because of this silly Upper Form swank!

"Who's got a fag to tea?" roared Coker.

"Haven't you?"

"Think I'd ask a measly fag to tea? If I did, I'd at least pick out one that washed! Don't be an ass, Blundell, if you can help it!"

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

It was news to him—sad news—that Coker of the Fifth had not asked him to tea. If he hadn't, Bunter couldn't imagine why he had asked him into the room at all. Neither could anybody else. A dozen seniors were staring at Coker now.

"Shut up, you fat young ass!" said Coker, sitting down. "You needn't look round for a chair; you're not sitting down in here. Don't be cheeky!"

"Look here—" hooted Bunter.

"I said shut up!" pointed out Coker.

"If it ain't tea, what do you want?" demanded Bunter indignantly. "Think I want to stand here and listen to your jaw—or what?"

"I said don't be cheeky," remarked Coker, with a warning frown. "I've a short way with cheeky fags, Bunter. Don't go!" added Coker, as the fat Owl of the Remove made a motion to retreat.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles with deep annoyance. He had taken it for granted that Coker was asking him in to tea. What else was a fellow to think?

If it was not tea, he could not imagine what it was. Still, as he was within reach of Coker's hefty hand he decided to give Coker his head.

A blink round the room revealed that there was no Sixth Form prefect present. In the presence of such mighty men even Horace Coker did not throw his weight about to its fullest extent; but there was no man of the Sixth in the room at all just then.

"Now," said Coker, adopting quite a magisterial manner, "what's all this about pinching in the Remove?"

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Bunter.

"That's why I've called you in," said Coker. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this. It's pretty disgraceful for pinching to be going on at a school like Greyfriars. From what I hear, your Form-master missed a gold watch-chain from his study a week or two ago. It's not been found. I hear that most of your Form think that you had it."

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter.

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"Think you're a prefect?"

"Never mind that!" said Coker. "I'm going to question you, Bunter. I warn you to answer truthfully."

Billy Bunter glared at Coker of the Fifth with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Other seniors in the room grinned.

This was Coker all over.

Sixth Form prefects, of course, were bound to inquire into such a matter to the best of their ability and give the Head and his staff every possible assistance in discovering the culprit.

Coker was not a prefect; he was nobody in particular. He had no more right to question Bunter of the Remove than Bunter had to question Coker of the Fifth.

These considerations did not matter to Coker in the very least; he disregarded them utterly.

"Now," went on the great Horace, while Bunter glared at him in speechless rage and fury, "I've heard a lot of jaw among the fags. They think you had it. I think it's very likely; you're a pilfering little beast. I've whopped you times out of number for snooping tuck from my study. From what I hear, Quelch's watch-chain snapped a link, and he stopped wearing it and put it in a drawer in his study table to take down to the jeweller's to be repaired next time he went to Courtfield. Somebody snaffled it; it was gone when he went for it. Was it you?"

"Coker, old man—" murmured Potter.

"Don't interrupt, Potter."

"The Head hasn't made you a prefect, has he, when nobody was looking?" asked Greene.

"Don't be a silly ass, Greene!"

"You—you—you cheeky fathead!" howled Bunter. "Think you can have a man up like a prefect? Go and eat cake!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Price.

"Shut up, Price!" said Coker. "Now, Bunter, I'm waiting! I'm pretty certain you're the man from the way you're always pinching tuck. Have you got Quelch's chain?"

"Find out!" yelled Bunter.

"I'm going to!" said Coker grimly.

"I'm not going to have this going on, I can tell you. Pinchers ain't good enough for this school. I—"

"Look here, Coker, chuck it!" urged Potter. "I've heard that some of the fags suspect a Highcliffe kid who was over here the day that chain was pinched. Anyhow, it's no bizney of yours—"

"For goodness' sake," said Coker, "shut up! Why a fellow wants to keep on talking when he can't talk sense beats me! Shut up! See? Now, Bunter, I want to know whether you've got that chain about you?"

"Beast!"

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance and went on with their tea. They gave Coker his head. Like a troublesome horse, Coker had to be given his head. Coker was in deadly earnest about this. Coker was generally in earnest. He took himself very seriously.

The little table at which Coker & Co. sat was piled with good things. Coker's spread was more interesting than Coker's conversation, so Potter and Greene gave their attention to the spread.

Coker, heedless of tea and teacakes, jam and jelly, chocolate eclairs and cream puffs, fixed his stern eye on Billy Bunter.

Plenty of Remove fellows suspected Bunter of having "snooped" that missing chain. Other fellows preferred to

suspect a fellow outside the school—a Highcliffe junior. Nobody, in fact, knew anything; it was all a matter of surmise and suspicion. Undoubtedly it was a very disagreeable state of affairs—a disgrace to the Remove and to the school. Coker was going to clear it up. As masters and prefects had failed, no doubt Coker considered that it was up to a really brainy fellow, over so much more gifted in the intellectual line than masters or prefects.

He waited sternly for Bunter's answer. Bunter did not answer. Whether the fat Owl had a guilty secret on his fat conscience or not, he certainly was not going to be cross-examined by a Fifth Form fathead. He would have walked out of the room, with his fat little nose turned up in scorn, but for the fact that Coker was ready to clutch him if he did.

"Very well; you refuse to answer!" said Coker grimly. "Now turn out your pockets on this table!"

Potter and Greene fairly gasped at that. All the seniors in the room stared. Only Coker seemed to be unaware that it was unexampled cheek for him to order a junior to turn out his pockets.

But the next moment even Coker's amazing cheek was forgotten as the fellows saw Bunter's face.

The fat Owl's jaw dropped. His little round eyes almost bulged through his big round spectacles. He gasped. If ever a fellow looked scared out of his wits, Billy Bunter did at that suggestion that he should turn out his pockets.

"Oh gum!" ejaculated Potter, staring at the fat Owl.

"Great pip!" murmured Greene.

"He's got it!"

"You hear me, Bunter?" hooted Coker.

"You—you—you cheeky beast!" gasped Bunter. "You—you think I'm going to turn out my pockets for you? Who are you, I'd like to know? Beast!"

At the risk of Coker's clutch, Bunter started for the door to escape into the outer shop.

Coker promptly clutched, reaching out from where he sat.

"Ow! Leggo!" howled Bunter, as Horace gripped. "Beast! Cheeky rotter! Leggo my shoulder! Yah!"

"Are you going to turn out your pockets?"

"No!" yelled Bunter.

"Then I'll make you!" said Coker.

Billy Bunter was indignant; he was wrathful—quite natural feelings in the circumstances. But every fellow there could see that this was not all. He was terrified, too. He gave a desperate wrench, but Coker held on to the fat shoulder.

But Bunter was desperate—that was clear. And, in his desperation, he took desperate measures. He could not jerk himself away from Coker's grip. But he suddenly grasped the edge of the table with both fat hands, tilted it up, and pitched it over on Coker & Co.

The table rocked. Its contents shot off in a shower. Potter and Greene yelled as they received a volley of pastries, jam, and marmalade. Coker yelled more loudly than his friends. Coker got the teapot!

The teapot landed on Coker's waistcoat. It shed its contents there, which ran down all over Coker of the Fifth.

The tea was hot. It was very hot. Coker let go Bunter on the spot, leaping to his feet, yelling frantically.

"Ow! I'm scalded! Yarooooop! Oooo-hooooop!"

Billy Bunter did not wait. He shot for the doorway like an arrow from a bow. He did the outer shop in a series of bounds like a fat kangaroo, and bolted into the quad.

The most rapid pursuit would hardly have overtaken Bunter. But there was no pursuit. Coker, drenched with hot tea, was dancing, yelling, and roaring. He danced, yelled, and roared for quite a long time. Billy Bunter had vanished long before Coker of the Fifth was half-through his song and dance.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

High Words!

HARRY WHARTON knitted his brows.

There was a tramp of feet in the Remove passage. Voices—excited voices—were heard outside Study No. 1, where the Famous Five were at tea. Loudest of all was the bull-voice of Bolsover major.

The chums of the Remove, sitting round the table in Study No. 1, exchanged rather grim glances.

"That fool Bolsover—" said Harry.

"That cad Skinner—" growled Johnny Bull.

"That worm Snoop—" said Nugent.

"That chump Wibley—" said Bob Cherry.

"The terrific asses are coming here to indulge in the idiotic jawfulness!" remarked Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

There was a heavy thump on the door of Study No. 1. It flew open, and the burly Bolsover marched in. Behind him, Skinner and Snoop stepped into the doorway, and, behind him, six or seven of the Remove appeared in view—Wibley, Morgan, Micky Desmond, Kipps, Hazeldene, Russell. Apparently, it was a sort of deputation that had called on the captain of the Remove, and Bolsover major, the bully of the Form, was the leader thereof.

Other fellows, in the passage, were looking on, but taking no part, among them Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, his chum, Tom Redwing, Peter Todd, Ogilvy, Tom Brown, and Squiff, Mark Linley, and Monty Newland.

Most of the Remove, in fact, seemed to be crowding the passage outside the study belonging to the captain of the Form.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet. His eyes glinted a little.

"Well?" he rapped.

"Well," retorted Bolsover major, "I dare say you know why we've come here! It's about that rotten chain that your pal from Highcliffe pinched the day he was over here, making out that he was hanging about waiting for you to come in!"

"You know that's not true, Bolsover," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "And you won't say so in this study, either!"

"Look here," roared Bolsover, "it's got to be found out—see? I've just punched Hobson of the Shell for chipping me about it!"

"Go and punch him again!" suggested Bob Cherry. "Punching is good for Shell swabs!"

"And young Nugent—" bawled Bolsover.

"Eh—what about my minor?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I'll tell you what about him! I've just banged his head on the passage wall downstairs for pretending to button his pockets!"

Nugent frowned, but he made no reply. If Dicky Nugent of the Second Form checked the Remove to that extent, even his major could hardly object to his cheeky head being banged on a wall.

"And Temple of the Fourth," continued Bolsover—"I heard him telling

a silly knock-knock story, and mopped him up!"

"Little man, you've had a busy day!" remarked Bob Cherry.

Some of the juniors laughed, but Bolsover major did not. Bolsover was in a bad temper—not an uncommon state with him.

"Well, I'm fed-up with it!" he hooted. "It's been hanging over the Form for weeks now, and the fellows won't let it rest! I've just heard that Coker—"

"Oh, my hat! Is jolly old Horace barging in?" asked Bob.

"He's had Bunter up, in the senior room in the tuckshop, and ordered him to turn out his pockets!" roared Bolsover. "What do you think of that? A Fifth Form swab ordering a Remove man to turn out his pockets!"

Bunter!" suggested Skinner. "We all know he pinches grub, but pinching jewellery is a very different matter. I thought it was Bunter at first; but when it came out about that Highcliffe chap, Courtenay—"

"You mean, when that cad Ponsonby came over here from Highcliffe and put it into your head!" said Wharton contemptuously.

"I don't see that he did!" answered Skinner. "It's a fact that Courtenay was over here the day Quelch's chain was taken, hanging about in the visitors' room over an hour, waiting for you fellows to come in from a bike spin. Nobody knows what he mightn't have done."

"Sticking in that room by himself, only a step from Quelch's study, and

The Famous Five were all on their foot now, glaring at Bolsover major.

"I've told you, Bolsover—" said the captain of the Remove.

"I'm telling you!" hooted Bolsover. "And I tell you they know it over there. Skinner saw a Highcliffe man to-day who told him—"

"Rubbish!"

"Well, I know what I was told!" said Skinner. "There's been a row over there, through somebody chalking up on Courtenay's door 'Beware of Pick-pockets!'"

Harry Wharton gave a start.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"That's that!" hooted Bolsover. "I've said, from the start, that I'd rather put it down to a Highcliffe man than to a Greyfriars man. Now it



"Yaroooh! Leggo! I'll smash the lot of you— Oh crumbs! Whoop!" The Famous Five collared Bolsover major, heaved him off his feet, and hurled him through the doorway of Study No. 1. There was a yell from Skinner and Snoop as he swept them away in transit!

"By gum!" said Johnny Bull. "That's too thick! We'll jolly well teach Coker that he can't cheek the Remove like that!"

"That's all very well," said Bolsover. "But we shan't hear the end of it till that putrid chain's found! It's got to be cleared up—see? Why, life ain't worth living in the Remove since Quelch's chain went!"

"You know what I think about it," said the captain of the Remove. "I've never had any doubt that Bunter had it—"

"You'd rather think a Greyfriars man a pincher than a Highcliffe man—is that it?" snorted Bolsover major.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Harry Wharton. "I don't believe Bunter pinched it! I think he shifted it to pay Quelch out for whopping him, and hadn't sense enough to understand that Quelch would think it had been stolen when he missed it. I've said so all along."

"It's a bit rotten, sticking it on

Quelch with the Head at the time!" said Snoop.

"Stick up for your own school!" growled Bolsover major. "I don't know much about Courtenay, but I've Ponsonby—a rank rotter who'd be heard that he's related to that cad sacked from any school but Highcliffe. This is up to you, Wharton, as captain of the Form. Now they've found him out over there—"

"What the thump do you mean, you fathead, if you mean anything?" exclaimed Harry Wharton angrily.

"I mean what I say! They know over at Highcliffe, now, that the chap did it, so what's the good of hunting for Quelch's chain here, when we jolly well know where it is? You may like all the school chipping us about pinching in the Remove. Well, I don't, you see! Courtenay's got that chain over at Highcliffe—"

Harry Wharton clenched his hands

comes out that the Highcliffe chaps think the same! Are we going to be rotted about it here, now that we jolly well know who it was? You can go to Quelch, as captain of the Form, and put it up to him. Their beak, Mobbs, came over here and rowed the Head about it—well, if a Highcliffe beak can come here, a Greyfriars beak can go there! Quelch ought to ask them for his chain back—and if he know it was there, he would!"

"You silly fathead!" exclaimed Harry. "I dare say that cad Ponsonby is making the worst of it; but nobody but a fool would suspect Courtenay."

"Then I'm a fool?" roared Bolsover major

"You don't need me to tell you that! Still, if you don't know, I'll tell you!" retorted Wharton. "Yes, you're a fool!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Biggest fool going!" concurred Johnny Bull.

"And then some!" added Frank Nugent.

"The foolfulness is terrific and preposterous, esteemed Bolsover."

"Well," gasped Bolsover major, spluttering with rage, "if I'm a fool, I'm not a pal of pinchers! And you fellows are, and if you don't take it up with Quelch, Wharton, I jolly well will, and I can jolly well say—Yaroooh! Leggo! I'll smash the lot of you—Oh crumbs! Whooop!"

The Famous Five seemed to have heard enough from Bolsover major. They collared him, heaved him off his feet, and hurled him through the doorway of Study No. 1.

There was a yell from Skinner and Snoop as he swept them away in transit! And there was a roar from the crowd outside as the three pitched headlong among them.

Harry Wharton slammed the study door.

In the Remove passage there was a loud and angry buzz of voices, and the remarks that reached the Famous Five in the study showed that the general opinion, for once, was stronger on Bolsover's side than on that of the captain of the Remove. The latest news from Highcliffe had settled the matter for most of the Remove. The affair of that wretched chain had made plenty of trouble already, and it looked like making more.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby Eats His Words!

THE Caterpillar smiled—a rather grim smile.

"This," he remarked is getting thick!"

His friend and study-mate, Frank Courtenay, the captain of the Highcliffe Fourth, made no reply.

His brow was darkly knitted.

They were in their study, No. 3, in the Highcliffe Fourth. Rupert de Courcy was extended in a comfortable armchair, his elegant legs stretched out, his hands behind his head. In that lazy attitude he watched his chum, who was on his feet, moving restlessly about the study.

It was a very handsome and well-furnished study. The Caterpillar liked luxurious surroundings, though his pal cared little for them. The Persian rug on the floor had cost some relative of the Caterpillar's thirty guineas—the Chinese jar on the mantelpiece probably as much. There was a silken cushion, stuffed with softest down, behind the Caterpillar's lazy head.

His expression was a little less whimsically good-humoured than usual as he watched his restless chum.

A moment ago there had been a footstep in the passage. Under the study door a paper was slipped.

A scamper of retreating feet followed.

Neither of the fellows in the study made a movement to pick up the paper that had been slipped under the door. But they glanced at it—Courtenay with a dark brow, the Caterpillar with his smile growing grim.

"When are we goin' to hear the end of this?" murmured the Caterpillar.

"Never, if Ponsonby can help it!" said the captain of the Fourth savagely.

"And I fancied it was O.K.!" sighed

the Caterpillar. "Those chaps over at Greyfriars, Franky, think it was Bunter snaffled that mouldy chain. He as good as let out that it was, chattin' to us in Courtfield the other day. Didn't you gather from his entertainin' conversation that he'd snaffled it, and popped it with old Lazarus?"

"He gave me that impression."

"Me, too," assented the Caterpillar. "And I exuded thirty bob for him to get it back, thinkin' that would be the end. We know that he went into Lazarus' place—we saw him go in. I expected the next news to be that that putrid chain had been found at Greyfriars. But—no news, Franky!"

"Goodness knows who had it—somebody at Greyfriars, of course! It was just rotten luck that I happened to be there that day, waiting for the fellows to come in. Not that anybody would ever have thought of me in such a connection if Ponsonby hadn't gone over specially to start the story going."

"He wasn't losin' a chance like that!" said the Caterpillar, with a nod. "And havin' started it at Greyfriars, he was able to bring it here—and spread it all over Highcliffe! Franky, old man, how does Pon know that that beastly chain will never turn up at Greyfriars?"

Courtenay stared at him.

"He doesn't, fathead!"

"He does, old man!"

"He can't!"

"I know he can't—but he does!" said the Caterpillar imperturbably. "It's impossible, but there it is! I almost begin to believe that Pon must have dropped down Quelch's chimney and pinched the chain himself to set the whole thing goin'. He's bankin' on the mouldy article never bein' found over there, Franky. Think he believes that you had it?"

"Of course not, ass!"

"But he's actin' as if he does. He's got his teeth into it. He's made it get to Mobby—and he's made sure that Mobby heard that you're suspected in your own Form here! What sort of a fool will he look if the dashed chain turns up at Greyfriars after all?"

"It will, sooner or later. At least, they'll spot the man in time."

"They haven't spotted him yet. And time's goin' Pon isn't settin' out to make himself look a dashed slanderin' fool! Pon knows that that chain will never be found at Greyfriars, old man—or thinks he does."

"How could he, ass?"

De Courcy shrugged his shoulders.

"No good askin' me. But Pon's deep—awfully deep! He's pullin' the strings somehow—I don't know how." The Caterpillar rose from the armchair with a yawn. "Shall we glance at the billet-doux, old bean?"

He picked up the paper that had been slipped under the door, and unfolded it. Courtenay's eyes blazed at the words written on it in capital letters:

"HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY!"

The captain of the Fourth breathed hard and deep.

"Give that to me!" he said quietly.

He took the paper from De Courcy's hand and turned to the door.

"Not Pon, old man!" said the Caterpillar. One of his pals, of course; but Pon isn't askin' for it like this!"

"I don't care about that! Ponsonby's got to answer for it!"

Courtenay left Study No. 3, and the

Caterpillar followed him down the passage to Study No. 5. The door of that study was shut; Courtenay hurled it open with a crash and strode in.

Three fellows were in the study—Cecil Ponsonby, Monson, and Gadsby. They jumped up in haste as the captain of the Fourth strode in. Monson looked rather alarmed; Gadsby worried and uneasy. Ponsonby gave the newcomer a black and bitter look.

"What do you want here?" he asked between his teeth. "If you've barged in to kick up another shindy, Courtenay—"

"Look at that!"

The captain of the Highcliffe Fourth thrust the paper into Ponsonby's face.

Pon looked at it and raised his eyebrows.

"What about it?" he asked. "Jolly good advice, if you ask me! Lot of solid horse-sense in those old proverbs."

Monson grinned.

"That came from you," said Courtenay.

"Not at all! Never seen it before."

"Dash it all, Courtenay, you can't put everythin' down to this study!" exclaimed Monson warmly. "That might have come from any man in the Fourth. Where did you find it?"

"It was slipped under my study door ten minutes ago by some funky cad who bolted as soon as he had slipped it in."

"Well, Pon's been in this study the last half-hour."

"That makes no difference! I don't know, and don't care, whether Ponsonby did it himself, or put up some other rotter to doing it. I'm holding him responsible for everything of the kind."

"Isn't that rather high-handed?" drawled Ponsonby. "It's not my fault if a fellow tips you that honesty is the best policy. It is, isn't it? You ought to know best whether you need the tip. Nothin' to do with me."

"You're going to eat your words!" said Courtenay grimly.

Ponsonby backed a pace.

"I'll put this plain," he said. "They're saying over at Greyfriars that you did some pinchin' the day you were there. A lot of fellows here believe the same thing. I've scrapped with you twice, and I'm fed-up. You lay a finger on me, and I'll go to Mobbs about it."

"Please yourself about that!" said the captain of the Fourth. "Every time anything of this kind happens you're going to answer for it. I've come here to make you eat your words, and that's what you're going to do. You can put up a scrap first, if you choose."

"Hands off!" yelled Ponsonby, making a jump for the door.

The Caterpillar was standing there. He pushed the cad of Highcliffe back.

"Mobby will keep, Pon," he remarked gently. "You can sneak to Mobby afterwards. Go it, Franky, old bean!"

Frank Courtenay's grasp was on Pon. He struggled frantically and fiercely in that grasp.

"Back me up, you rotters!" yelled Ponsonby.

Monson made a forward movement. The Caterpillar stepped in front of him. Gadsby, on the other hand, walked to the window and stood there. Gadsby seemed rather out of sympathy with his leader.

"You keep on askin' for it, Pon!" he said.

There was no help for Pon. He resisted furiously as the captain of the Fourth whirled him to the study table and slammed him down on it. With his right hand, Courtenay pinned him there. With his left he held the sheet of paper out to him.

"You're going to eat that, Ponsonby," he said, quietly and grimly.

"You—you fool! You rotter!" panted Ponsonby. "Let me go! I'll go straight to Mobbs—"

"Are you going to eat it?"

"No!" shrieked Ponsonby.

Bang!

The back of Pon's head smote the study table hard. The yell he gave rang the length of the passage.

"Now, you cur!"

"Ow! Help! Oh!" roared Ponsonby.

Bang!

"Oh! Oh gad! Ow! Oh! Help me, Gaddy, you rotter!" screamed Ponsonby.

Gadsby shrugged his shoulders. Monson made another movement, but backed away from the Caterpillar. There was a rush of footsteps in the passage. A dozen of the Highcliffe Fourth gathered to stare in.

Among them were Vavasour, Drury, Merton, and one or two others of Pon's select knutty circle. But the rest were friends of the captain of the Fourth, and the knuts did not venture to intervene. Perhaps they thought, like Gaddy, that if Pon asked for these things he must expect them to happen.

"What the dickens is that game?" asked Smithson.

"Pon's goin' to eat his words—nasty, unpleasant words," drawled the Caterpillar. "He's asked for this specially."

Bang!

Pon's head smote the table a third time. He yelled with anguish. Into his open mouth, as he yelled, the captain of the Fourth thrust the paper. Ponsonby gurgled.

"I say, that's too jolly thick!" muttered Drury.

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"Don't you fellows butt in," said Smithson. "I'll jolly soon stop you if you do! Pon can look after himself, can't he?"

It rather looked as if Ponsonby couldn't. He struggled and wriggled and kicked, but the iron grasp on him did not relax. A fourth time his head banged on the table, and he gasped and gurgled wildly. Then he made the effort and chewed. There was no help for it; he had to eat his words, and he did!

There was a howl of laughter from the fellows crowded at the door. Even the knuts grinned at the sight of the dandy of Highcliffe eating his words in that extraordinary way. Crimson with rage and humiliation, Pon got it down.

Then Courtenay released him, and he rolled off the table, breathless and panting. The captain of the Fourth eyed him, coolly and scornfully.

"If you want this to go further, Ponsonby, now's your time, with or without gloves," he said.

"Get out of my study!" hissed Pon.

"Dash it all, Pon, you're not takin' that!" muttered Monson.

"Hold your tongue, you fool!"

Monson shrugged his shoulders. The captain of the Fourth left the study, the Caterpillar lounging after him.

"That's that!" said Courtenay, when he arrived back in Study No. 3. "I fancy there won't be any more papers slipped under this door."

"Not if Pon has to masticate them, old thing!" grinned the Caterpillar. "But I fancy you'll hear from Mobby about it. Mobby won't stand for his pet Pon bein' made to eat his jolly old words in that style."

"I'm ready to tell Mobbs what I've done, and to do it again if Ponsonby asks for it!" growled Courtenay.

"We're goin' to hear from Mobbs, old bean."

The Caterpillar was right, for ten minutes later Yates of the Fourth looked in with a message that Mr. Mobbs wanted Courtenay in his study.

With a set face, the captain of the Fourth went down to see his Form-master.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A New Way!

BILLY BUNTER dipped his pen in the ink, reflected for a moment, and blinked across the table in Study No. 7, in the Remove, at Peter Todd.

"I say, Peter, how many s's do you put in disappointed?" he asked.

"As a rule," answered Peter, "only one. It saves ink."

"Well, you can't spell, old chap," said Bunter. "I thought there were two, and that settles it. I'll put in two."

"Put in three if you like," suggested Peter. "Or why not four? After all, ink's cheap. Besides, it's supplied by the school."

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter bent his fat head to write. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton were getting tea in that study, but Bunter had a corner of the table where he was writing a letter. For some time the fat Owl had been wrinkling his podgy brows over that letter.

"When you've done," said Peter, "we want the table."

"Well I've got to catch the post with this," said Bunter. "I've got to let De Courcy know, you know."

Peter, who was slicing a loaf for toast, which Dutton was making at the study fire, paused in that operation to stare at his fat and fatuous study-mate.

"You're writing to that Highcliffe man?" he asked. "What the thump are you writing to Highcliffe for, fathead? The less we have to do with Highcliffe the better, now that a row's going on."

"I owe the chap money," said Bunter, with dignity. "That's not the sort of thing I can let slide, Peter."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're not very particular about such things, Peter, I dare say. It's rather different with me."

"If you're getting particular about it," said Peter, "where's the bob you borrowed from me yesterday?"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"And the half-crown you had last week?"

"Those trifling sums will have to wait till I get my postal order, Peter. Didn't I tell you I was expecting a postal order?"

"I seem to remember something of the kind," assented Peter. "But I shan't want the money when your postal order comes. I shall be getting my old-age pension by then."

"Beast!"

Peter resumed slicing the loaf, and Bunter making smears and blots on his letter. But he blinked up again.

"Do you spell catch with a 'k,' Peter?" he asked.

"Hardly!"

"Then I shall. All right."

Bunter finished his letter at last.

"Got a stamp you don't want, Peter?" he asked.

"No!"

"Look here, I jolly well know you've got a stamp!" exclaimed Bunter, warmly.

"I've got a stamp I do want, certainly! Not one I don't want."

"I think you might lend a pal a

stamp, Peter, when he's been disappointed about a postal order. If I send this letter without a stamp, the Caterpillar mightn't pay the threepence on it. And then I shall still be owing him money. And those beasts make out that they're going to keep on booting me till I square that Highcliffe chap."

Peter Todd chuckled.

"So that's why you've got so particular about squaring a debt?" he asked. "Well, there's nothing like leather."

"It's like their cheeks to butt in, of course," said Bunter. "I suppose my friend De Courcy can lend me thirty shillings if he likes! No bizney of theirs."

Peter gave quite a jump.

"You've touched that Highcliffe man for thirty bob?" he ejaculated.

"My own friends let me down!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I asked you to lend me thirty bob, Peter, as you jolly well know. I told you what I wanted it for, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snorted Bunter. "I saw that rolled-gold chain in old Lazarus' window, exactly like Quelch's chain to look at, and it was only thirty bob. I told you I was going to get it, and put it in Quelch's study, and he would think it was his—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Peter.

"Oh, cackle!" growled Bunter. "It would have worked all right if Quelch hadn't caught me putting it in his table drawer. Then I had to own up that it was a dud chain, of course, or he'd have thought I'd pinched his chain, the one that's missing—which you know I never did, Peter."

"I'm pretty sure you did, you fat villain!"

"Oh, really, Peter! I've told you a dozen times, at least, that I never went to Quelch's study that day, and never saw him with the broken chain in his hand, and never saw him put it in his table drawer, and never went back to the study while he was with the Head, and never thought of bagging it because he whopped me. Besides, he whopped me for nothing! I never get justice here, as you know."

"You'll get more than you want, when Quelch spots who pinched that watch-chain!"

"I tell you I never did!" yelled Bunter. "I never even saw it! As for thinking of hiding it in his Sunday hat, the idea never even crossed my mind."

"Oh crikey!" said Peter.

"Besides, how was a fellow to know that Quelch would think it had been pinched, when he missed it?" demanded Bunter. "Of course, he ought to have guessed at once that it was a jape on him. But he didn't, Peter! He jumped to it at once that it had been pinched! Beastly suspicious, I call it!"

"And what did you do with it?" asked Peter.

"Eh? Nothing! I've told you I never even saw it!"

"If you'd parked it in his Sunday hat, he would have found it before this," said Peter Todd, eyeing his fat study-mate very curiously. "Mauleverer thought from the first that you'd taken it for some silly trick—he's not such an ass as they think him. Where is it now?"

"How should I know, as I've never seen it?" hooted Bunter. "If I knew anything about it, I jolly well shouldn't say so, after Quelch got that silly idea

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into his head that it had been pinched. Think I want to be sacked?"

"You fat villain," said Peter Todd. "You ought to own up! Half the fellows in the Form think that that Highcliffe chap, Courtenay, pinched it—especially now he's suspected in his own school. Can't you see what a worm you are, letting that chap be talked about like that?"

"Well, I did my best," said Bunter. "I rather like the chap! I got that rolled-gold chain for Quelch to find, to keep him quiet. It cost me thirty shillings! I did it entirely on Courtenay's account—not because Quelch had his eye on me, Peter."

"I don't think!"

"And it would have worked all right if the old ass hadn't caught me in his study," said Bunter. "The chains are exactly alike to look at—the only difference is, that one's made of gold, and the other isn't—"

"Only!" said Peter.

"And then those beasts begin booting me for borrowing thirty bob off De Courcy, when I only did it to clear their pal!" said Bunter. "Talk about ingratitude being a sharper child than a serpent's tooth!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And having been disappointed about my postal order, of course I can't pay De Courcy in cash!" said Bunter. "All I can do is to let him have the chain I got from old Lazarus, now it's turned out that it's no use to keep Quelch quiet! After all, it comes to the same thing, doesn't it?"

"Let's hope De Courcy will think so!" grinned Peter. "I'd like to see his face when you offer him a dud watch-chain." "Well, it's rolled-gold," said Bunter. "It's exactly like Quelch's chain, except that it's rolled-gold instead of real gold. I dare say the Caterpillar will be satisfied. I can't help it if he isn't! I say, lend me a stamp! He won't know it's there till he gets this letter."

"Eh? Where?" asked Peter, staring.

"I left it in his study for him, when I was over there!" explained Bunter. "You see, I never saw him, as I expected! That beast Skinner pulled my leg on the first of April, you know, making out that De Courcy had asked me over there to tea, and he hadn't—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that beast Monson kicked me when I got there—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I had to sneak into the place without being seen," said Bunter, "and then I waited in De Courcy's study, and he never came, and I can tell you I was fearfully hungry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Peter.

"And I had to get back for calling-over, so I couldn't wait till De Courcy came in, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up cackling!" roared Bunter. "It wasn't funny, you ass. I never had any tea—fancy that, Peter—"

"Awful!" gasped Peter. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I couldn't hand De Courcy the chain, as he wasn't there, so I left it for him," said Bunter.

"You left a rolled-gold chain lying about De Courcy's study at Highcliffe?" roared Peter.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter. "Of course I didn't leave it lying about, for anybody to pinch. I put it in a Chinese jar on his mantelpiece. Safe enough there till he finds it. That's why I've written to him—to tell him where it

is, see? I say, where's that stamp?"

There was a tramp of feet in the Remove passage. Five fellows looked in at the door of Study No. 7.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

The Famous Five stepped in.

"Have you squared with that Highcliffe man yet, Bunter?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Yes—no—you see—"

"You know you're going to be booted till you do!"

"The bootfulness is going to be terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

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

"Shove him over here, Toddy!" said Johnny Bull. "Bunter's going to learn to keep his manners and customs inside Greyfriars! We're going to teach him, if it wears out our boots, not to bilk chaps at other schools."

"Turn round, Bunter!" said Frank Nugent.

"I—I—I say, you fellows! Keep off, you beasts!" roared Bunter. "I'm going to square that Highcliffe chap—I've squared him already—I've just written to him—look at that letter, you beasts, and you'll see—"

"Eh? What?"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull. "Boot him, and get it over!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Oh, give him a chance!" said Harry.

"If he's paying up, all right! But what's that letter got to do with it, fathead?"

"Look at it, and see!" snorted Bunter; and he held out the missive for inspection—keeping the study table between him and the Famous Five.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Money's Worth!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. looked at that letter.

It was worth looking at. They looked at it, and blinked. Peter Todd looked at it, and roared. There were almost as many blots and smears and smudges as words. And the spelling was in accord with Billy Bunter's own original system of orthography. Altogether, it was quite a remarkable letter, likely to cause great surprise, and great entertainment, in Study No. 3 in the Highcliffe Fourth if the Caterpillar received it. It ran:

"Dear Katerpillar,—I'm riting to you becakwse I can't come over pursonally in the pressent state of affares, such a row beeing on, not beakwse its a lot of trubble to come sutch a long weigh. You see, I came over to tee, that beest Skinner making out you asked him to tell me, a rotten joak on the ferst of April, and I was going to settle the thirty bob you lent me Wensday in Courtfield butt you were not there so I coodn't, cood I? Beeing dissapointed about a poastal order, I hadn't the actual kash, but I was gowing to give you the chane I bort with the thirty bob which is no use after awl. You see I bort that chane beakwse it was eksactly like the one Quelch missed from his studdy, to put it there and kepe him quiet, but it was no go as he kort me at it and I was wopped. So I am letting you have it to settle the thirty bob.

"I am sorry I did not katch you at hoam, but it is all rite, as I have left the chane for you in the jar on your

mantelpiece in your studdy, with the dride lavender sticking in it, so noboddy will see it or pinch it, there are sum phellows at Highcliffe I wouldn't trust as phar as I cood see them.

"I hoap you will like that chane which is reely worth more that the thirty bob, Mr. Lazarus told me it was very cheep when he sold it to me, and he knoes bceeing a jocaller.

"Your pal,

"W. G. BUNTER."

What with the length of the letter, the unusual spelling, the smears and the blots, it was a matter of some minutes for the juniors to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the same. But they got through it at last, and transferred their gaze from the letter to the writer thereof.

"You priceless idiot!" said Harry Wharton. "Are you going to send that chunk of spilt ink to De Courcy?"

"I've got to let him know where the chain is, fathead!" answered Bunter. "I couldn't leave it lying about his study table for a fellow to pinch. Think he will think of looking for it, unless I tell him?"

"Well, hardly. You've really left that idiotic dud watch-chain over at Highcliffe in De Courcy's study, you fat frump?"

"Tain't a dud, you beast! It's genuine imitation gold!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quelch would have thought it his missing chain all right if he hadn't happened to cop me putting it in his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And after this, I hope you fellows won't make out that I don't pay back a loan," said Bunter, with dignity. "Money, or money's worth, it's the same thing."

"You unspeakable chump!" said the captain of the Remove. "That dud chain is worth nothing, or next to nothing! And De Courcy wouldn't be found dead with it!"

"I fancy he'll like it all right," said Bunter. "Anyhow, you can't make out that I haven't paid him now. I spent his thirty bob on that chain, and he's got the chain. I mean, he will get it, when he gets this letter. Look here, Toddy, you lend a chap a stamp! I've got to catch the post."

Peter Todd, chuckling, sorted out a stamp.

The Famous Five watched Bunter as he addressed an envelope to Rupert de Courcy, at Highcliffe School, stamped it, and folded the letter inside.

"You're really going to post that?" exclaimed Nugent.

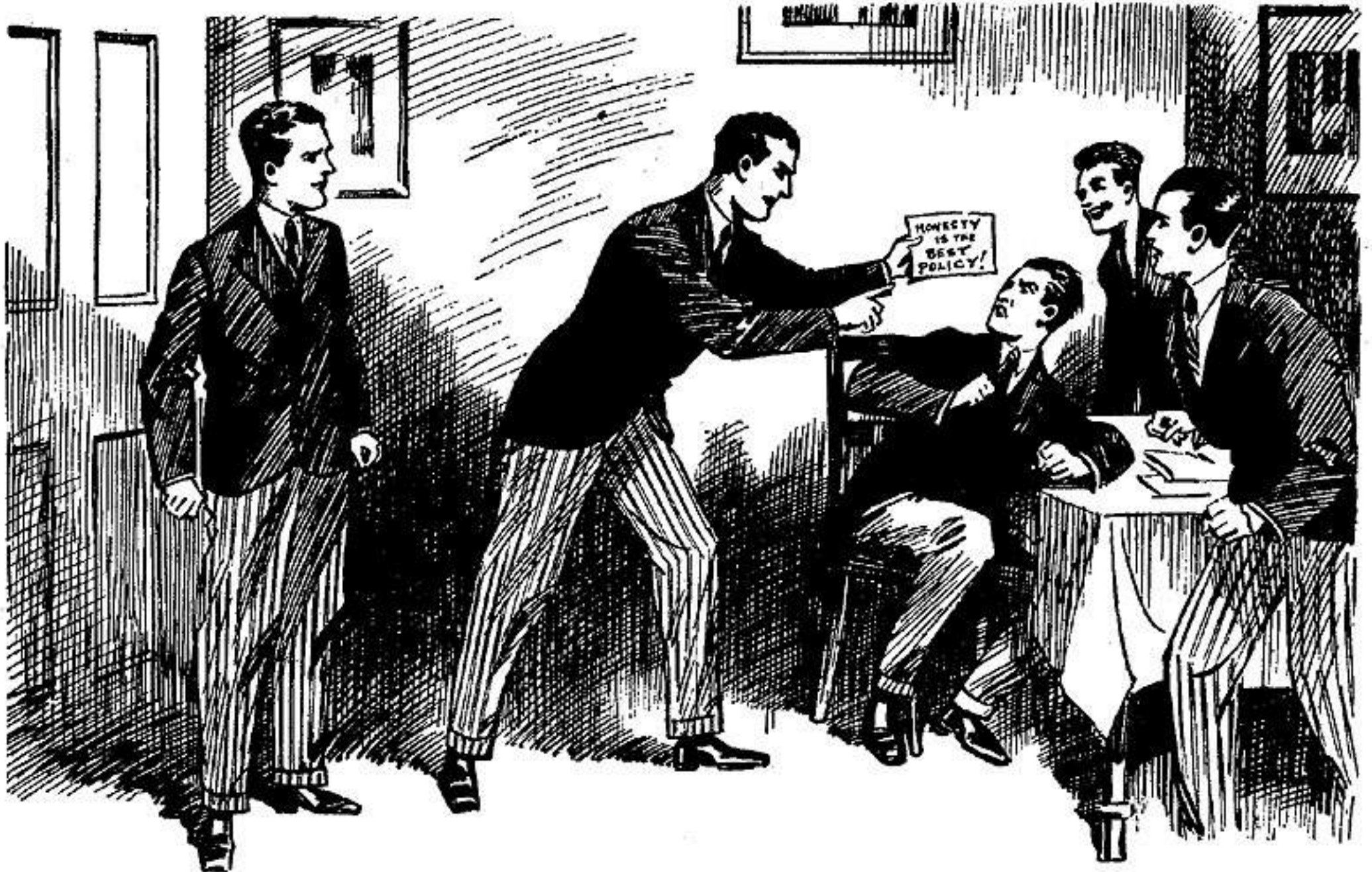
"Of course I am, you silly ass! The Caterpillar won't find that chain till he hears from me, will he?" said Bunter peevishly. "He's not likely to look in that jar under the lavender. Besides, he wouldn't know what it was for, unless I told him. He might think I was a fellow who didn't pay up—like you fellows do," added Bunter scornfully.

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study. Johnny Bull lifted his boot; but he lowered it again.

That the fastidious Caterpillar could possibly have any use for a dud watch-chain, bought for thirty shillings from Mr. Lazarus, in Courtfield, was an idea that Billy Bunter had entirely to himself.

Still, it had to be admitted that the fat Owl was loing his best to "square" that debt to a Highcliffe man.



Courtenay hurled open the door with a crash and strode into the study. "Look at that!" The captain of the Highcliffe Fourth thrust the paper in front of Ponsonby's face. "It was slipped under my study door by some funky cad who bolted as soon as he had done it. I hold you responsible!"

His celebrated postal order, being still in a non-arrived state, there was no cash available. And that chain had cost thirty shillings, whatever it might, or might not, have been worth.

"The blithering idiot!" said Bob Cherry. "If he's really left that rotten dud chain over there, we can't stop him. What on earth will the Caterpillar think when he finds it?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Ain't he a cough-drop?" said Peter. "Ain't he a wonder? He fancied that Quelch would take that dud chain for the one he lost; and now he fancies that Highcliffe man will take it off his hands. He was trying to sell it, up and down the Remove, and I hear that Fishy offered him ninepence for it. Nobody else made an offer at all."

"Well, it looks exactly like Quelch's," said Bob, with a chuckle. "I saw it when he was hawking it up and down the Remove. You have to look at it twice to see that it's a dud. Perhaps the Caterpillar will look at it only once; then it will be all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five left Study No. 7 with mixed feelings—both entertained and exasperated by Billy Bunter's fatuous proceedings.

Billy Bunter met them on the Remove landing. He had dropped that letter into the school box. On the following morning it would be delivered at Highcliffe School—and that was that!

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter.

"Scat, you fat frog!"

"Beast! I mean, I say, old chap, now I've settled with De Courcy, it's left me rather stony!" said Bunter. "I could have sold that chain—"

"For ninepence?"

"Well, I could have sold it, but I didn't. I'm not the fellow to leave a debt unpaid."

"Not when you're booted for it."

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, my postal order hasn't come! Which of you fellows will lend me the ten bob, and take the postal order when it comes?"

"The whichfulness is terrific!"

"Look here," said Johnny Bull, "we said we'd boot him till he squared that Highcliffe chap, and he hasn't squared! Let's boot him right up the passage and back again!"

Billy Bunter departed up the passage without waiting to be booted.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mobby Puts His Foot Down!

"MOBBY'S shirty," murmured the Caterpillar.

Courtenay shrugged his shoulders slightly.

It was morning in the Fourth Form Room at Highcliffe School.

Mr. Mobbs, master of the Fourth, was a little late for class—not an infrequent occurrence with Mr. Mobbs.

Highcliffe was a slack school. Old Dr. Voysey, at the ripe age of seventy, held the reins very loosely. The Head was slack, the staff were slack, the school was slack from the Sixth to the Second Form. If there was a spot of strenuousness in the Fourth Form, it was due chiefly to Frank Courtenay, who had blown into it like a fresh and invigorating sea-breeze.

A Greyfriars master would have stared at the sight of the Highcliffe Fourth Form Room, in class time, when Mr. Mobbs came in.

Ponsonby, Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour were standing in a group, discussing their fancy in the racing line, and hardly lowering their voices, though the Form-room door was open. Drury and Merton were looking out

of the window. Smithson, Yates, and several other fellows were shying books at one another across the desks. Courtenay was sitting at his desk—the only fellow in his place. De Courcy stood with one foot resting on the form beside his chum.

Mr. Mobbs whisked in with a frowning brow.

Careless as Mr. Mobbs was, and indulgent to his favourites in the Form, he had a temper, and not a pleasant one.

Fellows in the Form who were not blessed with high connections had the benefit of Mobbs's temper, when he let it go.

The expression on his face made Smithson & Co. rush for their places. Mr. Mobbs gave them a glare.

He would have given them lines, too, for being out of their places, in his present "shirty" temper. But he could scarcely do that without giving Pon & Co. lines as well—even Mobbs had to pay some regard to appearances. So the less important members of the Form escaped impots.

"Take your places, please!" said Mr. Mobbs.

Pon & Co. lounged to their places. Smithson & Co. had rushed—the knuts did not rush; they lounged in a leisurely way. It was Pon's way to presume on the indulgence of "Snobby Mobbs," and it seldom failed him.

The Caterpillar removed his foot from the form, and sat down beside his chum.

Mr. Mobbs fixed his eyes on him.

Courtenay had the distinction of being disliked by Mr. Mobbs. Seldom or never did he fail in an outward appearance of respect to his Form-master—he respected the position, if not the man. Nevertheless, Mr. Mobbs had a feeling that the boy despised him, which

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was neither grateful nor comforting. It would, indeed, have been difficult for a fellow like Courtenay to avoid despising a man who was snobbish, partial, and unjust.

His chum, the Caterpillar, was in Mr. Mobbs' bad graces, but not to the same extent. His connections were even more distinguished than Pon's—and Mr. Mobbs could not find it in his heart to be very severe towards any fellow with distinguished connections.

Mr Mobbs' angry look gave most of the Fourth the impression that Frank Courtenay was "for it." His dealings with Pon the previous day, when Pon had eaten his words, had been followed by an interview with Mobbs, a lengthy "jaw," and an imposition of five hundred lines—with the threat of a caning if Mr. Mobbs found anything further to complain of. Which made no difference whatever to Courtenay's determination to hold Pon to account, if there was any fresh gibe on the subject of pinching.

Apparently, however, it was not Courtenay who had made Mr. Mobbs "shirty" this time. It was upon the Caterpillar that his eyes were fixed.

"De Courcy!" rapped Mr. Mobbs.

"Here, sir!" drawled the Caterpillar.

"You are aware, De Courcy, that in the present state of affairs, the Head has placed Greyfriars School out of bounds for Highcliffe boys, and forbidden communication with the boys of that school."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Courtenay set his lips. In spite of that prohibition, he had met Harry Wharton & Co. in Courtfield the last half-holiday with his chum. He wondered whether Mr. Mobbs had heard of it.

"Yet I find you in communication with Greyfriars boys, De Courcy!" said Mr. Mobbs, in his harshest tones.

The Caterpillar raised his eyebrows.

"Do you, sir?" he inquired.

Mr. Mobbs held up a letter which he had brought into the Form-room in his hand. All the Highcliffe Fourth looked at it; and some of them grinned.

A letter addressed to "Roopert de Courcy" was enough to make any fellow grin. Some of them knew the hand, too.

"Look at that letter, De Courcy!" snapped Mr. Mobbs.

"Lookin', sir!" said the Caterpillar urbanely.

Evidently it was not last Wednesday's excursion that had reached the ears of Mr. Mobbs. His "shirtiness" was caused by a letter that had arrived at Highcliffe School that morning.

"That letter," said Mr. Mobbs, "is from Greyfriars."

"Is it, sir?"

"The postmark," said Mr. Mobbs, "is Friardale, which is the Greyfriars postmark. But that is not all. I have seen this hand before—it is the hand of a Greyfriars boy named Bunter."

"Just thinkin' so, sir!" assented the Caterpillar. "Either a spider's been crawlin' over that envelope, or it's Bunter's fist."

There was a chuckle in the Highcliffe Fourth.

"What—what?" said Mr. Mobbs. "This is no laughing matter, De Courcy! In entering into communication with this Greyfriars boy, De Courcy, you have disregarded Dr. Voysey's orders. You will not be allowed to receive this letter."

"Thank you, sir!" said the Caterpillar mildly.

"What—what do you mean, De Courcy?"

"Only what I say, sir! I don't want any letters from Bunter! I make you a present of it, sir."

Mr. Mobbs looked at him.

"Do you mean to say, Do Courcy, that you have not been in correspondence with this boy Bunter?"

"Quite, sir."

"Then this letter is not in answer to a letter from you?"

"Not at all."

"You were not expecting to hear from Bunter, Do Courcy?"

"Not in the least, sir!"

"You have not asked, or encouraged, him to write to you?"

"No fear!"

"It is very singular, in that case, that the boy should have had the impertinence to write!"

"Yes, isn't it?" assented the Caterpillar.

Mr. Mobbs compressed his lips.

"This letter has not been opened, Do Courcy. I shall not allow it to be opened. I accept your assurance that this impertinent Greyfriars boy has written to you without encouragement on your part. But I shall destroy this letter unopened."

The master of the Highcliffe Fourth watched the Caterpillar rather like a cat as he made that statement.

The Caterpillar only smiled.

Why Billy Bunter had written to him from Greyfriars, he had not the faintest idea; and he was not in the least interested.

To Mr. Mobbs, Bunter was a Greyfriars boy who had often come over to Highcliffe with Harry Wharton & Co. before the present trouble started. To the Caterpillar, he was a fat bounder who barged in, and who had to be kept at armslength. Most decidedly, Rupert de Courcy did not want any correspondence from Billy Bunter. Mr. Mobbs was welcome to do exactly as he liked with that letter, so far as the Caterpillar was concerned.

Mr. Mobbs bit his lip.

He had been extremely "shirty" at the idea that his strict injunctions had been disregarded. A letter from Greyfriars, addressed to a member of his Form, certainly looked like it.

Neither did he quite believe the Caterpillar's denial of any correspondence with Bunter. He had not a trusting nature.

"Very well, Do Courcy," he said at last. "I shall drop this letter unopened into the fire!"

He gave the Caterpillar another sharp look. But that youth seemed quite unmoved.

With a frowning brow, Mr. Mobbs stepped to the Form-room fire, and dropped the letter from Greyfriars into the glowing coals.

It flamed up and vanished.

"In that manner," said Mr. Mobbs, "I shall treat any letter that may arrive from Greyfriars addressed to boys in my Form. I will allow no communication whatever with a school where disgraceful imputations are made against Highcliffe boys."

Frank Courtenay's eyes glinted.

"I wonder," went on Mr. Mobbs, his eyes were fixed on the captain of the Form now—"I wonder that any Highcliffe boy can have the faintest desire to keep on terms of friendship with boys who suspect him of dishonest actions."

Ponsonby winked at Monson.

Mobby, being "shirty," had to take it out of somebody, so he was taking it out of Courtenay. Which was quite agreeable to Ponsonby.

Frank Courtenay's face crimsoned, but he gave no other sign.

"I am addressing you in particular, Courtenay!" yapped Mr. Mobbs.

"Indeed, sir?" said Courtenay quietly.

"Yes, indeed! I am shocked, surprised—I may say disgusted—at your wish to keep up the acquaintance of boys who impute dishonesty to you!"

"They do nothing of the kind, Mr. Mobbs!"

"Silence, Courtenay! How dare you argue with me? This Greyfriars tattle has caused suspicion to attach to you in your own school—"

"Nothing of the sort, sir! No fellow at Highcliffe thinks anything of the kind."

"From what I have heard of recent occurrences in the Fourth Form studies, Courtenay, I shall hardly credit that!" snapped Mr. Mobbs. "I understand that you have been taunted on the subject by your own Form fellows. Say no more!"

Mr. Mobbs bustled to his desk, and the lesson began.

Frank Courtenay sat with crimson cheeks. He could not deal with Mr. Mobbs as he had dealt with Ponsonby; but his feelings were deep.

Pon & Co. smiled at one another. Mobby had made the Highcliffe knuts feel quite merry and bright that morning!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Catch!

"BY gum!" ejaculated Coker of the Fifth. "Look, Potter! Look, Greene!"

He grabbed his friends by the arms suddenly and sharply.

"Ow!" said Potter.

"Wow!" said Greene.

Coker had a hefty grab.

"Look!" he breathed.

Coker & Co. were in the quad, after school, a day or two after the stern inquiry in the back-room of the school shop which had ended in such warm work for Horace Coker.

Potter and Greene had forgotten all about that. Coker hadn't!

Coker, indeed, had been so much annoyed by the hot tea on his trousers that he had paid a special visit to the Remove passage afterwards, to give Billy Bunter that for which he had asked.

Unfortunately for Coker—though fortunately for Bunter—he had been met on the way by the Famous Five, Smithy and Redwing, and five or six other Remove men, all of whom testified promptly and with vigour, what they thought of a Fifth Form man barging into Remove affairs.

Horace Coker's last state had been worse—much worse—than his first. Since then he had, so to speak, used no other. He had given that nest of hornets, the Remove passage, a wide offing.

But Coker was giving that little matter of the pinching in Quelch's study quite a lot of thought.

Coker, of course, as a Fifth Form man, was far above "chipping" the Remove on the subject. They had a lot of badinage from the Fourth and the Shell, and a lot of cheek from the Third and the Second. But Fifth Form men were miles above that kind of thing.

Coker was taking a very serious view of the matter. He was a fellow for serious views.

There was a pincher about! Nobody had spotted him! It was a scandalous state of affairs! Coker had resolved to look into it and set it right.

It would have been a little difficult,

perhaps, for Horace Coker to explain how it concerned him specially. But minding his own business had never been one of Coker's habits.

He was thinking of that very matter as he walked in the quad with Potter and Greene. They did not know it. It did not occur to them that Coker was thinking at all. It was not usual with him. They were only feeling rather pleased because Coker was not talking as usual.

They yelped in unison when he grabbed their arms suddenly, dragged them to a halt, and bade them look.

"Quelch's window!" breathed Coker, pointing in that direction.

They looked—and then stared!

The window of Mr. Quelch's study was open to the sunshine and the breeze. A fat figure was clambering on the window-sill.

That Mr. Quelch was not in the study was certain. Had he been, Billy Bunter certainly would not have been climbing in at his window.

"Well, my hat!" said Potter.

"Cheeky young ass!" remarked Greene.

"What do you think of that?" said Coker grimly. "I made it pretty clear the other day, I think, that it was that fat young swab, Bunter, who pinched that mouldy chain there's been such a fuss about. I saw it all over his face."

"Eh? Did you?" ejaculated Greene. "I didn't! And I'll bet I should have noticed it if he had had a watch-chain over his face—"

"Don't be a silly ass, Greene!"

"Well, did you see a match-chain all over Bunter's face, Potter?" appealed Greene. "Coker says he did."

"You silly fathead!" hooted Coker. "I saw it all over his face that he had pinched that chain, and had it about him, too. Guilt all over!"

"I thought it was solid gold, from what I've heard!" said Greene.

"Eh? So it was."

"But you just said it was gilt all over—"

"Guilt, you fathead, not gilt!" hissed Coker. "G-I-L-T—guilt!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Greene.

"I saw guilt written all over his face," said Coker. "So did you, if you've got any eyes! Now look at him. What do you think he's on to now?"

"The window-sill," answered Greene.

"You dummy! I mean, what do you think he's after?" hissed Coker. "Looking for another chance to pinch—what?"

Potter and Greene looked at Bunter at his Form-master's window. Really, they wondered whether Coker—contrary to all reasonable expectation—might possibly be right.

There was no doubt that Billy Bunter had looked guilty that day in the school shop, when in danger of having to turn out his pockets. Now he was sneaking in at his Form-master's study window!

Nobody was about, close at hand—he had chosen his moment rather well. His limited vision did not reach so far as the spot where Coker & Co. stood, and he evidently did not know that they were there.

"Once a pincher, always a pincher!" said Coker oracularly. "He had that chain, and, having got by with it, he's after something else. See?"

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!" admitted Potter. "Might be going to jape his beak, though, or something like that."

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"Well, it's quite likely, I think," said Greene. "Going to stick gum in an inkpot, or something—"

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"Don't be a fathead, Greene!"

Horace Coker had no use for suggestions that did not square with his own opinion.

"That young rotter's pinching again!" he said. "And I'm jolly well going to stop him—see?"

"But——" said Potter and Greene together.

Coker, unheeding his comrades' "buts," strode swiftly towards the window of Mr. Quelch's study. His friends, exchanging an expressive look, remained where they were. It was possible, of course, that Coker was right—unlikely things did happen sometimes. Anyhow, Coker had to be given his head.

Billy Bunter, by that time, had negotiated the window-sill. The sill was rather high from the ground, but it would not have been a difficult task for any other Remove fellow. Bunter had more weight to lift than other Removites, and his progress was slow.

But he was on the sill at last, and his fat head was put in at the open window. He blinked round the study through his big spectacles, to make assurance doubly sure that Quelch wasn't there, before he clambered in.

Kneeling on the broad stone sill, with his back to the quad, his head in at the window, Bunter did not, of course, see Coker coming.

Coker, on the other hand, had an expansive view of Bunter—chiefly trousers!

He reached Bunter.

Up went Coker's hand.

Down it came!

Slap!

Coker had a heavy, hefty hand. He had a lot of beef in his good right arm. He put it all into that slap!

That slap rang like a rifle-shot across the quad. Louder yet rang the fearful yell of Billy Bunter, as he received it. "Yoo-hooooop!"

"Now, you rascally young pincher——" began Coker.

He got no farther than that.

Bunter hardly knew what had happened to him. He knew that something had struck him astern, like a flail. He kicked out behind.

Crack!

The heel of a boot caught Coker on the chin. It stopped his remarks with startling suddenness. It hit him like a sledge-hammer.

Coker went backwards as if he had been shot. He landed on his back in the quad, feeling, for the moment, as if his chin had been driven right through the back of his head.

Bunter blinked round. For whatever reason the fat Owl had been sneaking thus surreptitiously into his Form-master's study, he gave it up. He jumped from the window-sill to run.

Coker, heaving himself up, would have been on his feet in another moment. But in that moment Bunter landed on him. One foot landed on Coker's waistcoat, the other on Coker's face. Bunter stumbled, and fell—on Coker! From Horace there came a low, quivering, anguished gurgle as all the wind was driven out of him by Bunter's uncommon weight.

"Oooooooh!" moaned Coker.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Mooooooh!"

Bunter scrambled up. He proceeded to hit the open spaces with all the speed of which his fat little legs were capable.

But there really was no hurry. Coker was incapable of dealing with him. Coker could not have dealt with a mosquito at that moment. All that

Coker could do was to moo like a mournful cow—and Bunter disappeared and left him mooing!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

In the Stilly Night!

HARRY WHARTON started, and awoke.

The hour was late, and in the Remove dormitory the members of that Form were sleeping the sleep of the just.

But there seemed to be one exception.

Something had awakened the captain of the Remove. It was a bump against his bed in the dark. He opened his eyes, sat up, and blinked round him.

"What the dickens——" he ejaculated.

"Oh!" came a startled ejaculation.

Harry Wharton peered through the gloom at a dim and shadowy figure.

"Bunter, you blithering ass——"

"Tain't me!" came a gasp. "I'm in bed, old chap!"

"You frabjous, foozling fathead, what are you up for, you burbling bandersnatch? What have you woke me up for, you chuckle-headed clump?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sleepy voice. "What's up?"

"A fat foozling frump!" answered Wharton.

"Beast!"

Bob Cherry sat up. So did two or three other fellows, awakened by the voices. There was another bump, as Bunter collided with a chair. The fat Owl had turned out of bed at that late hour very cautiously. Bunter had his own ways of being cautious.

Having bumped against Wharton's bed, he next bumped on a chair, and a third bump and a sharp yelp announced that he had established contact with the corner of a box.

"Bunter going out on the tiles?" came a chortle from Skinner.

"Or going pinching?" asked the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Look here, what are you up to, you fat freak?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"No-nothing, old chap! I'm not going downstairs!" explained Bunter. "I—I just got out of bed to—to walk about a bit, because—because I couldn't sleep."

"What are you going down for?" demanded Wharton.

"Nothing at all! If you think I'm going anywhere near Quelch's study, you're mistaken! Besides, mind your own business!"

"What's Quelch got in his study now?" yawned Skinner. "Has he busted any more watch-chains, and left them about?"

"Beast!"

"Look here, Bunter, you idiot——" exclaimed Harry.

"Is he going for the bit of the chain that that Highcliffe pincher left?" asked Skinner. "I remember Quelch said the short bit was left—a few links. Courtenay must have missed that—Yaroooooh!"

Skinner broke off, with a yell, as a pillow descended on his face. He yelled and spluttered.

"Have another?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Urrgh! Ow! You rotter—— Ow!"

The dormitory door was heard to open and shut. Bob Cherry had turned out of bed with the idea of pillowing Bunter; but Skinner's remarks had caused him to bestow his attention on Skinner. Bunter was gone.

The fat Owl groped away down the dark passage to the landing and the

stairs, leaving a buzz behind him in the dormitory.

It was nearly midnight, and Billy Bunter did not like dark passages and stairs at midnight's witching hour.

But he had had to leave it late, to make sure that Quelch was gone to bed.

In a state of dismal trepidation, blinking to and fro in the shadows through his big spectacles, the fat junior groped down the stairs.

No fellow in the Remove was likely to guess his mission.

Even the fellows who believed that Bunter had "snooped" Quelch's missing watch-chain were not likely to guess that he was now on his way to replace it.

Most of the Remove fellows believed, by this time, that Frank Courtenay, of the Highcliffe Fourth, was the guilty man. The fact that he was suspected in his own school settled it for them. If Highcliffe men believed that the pinching had been done by a Highcliffe man, it was not for Greyfriars fellows to claim that disagreeable distinction for their own school.

Harry Wharton & Co. had little or no doubt that the wanted man was Billy Bunter. But, unwilling to believe that the fat Owl was actually a thief, they supposed that he had snooped that chair for some fatuous and fatheaded reason of his own—as was, indeed, the case.

On one occasion Skinner had thrown away some of Mr. Quelch's manuscripts in malicious retaliation for a whopping. They were driven to the conclusion that Bunter had done the same with the chain, and, of course, was afraid to own up.

So they certainly did not dream of guessing that that wretched chain was in Bunter's trousers pocket as he groped down the stairs.

But it was!

It had been out of Bunter's possession ever since the day he had abstracted it, with the fatuous intention of hiding it to "pay Quelch out." It had come back into his fat hands in the most remarkable and unexpected way.

Ponsonby of Highcliffe had had it for more than a week. He had not only refused Bunter's beseechings to return it, but had booted Bunter instead.

The fat Owl had given up hope of ever seeing that chain again—hence his wonderful scheme for replacing it with the "dud" chain purchased from Mr. Lazarus.

That scheme had not been a winner. It had earned Bunter a licking, and caused great merriment in the Remove. That was all.

But fortune, in the most extraordinary and unexpected way, had favoured the worried fat Owl on the afternoon he had fallen a victim to Skinner's First-of-April trick.

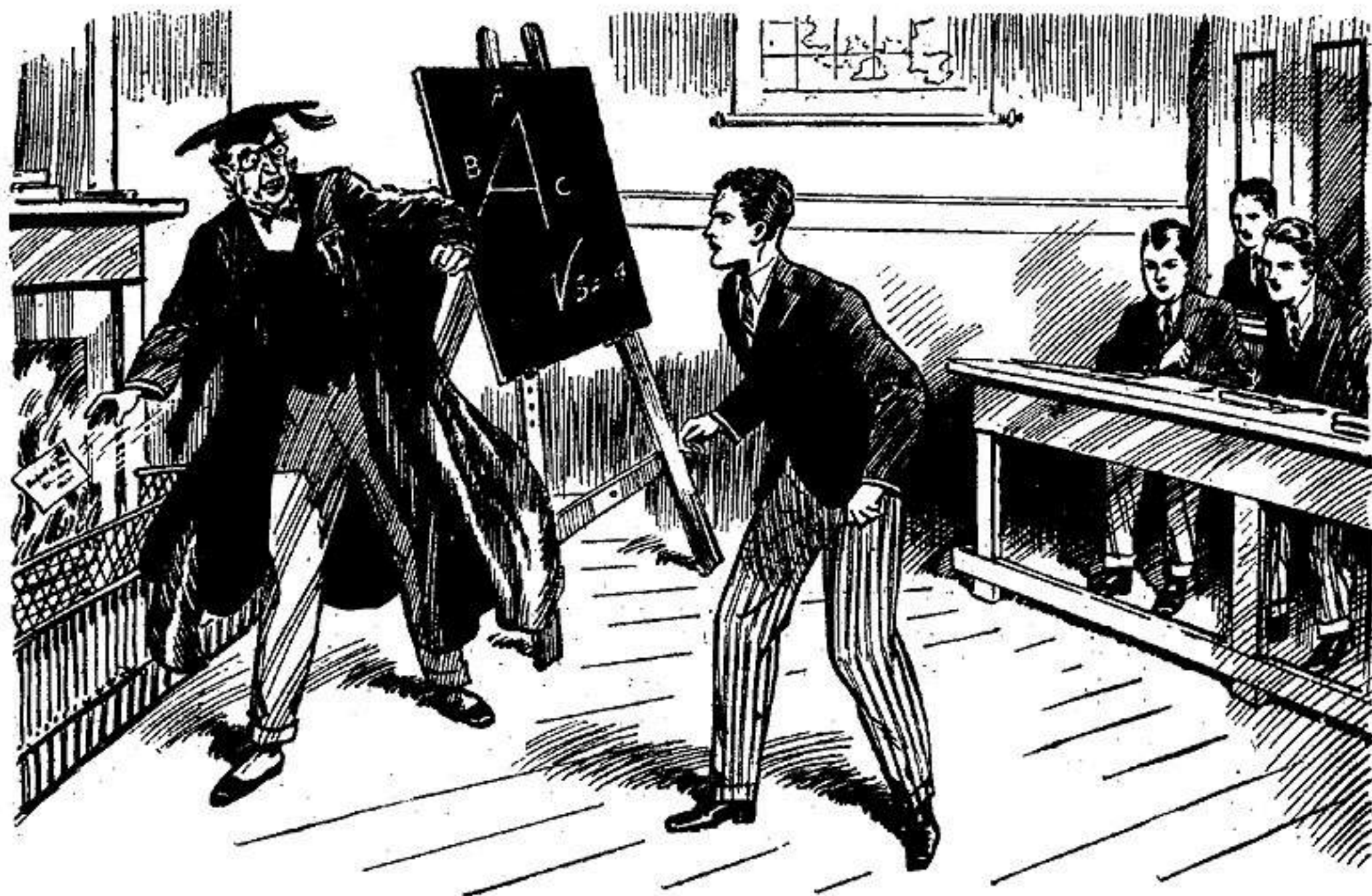
Why Ponsonby had crept into Study No. 3 at Highcliffe, and hidden the chain in the Chinese jar on the mantelpiece in that study, was a deep mystery to Bunter.

He could not begin to guess why Pon had done it!

But Pon had, at all events, done it; and Bunter had lost no time in recapturing that chain after Pon was gone.

All that Bunter could suppose was that Pon had wanted a safe hiding-place for the article that did not belong to him. That had put it into Bunter's head to place the Lazarus chain in the same spot, for the Caterpillar to find, when he was told by letter where to find it.

Having the right chain in his possession once more, Billy Bunter had fancied his troubles over! Instead of



With a frowning brow, Mr. Mobbs dropped De Courcy's letter into the fire. "In that manner," said the Highcliffe master, "I shall treat any letter that may arrive from Greyfriars. I will allow no communication whatever with a school where disgraceful imputations are made against Highcliffe boys!"

which, they seemed to be only beginning!

His idea was to put that chain back in Quelch's table-drawer, under the papers there, to be found by Quelch. He hoped that Quelch would fancy that he had overlooked it in his previous search.

But Billy Bunter made the old discovery that it is easier to get into a difficulty, than to get out of one! It had been quite easy to snoop that chain, in the first place! It seemed almost impossible to get rid of it again.

Again and again he had tried to get to Mr. Quelch's study unseen. Once Quelch had caught him there, and caned him. Another time Prout was in the passage—another time, Capper. Another time, when Bunter had tried the study window, that fathead, Coker of the Fifth, had barged in and spoiled a really good chance!

Now the fat Owl had taken the rather desperate step of going down in the middle of the night to get rid of that awful chain. It was his last resource.

He quaked and he quivered as he groped among dark shadows. Every creak of a board was, to his scared, fat ears, the footstep of a burglar. Every shadow was a lurking, dark form—and there were innumerable shadows.

His fat heart beat and thumped. Five or six times he halted, to turn back—and then crept on again, his heart in his mouth.

He was in a state of perspiring funk by the time he crept into Masters' Passage and groped along to Quelch's door.

But his dismal spirits rose a little at last as he reached that door and turned the door-handle.

It was his goal at last! At long, long last, as he was going to get rid of that beastly chain, which haunted him like a grisly spectre.

Another minute and it would be dropped into the drawer from which he had taken it, and he would be shut of it, and his fat nervous system would be getting a much-needed rest.

He turned the door-handle. The door did not open!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He shoved at the door; but it was locked. Quelch had locked his door after leaving his study, as was really not uncommon. Billy Bunter had not thought of that.

He thought of it now, as he stood palpitating in the darkness, his fat hand on the door-handle.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

He could not get into the study. He could not get rid of that beastly, rotten, mouldy old chain. He had lost his beauty sleep, and braved the terrors of dark staircases at midnight, for nothing.

With feelings too deep for words, the hapless fat Owl turned away, and crept to the stairs again. Once more he quaked and quivered through dark, lurking shadows. He was shaking like a fat jelly when he got back to the Remove dormitory.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he heard the dormitory door open. "That you, you fat, blithering bandersnatch?"

"Beast!"

"What have you pinched this time?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Beast!"

"We shall know who it was, when we hear in the morning!" chuckled Hazeldene.

"Beast!"

Bunter's vocabulary was limited, but expressive. He turned dismally into bed. He laid a worried and troubled fat head on his pillow. It was nearly five minutes before his snore woke the echoes.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Very Thoughtful!

"MY dear Ponsonby, what is it?" asked Mr. Mobbs.

The master of the Highcliffe Fourth gave his dear Ponsonby his most gracious smile as dear Ponsonby presented himself in Mobbs's study.

Pon was always welcome in that study.

It delighted the snobbish heart of "Snobby Mobbs" to ask him about his uncle, the marquis, and to hear kind messages which that great man sent in his letters to Pon. He did not even suspect that those messages were invented by the astute Pon to keep him in good humour.

Once upon a time the marquis had shaken hands with Mr. Mobbs; and the Caterpillar solemnly declared that Mobbs had not washed that hand since, so reluctant was he to part with the aristocratic contact.

But it seemed to be on some more serious matter that dear Ponsonby now desired to speak to his Form-master. His face was very grave as he came into the study and shut the door after him.

He stood at his Form-master's table and appeared to hesitate.

"It's about Courtenay, sir," he said at length.

Mr. Mobbs frowned.

"If there has been any further outbreak of brutality on Courtenay's part—" he began, setting his thin lips.

"Oh, no, sir! I've been avoiding the fellow," said Ponsonby. "I know how it displeases you to have these rows continually goin' on in the Form, sir. I've kept out of his way all I've been able to."

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Quite right, Ponsonby—quite right!" said Mr. Mobbs. "I can always rely upon your good behaviour and good breeding, though I am sorry I cannot say the same for Courtenay. But what is it, then?"

"It's about that theft at Greyfriars, sir," said Ponsonby. "I hardly know how to put it, but I feel that I ought to speak out frankly to you, sir."

"Certainly!" said Mr. Mobbs. "I expect frankness from you, Ponsonby—a boy whom I completely trust. Has there been some fresh unpleasant occurrence?"

"I'm afraid there has, sir. They've got it fixed in their minds over at Greyfriars that Courtenay had that gold chain the day he was over there. Only to-day I came on a Remove fellow named Bolsover, and he said—"

"I should prefer you to avoid Greyfriars boys, Ponsonby."

"I couldn't help the fellow fairly shouting at me, sir."

"Quite so—quite so! I am sure that you do your best to respect my wishes. What did the impertinent boy say?"

"He said that every fellow at Greyfriars knew that Mr. Quelch's chain could be found in Courtenay's study here, sir, if it was looked for."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs.

"And he said he had put it up to Wharton, as his Form captain, to ask Mr. Quelch to demand a search here."

"Is it possible?"

"Wharton, it seems, refused, as he is friendly with Courtenay; and Bolsover said that he was going to ask Mr. Quelch himself. I hardly think, sir, that a Greyfriars master would venture to take such a step."

"Impossible, Ponsonby! If Mr. Quelch made any such demand I would order him to be shown off the premises."

"But, sir, it's a rotten position for us," said Ponsonby. "A lot of fellows here think the same. The fact is, sir, that some things have come out that make it look suspicious."

Mr. Mobbs pursed his lips.

"Please explain yourself fully, Ponsonby," he said. "This is a dreadfully serious matter. There is nothing suspicious in Courtenay having been at Greyfriars that day; he has been in the habit of calling on his friends there until this trouble arose."

"But it has come out, sir, that he went at a time when his friends had gone out, and there's no doubt that he knew they were out. He waited for them more than an hour to come in. He was in the visitors' room—a room close to the Masters' Studies, and was left alone there. As it was a half-holiday, nearly everybody was out of doors, and I've learned that Mr. Quelch himself was with the headmaster, so there was nobody in his study."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Mobbs. "I was not aware of this."

"It's quite well known, sir—in fact, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,521.

Courtenay does not deny it himself. The Greyfriars fellows point out that he was right on the spot, and nobody else is known to have been. And—and—" Ponsonby hesitated again. "A lot of fellows here, sir, think it looks rather bad. I'm afraid Courtenay puts it down to me, as we've never been friends; though you know, sir, that I've stood up for him from the first—till now."

"I am aware of it, Ponsonby. But what do you mean by 'till now'? Has something occurred to cause you to share this suspicion?"

"Well, yes, sir. I'm unwilling to think anything of the kind, of course, but the way Courtenay has taken it forces me to do so. I've consulted with my friends before coming to you, sir, and they all agree that I ought to speak to you about it. If the fellow has taken that gold chain he must be intending to sell it, and if it should be traced to a Highcliffe man, sir—"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs, aghast at the suggestion.

"It's been rather on my mind the last few days, sir," said Ponsonby. "Some of the Greyfriars fellows have been talking about a police-constable coming over—"

"Ponsonby!"

"I can only tell you what I've heard, sir. If stolen property should be found at Highcliffe it would be a fearful disgrace for the school."

Mr. Mobbs gasped.

"Ponsonby, surely you cannot think that—"

"It's not what I think, sir, but what it looks like. It seems to me, sir, that for Courtenay's own sake it should be cleared up. He's a relative of mine, sir, and I feel this deeply. A search would clear up the matter."

"A search!" repeated Mr. Mobbs.

"If nothing's found, sir, it clears Courtenay. And—and if—the thing is there, sir, perhaps you could find a way to return it to its owner quietly, without an open disgrace to the school. I—I don't see that it need be made public, sir, disgracing the whole school because of what one fellow may have done—"

"That is true, Ponsonby, and I thank you for the suggestion," said Mr. Mobbs slowly. "I have, of course, heard that there is a great deal of unpleasant talk in the Form, and that many boys regard Courtenay with suspicion. I cannot share it, Ponsonby; the boy has often displeased me very much, but I cannot believe—" Mr. Mobbs shook his head. "Still, as matters stand, Courtenay can have no reasonable objection to a search of his quarters to set the matter beyond doubt."

"And—and if it was found, sir, there would be a chance of dealing with the matter at your own discretion, sir, avoiding a public scandal as much as possible—"

"Quite so," said Mr. Mobbs. "You are a thoughtful boy, Ponsonby, and I am glad to see that you have the good name of Highcliffe so much at heart. I cannot believe that anything will be found in Courtenay's study that does not belong to him; but if it should prove so, it will naturally be my object to deal with the matter as quietly as possible. I will consider this matter, Ponsonby, very carefully. In the meantime, say nothing on the subject."

"Very well, sir."

Ponsonby left his Form-master's study.

Mr. Mobbs was left in deep and painful thought. He disliked Frank Courtenay, but he could not believe

such a thing of him. Yet, if it was possible, the matter would never be allowed to rest, at the Greyfriars end. And what was to be the outcome?

If a Highcliffe boy was guilty, that boy would be immediately expelled, but the less said about the matter the better. All Mr. Mobbs' energies would be bent to hushing it up—and that certainly would be easier before some definite move was made from Greyfriars. It was a very painful and disagreeable matter, but Mr. Mobbs realised that he could not do better than act on the suggestion of that very thoughtful boy Ponsonby, who had the good name of Highcliffe School so much at heart.

That thoughtful boy Ponsonby walked down the corridor with a smile on his face.

Gadsby was waiting for him at the corner, far from smiling.

"What have you been sayin' to Mobbs, Pon?" muttered Gadsby.

"Talkin' about this fine spring weather, old bean," answered Pon, and he walked on, laughing, leaving Reginald Gadsby feeling very uneasy.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Means Business!

"PINCHING!" said Coker of the Fifth. "Nice state of affairs at a school like this—what?"

This was sarcasm.

Coker did not really think that it was nice; he thought that it was very nasty. Indeed, he took it very much to heart.

Potter and Greene had started tea in their study when Coker came in. Coker looked rather cross, rather untidy, and rather dusty. Coker as a hunter of trouble had few equals.

"Pinching?" repeated Coker, as he threw himself into a chair at the table. "Pinchers at Greyfriars! If the Head had sense enough to make me a prefect—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Potter involuntarily.

"What did you say, Potter?"

"I—I said, try these poached eggs, old chap! You're late for tea!"

"Yes, all you fellows think of is tea, with a disgrace like this over the school!" said Coker bitterly. "Talk about Pontius Pilate fiddling while San Francisco was burning!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Greene.

"What do you mean by that, Greeney?"

"I—I mean, try the toast, old bean! Lots, and awfully good!"

"Oh, yes, that's what I expect in this study," said Coker. He started on toast and poached eggs on a liberal scale. "While I'm thinking about the disgrace to the school, you fellows—pass the salt!—are thinking about poached eggs and toast! Eat! Just eat! Never mind the reputation of Greyfriars! Oh, no!" Coker was getting bitterly sarcastic.

"Look here! You might have left a fellow more than three eggs—dash it all! And I don't see why you couldn't make a bit more toast while you were about it!" Coker started on his second egg, and his third round of toast. "But, as I was saying, I've been thinking about the school, while you fellows think of nothing but guzzling toast and poached eggs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Coker. "Have I said anything funny, you cackling asses? I can tell you it's serious enough! I just asked young Wharton if he fancied we were going to

have Remove fags pinching things right and left, all over the school, and he yelled to the other young scoundrels, and they all jumped at me, and rushed me over! Barged a Fifth Form man over in the middle of the quad! What do you think of that?"

Potter and Greene, judiciously, did not state what they thought of that. Really, they could not help thinking that, if Coker asked so earnestly for it, he could not be surprised at getting it.

"Well, I'm going to handle this matter," said Coker. "I'm not going to have this school turned into a sort of Borstal by young Remove rascals. I'm going to put a stop to that pinching. It's not going on any longer, see?"

"Has it been going on at all?" asked Potter.

"Don't be an ass, Potter! Old Quelch's silly watch-chain was pinched weeks ago, wasn't it—and I caught young Bunter at his study window yesterday—trying on the same game again! Oh, cackle!" hooted Coker. "I dare say you think it was funny for that young scoundrel to hoot me on the chin, and fall on my bread-basket—"

"Ha, ha! Oh, no—not at all!" gasped Potter.

"The prefects can't do anything," went on Coker, with a glare. "Not that I expect them to—I never thought much of the Sixth, as you know. Well, I'm not a prefect—but I'm going to handle this. I know who did it—young Bunter! He's got that rotten watch-chain, as I jolly well know. If I were a prefect, I'd march him to the Head to be sacked. Not being a prefect, I can't very well do that—but I'm going to make him put it back, see?"

Coker finished the toast.

"No pinching in my school!" said Coker. "The young villain ought to be spotted and stopped, for his own sake, if for nothing else. Going from bad to worse, you know. He got away with the watch-chain. Goodness knows what he would have got away with, if I hadn't spotted him at Quelch's window! Any more toast?"

"No!"

"Well, I can fill up on cake!" Coker started on cake. "If your fellows can get your attention off eating for a minute—if that's not asking too much—I'll tell you're what you're to do."

"Us?" said Greene.

"Yes! I'm going to have Bunter on the carpet—"

"Eh?"

"Just as if I were a prefect, you know," explained Coker, "and question him."

"You think he'll play up?" asked Potter, closing one eye at Greene.

"I've no doubt about that, as I shall lay into him with a ruler till he does!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"If you fellows have finished eating—"

said Coker, still sarcastic.

"Well, I'd like some of that cake!"

said Greene.

"That's right!" Coker's voice came sardonically, but a little muffled, through a large mouthful of cake. "That's you, all over! Guzzle—guzzle—guzzle—nothing but gozzle! Can't you think about anything but cake, Greeney?"

Coker negotiated the large mouthful, took another equally as large, and went on:

"Stop thinking about grub for once, for goodness' sake! Now, I'm going to have that young rascal Bunter on the carpet, as I said. You fellows go and fetch him here. See?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Tell him I want him," said Coker. "If he doesn't want to come, take him by the ears, and walk him here. Don't lose any time—get going!"

"But—" gasped Potter and Greene together.

They gazed at Coker.

No doubt that great man ought to have been a prefect, empowered to give orders to lesser mortals. Still, the fact remained that he wasn't!

Potter and Greene could not exactly see themselves penetrating into that hornet's nest, the Remove passage, to drag a Remove man away by the ears. They hardly fancied that Bunter would obey Coker's lofty behest. And they hardly supposed that they would get away alive with Bunter.

If one thing in the wide world was absolutely certain, it was that Potter and Greene weren't going to the Remove studies, to walk off a Remove man by the ears.

"What are you waiting for?" hooted Coker. "Blessed if you fellows wouldn't talk the hind leg off a mule! For goodness' sake, cut the cackle, and get going!"

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance. They cut the cackle, and got going.

Coker gave a grunt as they left the study.

He finished the cake, pushed it down with a few doughnuts, and added a cream puff or two, frowning the while. Then he sorted out a long, thick, ebony ruler. This, Coker considered, was exactly the thing to overcome any objections Bunter might have to answering questions.

Coker was ready now!

He waited impatiently for Potter and Greene to reappear, with Bunter.

He waited in vain.

They had had plenty of time. But they did not seem to be coming. Coker went to the study doorway, and stared out impatiently. Those slack asses were wasting time—not merely their own time, which did not matter, but Coker's time, which was of value.

Nothing was to be seen of them in the Fifth Form passage. Where on earth they had got to, and what they fancied they were up to, Coker could not guess.

Hilton of the Fifth came up the passage, and the impatient Coker called to him.

"Seen Potter or Greene?"

"Eh? Yes," answered Hilton, "I passed them as I was coming in."

"Eh? Where?"

"At the gates, of course," answered Hilton, with a stare.

"At the gates?" repeated Coker blankly. "Mean to say they were going out of gates? Why, the silly asses—the howling chumps—what the chump have they gone out of gates for? My hat!"

Coker breathed wrath. He had told Potter and Greene, in the plainest possible language, to fetch Bunter. Instead of which, they had gone out of gates! It was really surprising—to Coker!

However, it was clear that it was useless to wait any longer for Bunter to be brought before the judgment seat. If Bunter was going to be fetched, Coker had to do the fetching personally.

Coker slipped the ruler under his arm, and started for the Remove to fetch Bunter.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

"COURTENAY!"

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Mobbs stood in the doorway of Study No. 3 in the Fourth at Highcliffe.

Courtenay and De Courcy had finished their tea when he arrived there. They rose respectfully to their feet at the sight of their Form-master, wondering what he wanted.

Mr. Mobbs looked a little embarrassed and uncomfortable. It was not a pleasant errand on which he had come.

Four or five fellows in the passage stopped to look on, wondering also what Mobbs wanted there.

Ponsonby, lounging in his study doorway along the passage, smiled. Vavasour, Monson, and Drury exchanged significant looks.

"I regret, Courtenay, that I am here on a most disagreeable matter," said the master of the Fourth. "I will say first, Courtenay, in order that there may be no misapprehension, that I do not regard you as being under any serious suspicion in connection with the recent deplorable occurrence at a neighbouring school."

Frank Courtenay's eyes glinted.

"I should hope not, sir!" he answered very quietly.

There was a murmur of voices in the passage. More fellows came out of the studies, and Pon & Co. came along to join the thickening crowd.

"But—" said Mr. Mobbs.

"Is there a 'but' in the matter, sir?" asked the Caterpillar. "Surely you, sir, are not takin' any notice of rotten insinuations from a few priceless cads in the Form."

"You will be silent, De Courcy," said Mr. Mobbs. "I repeat that I do not feel any doubt of Courtenay—I cannot! Impertinent and disrespectful as he has often been, I cannot believe that any Highcliffe boy would sink to dishonesty. I desire all the boys of my Form to hear me say so," added Mr. Mobbs, glancing round at the crowd behind him. "Let it be understood that the search that is going to take place is chiefly directed to clearing away this wretched suspicion, which seems to have gained currency here."

"The search!" exclaimed Courtenay, his eyes blazing. "You are not here to search my study, sir!"

"That is my intention," said Mr. Mobbs.

"I protest, sir!"

"You protest, Courtenay? I have a care! Any objection to such a proceeding can only give colour to the suspicion already rife in your Form!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs, his little eyes sharp with doubt now.

"There is no such suspicion in my Form, sir. Ask any decent fellow in the Fourth—Smithson, Yates; any decent chap!" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth. "Even Ponsonby, cad as he is, does not believe it for one moment."

"You need not mention Ponsonby!" snapped Mr. Mobbs. "I may tell you, Courtenay, that there is a suggestion of Mr. Quelch demanding a search here—even of invoking the assistance of the police. Such is the current talk at Greyfriars, as I have heard."

"Nonsense, sir!"

"What?" roared Mr. Mobbs.

"I said nonsense, and I repeat, nonsense!" exclaimed Courtenay, with flashing eyes. "I met Mr. Quelch one day last week, and he assured me personally

that he takes no notice whatever of the silly talk connecting my name with what happened in his study at Greyfriars."

"That does not accord with what I have heard," said Mr. Mobbs dryly. "But understand me, Courtenay, this search is chiefly in your own interests. I have come here unannounced to make a surprise search, and if, as I hope and believe, nothing is found here, that fact will clear you in the eyes of all Highcliffe. I am acting in your interests. I will excuse your impertinence, in the circumstances, but say no more."

Courtenay opened his lips for an angry retort, but the Caterpillar caught him by the arm.

"Shut up, old man!" he whispered. "Mobbs means well. Let him rip!"

He understood and shared his friend's indignation; but he was cooler-headed at the moment, and he realised what objections might look like.

Mr. Mobbs already looked suspicious.

"Courtenay, you had better be silent, for your own sake!" he snapped. "You are making the worst impression on my mind. I shall certainly search this study."

The Caterpillar compressed his grip on his chum's arm. Courtenay was silent, breathing hard. Outside the doorway most of the Highcliffe Fourth were packed now, looking on breathlessly.

The two juniors stood by the study window, out of Mr. Mobbs' way, as he proceeded to begin the search.

"You will give me your keys, Courtenay!" he rapped.

"Nothing of mine is locked, sir!" answered the captain of the Fourth.

"Very well," said Mr. Mobbs.

He proceeded to look through Courtenay's belongings in the study. In breathless silence the crowd at the door watched him.

Mr. Mobbs was very careful. To do him justice, he regarded the search as being in Courtenay's own interests—if he was innocent. It was the admitted "if" in the matter that roused the anger and indignation of the captain of the Fourth.

Various receptacles were examined and drawn blank. Such places as the bookcase and the table drawer, which the two chums used in common, could hardly have been used to hide stolen goods; but Mr. Mobbs searched them all. To his narrow mind, Courtenay's angry indignation seemed as likely as not to imply alarm, and he was leaving nothing to chance.

A gold watch-chain, even a heavy and massive one, was not a large article, and might have been concealed in any cranny. No cranny was left uninspected by Mr. Mobbs.

Courtenay watched him in silence. The Caterpillar watched him with a whimsical smile. Both of them suspected that Ponsonby had, somehow, put this idea into Mr. Mobbs' mind. If that was so, it was, to Courtenay's mind, only one more underhand blow from his old enemy, but to the Caterpillar it was rather a puzzle. For a surprise visit and a search could only prove that the Greyfriars master's missing chain was not there, thus clearing Courtenay, which certainly could not be Pon's object. If Pon had brought this about the Caterpillar had to confess that Pon was too deep for him. So far, it looked like defeating his own game.

"That's mine, sir!" drawled the Caterpillar, as Mr. Mobbs, having examined nearly everything else, stepped to the mantelpiece and placed his hand on a Chinese jar standing there. "I

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hope I'm not under suspicion of havin' pinched anythin', sir."

"Do not be impertinent, De Courcy!" snapped Mr. Mobbs. "I shall certainly examine this jar, in which a small object might easily be concealed."

He removed the bunch of dried lavender from the jar. Taking the jar from the mantelpiece, he glanced into it.

The change that came over his face as he did so made Courtenay start and the Caterpillar stare. It caused the crowded juniors at the doorway to exchange startled looks.

For a moment, a long moment, a pin might have been heard to fall in Study No. 3.

Mr. Mobbs, with the little Chinese jar in his bony hand, stared into it as if he saw a ghost there.

"Good heavens!" he breathed at last.

"Anythin' interestin' in my jar, sir?" drawled De Courcy, but there was a slight tremor in his drawling voice. Why was Mobbs looking like that?

Mr. Mobbs detached his eyes from the interior of the jar. He fixed them on the two juniors at the window.

"De Courcy! You say that this jar is your property?"

"Mine, sir."

"How long is it since you have looked into it?"

"Not this term at all, that I know of, sir," said the Caterpillar. "Franky—I mean Courtenay—stuck that bunch of lavender in it weeks ago, and it hasn't been moved since so far as I know."

"I believe you, De Courcy. I am assured—I am convinced—that you had no knowledge, no suspicion, of your study-mate's guilt."

"His—his what?" stuttered the Caterpillar. "Gone mad, sir?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"If you're not mad, what do you mean?" shouted the Caterpillar. All his cool nonchalance had deserted him. He forgot that he was addressing his Form-master. Neither would he have cared had he remembered. He made a stride at Mr. Mobbs, his eyes blazing, his fists clenched. "Now, tell me what you mean?"

"Take care, De Courcy! Look in that jar!" said Mr. Mobbs, in a grinding voice.

The Caterpillar looked, and his face became white, fixed, as he saw a thick gold watch-chain, with a broken link at one end, lying curled in the bottom of the Chinese jar.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

GUILTY!

RUPERT DE COURCY did not speak. He could not. He stared, transfixed. He could not believe his eyes, but he had to believe them. The colour drained from his face, leaving him like chalk.

There was a buzz in the doorway.

Frank Courtenay stared at Mr. Mobbs and stared at his chum. He did not understand.

"What——" he began.

Mr. Mobbs' narrow eyes gleamed at him. There was genuine indignation and scorn in Mr. Mobbs' face now.

"Wretched boy!" he exclaimed. "Miserable wretch!"

"What do you mean, Mr. Mobbs?" asked Frank Courtenay quietly, though his heart was beating unpleasantly.

"What do I mean?" repeated Mr. Mobbs, his voice rising. "You know only too well what I mean, Courtenay!"

I mean that your guilt is discovered, that your rascality is exposed, that your plunder has been found, and that you will leave, to-morrow morning, the school you have disgraced!"

Courtenay could only stare at him. It seemed to him that Mr. Mobbs must have taken leave of his senses.

"Look!" groaned the Caterpillar.

Courtenay looked.

His eyes almost started from his face at what he saw. Glimmering from the bottom of the jar, the coiled gold chain struck him like a blow.

"That," said Mr. Mobbs, between set lips, "is the gold chain that is missing from a master's study in Greyfriars School! Do you deny it, Courtenay?"

Courtenay could only stare, dumb.

"I have, in point of fact, seen Mr. Quelch wearing the watch-chain on more than one occasion," said Mr. Mobbs. "I have no doubt that you also have done so, Courtenay. Do you deny that this is the chain?"

Courtenay found his voice.

"It looks like it, sir!" he stammered. "So far as I remember, it's the chain I've seen Mr. Quelch wearing sometimes."

"The chain you feloniously abstracted from his study while you were in Greyfriars School, Courtenay!"

"I did nothing of the kind, sir!"

"You deny it?" almost shrieked Mr. Mobbs.

"Certainly I do!"

"You deny it, when the stolen chain is discovered here, hidden in your study!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs, as if he could scarcely believe his ears. "Boy, are there no bounds to your effrontery?"

Courtenay looked at him, looked at the chain in the jar again, and looked at the Caterpillar. His head seemed to be turning round. Either that was Mr. Quelch's missing watch-chain or one exactly like it. In either case, he had not the remotest idea how it had come there.

"Franky——" muttered the Caterpillar.

Courtenay's brows knitted.

"Don't be a fool, Caterpillar!" he said. His voice was steady. "You don't fancy that I pinched that chain, do you?"

"No! A hundred times, no! But—how did it get there—in our study? How—how—how——"

"Silence, De Courcy!" rapped Mr. Mobbs. "You cannot be so foolish as to retain any faith in this boy, with the evidence of his guilt under your eyes! Courtenay, I came to this study, hoping and believing that a search would clear your name of suspicion. I have found the article of jewellery you purloined at Greyfriars School! I shall now take the stolen chain to your headmaster, and you will accompany me!"

"Franky, how——" groaned the Caterpillar.

His faith in his chum was not shaken. It was founded as on a rock, and nothing could shake it. But he knew that he was alone in that. Every face in the crowded doorway told its own tale. Proof could scarcely be clearer than the discovery of the stolen chain in the study. If the Caterpillar was blind to proof, other fellows were not.

"I don't know!" Courtenay tried to be calm. "If that is Mr. Quelch's watch-chain, I don't know how it came there!"

"Oh gad!" came Monson's voice from the passage. "Hear that, you men? He don't know! He thinks it flew there!"

"I will not allow you to utter these falsehoods, Courtenay!" said Mr. Mobbs, angrily and harshly.



"Look!" said Coker, pointing in the direction of Mr. Quelch's study window. Potter and Greene looked—and then stared! A fat figure was clambering on the window-sill. "My hat!" ejaculated Potter. "Bunter!" "Cheeky young ass!" remarked Greene.

"I am not speaking falsely, sir. I know nothing of that chain. I had not the faintest idea that it was there any more than De Courey had."

Even as he spoke, Frank Courtenay realised how absurd it sounded. But it was true, and he said it.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Mobbs. This impudence passes belief! Do you deny that this is a Greyfriars master's chain, Courtenay?"

"I think it must be, sir. It certainly is not mine. Unless it is the chain I have seen Mr. Quelch wearing, I have never seen it before."

"It is Mr. Quelch's chain, miserable boy, and you have disgraced your school by an act of which I should never have believed a Highlife boy capable! You purloined this chain from Mr. Quelch's study the day you were there—"

"I never entered Mr. Quelch's study the day I was at Greyfriars, sir! I have not been in his study this term at all."

"Silence! I will not listen to such falsehoods! The stolen chain has been found hidden in your study! That leaves no shadow of doubt!"

Frank Courtenay set his lips hard. He did not look at the crowd of faces in the passage; but he knew that Ponsonby's face was there, gloating. The name of Ponsonby was in his mind.

Had Ponsonby done this?

How could he?

The chain had been stolen at Greyfriars by a Greyfriars hand. Only by a Greyfriars hand could it have been conveyed to Highlife. How, and why, was beyond his imagining; but Ponsonby did not appear in the matter at all.

"Rotten thief!" came Monson's voice. Courtenay's face became scarlet.

"Dirty pincher!" said Ponsonby.

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Mobbs. Courtenay, you will now come to your

headmaster! I shall take you to Dr. Voysey at once! You will not return to this study! You will be locked up by yourself until you are sent home!"

"Sent home?" repeated Courtenay.

"Yes," said Mr. Mobbs sternly, "sent home in disgrace! There is no room for a thief in this school! You will follow me to Dr. Voysey's study. Come!"

"But—"

"You must surely know, wretched boy, that you will be expelled from Highlife for this act! Do you imagine that a thief will be allowed to remain in this school?" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs.

"I am no thief!" exclaimed Courtenay fiercely. "How dare you call me one!"

Mr. Mobbs stared at him; he almost gibbered at him. With a face crimson with anger, he grabbed the junior's arm.

"Come!" he gasped. "Young rascal—abandoned young reprobate, come!"

Frank Courtenay wrenched his arm away.

"I will follow you, sir," he said quietly.

"Come—at once!" thundered Mr. Mobbs.

He took the chain from the jar, and swept from the study, with rustling gown.

Courtenay, with a white but steady face, followed him. The passage was left in a wild buzz.

The Caterpillar stood in the study like a fellow stricken.

Frank Courtenay had gone to the Head to be expelled—he knew that, as the others did. Half an hour ago they had been sitting over tea, talking about the Easter holidays. Now his chum had gone to the headmaster to be sacked! It seemed to the Caterpillar like some dreadful dream from which he must awaken.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Going Strong!

HORACE COKER marched across the landing to the Remove passage, with a grim brow.

Six or seven juniors stared at him as he came.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Want anything in our passage, Coker?"

"Where's young Bunter?" demanded Coker.

"In his study. What the thump—"

"Well, I want him!" said Coker.

And he marched on.

"Cheeky ass!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "Boot him out!"

"The bootfulness is the proper caper!" declared Hurreo Jaiiset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked up the passage after Coker. All the Remove fellows had heard of the scene in the school shop, when Horace Coker had ordered Bunter to turn out his pockets. If Horace was thinking of repeating that performance, the Famous Five were prepared to deal with him drastically. Coker of the Fifth fancied that he was the man to handle this matter, but he had that fancy all to himself.

"What's up?" asked Vernon Smith, looking out of Study No. 4.

"Coker!" answered Bob.

The Bounder grinned, and joined the fellows in the passage. Other fellows came out of other studies. More than half the Remove were almost at Coker's heels when he looked in at the doorway of Study No. 7.

Billy Bunter was there on his own. He did not look as if he was enjoying life.

Sprawling in the armchair, the fat

junior blinked dispiritedly at Coker as he stared in.

Bunter was worried.

That wretched chain was still in his possession. His excursion in the stilly night from the dormitory had failed to get rid of it. He had almost given up hope of getting it back to that drawer in Mr. Quelch's table, for the Remove master to find there, and fancy that he had overlooked it all the time.

Bunter was feeling that he could not stand that chain much longer. It made him feel like Sindbad the Sailor with the Old Man of the Sea on his shoulders.

"Oh, you're here!" grunted Coker.

"I want you, Bunter!"

Bunter gave a snort!

He was too worried to be bothered by Coker of the Fifth; neither was he afraid of the huffy Horace in the midst of the Remove. He could see the juniors gathering in the passage.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly.

"What?" roared Coker.

"Don't bother!" yapped Bunter.

Coker looked at him.

For a Fifth Form man—especially Coker—to be told not to bother by a Remove fag was the limit!

But Horace contrived to keep calm.

"Follow me to my study, Bunter!" he barked.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "Get out! Take your silly face away, if you call it a face!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Bob Cherry from the passage.

Coker breathed hard.

"I've told you to follow me, Bunter," he said grimly. "You can come of your own accord, or I shall take you by the ear. I'm going to look into this matter of pinching—"

"Fathead!" said Bunter.

"Are you coming?" roared Coker.

"No, you silly idiot!"

"Then I'll take you," said Coker of the Fifth. He glanced round at the thickening mob in the passage. "Don't you fags barge in—see?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

Coker's idea that he could walk into the Remove quarters and march off a Remove man by the ear was quite amusing.

"Stand ready, you men!" said the captain of the Remove. "If Coker lays a finger on that fat chump, collar him! We'll walk him home on his head!"

"Hear, hear!"

Coker, about to stride at Bunter, paused. There were fifteen or sixteen Remove fellows in the passage, all grinning with anticipation. Coker feared no foe—but even Coker had to realise that that mob of juniors numbered rather more than he could handle. Coker did not want to be walked home on his head!

"Go it, Coker!" said Frank Nugent, chuckling. "Waiting for you to start, old man!"

"Get on with it, Coker!" chortled the Boulder.

"Pile in, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker was not one of those brilliant fellows who take in a situation at a glance. But Coker could see anything that was absolutely obvious. It was clear, even to Coker, that if he started yanking Bunter along that passage by his fat ear he would not get very far with him.

He stood—pausing. He looked at the grinning crowd in the passage—he looked at Bunter in the armchair. Then Coker's brain worked. Suddenly he slammed the door of Study No. 7 right in the grinning faces outside and turned the key in the lock.

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Bunter had begun to grin like the fellows in the passage. He ceased to grin all of a sudden as Coker slammed and locked the study door.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He heaved himself up from the armchair, in alarm.

Coker put his back to the locked door, surveying him grimly.

"I'll question you here, Bunter!" he remarked.

"Look here, you cheeky beast—" gasped Bunter.

Bang! came Bob Cherry's boot on the door.

Coker's sudden strategy had taken the Removes by surprise. There was a roar of wrath in the passage.

"Come out of that, Coker!" roared Bob.

"Be quiet out there, you fags!" rapped Coker.

Bang, bang! Thump! Kick! Bang! Excited Removes crammed round the door.

But they banged and kicked and thumped in vain. Thick oak and a strong lock interposed between them and Coker of the Fifth. Coker heeded not.

"Now, Bunter!" He took a grip on the ruler he had brought with him. "Now, you dodged me the other day when I was questioning you—"

"Think you're a prefect?" yelled the indignant Owl.

"Don't jaw!" said Coker. "What you're to do is to answer my questions. And don't shout. I don't like it."

"Look here—"

"I said don't jaw! Now, you had that watch-chain out of Quelch's study," said Coker. "Where is it?"

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

"Mind, I'm not going to take you to the Head or to Quelch!" said Coker. "I would if I were a prefect—but, as it happens, I'm not. I'm going to get at the truth and make you give up that chain. I'm going to whop you as a warning to chuck pinching. Now, don't waste time—"

"I say, you fellows—" yelled Bunter.

Bang! Thump! Bang!

"Never mind those noisy fags out there," said Coker. "Now, answer up, Bunter, and mind you tell the truth. You're an untruthful little scoundrel, I know—but I'm going to whop you with this ruler every time you tell a crammer! See? Now, you pinched that chain from Quelch's study—what?"

"No!" yelled Bunter.

Coker made a stride at him. The Owl of the Remove dodged wildly round the study table. But Coker's long legs travelled twice as fast as Bunter's little fat ones. Dodging did not save Bunter.

Whack! came the ruler on Bunter's tight trousers!

Bunter's frantic yell almost drowned the din in the passage, where the juniors were getting more and more wildly excited.

"Yaroooooop!"

"Now—" said Coker.

"Ow! Beast! Wow! Rescue!" shrieked Bunter.

Bang! Thump! Bang!

"Come out of it, Coker!" shouted Harry Wharton. "We'll scrag you, you cheeky ass! Come out of it!"

"Now, Bunter—" said Coker, unheeding.

"Beast!"

"Well, if you will have it you will!" said Coker. And he grasped the fat Owl by the collar and jerked him over the study table. The ruler, in his other hand, rose and fell. "I'm going to whop you till you cough it up! See?"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Beast! I say, you fellows— Yaroooooh!"

Outside Study No. 7 the Removes raged. They banged and thumped and kicked and shouted.

But it booted not!

Loud above the thumping and banging and shouting rose the frantic yells of Billy Bunter as Coker laid on the ruler.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

High Words in Pon's Study!

PONSONBY sat in the window-seat in Study No. 5 at Highcliffe, lighting a cigarette, and smiled through a whirl of smoke.

Pon seemed to be in a very cheery mood.

Monson and Drury and Vavasour, lounging about the study, did not seem quite so cheery as Pon. They felt, more than Ponsonby did, the disgrace that had fallen on their Form and on their school.

"The awful worm!" said Monson. "I never believed he had it—I just couldn't! I thought you were making capital out of it, Pon—and that was all right, as we're up against the brute. But—"

"I'd never have believed it, really!" said Drury.

"Absolutely!" assented Vavasour.

"And he had it in his study all the time!" went on Monson. "He pinched it that day he was over at Greyfriars, after all. It's a pretty come-down for Highcliffe. Those Greyfriars cads will never let us hear the end of this."

"The old Caterpillar's takin' it rather badly!" remarked Drury.

"Well, it's a knock for him!" said Vavasour. "He's always stood by that chap! Bit of a shock—what?"

"Oh, the Caterpillar will be all right when that cad's gone!" drawled Ponsonby. "The old Caterpillar will come back to the fold when Courtenay's turfed out."

"Yes, that's all right!" agreed Monson. "But, I say, what an awful tick—what a worm! What a sneaking rotter—pinching! Pah! Blessed if I can quite believe it now!" He stared round as the study door was flung violently open. "Hallo, Gaddy! You've heard—"

Gadsby came rushing into his study. His face was quite white. He took no notice of the other fellows, but rushed across to Ponsonby, sprawling in the window-seat, smoking.

"You rotter!" he panted. "You cur! It can't go on—it shan't! See! You've done it, Pon, and you've got to stop it before it's too late! Oh, you villain—you villain!" Gadsby choked.

Monson, Drury, and Vavasour stared at Gadsby in blank astonishment.

Ponsonby sat up, black and bitter.

"Shut that door, Vav!" he rapped.

Vavasour, staring, closed the door.

"Shut it if you like," panted Gadsby, "but I tell you all Highcliffe is going to know, if you don't stop this, Pon!"

"Hold your tongue, you fool!" said Ponsonby, between his teeth.

"I tell you, I'll shout it out all over Highcliffe, if you don't stop it!" panted Gadsby. "I've just seen him—Mobby marchin' him in to the Head! I've seen De Courcy—he looks—he looks—" Gadsby choked again. "I tell you I'm not standin' for it, Pon! Oh, you villain!"

"What the thump are you burblin' about, Gaddy?" asked Monson, in amazement. "Pon's had nothing to do with this! Mobby found the chain

hidden in Study No. 3— Courtenay pinched it at Greyfriars—

"Oh, you're a fool!"

"But he did!" exclaimed Drury. "You don't think the Caterpillar pinched it, do you? Well, it was, in their study."

"Hidden in De Courcy's Chinese jar!" said Vavasour. "I saw it there, Gaddy, when Mobby took it away! It was Courtenay hid it there—"

"It was Pon!" yelled Gadsby.

"Eh? What?"

"Pon!"

"Don't be a mad ass!"

"You'd better cut off, after that, Reggie Gadsby!" said Ponsonby, with a dangerous glitter in his eyes. "That's enough from you!"

"I'll tell the whole school if you don't set it right!" panted Gadsby. "I don't like the fellow any more than you do, but I won't see this awful thing put on him—I won't see him sacked for nothing! I tell you, I won't!"

"Don't be a fool!" said Monson. "You're off your nut, I think! Pon had nothin' to do with that chain bein' found there! I don't suppose he's ever seen it before."

"Pon put it there!" yelled Gadsby. "I tell you, it was Bunter—that fat fool in the Remove at Greyfriars—who pinched that chain and Pon got it away from him—"

"What utter rot!" gasped Monson.

"You're dreaming!" said Vavasour, staring.

"Are you going to shut up, Gaddy?" asked Ponsonby, setting his lips.

"No! And you shan't make me! I tell you men, that fat fool, Bunter, had it, one day when we met him near Highcliffe, and we got him into the paddock, and ragged him; and it dropped out of his pocket!" panted Gadsby. "Ponsonby snatched it up, and kept it!"

"Rot!" gasped Drury.

"Absolutely!"

But all three were looking very oddly at Cecil Ponsonby now.

"There's nothin' in it, Pon!" asked Monson.

"Nothin' at all!" drawled Ponsonby. "Gaddy's dreamed all this, and the sooner he forgets his silly dream, the better!"

Gadsby's eyes blazed at him.

"Well, we'll see whether the Head thinks I've dreamed it," he said. "We'll see whether Bunter keeps it up that he never had the chain, when he's asked point-blank! You think he'll keep it dark to save his own skin—but we'll see whether he can, when it all comes out—" Gadsby rushed back to the door.

Ponsonby was after him, with the spring of a tiger. He grasped Gadsby, before he could reach the door, and spun him across the study.

Gadsby staggered, breathless, against the fender.

"Cut that out, Gaddy!" said Pon savagely. "You can tell these fellows what you like—but you're not talkin' that rot outside this study!"

Monson, Drury, and Vavasour, stared at Pon. They knew now! There was something like horror in their faces. Vavasour was quite pale.

"Pon—" stammered Drury. "You—you—"

There was a flush on Ponsonby's face. Even he, perhaps, was not wholly lost to a sense of shame. Gadsby knew, that could not be helped, as he had been with Pon when the chain was taken from Bunter; but he did not want

(Continued on next page.)

The STATELY HOMES of GREYFRIARS

DON OGILVY AT HOME

By The Greyfriars Rhymester



(1)

Don Ogilvy lives to the north of the Tweed,
In Scotland, the land of the heather;
The home of the rugged old Highlander
breed

Who've fought many battles together,
Whose clansmen have gathered with
tartan and sword

And marched to the skirl of their pipers,
Whose sons were together when bigger
guns roared

Around the grim salient of "Wipers."

(2)

Yes, Don is a Highlander sturdy and true,
Although he does little to show it;
He speaks much the same as the
Londoners do,

His North Country friends wouldn't
know it!

He doesn't say: "Hoots, mon, I doot
it, ye ken!"

But rather: "Sez you!" or "Oh,
really?"

And when he goes home to his own
bonnie glen,

They all shake their nappers severely.

(4)

And when the King's soldiers with
battles and bribes

Put paid to their Jacobite gambels,
These fire-eating rebels made war on
the tribes

They hated, MacGregors and Campbells.
But that's long ago, and they now are
no more

As a clan to be feared or detested,
They're scattered through Scotland by
mountain and shore,

Forgotten and quite unmolested.

(6)

Wild stags you may find on the moun-
tainous creeks,

They're creatures majestic and regal;
And high in the sky, gliding over the peaks
You often may see the great eagle.

Our Donald grew up in surroundings
like these,

And soon became strong and reliant;
At hunting and fishing and muscle-work
he's

As sturdy and strong as a giant.

(3)

The Ogilvy clansmen are proud of their
name,

Far backwards its history stretches;
With Bonnie Prince Charlie they won a
great name

For slaughtering Protestant wretches.
They grew rather fond of this blood-
thirsty work,

And when the Good Cause touched
rock-bottom,

The Ogilvy clansmen with claymore and
dirk

Still went after English—and got 'em!

(5)

A house on a mountain in far Inverness
Is the "hame" where Don's living
at present.

I've never been up to his place, I confess;
No doubt it's exceedingly pleasant.
It's close to the shores of the world-
famous loch

Where boating is very exciting,
For monsters pop out just to give you
a shock—

But I simply scorn 'em. (In writing!)

(7)

He's keen on the bagpipes, although he
admits

The first time he tried, it was awful!
The noise gave his grandfather seventeen
fits,

And made him use language unlawful!
But practice makes perfect, and so he
went on

To practise his weird-looking whistle
Until he was perfect. So here's to our Don,
The lad from the land of the thistle!

Next Week: WUN LUNG, whose home is in far-away China.

the others to know. They knew now! He gave Gadsby a bitter look.

"You gabblin' fool!" he muttered. "Pon—" breathed Monson.

"Oh, don't blink at me as if I was a ghost!" snarled Ponsonby. "We're up against that rotter, aren't we? He's always been my enemy, since he came to Highcliffe, where no one wanted him. He's always had the best of it! Now I've got him down—and he's stayin' down!"

"Then—then you—" faltered Vavasour helplessly.

"I'll tell you!" panted Gadsby. "He got that chain off Bunter—the fat fool said he had taken it for a jape on his beak—I don't know whether he did, or whether he pinched it—and I don't care! I know he had it, and it dropped when we were ragging him in the paddock, and Pon pounced on it, and has had it ever since!"

"Oh!" breathed Monson.

"That fat fool has begged it back half a dozen times," went on Gadsby. "Pon was keeping it to frighten him—like the tormentin' cad he is. Then he heard about Courtenay bein' over at Greyfriars that day, and this came into his head. As soon as it was said that the chain had been stolen, he banked on Bunter keepin' quiet, to save himself—and I dare say he's right; that fat scoundrel won't own up and get himself sacked from his school. I tell you, that chain's been parked in that jar in Study No. 3 for days, and I was with Pon—I was outside the study door when he put it there—it was the day Bunter came over, and Mobby turfed him out—the first of April. That was the day Pon did it—that chain's been there ever since! And he's worked up the row, hotter and hotter, here and at Greyfriars, till it was ripe to put Mobby on to it—and then he put it into Mobby's head to search—I tell you, it shan't go on!"

"It can't, Pon!" said Drury, in a scared voice. "I—I say, it—it's too awfully thick! A chap sacked for stealin'—"

"Can't it?" said Ponsonby. If he felt alarm, he did not show it in his hard, savage face. "I tell you, it can, and will! We've got that brute now, where we want him! Who wants him here?"

"Nobody! But—"

"He's goin'—sacked!" Ponsonby snapped his teeth over the word. "We're done with him at Highcliffe! The Head's sacking him now, and he goes in the mornin'! We're quit of him! He's asked for this—an' got it!"

"You've got to stop it, Pon!" said Gadsby. "I tell you, you've got to!"

"How can I stop it—now?" asked Ponsonby, with a bitter sneer. "There's only one way to stop it—to walk into Dr. Voysey's study, and tell him that I pinched the chain from Bunter, and planted it in Courtenay's study to get him expelled! Can you see me doin' that?"

Gadsby was silent.

"Now it's gone so far, it's him or me!" said Ponsonby. "Either he's sacked for stealin', or I'm sacked for puttin' it on him! If that's what you fellows want, go to the Head, and tell him Gaddy's drivell!"

There was silence in the study.

"But if I'm sacked," said Ponsonby, in a low voice, "I don't go alone. Keep that in mind! We've been in a lot of things together, and Mobby's kept his eyes shut hard. If I go, we all go—the whole happy family! Let me down, and

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see that you all come a mucker along with me!"

"Oh, shut it!" said Monson, in disgust. "We can't give you away, and you know it, now it's got as far as sackin'."

"It's too beastly rotten, though!" muttered Drury.

"Absolutely!" whimpered Vavasour.

"You've got to do somethin', Pon!" said Gadsby. But his excitement had passed now, and his voice was pleading. "You can't do this—you can't! And I tell you, it's dangerous, too—you're always layin' some cunning scheme, and what comes of it? You always come a mucker. I tell you nobody could get away with a dirty game like this—it's not sense! Somethin's always bound to turn up and knock it out. You know that—"

"I don't!" said Ponsonby coolly. "It looks to me a winner—and in any case, I'm clear of the bizney! Even the brute himself doesn't fancy that I had any hand in it—even the Caterpillar, and he's keen as a razor, can't guess that I happened to get that chain off Bunter a fortnight ago. It's as safe as houses!"

"Oh, you villain!" mumbled Gadsby.

Ponsonby stepped away from the door. He threw himself into the window-seat, and lighted another cigarette.

"Up to you!" he said. "Go and drivel to the Head, if you like; and I'll go and pack my box, and you can all do the same! We'll make a merry party, all turfed out together, and all Highcliffe hiss'n' us as we go! Don't talk to me any more, Gaddy—go and talk to the Head!"

Gadsby stood looking at him. He looked at the others. In silence, they left the study.

Pon watched them go—with a cold sneer on his face. They went, as if they could not breathe the same atmosphere with him—Gadsby giving him a look of loathing as he went. But he knew that Gadsby was not going to the Head—and Gadsby did not!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Cough It Up!

BILLY BUNTER, in those same moments, over at Greyfriars, was having the time of his life!

Pinned down on the table, in Study No. 7, by Horace Coker's hefty hand, the fat Owl struggled and wriggled, and squirmed and roared, and kicked up his little fat legs, as the swiping ruler came down.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

Bunter's wild roars woke all the echoes of the Remove passage.

Outside the study door, the Removites raged like the heathen of old. They thumped and shouted, and yelled fierce threats through the keyhole. But they could do nothing more. Horace Coker was getting by with this!

When he emerged from the study, it would be a different story. But so long as a locked door barred him from the enraged Removites, Coker was able to carry on with a high hand—and he did!

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

The ruler fairly rang on Bunter's tight trousers.

"That's a dozen!" remarked Coker casually. "If you want any more, just mention it."

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Billy Bunter rolled off the table. He

cast a longing blink at the door. Coker wagged the ruler at him warningly.

"Now let's have it!" said Coker, in his most magisterial manner. "From what I've heard, Bunter, you went into your beak's study that day, and saw him with the broken chain in his hand. You saw him put it into his table drawer—"

"I didn't!" gasped Bunter. "In the first place, I never went to Quelch's study at all; and, in the second place, it was only to ask him to let me off my lines, and he never whopped me, either! He wasn't sitting at the table with the mouldy chain in his hand, and I never noticed that it was broken, and he never put it in the drawer when he grabbed up his cane to whop me. As I've said, he never whopped me at all, and I never thought of paying him out for it."

There was a chuckle outside the study.

Billy Bunter's remarks seemed to be turning the wrath of the Removites into merriment.

"That's all!" said Bunter. "If you think I came back to the study later with my lines, I never did any lines at all—see? Besides, Quelch hadn't gone to the Head when I took them in. He was sitting there."

"Oh crumbs!" said Coker.

"That's the whole truth," said Bunter. "It's no business of yours, but I don't mind telling you exactly how it happened, if you want to know. As for taking the chain, as if I would! Besides, how could I guess that old Quelch was going to fancy that it had been stolen? Of course, I thought he would know at once that it had been taken away for a jape! Not that I took it, you know! I never even saw it, and I've never touched it. And I don't know anything about it—not now Quelch thinks it's been pinched, you know."

"Oh, my hat!" came from the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you blithering young idiot!" said Coker. "I fancy it would all come out pretty quick if the Head had you up!"

"I hope there's nothing about me that I'd mind the Head knowing!" said Bunter. "I'm not a fellow with rotten secrets, like some fellows, I hope!"

"So you took it for a jape on Quelch—"

"Oh, no! I never took it at all!"

"Shut up, you young ass! Didn't I warn you not to tell crammers?" roared Coker. "Do you want this ruler again? Keep away from that door! Now, if you took it for a jape, why haven't you put it back, or let it be found, after all this time?"

"How could I, when I hadn't got it?" demanded Bunter.

Swipe!

"Yaroooh!"

Swipe!

"Wow! Beast! Yow!"

"We've got this far," said Coker. "You took it from your beak's study for a jape, like the fool you are. I'll believe that, if you can explain why you didn't give it up afterwards? Why didn't you?"

"I never had it—"

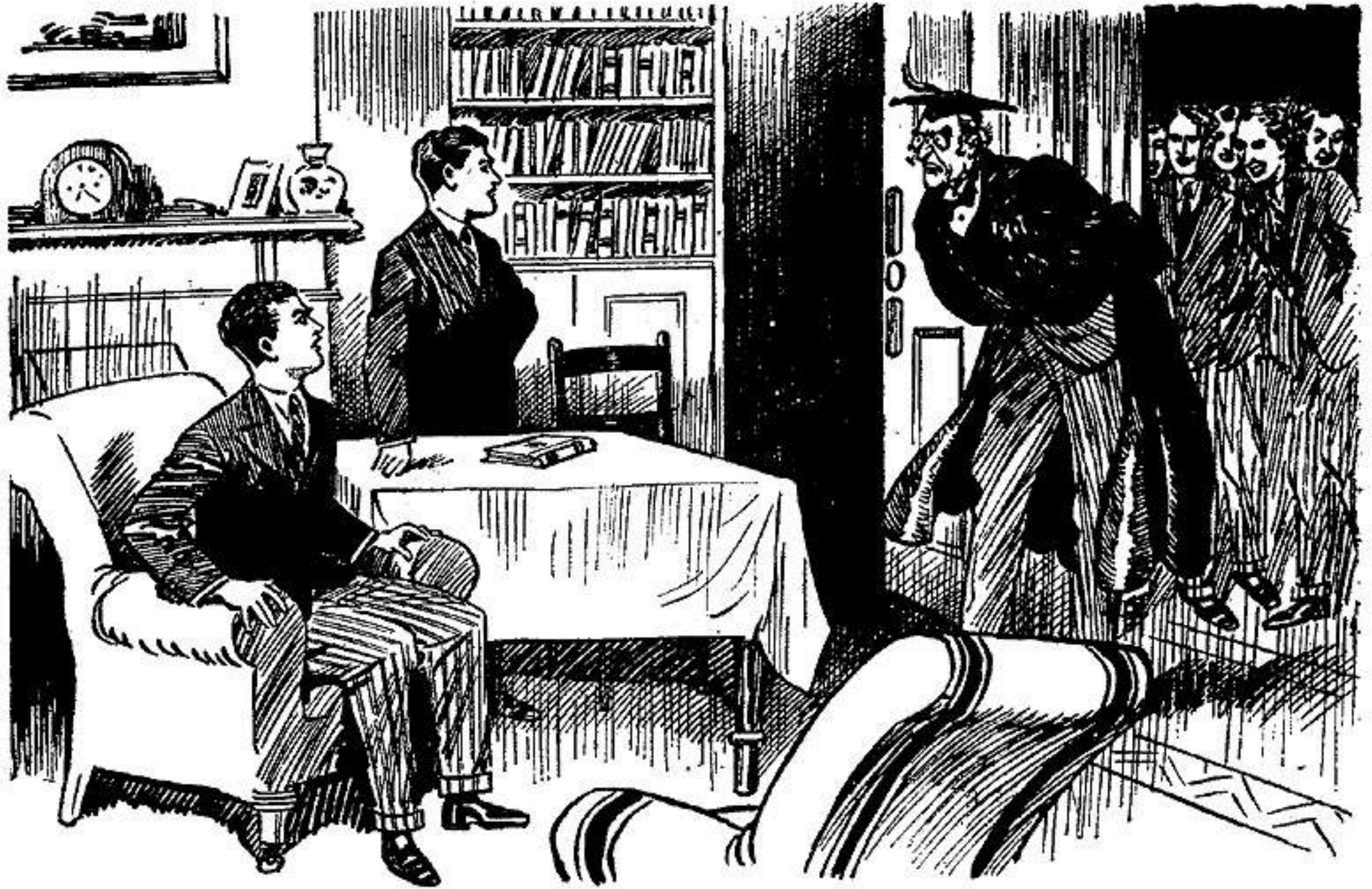
Swipe!

"Yoo-hoop! I—I mean, I lost it!" howled Bunter, in anguish. "A—a—a beast took it away from me! Ow!"

"Rubbish!" Swipe! "Better tell the truth!" Swipe! "Nobody at Greyfriars took it away from you!" Swipe!

"Will you leave off?" shrieked Bunter. "It wasn't anybody at Greyfriars, you silly ass! It was a Highcliffe chap—Ow!"

"Rot!" Swipe! "Cough up the truth, you young scoundrel!" said



"You are not going to search my study, sir!" said Courtenay, his eyes blazing. "I protest!" "Any objection to such a proceeding can only give colour to the suspicion already rife in your Form!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs, his little eyes gleaming.

Coker. "I'm going to get at the truth, if I wear out this ruler on your bags!" Swipe!

"Yaroooh! It was Ponsonby!" said Bunter. "Pon and Gadsby caught me, and started ragging me, and it—wow!—fell out of my pocket—ow!—and that beast Pon grabbed it—yow-ow-ow!"

"Oh crumbs!" came a howl of surprise outside the study.

Harry Wharton & Co. were not banging on the door now. They were getting quite interested in Coker's cross-examination of the fat Owl.

Coker's methods were peculiar; but they seemed to be delivering the goods, so to speak. So far, nobody had been able to extract the truth from Bunter. Coker's brilliant idea of extracting it with the aid of a ruler seemed to be a winner.

"Well, that young cad Ponsonby is rotter enough for anything!" said Coker. "But it's no good telling me that he pinched that chain—he wouldn't! What did he want it for?"

"How should I know?" groaned Bunter. "I know the beast had it, and when I went over to ask him for it, he only booted me, and Courtenay came up and stopped him—ow! I suppose he kept it just to worry me, the beast—that's the sort of rotter he is! Wow! I tried to get him on the phone to ask him for it, too, but that beast Mobbs wouldn't let me get him. Wow! If I could have got it back sooner, I'd have bunged it into Quelch's study—yow-ow! I'd have put it there yesterday, if you hadn't grabbed me at his window, you beast! Ow!"

"You've got it, then!" roared Coker. "You young rascal, you just said that Ponsonby had it!"

"So he had!" yelled Bunter. "I got it back the day that beast Skinner pulled my leg, on the First of April, and made out that the Caterpillar had asked me over there to tea, and he

hadn't; and I waited in his study, and he never came in, and I was fearfully hungry, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" from the passage. "You're making out that Ponsonby had the chain, and that he gave it back—"

"No, he jolly well didn't! Catch the beast!" gasped Bunter. "I bagged it after he hid it in the jar! Ow!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I don't suppose he knows I've got it back at all!" said Bunter. "I haven't seen him since, blow him! But when he stuck it in a jar belonging to the Caterpillar, I jolly well wasn't going to leave it there! I—"

Swipe!

"Yarooop!"

"Cough up the truth!" said Coker encouragingly. "There's another one coming, if you don't!"

"That's the truth, you beast!" howled Bunter. "You see, Pon never saw me! I was in the Caterpillar's study, and I heard him and Gaddy outside, and you can bet I got out of sight. Pon never saw me behind the screen. He jolly well wouldn't have left the chain there, if he had."

"What utter rot!" said Coker. "You make out that Ponsonby was keeping that chain, and that he hid it in another fellow's study! Rubbish!"

Swipe!

"Yow-ow-ow! Beast!" roared Bunter. "I tell you he did! I suppose he was afraid of keeping it on him, or something. Anyhow, he stuck it in that Chinese jar, under the lavender. I suppose he thought it would be safe there. I don't know why he did it, and don't care, but I know he jolly well did, and I jolly well know that when he went, I got hold of it pretty quick!"

Outside the study, Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

If what Bunter stated was true, the fat Owl might not be able to guess why

Pon had hidden the missing chain in the Caterpillar's study, which was also Courtenay's. But such an act could have only one meaning to the more intelligent minds than Bunter's.

"Is it possible?" breathed Wharton. "That rotten rascal has been trying to fix it on Courtenay. Is it possible that he meant the chain to be found there, to make it look—"

"Good heavens!" muttered Nugent.

"Pretty tall story!" said Horace Coker, shaking his head. "Anyhow, whether that young Highcliffe cad had the chain or not, you've got it now—what?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've never seen it—"

"What!" roared Coker.

"Besides, I should have put it back in Quelch's drawer, and he would have found it, and thought that he'd overlooked it, if you hadn't grabbed me at his window, you beast! And I went down from the dorm last night, but Quelch had his door locked—just as if he fancied that a fellow might want to sneak into his study, blow him! I wish I'd never touched the beastly thing!" groaned Bunter. "Not that I did touch it, you know," he added, with a revival of caution. "The actual fact is, that I never even knew that Quelch had a watch-chain at all—"

Swipe!

"Yooo-hoop!"

"Where's that chain?" demanded Coker.

"Ow! How should I know?" yelled Bunter. "You're not going to take that chain to Quelch, and make out that I pinched it."

"You fat young scoundrel! I won't mention your name, but I'm going to take it to Quelch! Where is it?" demanded Coker.

"I—I don't know! I—I've never seen it! I—I shouldn't know it if I saw it. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,521.

I never bought one like it in Courtfield, because I don't even know what it looks like! I—I've never seen that chain—keep that ruler away, you beast—I haven't touched it, and it's not in my trousers pocket now!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell.

Coker grinned.

"I'll keep on with this ruler till you had it over!" he said. "Say when!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

"Ow! Beast! Wow!" Bunter dragged a clinking gold watch-chain from his pocket. "Wow! Stop it, can't you? You've got that rotten chain, haven't you, you beast? Ow!"

Coker unlocked the study door.

Harry Wharton & Co. and a whole mob of Removites eyed him as he came out. But Coker passed through the crowd unharmed.

They had been prepared to scrag him, to slaughter him, to strow him in small sections all over the Remove passage—but they did not.

Coker of the Fifth—by extraordinary methods, it was true—had elucidated the truth. The mystery of the missing chain was a mystery no longer. The chain itself was in Coker's hand, on its way back to its owner. Nobody felt disposed to prevent Coker from getting on with the good work.

Coker—probably not even aware of his narrow escape from being scragged, slaughtered, and strewn in small sections—passed in peace, leaving the Remove in a buzz of excitement, and headed for Masters' studies.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Surprise!

"**M**OBBS!" said Mr. Quelch. "Yes, Mobbs. Mr. Mobbs, speaking from Highcliffe School!" came the squeaky, disagreeable voice over the wires; and Mr. Quelch frowned at the telephone.

Quelch was not pleased. He had not forgotten Mr. Mobbs' recent visit to Greyfriars, when Mobbs had made himself very unpleasant.

However, the Remove master answered civilly, if not cordially.

"What is it, Mr. Mobbs? I did not expect—"

"A few days ago, sir, I called on Dr. Locke, and saw you," said Mr. Mobbs. "It was in reference to a certain article of jewellery missing from your study—a watch-chain, in fact! I expressed my indignation, sir, at the thought of any suspicion attaching to a Highcliffe boy, and—"

Mr. Quelch cut in sharply.

"No suspicion attaches to a Highcliffe boy, Mr. Mobbs! A discussion appears to me useless—"

"It is no pleasure to me to refer to the matter, sir!" snapped Mr. Mobbs. "But I have no alternative, sir! The chain has been found."

"Wha-a-at?"

"In a Highcliffe study, concealed there!"

The words came reluctantly from Mr. Mobbs. Obviously, his present task was most unpalatable to him. But it was one that he could not avoid.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Is it possible?"

"I regret to say that it is true, sir! The chain found in Courtenay's study belongs to no one here, and its description is that of the one you have lost—indeed, I myself have seen you wearing such a chain, and, though it appears to me to be of no great value, I shall

hasten to return you your property, sir."

"If the chain is mine, Mr. Mobbs, it is of considerable value," said Mr. Quelch tartly. "Possibly there is some mistake—"

"Unfortunately, there is no room for a mistake," said Mr. Mobbs acidly. "I should welcome the possibility only too gladly, as you may guess; but the facts are as I state. Valuable or not, the chain is yours. Courtenay can give no account of it—indeed, denies having known that it was in the school at all. This is a blow to me, sir, as his Form-master—"

"I quite understand that, Mr. Mobbs," said the Remove master more cordially. "I am sorry, sir; I sympathise—"

"Thank you, Mr. Quelch!" Mobbs' tone was acid. He seemed to have no great use for sympathy. "I am about to order a taxi-cab, sir, to come over to Greyfriars, and return your property without loss of time. If convenient to you, I will come over immediately."

"Pray do so, Mr. Mobbs!"

Mr. Mobbs rang off.

The Remove master replaced the receiver and went back to his writing-table. He sat down with a wrinkled and thoughtful brow.

It seemed impossible to doubt how the matter stood. Yet, as he remembered the honest, frank face of Courtenay, it seemed almost impossible to believe it. In his recent interview with Mr. Mobbs, he had been provoked by Mobbs' bluster into expressing the opinion that a pilferer was more likely to be found at Highcliffe than at Greyfriars. That was, in fact, the truth; but he could not think of Frank Courtenay in such a connection. He had, indeed, gone out of his way to assure Courtenay that he took no notice whatever of the surmises connecting his name with the theft. And now—

If the chain had been found at Highcliffe, that settled it—or seemed to settle it. And yet—

Knock!

The door of Mr. Quelch's study opened. He raised his eyebrows in surprise at the sight of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form. He could imagine no reason why one of Prout's boys should come there; neither was he pleased to see him.

"What is it, Coker?" he asked testily.

Coker marched in, shut the study door, and faced the Remove master across the writing-table.

Mr. Quelch eyed him very impatiently.

There was, if possible, more importance than usual in Horace Coker's manner, and self-satisfaction beamed from his face.

"I've got something to tell you, sir," said Coker cheerfully. "About that chain you lost, sir—"

"I have lost no chain, Coker. If you are alluding to the watch-chain that was pilfered from my study some time ago I—"

"That's it, sir; the one that was pinched—"

"Was what?"

"Pinched, sir. Snaffled!" elucidated Coker. "Snooped, you know?"

"It is not for me," said Mr. Quelch, "to instruct Mr. Prout's boys in the English language. But if you can speak that language, Coker, kindly do so when you are addressing me."

"Eh? Oh! Yes!" said Coker. "What I mean is—"

"My time is of value, Coker."

"Yes, sir; so's mine," said Coker innocently. "About that chain, sir. You weren't able to spot it, and the pro-

fects couldn't do anything—not that I expected them to be able to, of course—"

"Close the door after you, Coker!"

"Eh? I haven't told you yet, sir! As nobody was able to handle the matter, sir," explained Coker, "I decided to take it in hand myself."

"If you have come here to talk impertinent nonsense, Coker—"

"You don't seem to follow me, sir!" said Coker. "As I was saying, I wasn't going to have pinching going on in the school, and I took the matter in hand, and I'm glad to say that I've been successful, sir."

"What?"

"I've found the chain, sir!"

"You—have—f o u n d—the—chain!" articulated Mr. Quelch.

Coker smiled. He expected Mr. Quelch to be surprised. Quelch, undoubtedly, was surprised—in fact, astounded. As Mr. Mobbs had informed him, a quarter of an hour ago, that the missing chain had been found at Highcliffe, such a statement from Coker was enough to astonish Henry Samuel Quelch very much indeed.

"Yes, I've found it, sir!" assented Coker. "I rather thought I should, when I took the matter in hand, and I—"

"Are you in your senses, Coker?"

"Eh? Yes, sir; I hope so!" ejaculated Coker.

"In that case, what do you mean by coming to my study and making such an absurd statement?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

Coker blinked at him.

"But I have found it, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

"Well, my hat!" said Coker. He dived his hand into his pocket. "Look at that, sir. Is that your chain, or not?"

A massive gold chain clinked on the table.

Mr. Quelch almost bounded from his chair. He stared at that chain. He seemed to devour it with his eyes. His eyes, indeed, seemed almost popping from his scholastic countenance.

"Upon my word!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

He stretched out his hand and took the chain. He examined it carefully. Perhaps a suspicion was in his mind that the fathead of the Fifth might have got hold of Bunter's "dud" chain and fancied that it was the genuine article. But this chain was no dud! This was the genuine article. This was Mr. Quelch's massive, ancient chain that he had worn for thirty years; that his father had worn for forty years before him! This was the goods!

"Upon my word!" repeated Mr. Quelch, quite dazedly.

Coker smiled. He almost smirked. Coker was pleased with himself. True, Coker generally was pleased with himself. But this time he had cause. Coker had done the trick. Coker had worked the oracle! Coker had taken the matter in hand, where all others had failed, and, like Caesar of old, he had come, and seen, and conquered! It was Coker first, and the rest nowhere!

"That—that—that is my chain!" said Mr. Quelch, at last.

"I thought so, sir!" smiled Coker. "Glad to return it to you, sir!"

"Where did you find this chain, Coker?"

"Well, I found it, sir!" said Coker. "Not being a prefect, I can't report the chap's name—the fellows would call it sneaking—"

"That does not apply in a matter of

theft, Coker!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I'm satisfied that this wasn't a theft, sir!" said Coker.

"You—are—satisfied!" Quelch seemed to bite off those words.

"Yes, sir!" said the cheerful Horace. "I can't give you the chap's name, sir, but he's a fellow well known to be the biggest idiot at Greyfriars—an absolutely footling ass, sir. He's owned up that he took it for a practical joke, sir—a jape; and, according to his own account, a fellow took it away from him, and he only got it back a day or two ago. He seems to have tried to put it back into your study more than once, sir, but he couldn't find a chance."

Mr. Quelch gazed at Coker.

"Nonsense!" he said. "No boy could be so foolish—so crass—"

"The other fellows in his Form believe it, sir, now it's come out," said Coker, "and my opinion is that he's fool enough for anything. The fact is, sir, I know he tried to put it back, because I caught him yesterday getting in at your study window. Thinking he was pinching again, I stopped him; but, as it turns out, he had the chain, and was trying to put it back—"

There was a sound of a taxi in the quad.

Mr. Quelch, with a start, remembered Mobbs.

"I will go into this matter another time, Coker," he said. "I am, at all events, greatly obliged to you for having recovered my chain, and I shall excuse your stupidity and impertinence—"

"Eh?"

"I am expecting a caller now. Please leave my study."

There were footsteps in the passage. A tap came at the door, and Trotter opened it.

"Mr. Mobbs, sir!"

"Please come in, Mr. Mobbs!" said the Remove master, rising. "Coker, pray leave my study!"

Coker gave him a look. Coker was quite unaware that there was any stupidity or impertinence to be excused. However, even Coker did not think of pursuing the matter in the presence of the Highcliffe master. He left the study, and as he went down the passage, he grunted expressively.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Two of Them!

MR. MOBBS sank into a chair. The expression on his face was, if possible, more acid and disagreeable than usual.

In the belief that the purloined chain had been found at Highcliffe, Mr. Mobbs had no alternative but to return it to its owner; indeed, Dr. Voysey had directed him to do so, without delay.

But it was a very unpleasant task. Still more unpleasant was it to ask favours of Mr. Quelch. And he had to ask favours. He was deeply, tremulously anxious to keep this disgraceful episode as private as possible. That rested with Quelch.

"My dear sir—" began the Remove master.

"I regret having to trouble you, sir!" said Mr. Mobbs. "This is a very painful matter—very painful indeed. Such an act, at Highcliffe, is almost beyond belief. The wretched boy, Courtenay, is, of course, under sentence of expulsion."

"The boy Courtenay, sir, is, in my opinion, the soul of honour!" said Mr. Quelch. "I could not help thinking that a mistake had been made, sir, when you spoke to me over the telephone. I am now certain of it."

"There is no mistake, sir! The chain has been found, concealed in a jar in the boy's study at Highcliffe," said Mr. Mobbs heavily. "Obviously, he purloined it the day he was here—"

"He did nothing of the kind, Mr. Mobbs. Whatever chain may have been found at Highcliffe, sir, it is not my property."

"N-n-not your property, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs.

"Certainly not! Since speaking to you on the telephone, sir, my chain has been restored to me—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"It is here, sir!" Mr. Quelch tapped the thick gold chain lying on the table. "The boy who was in this study when you came in, Mr. Mobbs, had just brought it to me. He had found it—"

"Fuf-fuf-found it!"

"It transpires," said Mr. Quelch, "that no theft took place at all." If Mr. Quelch had any lingering doubts on that point, he dismissed them now on the spot, lock, stock, and barrel! It was so very gratifying to make it known that there was no pilferer at Greyfriars School, that it had a convincing effect on Mr. Quelch. "There was no theft, sir! I have learned that the chain was taken from my study by a foolish boy for an absurd practical joke—and it has now been found and restored to me!"

Mr. Mobbs gaped at him.

He blinked! He goggled! He gasped like a fish out of water!

"Here, sir, is the chain!" said Mr. Quelch, tapping it again. "So far as I know, it has never been out of this school at all. Certainly Coker did not find it at Highcliffe! The boy Courtenay has no connection with the matter in any way."

Mr. Mobbs looked at the chain.

Then he drew a gold chain from his pocket, which, at the first glance, was the exact replica of the one on the table.

It was Mr. Quelch's turn to goggle! He knew that chain!

"That, sir," said Mr. Mobbs, in a gasping voice, "that chain, sir, was discovered in a place of concealment in Courtenay's study at Highcliffe. Several boys were able to identify it as the one that you had been seen wearing! I—I had no doubt of it; as your chain was missing! If—if that is your chain, sir, what—what is this? I—I am quite confused! I—I do not understand—"

"Pray allow me to examine that chain, Mr. Mobbs."

Mr. Mobbs passed it across the table. Then he passed his hand over his brow.

Certainly this was good news! If Mr. Quelch's missing chain had been found at Greyfriars, obviously Courtenay had not pinched it, and there was no thief at Highcliffe—no occasion for an expulsion in Mr. Mobbs' Form!

That was great news! But Mr. Mobbs felt his head turning round.

"That, sir, is—is, to all appearance, your chain," he stuttered. "It—it is not the same, of course—it cannot be, as your—your chain lies there on the table—but in appearance— Upon my word! It was found, sir, concealed in a jar in the boy's study—he could not explain it—he disclaimed all knowledge of it! Yet—yet it is not—not yours! I—I am amazed! He himself supposed it to be your chain! He admitted it! I had no doubts! On examining it more closely, it is true, I was surprised to find that it was of imitation metal—I should not have expected you to wear such a chain, but—but—" Mr. Mobbs, gasping, broke off helplessly.

"I think I have seen this chain before, Mr. Mobbs," said the Remove master quietly. "It was in the hands of a boy of my Form named Bunter."

"B-b-b-Bunter?"

"This foolish boy, sir, was aware that I regarded him with some suspicion, and he had the absurd, the insensate idea, of buying an imitation chain, resembling mine in outward appearance, and placing it in my study. He had the unexampled folly to imagine that I should suppose it to be my chain, sir. I caught him in the act of placing it here, sir, and caned him. I have no doubt that this is the imitation chain that Bunter bought for his purpose."

"But how—how did it come to be concealed in a Highcliffe study, sir?" gasped Mr. Mobbs. "How—how—I remember seeing Bunter at Highcliffe one day—the first of the month, I think—but how—why—"

"For some reason that I cannot begin to imagine, I conclude that the stupid boy left the chain there, sir—indeed, there is nothing else to suppose!" said Mr. Quelch. He touched a bell. "I will

(Continued on next page.)

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send for him, sir, and question him in your presence, in order that the matter may be cleared up to your satisfaction."

Trotter was dispatched for Bunter.

There was some delay before that youth arrived in the study.

His voice preceded him from the passage.

"Leggo my ear, Wharton, you beast! I ain't going to Quelch!"

"You silly ass, you've got to!"

"I won't!" wailed Bunter. "I tell you—leggo my ear! Ow! Leggo! I'm going, ain't I?"

A fat figure was pushed into the study. Billy Bunter blinked at his Form-master through his big spectacles in dire terror. That summons had terrified the fat junior to the marrow of his bones. He could only suppose that Coker had given him away, and that Quelch knew who had snooped that chain.

His fat knees knocked together as he blinked at Mr. Quelch.

"I—I say, sir, it—it wasn't me!" gasped Bunter.

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"If Coker says, sir—"

Mr. Quelch glared. Possibly he had guessed at the name that Horace Coker refused to mention. He could not doubt now what that name was!

"Silence, Bunter! Coker has returned my chain to me, but it is not about that that I desire to see you now."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. His fat face brightened.

"This imitation chain, Bunter, is your property, I think?"

"Eh?"

Mr. Quelch held up the chain purchased from Mr. Lazarus.

Billy Bunter blinked at it in utter amazement. Having left it in the Caterpillar's study, and having written to De Courcy, telling him where to find it, he had never expected to see it at Greyfriars again.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"That is the spurious chain I saw in your possession, Bunter!" said the Remove master sternly.

"Oh! Yes, sir! 'Tain't mine now, sir!" gasped Bunter. "If Mr. Mobbs has brought it here, sir—" He blinked at Mr. Mobbs. "I—I don't see why he should, sir! If the Caterpillar ain't satisfied—"

"The what?"

"I—I mean De Courcy, sir! If he ain't satisfied, I don't see that he wanted to hand it over to Mr. Mobbs! He could have written to me!" said Bunter warmly. "I'm quite prepared to let him have the money instead, when—when my postal order comes—"

"Did you leave this chain in Courtenay's study at Highcliffe, Bunter?"

"I left it in De Courcy's study, sir, and—"

"It is the same study!" said Mr. Mobbs. "Boy! Why—"

"Explain yourself, Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir! You see, sir, the Caterpillar—I mean, De Courcy—lent me the thirty bob that I paid for that chain to old Lazarus, and the fellows found out that I owed a Highcliffe man money, and they kept booting me, sir—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"So I let De Courcy have the chain, sir, as I was short of money!" explained Bunter. "He wasn't in when I went to see him at Highcliffe, and I left it in a jar on his mantelpiece, and wrote to him explaining where it was, and—"

"You wrote to him?"

"Yes, and told him—"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Mobbs. "A—a—a letter in a hand I recognised as Bunter's did, indeed, arrive at Highcliffe for De Courcy, but—"

"Then surely De Courcy knew—"

exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Mobbs coloured uncomfortably. "In—in the present state of affairs, sir, Dr. Voysey had forbidden any communication between the two schools!" he stammered. "And—and I threw Bunter's letter into the fire unopened, so—"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Then—then De Courcy couldn't have known where to find the chain—he thinks that I still owe him thirty bob— Look here, sir, if you found that chain, it's De Courcy's, not mine—and you can tell him that if he's not satisfied, I'll pay the thirty bob! I'm expecting a postal order shortly, sir, and—"

"The matter seems to be clear now, Mr. Mobbs," said the Remove master. "That chain certainly is not mine, and Bunter has explained how it came to be found in Courtenay's study. The stupidity of this boy—"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"The crass, almost unbelievable stupidity of this boy—" said Mr. Quelch, with a glare at the fat Owl. "Bunter! Leave my study!"

"Yes, sir! If the Caterpillar doesn't want that chain—"

"Leave my study!" thundered Mr. Quelch; and Bunter fairly bolted.

Mr. Mobbs rose to his feet. His glance, following Bunter, showed what he would have liked to bestow on that fat and fatuous youth. But Mobbs, on the whole, was feeling bucked. His manner was almost genial as he shook hands with Mr. Quelch and went back to his taxi.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Clouds Roll By!

"PON, old man—" "Shut up, Gaddy, you fool!" "It's not too late!" muttered the wretched Gadsby, catching at Ponsonby's sleeve.

Ponsonby shook off his hand and walked into the Fourth Form Room at Highcliffe.

The rest of the Highcliffe Fourth were going in.

Why Mr. Mobbs had ordered the Form to assemble in their Form-room immediately after his return from Greyfriars, nobody knew—but all guessed that it had some connection with the affair of Frank Courtenay.

Not only Gadsby, but Pon's other pals, Monson, Drury, Vavasour, gave him expressive looks.

Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders. If there was a pang of remorse in his hard heart, he could not afford to heed it now; he had gone too far to retreat.

Even Pon, perhaps, felt a qualm, as the Caterpillar came in.

The cool, nonchalant Caterpillar was not the fellow to wear his heart on his sleeve; seldom, or never, had he been seen to display emotion of any kind. But this blow was too hard for De Courcy to brace himself against it. He

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was calm, quiet; but his face was pale, almost drawn—the face of a fellow stricken to the very heart.

Many of the Highcliffe Fourth looked at him and exchanged glances. Gadsby, with a quivering lip, touched him on the arm.

"I say, I'm sorry—" he muttered. The Caterpillar looked at him. His face was like chalk; but his eyes were burning. His voice came low and distinct.

"Didn't you have a hand in it, then, Gaddy?"

Gadsby started. "What?" he stammered. "What—" "How did Pon wangle it?" asked the Caterpillar. "He's got me beat—I can't make it out! How did he do it, Gaddy?"

Gadsby stared at him blankly. The Caterpillar knew. He knew by instinct, though he could not understand.

De Courcy turned from him and went towards Ponsonby who set his lips.

"How did you work it, Pon?" asked the Caterpillar. Every fellow in the Form-room heard him. "How did you get away with this? I knew you had some dirty game on when you made all that fuss about old Quelch's chain bein' missin'—but I couldn't guess this one! How did you do it?"

There was a buzz in the Form-room. Ponsonby paled a little.

Mr. Mobbs had not yet arrived, but all the Fourth were there.

"I don't understand you, De Courcy!" muttered Pon. "What—"

"I think you do! And I'm tellin' you, you cur, that this isn't the end!" said the Caterpillar. "If Franky goes, it's not the end! I'm goin' to root out how you did it, you snake!"

The Caterpillar said no more; but his look of loathing and scorn brought a crimson flush to Ponsonby's hard face, as he turned away and went to his place.

Ponsonby breathed hard. But he shrugged his shoulders again. De Courcy could suspect what he liked—he could prove nothing.

"Here comes Mobby!" muttered Gadsby. "Pon, old man—"

"Hold your silly tongue!"

Mr. Mobbs entered the Form-room with rustling gown.

The juniors stared in surprise as Frank Courtenay followed him in.

Nobody had expected to see Courtenay again. It was understood that he was to be kept away from the rest of the school until he left in the morning.

His face was pale, but he was quite calm and collected. His eyes at once sought the Caterpillar's face. It gave him a pang to see how white and worn his chum looked. But in that stricken face he read unchanged loyalty and trust.

Mr. Mobbs gave a little cough, about to speak. But the Caterpillar spoke first. His voice rang out clearly.

"Franky, old man! Keep a stiff upper lip! This is goin' to be set right, somehow! Nobody here believes it against you—nobody but a fool or a rotter, anyhow!"

"Thanks, old man!" said Courtenay quietly. "I needn't tell you, at least, that there's no truth in it—"

"Come, come!" said Mr. Mobbs. "Silence, please!"

But Mr. Mobbs spoke very mildly for once; his manner, indeed, was almost benign, to the amazement of the Form. Every fellow there had expected an outburst of anger from Mobby at the Caterpillar's words.

Ponsonby stared at him. What was the matter with Mobby?

Gadsby caught his breath. Had something, after all, turned up to stop that

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.

WELL done, Mr. Frank Richards! The present series of Greyfriars yarns is absolutely super! Keep up the same high standard and all's well! The foregoing is an extract from a letter sent to me from some of my Lancashire chums who write under the nom de plume of "The Famous Five," and is only one of the many wonderful tributes paid to the greatest schoolboy author of the day.

Keep your peepers open, chums. For real healthy school stories the good old MAGNET is going to break all records. Mr. Frank Richards and myself have been discussing some stunning plots for future stories, and I guarantee you would all jump with joy if I were to tell you all about them here. It is not my policy, however, to let you know too far in advance of the good things I've got in store for you. Still, I ask you all to keep the old flag flying and rely on me to do the rest.

It is gratifying to know that the MAGNET is still leading the way in the boys' fiction market, and I take the opportunity now of thanking you fellows who have been introducing the Old Paper to your friends. Continue the good work, chums, the more new readers the better. I'm not greedy, but I shall not be satisfied until the MAGNET is read by every British boy and girl.

When you meet a fellow who looks "down in the mouth," you can bet your best Sunday hat that he isn't a reader of the MAGNET. Introduce Harry Wharton & Co. to him, and you'll soon see a change. And what's more, he'll for ever remember the good turn you've done him.

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The three new numbers of this popular library now on sale are well worth a mention in this Chat. No. 295—"The Fugitive Schoolboy!"—features your old favourites, Harry Wharton & Co. It's a tip-top yarn, chums, and if you fail to read it—well, it will be your loss. No. 296 introduces Jimmy Silver & Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood School, and the story shows Mr. Owen Conquest bang in form. The title is: "THE FOURTH FORM AT ROOKWOOD!" Next comes No. 297—"THE SPENDTHRIFT'S LESSON"—a rattling fine yarn of Nipper

rotten scheme? He had told Ponsonby that nobody could get away with such a dirty game! Had he been right?

It was clear, at least, that there had been some unexpected development. All the Highcliffe Fourth hung on Mr. Mobbs' next words.

"My boys!" said Mr. Mobbs. "I have called the Form together to let all the Highcliffe Fourth know that a dreadful mistake has been made. I have already explained the matter to your headmaster, and Dr. Voysey has, of course, immediately rescinded the sentence of expulsion passed on this boy, Courtenay—who stands before you completely cleared of the slightest suspicion."

A thunderbolt could not have startled the Highcliffe Fourth more.

Frank Courtenay almost staggered.

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And now for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to readers' inquiries.

Rob Raynor (Enfield).—Mr. Frank Richards writes regularly for the MAGNET and has done so since the very first issue—which was dated Feb. 15th, 1908.

"Billy" Burton (Bognor).—Yes, it is very bad to see a pal bite his nails. If your chum wishes to cure himself of this habit, advise him to put bitter aloes on his nails. If this doesn't stop him, nothing will!

George Roberts (Walsall).—It is not claimed that Greyfriars is a real school. Harry Wharton & Co. are fictitious characters, based, however, on real life.

F. Hammond (Watford).—The back numbers you want have long since been out of print. Back numbers of the MAGNET—for the last three months—can be obtained from our Back Number Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Size of Billy Bunter's collar is 16½ in., and his gold watch-chain is worth "nines"!

T. Bolton (Gloucester).—Bob Cherry is the best fighting man in the Remove (on points). Next in order come Harry Wharton, Mark Linley, Richard Russell and Peter Todd.

"Girl Reader" (Portsmouth).—Johnny Bull was the last member of the Famous Five to arrive at Greyfriars.

Doris Markham (Oxford).—Mr. Quelch is the most popular master at Greyfriars. Stern, but just.

And now for next week's story—the first of a grand new Easter series. Billy Bunter, as usual, is at a loose end for the "hols" and desperately determined to hook on to somebody. His deep-laid and artful schemes are well known to the Famous Five, all of whom he has "done" so many times. Dame Fortune, however, smiles upon the fat Removite, as is gathered from the title:

"BILLY BUNTER'S LUCKY DAY!"

By Frank Richards,

a yarn you will for ever remember reading. Fun and excitement you'll find in plenty in this swift-moving yarn of your old favourites. Wan Lung comes next in our series of "Stately Homes of Greyfriars" by our clever long-haired poet. As regards the "Greyfriars Herald"—well, that never fails to come up to expectations, does it?

Chin, chin, until next week.
YOUR EDITOR.

The Caterpillar gazed at Mr. Mobbs spellbound.

Ponsonby hardly breathed.

In a dead silence Mr. Mobbs went on:

"I called on Mr. Quelch, at Greyfriars, to return to him the chain found here in Courtenay's study, which I believed to be his! Mr. Quelch informed me that his property had already been found at Greyfriars, and the chain was, in fact, lying on his study table when I was shown in."

"Oh!" gasped Courtenay.

"Oh, my hat!" stuttered the Caterpillar.

Ponsonby's eyes almost started from his head. He wondered whether Mr. Mobbs was mad—or whether he was himself. He had placed a gold chain

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in the Chinese jar in Study No. 3! A gold chain had been found there. He had seen it. What did Mobbs mean—unless he was mad?

"This chain," went on Mr. Mobbs—he held up the chain Bunter had purchased from Lazarus, and the Highcliffe Fourth stared at it blankly—"this chain was found hidden in a jar in Study No. 3. It exactly resembles Mr. Quelch's chain, except that it is made of spurious metal. It is not Mr. Quelch's chain."

"Not!" gasped Courtenay.

Mr. Mobbs gave him a frosty smile.

"No, Courtenay, it is not the same chain," he said. "I certainly supposed that it was—you supposed so yourself—"

"I did, certainly, sir, though I could not imagine how it came to be hidden in my study," said the captain of the Fourth blankly.

"That is now explained," said Mr. Mobbs. "The study is De Courcy's, as well as yours, Courtenay, and this chain belongs to De Courcy."

"Wha-a-t—"

"To—to—to me!" stuttered the Caterpillar.

"You were not aware that it was there, De Courcy. I must explain," said Mr. Mobbs. "An extremely foolish Greyfriars boy, named Bunter, bought this chain at a shop in Courtfield last week, and appears to have borrowed thirty shillings from you for the purpose."

"Oh!" gasped the Caterpillar.

"He had the ridiculous idea of palming it off on Mr. Quelch as his own, to stop inquiry into the matter of the missing chain—"

"Oh gad!"

The Caterpillar understood now why Billy Bunter had "touched" him for that thirty "bob." He had supposed, at the time, that the fat Owl had pawned the chain and desired to redeem it. He understood now!

"The stupid boy did not, of course, succeed in such foolish trickery," continued Mr. Mobbs, "and the chain being left on his hands, he desired to give it to you, De Courcy, in settlement of the loan—"

"Oh!"

"He came here one afternoon, and appears not to have found you in," went on Mr. Mobbs. "He therefore placed the chain in the jar on the mantelpiece, and wrote you a letter explaining—"

"That letter—" gasped the Caterpillar.

"That letter was burned unopened, De Courcy, and, in consequence, you remained in ignorance of the fact that the chain was there!" said Mr. Mobbs. "It was very unfortunate, as it turns out."

"The how'n' ass—"

Mr. Mobbs smiled.

"This chain is yours, De Courcy, and

you may take it," he said. "It is of no great value, I think; but if you lose on the transaction, it will be a warning to you not to lend money thoughtlessly. From what I know of the boy Bunter, I doubt whether you will be repaid in any other way."

The Caterpillar chuckled.

He glanced round at Ponsonby. He had seen Pon's hand in what had happened—or thought that he had. Had he been mistaken? The look on Ponsonby's face showed that he had not.

In Ponsonby's face was utter terror. His knees were sagging under him. He knew that he had placed Mr. Quelch's chain in that jar. He knew that Bunter must have found it there—now! Had Bunter seen him? Was all known? Pon's face was ghastly as he waited, unable to breathe, for what Mr. Mobbs was going to say next.

"The matter," said Mr. Mobbs, "is now wholly explained and cleared up. Courtenay, I am sorry—deeply sorry—that such an unjust suspicion should have fallen upon you for one moment. In the circumstances, it was unavoidable; but I express my deep regret, Courtenay!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Frank Courtenay.

His face was very bright.

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"That," said Mr. Mobbs, "is all!"

Ponsonby breathed again.

"I will now leave you, Courtenay," said Mr. Mobbs, with unwonted geniality, "to the congratulations of your Form-fellows."

Mr. Mobbs rustled out.

"Hurrah!" roared the Caterpillar.

Ponsonby crept, or rather slunk, out of the room. He left Frank Courtenay surrounded by a cheering crowd—Gaddy's voice loudest of all. The wretched schemer slunk away unnoticed—enraged, scared, and yet perhaps, at the bottom of his heart, relieved as well.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

What About It?

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Scat, you fat villain!"

"I've been whopped!" roared Bunter.

"Good!" said the Famous Five, with one voice.

"That's what I expect from you fellows!" said Billy Bunter bitterly.

"Quelch makes out that I snooped that rotten chain—"

"He makes out—" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Yes, makes out I had it!" said Bunter. "He says I should be sacked, only he believes I was only playing a trick—he called it a silly, stupid, insensate trick—just like a boak, you know! He said he would let me off with a caning—Ow! I can tell you he laid it on—Wow! He wouldn't listen to a word! I told him I never had the chain, and that I wouldn't have given it to Coker, only he laid into me with a ruler—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter. "I'd have put the rotten thing back long ago if that beast Pon hadn't kept it—was that my fault? Not that I had it, you know! But, I say, you fellows, that chain's in Quelch's study now—I know where he put it! I say, it would make him sit up no end if some fellow were to snoop it and hide it—"

"Hide it!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"And give him a hunt for it, to pay him out, see?" said Bunter. "That was my idea all along, you know! Make him sit up, what? What about it?"

The Famous Five gazed at Billy Bunter. Lessons, evidently, were lost on that fat and fatuous youth! After all the terrific bother over Quelch's chain, Bunter was prepared to begin again at the beginning! They gazed at him—speechless!

"I say, you fellows, what about it?" asked Bunter hopefully. "What do you think?"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not state what they thought about it! It was a time for action, not for words! They grasped Billy Bunter, up-ended him, bumped him on the floor of Study No. 1, bumped him again and yet again, and then hurled him headlong into the Remove passage.

"There!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"That's what we think about it, old fat ass! Come back if you want us to make it clearer!"

But it seemed to have been made clear enough to Billy Bunter. He did not come back!

The Caterpillar was puzzled. But when Courtenay and his chum compared notes with Harry Wharton & Co., he was no longer puzzled. Pon's plot was clear enough then. And Billy Bunter was surprised and greatly bucked by receiving a pressing invitation to a spread in Study No. 3 at Highcliffe—not a First-of-April invitation this time! It was a lavish spread, a gorgeous spread—and Billy Bunter wrapped himself round it so extensively that he found it rather laborious work to get back to Greyfriars afterwards.

THE END.

(Look out next Saturday for "BILLY BUNTER'S LUCKY DAY!" the first yarn in a grand new Easter series, featuring Harry Wharton & Co. It's a real good'un, too!—ED.)

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The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 235.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

April 10th, 1937.



RIVAL SUITORS THOUGHT ONE MUST WIN!

Both Lost!

In the spring, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of—
Brighton! Or that's what Coker's fancy and Temple's fancy turned to last week-end, anyway, for they both found themselves strolling towards each other on the prom., at the same sunny moment on the same morning!

By a strange coincidence, Barbara Redfern, the dazzling damsel from Cliff House, stood leaning over the promenade rail midway between the two at just the same time. Coker and Temple spotted her before they spotted each other.

They accelerated together. They raised their hats together. They noticed each other and raised their eyebrows together. "Fancy meeting you, Miss Redfern!" they exclaimed together; then they broke off to scowl at each other—together! After which, they growled at each other: "What are you doing down here?"

Miss Redfern managed to preserve a uniform smile for both and asked them if they were having a nice vac. They nearly replied simultaneously with the remark that it had been made all the better by seeing Miss Redfern—but some obscure instinct made each guess that the other meant to say it, so they just said: "Yes, rather. How about you?" instead.

Then they both started to blurt out an invitation to Miss Redfern to have a morning coffee.

After that, they asked to be excused and drew each other aside. "Don't you think you'd better buzz, kid?" asked Coker, when they had placed a kiosk between themselves and the young lady.

"Just the suggestion I was going to make to you, old 'un!" retorted Temple. "One of us has got to win!" said Coker. "Exactly. I rather fancy my own chances," said Temple blandly.

To round off these pleasanties, they playfully reached out at each other, Coker spreading his hand over Temple's face and pushing it back for him and Temple trying to wrench off Coker's ears. Both being apparently under the impression that they had won, they then returned to the fair Barbara.

There they found out their mistake. It was not true, after all, that one of them had to win. Both had lost!

Tom Brown of the Remove, for whom Miss Redfern has been waiting, was just marching off with her!

paper away and give it to the winner! Good-afternoon!"

He was out of the study in a flash, making for the Skool House eggst like a champion on the cinder-track. A dash across the quad brought him to the gates, where he was joined by Scrownger of the Fourth.

"It's all serene, Scrownger!" he chortled. "Lickham's signed! Hooray!"

He seized Scrownger round the waist and performed a wild and whirling dance of joy for a few seconds. Then he led the way to Muggleton and the bank.

But a shock was in store for Doctor Birchmell.

When he reached the bank, he marched boldly in and plunked down the signed certificate, fully eggpecting that the fifty pounds would be handed over immediately. But it wasn't!

"Sorry, sir, and all that," grinned the bank cashier. "We can't pay cash for that to-day."

The Head's face blanched. "Why not?" he asked, hoarsely.

The cashier's reply made him jump fully three feet in the air.

"BECAUSE SIR GOUTY HAS CABLED US SAYING WE MUST NOT. HE'S COMING BACK BY AIRPLANE TO EGGSPLAIN WHY!"

(Don't miss next week's spiffing instalment, whatever you do!)

HOW TO TREAT A BEAK ON HOLIDAY!

By BOB CHERRY

"My pater is having one of the masters stay with us, this vac," writes a correspondent. "It is jolly embarrassing, living with a beak in holiday-time, and I'm wondering if you can give me a few tips on how to treat him."

Certainly, old bean! The main thing to remember is that there is no longer any need to preserve that formal relationship that exists between you and him during term time.

Be informal and pally, instead! When you come down to breakfast, don't bow and scrape and say "Good-morning, sir." Slap him on the back instead and push his face into the porridge.

There's no longer any need to feel

cowed in his presence. Don't stand trembling and knocking at the knees whenever he looks at you. Put on a bit of swagger and snap your fingers at him. Laugh derisively and make ugly grimaces.

When you look through a doorway and find him in a room, gassing to the pater, don't sneak away with your tail between your legs. Walk up behind him and give him a good, hearty kick.

That's the way to treat him, lad! Punch him, push his nose into the porridge, pull faces at him and boot him for all you're worth.

If you want any more tips, let me know. But I think I've said enough to give you the right idea. (More than enough!—Ed.)

Having finished his fowl work, the Head glanced at his watch and started.

"Half-past two!" he muttered. "I'm just in time to get back to St. Sam's, meet Lickham, and sign the certificate that will enable Scrownger to cash Sir Gouty's cheque at the bank."

With these muttered words, Doctor Birchmell rushed out.

Jack Jolly and his pals groaned.

"There's only one heap left now, you fellows," said Jolly. "That's the message."



I wrote on that envelope that fell out of the Head's pocket. But I'm afraid there's only a very slender chance of that bringing anyone to the rescue!"

But for once, the kaplin of the Fourth was mistaken. Had he but known it, that message had reached a quarter where it was receiving prompt attention.

Forces were at work that were destined to release the chums of the Fourth before they eggpected it.

Nothing doing!

"Here's the certificate, Mr. Lickham. Now all you've got to do is, sign on the dotted line!"

Mr. Lickham nitted his brows, as he glanced at the certificate that his visitor placed on the desk before him. Somehow—he couldn't quite tell how—he detected something familiar about this tall, weedy gentleman in the blue beard and smoked glasses. He reminded him of somebody he knew.

He couldn't quite think who it was.

"H'm. I suppose I've got no option but to sign, Mr. Smith," he said, with a sigh. "All the same, I must say I disapprove of the way you rushed those last four rounds. Another thing is that I feel a little suspicious of the easy way in which

"Ten to one in demitts he'll wangle it so that the contest closes quickly with Scrownger the winner!" said Bright. "Then he'll take his share of the prize and release us—and swear he had nothing to do with our being kidnapped."

"You're Eeker!" yelled Frank Fearless at that moment.

The others looked at Fearless in surprise.

"We're whatter?" asked Merry.

"You're Eeker!" asped Fearless, in a state of grate eggitement. "I've worked my hands free at las, you fellows! Look!"

"Good old Fearless!" Jolly and Merry and Bright farly chortled with joy, as Fearless held his hands aloft. Even Tubby Barrell sat up and took notice.

"Hooray! Now you can use your hands, it should be easy for us all to achieve the feat of escaping altogether!" grinned Jack Jolly. "Get bizzy, Fearless, old chap, and in five minutes we'll be on our way back to St. Sam's."

"OH, NO YOU WON'T!" A groan of sheer dismay went up from the juniors, as they heard that making cry from the doorway. It was the Head—still disguised as Sir Gouty's secretary, "Mr. Smith."

Doctor Birchmell egged his fourfinger at Fearless and uttered a leering larf.

"Caught in the act!" he cried. "What a lucky thing I thought to look in and see how you were getting on."

Fearless struggled desprily to free himself from the cord that bound his legs so that he could put up a fight for his freedom. But long before he could rid himself of the obnoxious cord, the Head sprang on him like a cat springing on a mouse.

"Gotcher!" he cried. Then, as Fearless lashed out and gave him a sock in the jaw, his yell of triumf changed to a yell of pane.

"Yarooooo! Ow-o"

"Go it, Fearless!" roared Jolly.

But Fearless, with his feet still noddid up, was suffering too big a hargicap. In a matter of secc 49 the Head had him turned on his face and was tying up his hands again so firmly that it seemed impossibl for them ever to be undone.

The rest of the skool began to look daggers at Scrownger.

Then came the last test in the grato Trezzure Hunt. A pretty puzzling test it was, too. Sir Gouty wanted a bow-and-arrow!

The fellows rushed out of Big Hall, looking completely flummoxed. Bows-and-arrows were never allowed at St. Sam's and nobody had the slitest idea where they could be obtained.

But Scrownger knew all right. He rushed off to his study and reappeared in a couple of jiffies with a bow in one hand and an arrow in the other.

Followed by a buzzing crowd, he went to the Head's study yet again.

When he came out, he was grinning all over his dial.

"I've won the Gouty Greybeard prize!" he yelled. "I've wacked everybody else hollow! Three rousing cheers for me!"

But if Scrownger eggpected three rousing cheers, he was disappointed. All he got was three rousing boos.

The St. Sam's fellows felt sure there was something fishy about it, though what it was they couldn't think. The scales had not fallen from their eyes—yet.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT!

"Any luck, you fellows?" "Nothing doing, old chap!"

"Never mind! Keep on trying!" said Jack Jolly, encourridgily. "We'll live in hoaps, even if we die in despair."

"Some hoaps of breaking this coard!" remarked Merry, with a rewful larf. "I fancy it'll break my wrists first!"

"Look here, I wish you fellows would do something to get me out of this!" groaned Tubby Barrell, from his corner of the dark and dismal den where "Mr. Smith," alias Doctor Birchmell, had imprisoned them.

"I want to get back to St. Sam's and get a good square meal."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd like to know what's happening at St. Sam's," said Jolly grimly. "I bet the Head duzzent intend to keep us locked up here for weeks while the Trezzure Hunt carries on in weekly instalments."

"No fear! He's too much of a cowherd to risk it!"

his nose very thoughtfully indeed.

It took some time to get all the fellows back; but they duly assembled in Hall, and grato was their disgust when they heard that Scrownger had won the round.

But worse was to follow. The next item in the trezzure hunt proved to be a jam-jar full of tadpoles.

Before anybody else had secured the jam-jar, let alone the tadpoles, Scrownger was trotting along to Mr. Lickham's study, triumphantly balancing a jar of tadpoles in his hands.

Once again the fellows rolled up to Big Hall to hear Sir Gouty's next requirement. They heard, with very mixed feelings, that this time they had to search for a Christmas card.

As Stedfast remarked, Christmas cards at this time of the year were about as plentiful as snowballs on August Bank Hollerday.

But Scrownger once more rose to the occasion. He was rushing along to the Head's study with a Christmas card in his hand before you could say "Nife!"

"What, already, Scrownger?" However did you manidge it in such a short space of time?"

"Meerly used my branes, sir!" leered Scrownger. "I think you'll find it's all right."

Mr. Lickham unwrapped the parcel, and brought to light a heavy nocker in the correct shape.

"Right enuff, Scrownger. You're a bit of a coiffdrop, you know, doing it so quickly as this!"

"Shall I tell Fossil to ring the bell to call the fellows back?" asked Scrownger eagerly.

"Very well, Scrownger." Scrownger dashed off at top speed and Mr. Lickham sat down again, scratching

"ALL FUNKS—BAR ME!"

Bunter's Aerial Acrobatics!

Bunter won't forget the trip he took to London with the Famous Five in a hurry. The Famous Five will remember it for a long time, too.

Standing watching a big new building that was going up in the West End, they were arguing about whether or not they would feel dizzy if they were carried up on a girder by one of the great cranes there, like some of the workmen. Opinions were about equally divided about it. Nobody felt very sure about it, anyway—with the exception of Bunter!

Bunter had no doubts. "Dizzy? Catch me feeling dizzy!" he said, with a sniff. "Think I'm a nunny like you? Not likely! I've got nerve, if you chaps haven't! Why, if I were swinging up there, like that chap, I should feel just as much at home as—"

And then it happened!

Quite unintentionally, Bunter had stepped on to a load of bricks that was just about to be hauled up.

Before he could step off again, there was a whirr of machinery up aloft, and the load shot up in the air—Bunter with it!

Wharton and the rest looked up in utter horror. The load was swaying in midair at a fearful height. Bunter was kneeling on the edge of it, wobbling like a fat jolly and howling at the top of his voice!

Fortunately, his plight didn't last long. A whistle shriiled out from somewhere, the derrick swung round again and the load started rattling down. The Famous Five had the pleasure and relief of lifting off Bunter and setting him back on his feet again on terra firma.



Not that he seemed very grateful about it, afterwards.

Interviewed five minutes later, he spoke of Wharton & Co. with great contempt.

"I was the only one that dared to do it!" he said. "It was a question of whether a chap should feel dizzy or not up in the air. I went up to see for myself. The rest didn't dare!"

"The plain fact is that they were all funks—bar me!"