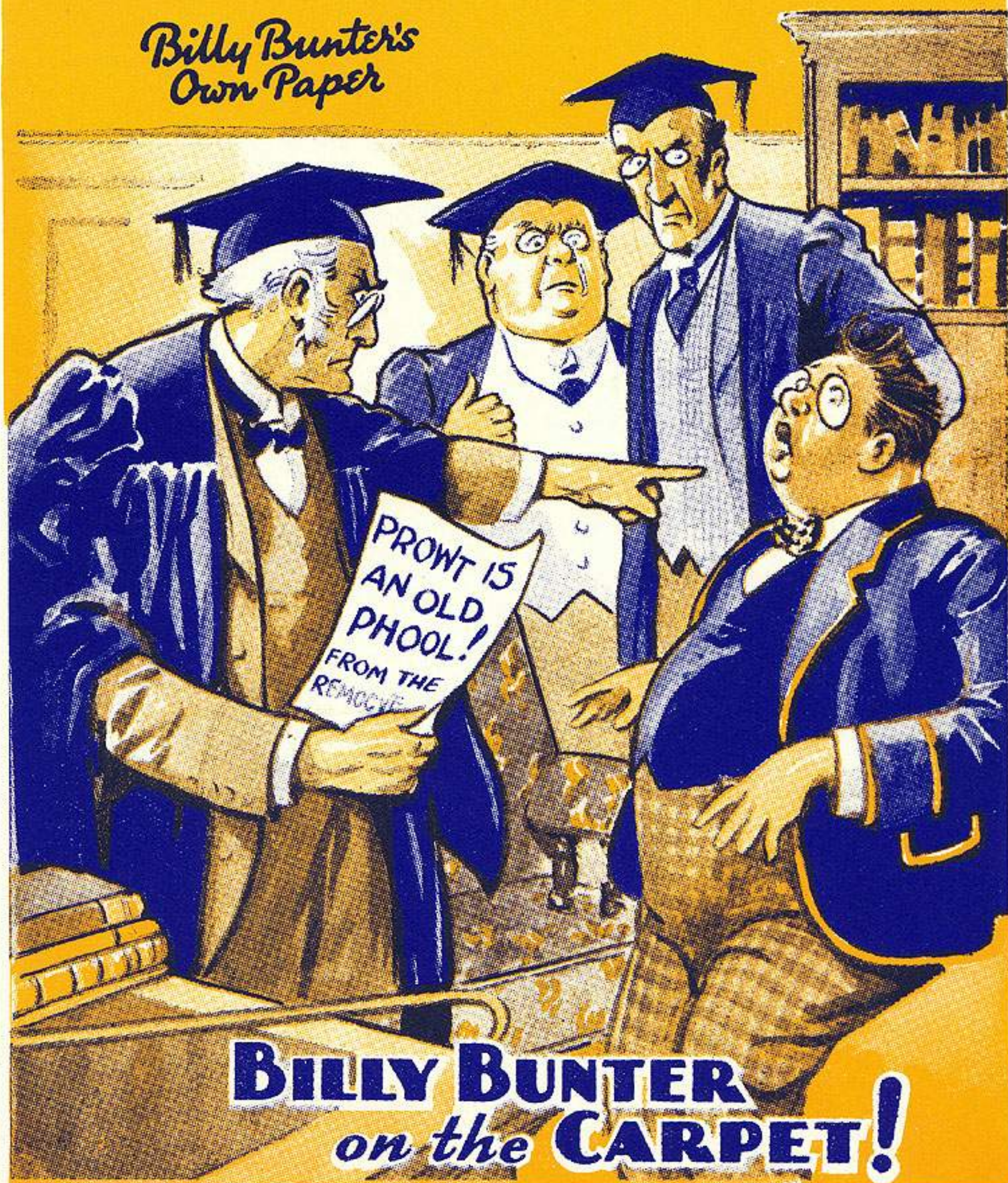


Frank Richards' Greatest Greyfriars Yarn: "BAD LAD SMITHY!" Inside!

The Magnet ^{2^d}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*

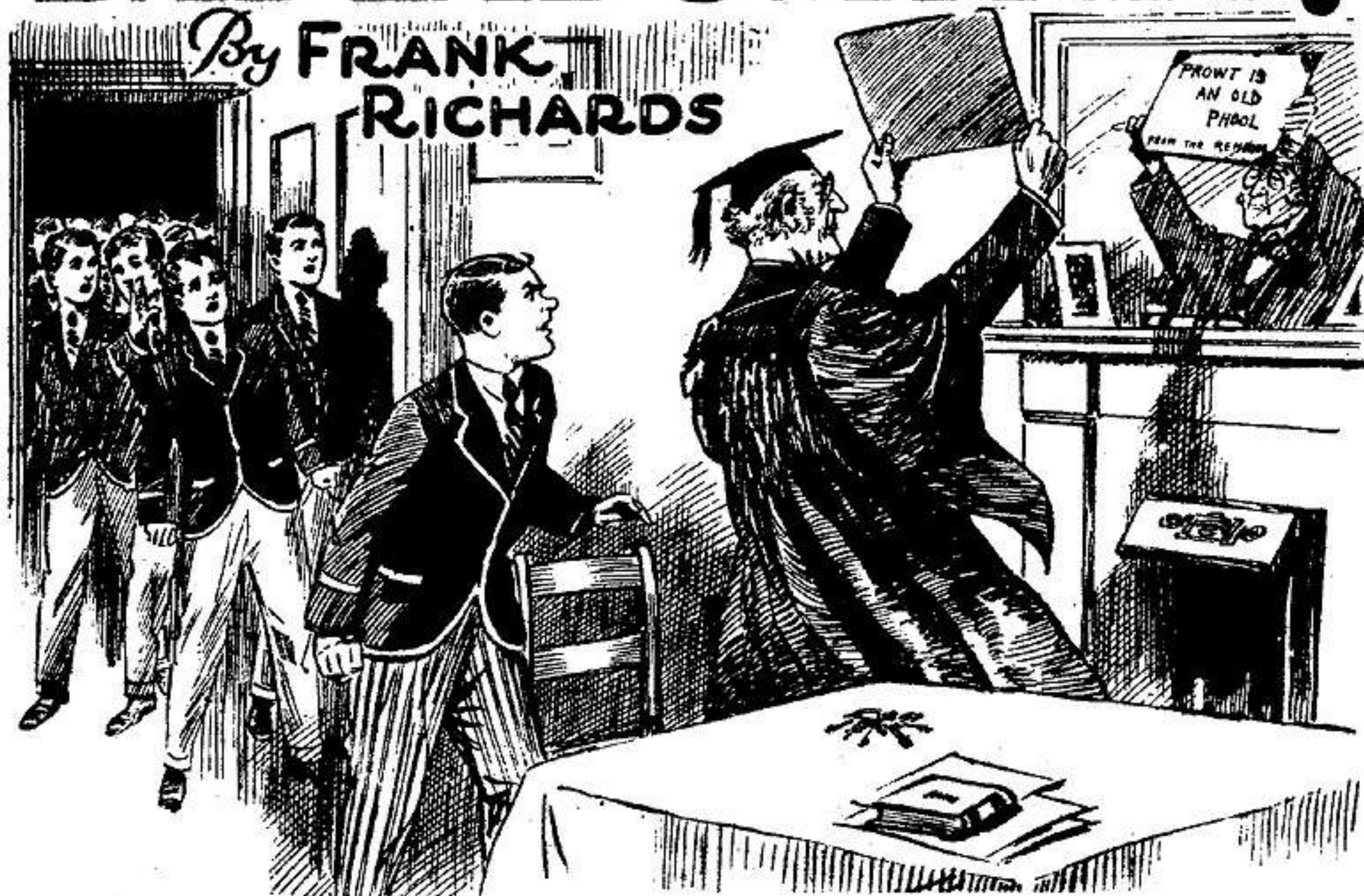


BILLY BUNTER
on the **CARPET!**

OUTRAGEOUS! Someone has dared to call Mr. Prout, the pompous master of the Fifth Form, a fool! Who's the culprit?

BAD LAD SMITHY!

By FRANK
RICHARDS



For a long moment Dr. Locke stared fixedly at the tell-tale impression on the blotter. Vernon-Smith watched him, with sinking heart.

THE FIRST CHAPTER Bad Luck for Smithy!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, scowled blackly.

His hands, in his pockets, clenched hard.

Smithy, at that moment, would have liked to plant one of those clenched fists right on the plump features of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

His eyes gleamed at the portly Form-master as he rolled into view.

It was morning break at Greyfriars School, and the old quad was crowded with fellows of all Forms. Harry Wharton & Co., and a number of other Remove fellows, were punting a footer about. Their cheery shouts reached the Bounder's ears from a distance. But he could not see them; neither could they see him. Smithy was standing in a quiet, secluded spot, leaning on a buttress of the high stone wall where it bordered the road. Two or three ancient elms shadowed that spot, and the Bounder was safe from general observation until Prout rolled along.

It was like Prout to barge in exactly where and when he was not wanted!

Though really, Prout, if he had noticed the scowling junior at all, might have wondered why his arrival on the spot angered and alarmed Smithy.

Smithy, apparently, was doing nothing but idling away his time in break, which he had a right to do if so disposed, and it did not seem to matter

whether a Form-master saw him loafing there or not.

But it did matter—to Smithy!

He had been there five minutes—waiting. Prout, certainly, was not likely to guess that a Remove boy was waiting there for something to be tossed over the school wall from the road.

But that, in point of fact, was exactly what Smithy was waiting for!

It had seemed absolutely safe to the black sheep of the Remove. Juniors were not allowed out of gates in break; but any junior could, if he liked, loaf under the school wall, and there was nothing to prevent Bill Lodgey from walking past on the public road outside, and tossing a letter over the wall in a certain definite spot.

Any minute now that message from Smithy's sporting friend outside the school might drop over the wall. Smithy was waiting to pick it up when it dropped. Nobody was at hand, and no eye was on him. And then Mr. Prout, taking his usual walk in break, chose that direction instead of a dozen others—by sheer chance, but a most unfortunate and unlucky chance for Smithy.

The Bounder breathed hard as he watched Prout's stately roll.

It might have been worse. It might have been his own Form-master, Quelch, who came along—in which case a pair of eyes as sharp as gimlets would have been turned on the Bounder. Prout took no notice of him. No doubt he saw him there, but he was not interested in Remove juniors, and he gave him no heed.

Slow and stately, Prout paced along by the path under the school wall.

The Bounder had plenty of nerve, but he felt an inward tremor at the idea of Bill Lodgey's note dropping under the eyes of a Form-master.

If the old ass would only move a little faster!

But Prout never moved fast. His avoirdupois was against it. Mr. Prout carried his considerable weight with slow and leisurely dignity.

The Bounder gave a start as he heard a sound—a slight sound from the other side of the wall.

Someone had stopped there on the road!

Smithy did not need telling who it was. It was Bill Lodgey, with his note in his grubby hand—that note which contained important information regarding Black Bunny, who was to run in the three o'clock on Wednesday.

And Prout was there!

It was coming—Smithy knew it was coming! He could give the racing man no warning, with Prout there. All he could do was to affect complete ignorance of the whole matter. His only comfort was that no names would be mentioned in that note. Lodgey was discreet. But Prout, if he saw it, would surely connect it with the fact that Vernon-Smith was waiting there. How could he fail to do so?

It was a horrid moment for the Bounder. His heart was beating quite unpleasantly.

Whiz!

A small object shot over the wall and

dropped. It dropped, with a light thud, almost at the feet of Mr. Prout!

Had it dropped behind him, Smithy might have had a chance of pouncing on it and securing it before the Fifth Form master turned his head. But it did not drop behind Prout. It dropped just in front of him, and with another step he would have trodden on it.

Prout did not take that other step. He stopped in astonishment, and stared at the small object on the ground.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Prout.

He stared up at the high wall, over which it had come. Then he stared for a moment at Vernon-Smith, who looked in another direction. Then he stared again at the object at his feet. Then slowly, for bending required rather an effort for a gentleman of Prout's girth, he stooped and picked up the object.

"Bless my soul!" repeated Prout.

He saw that it was a note in an envelope, wrapped round a stone to give it weight for throwing.

He unwrapped it.

There was no superscription on the envelope. It was quite blank. More and more astonished, Prout gazed at it. Slowly a frown accumulated on his portly brow.

Prout was not quick on the uptake. He was, in fact, rather dense. But he would have had to be a good deal denser than he was, had he not guessed that this was a surreptitious communication from outside the school, intended for some Greyfriars boy.

"Upon my word!" breathed Prout.

He jerked open the envelope and took out the note inside. He unfolded the note, adjusted his glasses, and looked at it. And he read:

"I seen the trainer, and there ain't no doubt about the Bunny. I wouldn't take anything but odds on, now I know; but I know where to put on a fiver for you at two to one, if you let me know by six."

That was all, and there was no signature.

Mr. Prout was quite unacquainted with the crabbed scrawl. From whom that note came he had not the faintest idea; but that it came from a racing man, conveying a "tip" to a Greyfriars boy, and offering his services to put him "on," was clear enough.

Thunder gathered on Prout's brow.

He looked at the Bounder again.

Vernon-Smith, apparently interested in watching pigeons among the elms, did not seem to see him.

"Vernon-Smith!" said Prout, in a deep voice.

"Eh?" Smithy looked round. "Did you call me, sir?"

Prout held up the note.

"Do you know anything of this, Vernon-Smith?"

"Of what, sir?" asked the Bounder innocently.

"Of this note, which was flung over the wall a minute ago by some person on the road," said Mr. Prout sternly.

"Someone has thrown you a note over the wall?" asked the Bounder, apparently misunderstanding.

"Nothing of the kind, Vernon-Smith. This is a note from some racing man, and it is intended for some Greyfriars boy."

"Oh, sir! Some Fifth Form boy, do you think?"

"What?" gasped Prout. "What? Certainly not! No boy in my Form, I am happy to say, is capable of such dealings with disreputable characters."

Mr. Prout was happily unacquainted with the manners and customs of Hilton and Price of the Fifth. Like many

Form-masters, he regarded his own Form as being, like Mrs. Caesar, above suspicion.

"Indeed, sir!" murmured the Bounder.

"I find you," said Prout, "waiting here. Why are you waiting here, Vernon-Smith?"

"I'm watchin' the pigeons, sir."

"The—the what?"

"Pigeons!"

Prout breathed hard.

"Do you mean to tell me, Vernon-Smith, that you are loitering alone in this secluded corner, for no other purpose but to watch the pigeons?"

"I've told you, sir."

"In a word, Vernon-Smith, are you the boy for whom this—this rascally and disreputable message was thrown over the wall?" boomed Prout.

The Bounder gave him a cool, hard stare. Among his Form-fellows Smithy would have disdained to lie, but in dealing with prefects and "beaks" he was absolutely without scruple on that point. In his view, they were natural enemies, to circumvent whom any means were justifiable. It was for them to catch him out, if they could. He answered, with perfect coolness, and without the flicker of an eyelid:

"Not at all, sir!"

"You deny it, Vernon-Smith?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Very well!" said Prout. "Very well! I doubt your statement, Vernon-Smith!"

Vernon-Smith is in deep waters—the "sack" looms darkly over him. And the only person who can save the Bounder's bacon is Skip, ex-professional pickpocket!

Smith! I am aware that you have far from a good reputation in the school. I have not forgotten that you have been very nearly expelled from Greyfriars on more than one occasion. I shall keep this note, Vernon-Smith, and when I see your Form-master after class I shall hand it to him, with the information that you were waiting about, with no apparent object, on the spot where it fell. Mr. Quelch will deal with you as he thinks fit."

With that Mr. Prout slipped the note into the pocket of his gown and rolled on, scornful and majestic.

The Bounder looked after him—breathing hard! What was Quelch going to think when he got that note, and Prout's information along with it?

Smithy knew only too well! He had a vision of an interview with his head-master—and of the chopper coming down, at last, with a crash!

Often and often had the scapegrace of Greyfriars sailed dangerously near the wind—and this time he could not help feeling he had taken one chance too many! Slowly, with knitted brow, he walked away from the spot—wondering whether that golden October day was going to be his last at Greyfriars School!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Billy Bunter in a Scrape!

"BUNTER!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Have you written your lines?"

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

Third school was at an end in the Remove room.

That lesson had been Roman history; but—as was often the case—many of the Remove fellows had other matters on their minds as well as the valuable instruction they were receiving from their Form-master.

The Famous Five couldn't help giving a thought or two to the Highcliffe match, now nearly due; Vernon-Smith was reflecting glumly that it would not be long now before Prout interviewed Mr. Quelch; his chum, Tom Redwing, was wondering uneasily what was the cause of the black look on the Bounder's brow. Skinner was debating in his mind whether Quelch would spot him if he projected an ink-ball at the new junior, Skip—and decided not to risk it. Billy Bunter's fat mind was deeply occupied—to the almost total exclusion of Roman history. Bunter could not help worrying about certain lines that were long overdue—nourishing a faint hope that Quelch might have forgotten them, which was, however, a very faint hope indeed.

Such as it was, that hope was dashed to the ground when the Remove master addressed him at the end of third school.

Quelch had not forgotten! That was the worst of Quelch—he had an absolutely putrid memory—he remembered everything!

Those lines had haunted Bunter for days and days. Again and again he had had a shot at them, but laziness always supervened. His excuses for their non-delivery had been many and various. Mr. Quelch, though obviously doubtful, had admitted excuse after excuse—but still he seemed to want the lines. Now he was raising the subject again—a subject of which Bunter was thoroughly tired.

Really, it seemed as if Billy Bunter would never hear the end of those lines—unless, indeed, he wrote them and handed them in. But that, of course, was a very last and desperate resource.

"You have not written the lines, Bunter!" Mr. Quelch's voice rather resembled that of the Great Huge Bear. It indicated that he was at the end of his patience.

"No, sir! I mean, yes, sir! That is, no, sir!" stammered the hapless Owl of the Remove. "The fact is, sir, I—I've nearly finished them, sir—"

"Very well, Bunter! Bring them to my study in ten minutes."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I haven't quite done them, sir! Very—very nearly, sir, but—but not quite!"

The Remove fellows suppressed grins.

Bunter had the unusually heavy impot of a thousand lines on hand. He had, as it were, asked for it, and got it! The fellows knew that he had had shot after shot at it—but they doubted whether he had done more than twenty out of the thousand—leaving a balance of nine hundred and eighty or so.

Mr. Quelch looked as if he shared that doubt.

"I will accept your statement, Bunter, that you have nearly finished your imposition," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "and you may bring it to me in my study, as I have told you. The remainder may be written out later."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Dismiss!" said Mr. Quelch.

Many of the Removites were grinning as they marched out.

Billy Bunter was not grinning. Bunter was full of dismay.

Truth and Bunter had long been strangers. He had told Quelch that he had nearly finished that impot simply to

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keep him quiet. By that simple device he would gain time, and that wretched impot might be finished somehow or other. How was a fellow to guess that Quelch would tell him to hand it in in its unfinished state?

Bunter certainly had expected nothing of the sort, and now he was in a fearful scrape. He had about a score of lines to show up—which by no stretch of the imagination could be supposed to be a "nearly finished" impot of a thousand! Quelch would know that he had told a crammer—and Quelch's views on crammers differed widely from Billy Bunter's!

The fat Owl wriggled as if he could already feel the cane!

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter hooked on to the Famous Five in the quad. "I say, you heard what Quelch said? I say, what's a chap to do?"

"Lines!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, fancy telling a chap to take in an impot unfinished," groaned Bunter. "It almost looks to me as if Quelch doesn't believe me, you fellows."

"Almost!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Think that's it?" groaned Bunter. "Think he doesn't believe that I've done any of that rotten impot at all and wants to catch me out?"

"Sort of!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The catchfulness will be terrific if the ridiculous lines are not done!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, I've done twenty—"

"Twenty!" gasped Bob. "And you told Quelch you'd nearly finished a thousand!"

"Well, perhaps twenty-one!" said Bunter.

"Better pack your bags before you take that twenty or twenty-one in to Quelch!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You fat ass, Quelch knows perfectly well that you were telling whoppers. You're going to be licked for it—and serve you jolly well right!"

"I don't want to be licked!" wailed Bunter. "Besides, I never ought to have to do those lines! It was all a mistake, really! You see, I wrote up on the blackboard 'Beware of Pickpockets,' just as one in the eye for Skip. It was all your fault, really—"

"Our fault!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "How do you make that out, you fat ass?"

"Well, you were down on Skip!" argued Bunter. "I was only backing you up in putting it on the blackboard. You fellows might have helped me with the lines, as it was really all your fault. I've asked you a lot of times."

"Fathead!"

"The brute told me to write that beastly sentence out a thousand times!" groaned Bunter. "But it ought to be washed out now, you know, if Quelch could only see it! Since it came out that Skip fished my sister Bessie out of the Sark I'm sorry I chipped him about having been a pickpocket before he came here. Really and truly, you know! The chap did a plucky thing—just what I should have done in his place—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And since then I ain't down on him any more!" said Bunter. "So the whole thing ought to be washed out—see? But I suppose it's no good saying that to Quelch! I've got to write out 'Beware of Pickpockets' a thousand times—and I've only done twenty or so! I wish I hadn't told Quelch now that I had nearly finished that impot—"

"Try sticking to the truth another time, old fat man!" chuckled Bob.

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"That's all very well, but that won't see me through now!" said Bunter peevishly. "I say, you fellows, Quelch will expect to see at least six or seven hundred lines, as I told him I'd nearly finished the thousand. If it was left till after dinner I might get some fellows to help. But what am I to do now?"

"Go and take your whopping, and never tell any more lies!" suggested the captain of the Remove.

"You silly idiot," hissed Bunter, "that's just the point—I don't want to be whopped. That's important. I say, you fellows, suppose I go to Quelch and say that some fellow has hidden my lines for a—joke. What do you think he would do?"

"Give you a few extra!"

"Oh lor'! I—I suppose he mightn't believe it!"

"The mightfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, look here, I'll tell you what!" said Bunter. "I dare say you know that the Head's lunching at the vicarage to-day—"

"Blessed if I knew!" said Harry.

"Oh, you fellows never hear anything!" said Bunter contemptuously. "I heard Prout mention it to Capper. You fellows never keep your ears open."

"Not for what isn't intended for them, certainly."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Well, the Head's gone to the vicarage. Suppose you go to Quelch and say that the Head spoke to you as he went—"

"Eh? He didn't!"

"For goodness' sake, Wharton, keep to the point when every minute's precious!" exclaimed Bunter impatiently. "You tell Quelch that the Head spoke to you as he went, and gave you a message for him—say, a message that he wanted him to go to the vicarage to—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Quelch won't take my word," said Bunter bitterly. "You fellows would hardly believe it, but he's doubted my word a lot of times. It's pretty ungentlemanly, but there it is. But he will take your word all right, Wharton—you being head boy and all that. See?"

Harry Wharton gazed at the fat Owl; his friends grinned.

Billy Bunter, full of that bright idea, ran on eagerly.

"You see, Quelch will trot off; he's bound to if he thinks that the Head left word for him to go. I dare say they'll give him some lunch at the vicarage, too, when he barges in, and we mayn't see him again till afternoon school. Anyhow, we shall be shut of him till dinner-time. See? That lets me out all right. I can't take him my impot if he's gone out. Catch on?"

"You fat, frabjous, foozling, footling, frowsy frump!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"Eh? Wharrer you calling a fellow names for, I'd like to know?"

"Do you think I'm going to Quelch to tell him lies to get you out of a whopping you've asked for over and over again?" roared Wharton.

"Well, I'd do as much for you another time, old chap. Besides, it ain't exactly telling lies. Smithy says a fellow can say anything to a beak."

"Smithy ought to be booted! Now shut up!"

"But, I say, you go to Quelch now and say— Beast! Don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter rolled in pursuit of the Famous Five and

grabbed Harry Wharton by the sleeve of his jacket. "I say, Harry, old chap, you go to Quelch—"

"Get out!"

"You go to Quelch and say to him— Yaroooooh! Beast! Whooo— hoooooop!"

Billy Bunter roared wildly as he was suddenly grasped and sat down on the quad. He sat down hard, with a bump. He sat and roared.

"Ow! Beast! Wow! Beast! Yow!"

The Famous Five walked on and left him to roar. Evidently there was no help, in Bunter's sad scrape, from the captain of the Remove.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows How!

"SMITHY!"

"Get out, you fat fool!"

"Eh?" gasped Bunter. "What?"

The Bounder's manners were never exactly polished, especially in dealing with Billy Bunter. Still, this was rather unusually unpleasant, even from the Bounder, and Bunter blinked at him in surprise.

Smithy, who was often in a bad temper, now seemed to be in one of the worst. He had reason to be perturbed. Now that third school was over, he had no doubt that Prout would roll along to Mr. Quelch's study—immediately after which Vernon-Smith would be called on the carpet.

The prospect was not a pleasant one. Smithy had snarled at Tom Redwing, who had asked him what was the trouble, and Redwing had left him to himself. He was not likely to waste more politeness on Billy Bunter than on his own chum.

Once that note was placed before Quelch, with Prout's statement that Vernon-Smith had obviously been waiting under the wall for it, the scapegrace of the Remove was booked for bad trouble. He had even turned over in his mind desperate ideas of getting that telltale paper back from Prout somehow. But that was hopeless, and he knew it.

He told himself savagely that had he been a pickpocket, like that young cad Skip, it would have been easy enough. Skip, the new boy in the Remove, whose early training had been so startlingly unlike that of any other fellow in the school, could have relieved Prout of that paper as easily as he could have fallen off a form.

But it was impossible to Smithy.

He could have wished just then that he had been on more friendly terms with the waif from Slummock's Alley; he might have asked him to filch that paper from Prout.

But he was Skip's enemy; and the Bounder, who hated asking a favour even from a friend, would have been sacked a dozen times over before he would have asked one from a foe.

He was "for it" as soon as Quelch saw that paper.

Billy Bunter, unaware of what was on his troubled mind, could read the danger signals in his scowling face, and he eyed the Bounder warily through his big spectacles.

But he did not depart, as bidden. Whatever might be the trouble with Smithy, Bunter was in a scrape—and Bunter's scrape was, to Bunter, the most important and urgent thing within the wide limits of the universe. A whopping loomed over Bunter's fat head, and Bunter did not like whoppings—in fact, he hated them.

"I say, Smithy, don't be a beast!" he

urged. "I say, you heard what Quelch said about my lines. That beast Wharton won't help me out; he makes out that he can't tell crammers. I know you don't mind, old chap, so I've come to you. See?"

"Will you clear off?" snarled the Bounder.

"I haven't finished yet. The Head's gone to lunch at the vicarage at Friardale, and if Quelch thought he'd left a message for him to go there he would have to go. See? Well, my idea is this—you go to Quelch and say that the Head stopped you as he went out and

believing sort of man in dealing with William George Bunter.

Bunter rolled into Masters' Passage, but he did not—like Iser in the poem—roll rapidly. Far from it. He rolled slowly—and the nearer he drew to Mr. Quelch's study the more slowly he rolled.

And, still without having reached that dreaded study, he came to a halt. He had to go, but it really seemed as if his fat little legs refused to carry him within reach of Quelch's cane.

As he stood in dismayed indecision Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell,

forgot Bunter as his bell rang. His voice came through to Bunter's fat ear.

"Hallo!"
"Er—my dear Quelch—" gasped Bunter.

"Who is speaking?"
"Dr. Locke, from the vicarage," breathed Bunter.

"Indeed!" Mr. Quelch's voice was surprised, but respectfully cordial. "What is it, sir?"

Billy Bunter paused for a moment. He hardly had the nerve to do it. But it was clear that his Form-master believed that it was Dr. Locke speaking,



Whiz! A small object shot over the wall and dropped, with a light thud, almost at the feet of Mr. Prout. "Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Fifth Form master, stopping in astonishment and staring at the small object.

said—"You rotten beast, leave off kicking me!"

There was no more help from the Bounder than from the captain of the Remove, that was clear. Smithy's foot landed twice before the Owl of the Remove could dodge out of reach, and Billy Bunter fled, with a frantic yell.

The Bounder looked inclined to follow him up and land a few more, but he left it at that, and resumed his gloomy reflections on what was coming to him.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter, as he rolled into the House.

More than ten minutes had elapsed since the Remove had been dismissed. Quelch would be expecting him, and Quelch was not likely to be in a better temper for being kept waiting.

In the lowest of spirits Bunter rolled away to Masters' Passage.

He did not go up to the Remove studies for the twenty lines he had written of his imposition. Bunter had a hopeful nature but he could not hope that twenty lines out of a thousand would satisfy Quelch.

He wondered dismally whether Quelch would believe a statement that that nearly finished impot had fallen accidentally into the study fire. There was little hope of it. Quelch was an un-

came out of his study and walked down the passage,

He did not even glance at Bunter; but Bunter blinked at him and noted that Hacker had his coat on—which looked as if he were going out.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles. A new and bright idea flashed into his powerful brain.

Nobody was prepared to carry a spoof message to Quelch to get rid of that obnoxious beak till Bunter had had time to get some lines done. But there was a telephone in Hacker's study—and Hacker had gone out. What price getting Quelch on Hacker's phone and handing over the spoof message himself? He could imitate the Head's voice—quite near enough for the telephone, anyhow—the beastly thing always buzzed.

Billy Bunter looked this way and that way, like Moses of old—and, like Moses, he saw no man; no eyes were on him.

He whipped into Hacker's study and shut the door.

With his fat heart thumping, he rolled across to Hacker's telephone, and with a trembling, fat hand lifted the receiver.

A few moments more and Mr. Quelch, who was expecting Bunter in his study,

and that encouraged the fat Owl. He made the plunge.

"Er—Mr. Quelch, I should be glad if you would come to the—the vicarage! Mr. Lambe desires you to join us at lunch, and I should be very glad if you came—"

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"I shall expect you, Mr. Quelch!" gasped Bunter.

"I will lose no time, sir."

Billy Bunter replaced the receiver on Hacker's phone. He crept back to the study door and stood there, listening for Quelch's step. Evidently he had got by with it, for in a minute or two he heard the well-known step of his Form-master passing down the corridor.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

Not till a full minute after those footsteps had died away, did the fat Owl venture to emerge from Hacker's study. Then he bolted out, and rolled away—grinning!

He was safe now for an hour, at least! No doubt the Head, and Mr. Lambe, the vicar of Friardale, would be surprised when Mr. Quelch arrived for lunch—no doubt Mr. Quelch would be surprised, too, and considerably perturbed, when he learned that he was not expected there!

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But Billy Bunter was not worrying about that! He had too many troubles of his own, to have time to spare for worrying about other people's!

He rolled away to his study in the Remove, to slog at that impot, and get enough lines done to satisfy Quelch, when he could no longer postpone an interview with his beak. And as he scribbled, and scrawled, and blotted, and smeared, he felt—justly—that few fellows at Greyfriars would have thought of that wonderful way of getting out of a scrape!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

The Last Chance!

MR. PROUT sailed majestically out of Common-room, and glanced, with disapproval, at a Remove junior who was loafing in the passage.

Juniors were not supposed to loaf in that passage; and this particular junior was Herbert Vernon-Smith, already the object of Mr. Prout's disapproval.

The Fifth Form beak frowned at him. Smithy was waiting for him, as a matter of fact. He had decided in the rather hopeless course of asking Prout to let him off.

After all, Remove affairs were no concern of Prout's—and Mr. Quelch never liked—indeed, the reverse—assistance from other masters in the management of his Form. There was perhaps a sporting chance that, with the help of a little "soft sawder," Prout might be induced to let the matter drop.

"If you please, sir—," began Smithy. He had waited for a quarter of an hour, at least, listening to the boom of Prout's portly voice from the Common-room, and wondering whether the old ass would ever shut up, and get a move on! But nothing in Smithy's meek face indicated that he regarded Mr. Prout as an old ass. "May I speak to you, sir?"

"I think," said Prout, "that you had better speak to me in the presence of your Form-master, Vernon-Smith. I am going to his study."

Smithy breathed hard.

"I'd like to speak to you first, sir, if you'll permit me! I—I'm rather afraid, sir, that—that Mr. Quelch may fancy that that note was intended for me, if you mention that I was on the spot when it was thrown over the wall—"

"I have no doubt of it!" said Mr. Prout dryly. "Your Form-master is probably well acquainted with your character, Vernon-Smith."

"Of course, I know nothing of it, sir!" said the Bounder. "I happened by sheer chance to be there—"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Prout, still more dryly.

The Bounder had a system—which Billy Bunter thought quite a good one—of lying without scruple to beaks. But the cold contempt in Prout's tone brought a flush to his cheeks, all the same.

His voice faltered a little as he went on:

"I've no doubt, sir, that that note ought to be handed to my Form-master, if you think fit. But—if you'd hand it to the Head, sir, instead of my Form-master—"

"I should certainly do so, Vernon-Smith, but for the fact that you were on the spot, plainly waiting for that note!" boomed Prout. "It is, therefore, a matter for your Form-master to deal with, and I shall place it in Mr. Quelch's hands."

"If—if you wouldn't mention, sir, that I was there—"

"I shall certainly mention that you were there, Vernon-Smith; as that is my only reason for placing the matter in your Form-master's hands at all."

Smithy shut his teeth hard. It was useless—and he had known that it would be useless, though he had thought it worth while to try it on.

"As you are here," added Mr. Prout, "you had better come with me, and I will explain the matter to Mr. Quelch in your presence."

An angry reply trembled on the Bounder's lips. He was not under Prout's orders, and he came very near to telling him so.

But he checked himself in time. The more he irritated Prout, the worse it

would be for him in the circumstances.

"Very well, sir!" he said meekly. And he followed the portly gentleman down Masters' Passage. It had to be—and he had to face the music.

Mr. Prout knocked on the Remove master's door and opened it. He rolled majestically into the study. His hand was in the pocket of his gown, on the note that was, in all likelihood, to decide the Bounder's fate.

"My dear Quelch—" he began.

Then he stopped.

The study was unoccupied.

Ten minutes ago Mr. Quelch had been there. Now Mr. Quelch was not there—he was walking down Friardale Lane, en route to lunch at the vicarage.

Vernon-Smith caught his breath. He knew that Quelch had gone to his study after class, and had had no doubt that he was there. This was an unexpected respite.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Prout crossly. "Do you know where your Form-master is, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bounder did not know; and would not have been likely to tell Prout had he known.

"No, sir!"

Prout rolled out of the study again. Monsieur Charpentier was coming up the passage, and Prout addressed him.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Quelch is, monsieur?"

"Mais oui, sare!" answered the French master. "Monsieur Quelch s'en va—he go out viz himself, it is ten minutes that he go."

"Oh!" said Prout. "He has gone out of gates?"

"Oui, Monsieur Prout."

"You may go, Vernon-Smith!" said the Fifth Form master. "No doubt Mr. Quelch will send for you, when I see him on his return here."

Herbert Vernon-Smith was glad enough to go. If Quelch had gone out for a walk before dinner, it was probable that the matter would be left over till after dinner.

With his fate at stake, a respite was welcome to the Bounder—it gave him, at least, time to think and plan. Somehow—anyhow—that note from Bill Lodgey might be got away from Prout, before he saw Quelch.

He tramped out into the quad, bright and sunny on a bright October day. Some of the juniors were punting a footer about before dinner, and Bob Cherry shouted to the Bounder as he came out of the House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy! Join up, old bean!"

The Bounder did not heed. He tramped on his way. Tom Redwing glanced at him—but he did not even see him.

Redwing was his chum, and a loyal and helpful chum; but he was of no use to him now. Smithy was looking for Skinner—who was no great friend of his, or of anybody's; but who had a fund of cunning and artfulness that might be of use in this emergency.

"Seen Skinner?" he asked, as he came across Hazeldene.

Hazel grinned.

"Go up to the studies and sniff for smoke!" he answered.

Smithy went back into the House and up to the Remove passage. As he passed the open doorway of Study No. 1 in the passage, he saw Skip, the new junior—sitting at the study table with a Latin exercise before him.

"Rotten swot!" sneered the Bounder as he passed.

Skip glanced up, catching the words.

"Hallo, face!" he said. "What's biting you, old covey? Can't be civil to a bloke, can you, features?"

Packed with Good Things!



In this respect, William George Bunter resembles the Greyfriars HOLIDAY ANNUAL, the all-school story gift book in which he is so prominently featured. Of course, you will also meet Harry Wharton & Co., and the chums of St. Jim's and Rookwood schools. There are 256 pages in all, including 4 splendid colour plates. Buy yourself a copy of this famous annual.



The Greyfriars

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Vernon-Smith passed on without answering. His feud with the new junior was as bitter as ever; but he had no leisure just then for a row with Skip.

The door of Study No. 7 was also open, and a junior was to be seen in that study—a very fat one.

Preoccupied as he was with his own affairs, the Bounder could not help staring at the unusual sight of Billy Bunter at work!

Skip, whose education in Slummock's Alley had been neglected, had a lot of leeway to make up, and worked hard to make it up. Bunter, it was true, had a lot of leeway to make up, also; but he was never known to make any attempt to put it right, if he could help it.

The fat Owl blinked up at the Bounder, pausing in his weary labours.

"I say, Smithy, old chap, come in and lend a fellow a hand!" he said eagerly. "I say, I've got shut of Quelch till dinner-time, at least, and if a fellow would lend me a hand—"

"You've got shut of Quelch!" repeated the Bounder. "What do you mean, you fat ass?"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"I worked it all right," he explained complacently. "Quelch got a call on the phone, and he's gone after the Head! See? He never knew that it was a call on Hacker's phone! He, he, he!"

"Oh!" gasped the Bounder. He understood now why Mr. Quelch had been absent when Prout marched him in.

"Rather deep, what?" grinned Bunter. "I say, fancy Quelch's face when he gets to the vicarage, and finds that he ain't expected there! He, he, he!"

The Bounder laughed. It was Bunter who, quite unintentionally, had gained him that respite.

"But I say, come in and do fifty for me, old chap!" urged Bunter. "I say, Smithy, don't walk away while a chap's talking to you—Beast!"

Bunter snorted, and resumed lines.

Vernon-Smith walked on to Study No. 11, which was Skinner's study. In that study he found Harold Skinner, sprawling in the armchair, with a cigarette in his mouth. He entered, and shut the door after him—a proceeding that made Skinner stare a little.

"Want anything?" asked Skinner.

"Yes; I'm in a fix."

"Copped at last," grinned Skinner.

"I noticed you were looking as if you were going to be hanged in third school."

The Bounder gave him a scowl. He sat on the corner of the study table, swinging his legs. Skinner was as cunning as a sackful of monkeys; and it was possible that he might help with some suggestion.

He regarded the Bounder curiously.

"What's the row?" he asked. "Not up for the long jump?"

"I shouldn't wonder!" snarled Smithy.

Skinner whistled.

"Look here, I'll tell you how it stands!" growled Vernon-Smith. "If you can help me out, I shan't forget it."

Skinner's eyes opened wide as he heard what had happened. He whistled again, very expressively.

"By gum!" he said. "You're for it! Quelch won't have any doubt; he can't. If Prout hands him that note from Lodgey, you can pack your box."

"I know that. Look here, that old ass has stuck it in the pocket of his

gown. If a fellow could get it off him—" muttered the Bounder. "Suppose some fellows barged him over in the quad—by accident, of course—and—and—"

"Wash it out!" said Skinner promptly. "You won't get me barging a beak over in the quad, or Snoopey, either. More in Cherry's line; but I don't suppose he'd have a hand in it."

"It might work."

"It wouldn't. Don't be an ass. Smithy! You're no hand at picking pockets, even if you could get fellows to do such a mad thing." Skinner burst into a laugh. "Oh, my hat! It's funny! You've been down on that kid Skip ever since he came, because he was a pickpocket before Coker of the Fifth picked him up, and now—" Skinner chortled.

"Shut up, you fool!" snarled the Bounder.

"But I say, what about that young pincher?" exclaimed Skinner. "He could do it for you, if he liked, easy as winking."

"Think I could ask a favour of him, you fool?"

"I'd ask a favour of anybody in the jolly old universe before I'd be booted out of Greyfriars!" grinned Skinner.

"Well, I wouldn't!" snarled Smithy.

"But look here," said Skinner, "you needn't ask it as a favour. The kid could do it—that's easy to a fellow like him. I've heard that he picked Wharton's pocket last holidays, and Wharton, never knew it. He fancied that that Chinese kid, Wun Lung, had been playing tricks on him. That shows what he can do. Well, that fool Coker took him up, and got his Aunt Judy to pay his fees here; but he can't be rolling in money. You've got lots. Stand him a fiver to get that paper back. It's worth it."

The Bounder gave a start.

"By gum!" he breathed.

He had not thought of that. To ask a favour of a fellow he disliked and despised, and whose enemy he was, was impossible to the arrogant Bounder. But tipping the young rascal to do something for him was quite a different matter. He had had a faint hope that Skinner, with his gift of cunning, might be able to help—and Skinner had helped.

Smithy slipped from the study table.

"That's a tip," he said.

And he hurried out of Study No. 11, leaving Skinner to finish his smoke.

As he went down the passage, a fat voice squeaked from Study No. 7.

"I say, Smithy—"

Unheeding, the Bounder hurried on to Study No. 1 to see Skip.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Nothing Doing!

"DIES sunt sereni!" mumbled Skip.

He wrinkled his youthful brow over it.

It was such Latin as Sammy Bunter of the Second Form could have taken in his stride. But it worried Skip.

English—as spoken at Greyfriars—came hard to the boy from Slummock's Alley. French came harder. Latin came hardest.

But Skip wrestled manfully with these strange things. He knew that it was a trouble to a hard-worked Form-master to give him tuition different from that of the rest of the Form. He lessened that trouble all he could, and his earnest endeavours

had made a very good impression on Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master had doubted the wisdom of his chief in giving Skip admittance to Greyfriars. True, the boy had saved Coker of the Fifth from having his nut cracked. And Coker's Aunt Judy, overflowing with gratitude to the boy who had saved her dear Horace from damage, had been urgent and indeed overwhelming.

Remove fellows declared that Aunt Judy had sat and talked to the Head till, worn out, he had agreed to let Skip into the school. Billy Bunter declared, as a positive fact, that she had threatened to scratch him if he didn't. Anyhow, there he was, and it had been quite a shock to Quelch.

But the Remove master was modifying that opinion now. That Skip had been a pickpocket, everybody knew; but that he had turned over a new leaf in that respect, was hardly doubted, even by the Bounder.

The Remove had barred him; but they had come round, since he had fished Bunter's sister Bessie out of the Sark, at the risk of his life. They agreed that a fellow who did that must be pretty decent.

A week ago Lord Mauleverer had been the only fellow in the Form who would speak to him. Now only the Bounder barred him. Even Skinner was more or less civil, and Bolsover major was almost friendly.

It was a happy change for Skip. In the darkest days, he had preferred Greyfriars to Slummock's Alley; and the arrogant Bounder, and the sneering Skinner, to such associates as Barney the Binger, and Jimmy the Rat. But now his days were not dark—they were bright. He was happy at Greyfriars—well aware that he had had a wonderful stroke of good fortune in getting there at all—and his chief trouble at present was the difficulty of catching up with other fellows in the Form work. Mr. Quelch, pleased with his keenness, was beginning to have quite a high opinion of him.

Nevertheless, such a simple sentence as "Dies sunt sereni" bothered Skip; and he was wrestling with that little exercise, while the other fellows in his Form were out in the fresh air, punting a footer about, or otherwise disporting themselves.

"Dies sunt sereni," mumbled Skip. "Dies is a blooming day; or it might be days—it's jest the same, blow it! And 'ow's a bloke to know whether it's nominative, or acc-acc-acc—what's it's name? Them blooming Romans seem to 'ave spelt a lot of their words in the same blinking way, blow 'em, whatever the blooming words meant! Sereni—that's a blessed plural—serenus—sereni—Hallo, face! You again!"

He stared up irritably as Vernon-Smith came into the study, and threw the door shut.

Skip rose from the table with a wary look.

He had only enmity to expect from the Bounder, who was implacable when he had once taken a dislike. He took it for granted that Smithy had come there for a row.

Skip did not want a row. He wanted to get on with his Latin exercise, and get through before dinner. Still, if the Bounder was hunting trouble, he was ready to oblige him. The fellow who had knocked out Bolsover major had nothing to fear in a scrap with Smithy.

"Can't you leave a bloke quiet?" he demanded aggressively.

"Interrupting your swotting?" sneered the Bounder.

"Swots" were not popular in the Remove. So it pleased Smithy to designate Skip's efforts to catch up with the Form as "swotting."

"If you've come 'ere for a row, put up your 'ands, and get it hover!" said Skip, coming round the table.

"I haven't," said the Bounder, coolly and contemptuously. "I've come to ask you to do something for me, and to make it worth your while to do it."

Skip stared at him.

"Well, you ain't a bloke I like," he said. "You've been pretty 'ard on a covey, making out that he was still a pincher, though I promised the 'Ead I never would pinch no more, arter I come 'ere, and I ain't neither. But if you want me to do something, all right. Give it a name!"

"I've lost a letter."

"Think I've pinched it?" jeered Skip, aggressive again at once.

"No, you young ass! Look here, that letter dropped in the quad, and that old fool Prout picked it up, and he's got it now. Quelch has gone out, but when he comes back, Prout is going to hand it to him. It will land me in a fearful row if he does."

Skip nodded. He had been long enough in the Remove to have heard a good deal about the Bounder's manners and customs, and he could guess at once that that lost letter was one that a schoolboy ought never to have received, and that was dangerous for Smithy if his Form-master saw it.

That was easy to understand, but he did not understand why Smithy was telling him about it.

"The old goat has a pocket in his gown, and he shoved the letter into it," went on Smithy. "I know it's still there. He was going to take it out ten minutes ago to give Quelch, only luckily the old bean had gone out. If I could get that letter back before he sees Quelch, I'm all right."

"Well, I don't like you, old covey; but I 'ope you will," said Skip. "But what the smoky 'addocks are you telling me for?"

"You can get it for me!"

Skip jumped.

"Me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you!" snapped the Bounder. "I've told you the pocket he's got it in, and you could get it off him, as easily as you got Wharton's wallet in the hols."

Skip stood looking at him, his face growing crimson.

It was not long—only a matter of weeks—since Skip had been a professional pickpocket, and had never given a thought to the rascality of it. But there had been a great change since then.

Reform at first had seemed to Skip the price he had to pay for staying at Greyfriars; but new associations had worked an inevitable change in his point of view, and he looked at that matter now, not from the Slummock's Alley angle, but from the Greyfriars angle. Between the young rascal who had associated with Jimmy the Rat and the junior who shared a study with Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent there was a great gulf fixed. The Bounder did not understand it, and would not have believed it, but there it was.

"Let's 'ave this clear," said Skip in a low voice. "You want me to get that

letter off the old bloke—pick his blooming pocket—eh?"

"You can do it; and nobody else could or would," said Smithy.

"You cur!" said Skip in a tense voice.

The Bounder started. Scorn from a fellow whom he despised with his whole heart was rather startling to Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"You 'ound!" went on Skip. "That's your sort, is it? You been down on a bloke, and never let 'im forget for a blooming minute that he had been a pincher! You make out that you couldn't touch a pincher with a barge-pole—you couldn't, you being so superior! But when it serves your turn, you're ready to ask a bloke to go picking pockets! You're a cur—that's wot you are!"

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"I'm not asking you to do it for nothing," he said. "I'll stand you a fiver if you get that letter back for me. It's not pinching. It's my letter, and that old fool grabbed it before I could pick it up. I dare say you do pretty well out of Coker's old sketch of an aunt; but a fiver must be worth something to you, and I'll stand it for that letter."

Skip looked at him in silence for a long moment.

"You're offering me money to go for to do it?" he said at last.

"Yes."

"You wouldn't offer money to any other bloke here to do nothing."

"Don't be a fool! You're different!"

"I s'pose I am!" said Skip, bitterly. "I'm a blooming pickpocket, and arter I've chucked that game, you want me to take it up again to save your neck! And you'll pay me for the job! I'd like to see Wharton's face if you offered him your dirty money! Yes, I s'pose I'm different! But p'r'aps there ain't so much difference as you fancy! Keep your money in your trousers pocket, and get out of my study afore I chuck you out!"

Skip stepped to the door and threw it wide open.

"You cheeky cur!" hissed the Bounder.

He did not quite understand how and why he had failed; but he could see that he had failed. Skinner's tip was not, after all, a winner.

"Don't you say any more, or I won't keep my 'ands off you!" said Skip.

"Get out afore you're 'urt!"

"Why, you low, cheeky, thieving young scoundrel!" panted the Bounder, almost mad with rage.

"That's done it!" said Skip.

And he grasped the Bounder, and, unheeding a fierce and savage resistance, pitched him headlong through the study doorway.

Vernon-Smith crashed in the passage.

"Now keep out of 'ere!" snapped Skip.

The Bounder leaped to his feet. With clenched fists and blazing eyes, he hurled himself at the junior in the doorway.

The lost letter, the prospect of the "sack," were forgotten now; all he was thinking of was swift and savage retaliation on the fellow who had flung him out of the study.

Skip's jaw squared as the Bounder rushed at him. He faced the rush with his fists up, took, without heeding, two savage blows in the face, and hit out—a drive that almost lifted Smithy off his feet and sent him staggering along the passage, to crash down two or three yards away.

Skip slammed the study door.

He was ready for action if it opened again. But it did not open. That ter-

rific jolt had knocked out the Bounder, tough as he was.

It was a full minute before Smithy was on his feet again, and then all he could do was to totter into his own study and sink into an armchair there, holding his hands to a spinning head.

Skip, in Study No. 1, sat down to his Latin exercise. But he was no longer puzzling over that troublesome sentence, "Dies sunt sereni." He was thinking—not of Latin. And the deep wrinkle in his brow showed that his thoughts were worrying him.

After a time he left the study and went down to the quad, still with a worried and troubled frown knitting his brows.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Skip Asks Advice!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came in to dinner when the bell rang, and did not find their Form-master at the head of the Remove table as usual.

Billy Bunter noted that circumstance, with a fat grin on his podgy face.

No doubt Quelch had been surprised, and had caused surprise, when he arrived at the vicarage. Still, no doubt the vicar had persuaded him to stay to lunch. This was all to the good, from Billy Bunter's point of view; for not only did it give him additional time for getting some more of those rotten lines done, but it was easier to get sixth or seventh helpings at dinner when the gimlet eye was not on him.

So anyone who had taken the trouble to observe Bunter's fat visage could have read complacent satisfaction depicted thereon.

There was another face on which the expression was quite different. A good many fellows glanced at the Bounder, and wondered what was wrong with Smithy.

The Bounder noticed, without caring much, that Quelch was still absent. The respite was no use to him, as Skip had refused to do what was wanted. It had been his last chance, and it had failed.

Worse than that, he was still feeling the impact of Skip's knuckles. The waif of Greyfriars, the hooligan from an East End alley, the pickpocket, the pincher, had knocked him out with ease.

It was not to be wondered at, for Skip had knocked out Bolsover major, the biggest and heaviest fellow in the Remove, on his first day in the school. He had held his own with Bob Cherry, with the gloves on, in the gym. He was tough as leather, hard as nails, and had a punch like the kick of a mule, and Smithy, good fighting man as he was, could hardly have hoped to get the upper hand in a scrap. But defeat rankled bitterly with the Bounder, all the same.

Ten to one, he was booked; and if he had to go, he would have to leave that rotter, that pincher, that pickpocket with the memory of having knocked him out before he went. That reflection was as bitter to the Bounder as the thought of leaving Greyfriars in disgrace. He even felt that he could have gone contented, could he have seen Skip kicked out of the school before he went.

Skip was very silent at dinner. He glanced once or twice at the Bounder, and winced at the deadly rancour that gleamed from Smithy's eyes at him.

Skip, with all his faults, was not a fellow to nurse a grudge or nourish bitterness, and he hardly understood Vernon-Smith's unrelenting animosity.

When the Remove went out of Hall, Harry Wharton touched the Bounder on

the sleeve. He was not exactly pally with Smithy, and he was irritated by his persistent feud with Skip; but he could discern that there was something very much amiss, and he was a little concerned.

"Anything up, old chap?" he asked.

"Find out!" snarled the Bounder.

And he tramped away, leaving Wharton staring, with a red face.

"By Jove!" breathed the captain of the Remove. "The cheeky swab! I'll—"

"Something's up with Smithy," said Bob Cherry quietly. "Better give him a miss, old man! He looks as if he's got it in the neck!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Can't have been rowing with Prout, can he?" asked Johnny Bull. "Look at him now! He has nothing to do with Prout!"

Mr. Prout was taking a stately walk after a substantial meal. He rolled, slowly and majestically, like a Spanish galleon.

The Bounder, passing near him, gave his portly back a look—which the Famous Five and other fellows saw. It was such a bitter, savage, rancorous look that it made fellows stare at Smithy.

"What the dickens has he got up against Prout?" asked Frank Nugent, puzzled.

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Goodness knows!" he said. "Smithy's always got something up against somebody! Prout's the happy man this time, I suppose!"

"Ere, you blokes!"

It was Skip's voice—and Skip's mode of address.

The Famous Five looked round, with smiling faces.

Several weeks in the school had changed Skip a good deal in many ways, but he had not yet unlearned his native language—English as spoken by the denizens of Slummock's Alley.

"Allo! Ere we are, old covey!"
(Continued on next page.)

The Second of a SERIES of INTERESTING AND INSTRUCTIVE ARTICLES written specially for the young "Magnetite" who wants to—

LEARN TO PLAY FOOTBALL!



OUR INTERNATIONAL COACH

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!

NOW, then, lads, let's get down to the real business of learning to play this game of football. Before you start, you've got to know what is the most important thing about the game. I can tell you, without any trouble. You will never make anything like a good footballer until you can control the ball perfectly. Whatever you are doing you must be able to do it with the ball under absolute control. Watch a good footballer on the field. He will look as though he has got the ball tied to his toe. That is what I mean by ball control. Never let the ball go anywhere but where you mean it to go.

That sounds a bit hard, doesn't it? It is not as though you can guide the ball about with your hands. That would make it easy, because you are always doing fussy little things with your hands, and they become used to it. No, everything has to be done with your feet, and I admit, when you're beginning, it seems a bit difficult. But it has to be done, so let's get down to it quickly.

The only way to learn ball control is by continual practice. Please don't groan, because unless you are prepared to practise at football you might as well not bother to learn. Practice is the thing which has put your favourite players where they are, and you must practise, too—all the time. It hasn't got to be proper practice, of course. I am not suggesting that every spare minute you should be playing a proper game, or putting in serious practice on the football field. I know that some of you wouldn't be able to do that, even if you wanted to. But every chance you get to kick a ball about, do so.

Find a wall in a quiet back-street, and kick a ball—any old ball will do, or even a roll of paper, if you can't find anything better—against it, round the lamp-post, up the pavement, and back again on to the wall. Perhaps you will

The thing that matters most in football is **BALL CONTROL**. Read what "International Coach" has to say on this all-important subject.

get ticked off now and again for wearing your boots out. If the rows get too bad, get the shoe-mender to fit one or two iron studs on to the toes of your boots. That's what I used to do.

TRAPPING THE BALL!

THIS business of always kicking something about is really very important. Many a star will agree that he owes his success to this sort of training when he was a young lad just learning the game.

I remember George Camsell, the Middlesbrough centre-forward, telling me the story of how he used to get into trouble for breaking windows. Although he didn't always do it, he says he had the hardest kick of all his friends, so they used to blame the window-breaking on to him. I know for a fact that Eddie Hapgood, Arsenal's captain, was fined half-a-crown when he was a lad for breaking the glass of a street-lamp. You see, they've all done this sort of thing. You, too, must try to be playing about with some sort of a ball all the time.

First of all you must learn to trap a ball. That means that when a ball comes through the air you must be able to bring it down to your foot without letting it bounce all over the place. Practise by throwing the ball into the air. As it reaches the ground, put your foot on it. At first it will bounce away again, I expect, but you'll soon find that, however quickly, or at whatever angle,

the ball comes, you will be able to trap it with your foot. That's the first part of ball control.

DRIBBLING!

NEXT you must learn to dribble the ball. This means, you must be able to run with it, fast or slow, keeping it at your feet all the time, not letting it get too far in front of you.

Mr. W. H. Walker, the manager of Sheffield Wednesday, says that in his opinion there is no player in first-class football to-day who could dribble a ball from one end of the field to the other, keeping it under absolute control all the time. He may be right, but don't let that worry you. Tell yourself that you are going to be the first person to do it.

Dribbling a tennis ball along the street will help you. First-class footballers have various ways of improving their ball-control. Watch Stan Matthews, the Stoke outside-right, if you get the chance. He's one of the best dribblers in football to-day. I believe he practises by putting a line of sticks in the ground a yard or two apart and dribbling the ball in and out and round about them, keeping it close to his toe all the time. Not a bad idea. Why not try it some time, and see how many sticks you can go round without losing control of the ball.

Let me give you a little dodge about this first, though. If you are doing it with a football, let some of the wind out of it before you start. A ball which is a bit soft is not so hard to control. When you feel you are improving you can put a little more wind in.

Of course, you will never be able to control a football, for dribbling, or anything else, unless you know how to kick it in the right way. Next week I will tell you some more about ball control from the kicking point of view.

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answered Bob Cherry, in playful imitation.

"The 'erefulness is terrific!" smiled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

The chums of the Remove grinned cheerfully, but Skip did not grin. His usually cheery, chubby face was dark with worry and doubt.

"What's the row, kid?" asked Harry. "Something up with you as well as Smithy?"

"Eh? Oh, no!" said Skip. "I'd like to speak to you blokes, specially you, Wharton, you being in my study, and 'ead boy, and all that!"

"Go it!" said Harry, smiling. "No charge! Get it off your chest!"

Skip opened his lips—but closed them again. He seemed to have some difficulty in getting it off his chest.

"Look 'ere!" he said, at last. "I know I ain't like you blokes 'ere—but I've been trying 'ard to pick up your ways, but I tell you straight, it ain't wot I was used to in our alley."

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "Nunno! Perhaps not! But what—"

"You blokes trust me now, I know!" went on Skip. "You don't think I'm a pincher, like I was with Jimmy the Rat. Even the gold locket wot I got, with a photograph in it, what I've 'ad since I was a little nipper—you believe what I told you about that, and you don't figger that I've pinched it since I come 'ere—"

"No; that's all right!" said Harry. "We take your word about that, Skip. You're not worrying about that now?"

"No—but that bloke Smith thinks the same as he did, and he don't make no secret of it," said Skip. "He ain't like you blokes."

"I wouldn't bother about Smithy!" said Bob rather uncomfortably. "When he gets his back up, he's a bit of a mule."

"Well, he don't go easy with a covey," said Skip. "I dessay you've 'ad rows with 'im, in your time."

"A good many!" said Harry, with a laugh. "There's hardly a man in the Form that Smithy hasn't rowed with at one time or another. He had a scrap once even with old Mauly."

"Well, s'pose when you was rowing with him, and I dessay he was making hisself unpleasant, s'pose you could 'ave done him a good turn, and saved him from a lot of trouble, would you 'ave done it?"

"Eh? Of course, fathead!"

"Oh!" said Skip rather blankly. "You would 'ave?"

"Yes, ass! Any fellow would!"

"Well, Barney the Binger wouldn't 'ave, nor yet Jimmy the Rat!" said Skip. "If they was up agin a bloke, and saw 'im down on his luck, they'd jest 'ave crowed."

"I've never had the happiness of meeting Barney the Binger, or Jimmy the Rat," remarked Bob Cherry. "But if I had, I shouldn't take them as models."

"You'd get a feller out of a 'ole, even if you was rowin' with 'im, and he was down on you?" asked Skip.

"Well, I suppose so," said Harry, puzzled. "Blessed if I understand what you're driving at, kid. Smithy's dropped into some trouble now, that's pretty plain—he's not taking much trouble to hide it. I'd help him out if I could."

"Arter he was a-biting of your 'ead off, like I 'eard him only a few minutes ago?" said Skip.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes, fathead! Smithy puts a chap's back up at times—but he's a good sort,

in his own way. You've seen the worst of him, but he's got a lot of good qualities."

"I ain't seed much of them," said Skip. "Well, that's all I wanted to ask you. I'm a Greyfriars bloke now, and I'm picking up your ways as fast as I can. Wot's good enough for you is good enough for me."

With that, Skip walked away—leaving the Famous Five staring. The waif of the Remove had completely puzzled them.

"What the dickens was the kid driving at?" asked Nugent, in wonder. "Smithy's in some sort of a hole—but that young ass can't help him."

"Beats me hollow!" said Bob.

But just then William Wibley came up—full of a new play he was planning for the Remove Dramatic Society, and claimed attention. Skip, and his mysterious remarks, were dismissed from mind.

Wibley dragged the Famous Five off to his study for a "jaw" on amateur theatricals; and they forgot Skip, and certainly never dreamed how he was occupied.

The peculiar new boy in the Remove was sauntering, with a careless air, after Mr. Prout, who was rolling on the path under the elms.

Skip's mind was made up now.

It was not, as the Bouncer had declared, pinching—the letter belonged to Smithy! But it was picking a pocket—and Skip, once so cheerfully light-fingered, jibbed at the idea of it. But his talk with Harry Wharton had settled that for him. The Bouncer was in deep waters—the "sack" from Greyfriars School loomed darkly over him—and the only way to save him was to prevent that telltale letter reaching his Form-master's eyes.

It was easy enough to Skip, after what Smithy had told him. Doing an enemy a good turn was not the sort of thing they did in Shummock's Alley—but the Famous Five, clearly, would not have thought twice about it. It was in Skip's power to do Smithy a good turn—and he was going to do it.

Mr. Prout, pacing majestically, gave a grunt, when a junior, running past him, stumbled and collided.

But when that junior cut off, he certainly had not the faintest suspicion of what had occurred during the second that Skip was in contact with him.

He did not even notice that the junior was Skip!

He rolled on, majestic.

Skip walked away, with the letter in his pocket that had been in Prout's pocket.

Smithy was safe now—though he did not know it. Neither had Mr. Prout the faintest idea that that crushing piece of evidence was no longer in his possession when he saw Mr. Quelch come in, and rolled after him to his study, to have this matter settled without further delay.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Evidence!

MR. QUELCH compressed his lips at the sight of the portly Prout.

The Remove master was not in a good temper.

He was deeply and intensely angry.

They had given him quite a good lunch at the vicarage. But the peculiar episode had caused Quelch great discomfort.

Naturally, the Head and Mr. Lambe

had been surprised to see him there. Their surprise had surprised Mr. Quelch.

But he was not long, of course, in learning that Dr. Locke had not telephoned—and that his leg had been pulled by some audacious young rascal.

It was almost unbelievable that any fellow could have had the nerve to do it—but it had happened.

Mr. Lambe, all hospitality, had insisted on his staying to lunch. During that function Mr. Quelch had had to suppress his wrath. He had even contrived to work up a frosty smile.

But it was an awkward and annoying experience; and he got away as soon as he could, and walked back to Greyfriars, inwardly in a boiling state.

To discover who had spoofed him on the phone, and make an example of him, was now Mr. Quelch's chief thought. With that urgent problem on his mind, he was not glad to see Prout. One of Prout's lengthy chats was the very last thing he desired just then. Indeed, he barely suppressed an impatient snort, as the Fifth Form master rolled into his study.

"My dear Quelch—" boomed Prout.

"You will excuse me, Prout," said Mr. Quelch, "I am, at the moment, very busy—in fact, pressed for time—"

Prout became immensely dignified at once.

"In that case, Quelch, I will not interrupt you," he said. "Yet, in a matter affecting your own Form—a matter so serious that it may lead to the expulsion of a Remove boy—"

Quelch jumped, almost like a kangaroo.

"What?" he ejaculated. "Absurd!"

Prout blinked at him.

"Did you say absurd, Quelch?" he asked.

"I did!" rapped Mr. Quelch acidly. "And I repeat, absurd! No boy in my Form, I hope, is in the remotest danger of expulsion. I refuse to entertain the possibility for one moment."

"Really, Quelch—"

"And I am bound to add," said Mr. Quelch, with intensifying acerbity, "that I am in no need—absolutely no need—of assistance from other members of the staff, in the management of my Form."

Prout seemed to breathe with difficulty.

He did not often get plain English like this, often as he asked for it. But Quelch, under the influence of his state of annoyance, let him have it, for once.

"Very well!" gasped Prout. "Very well! If you take that view, Quelch—if you take the view that Remove boys may be permitted to receive communications from disreputable racing characters outside the school—very well! No doubt Vernon-Smith will be pleased to hear it."

"Vernon-Smith?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"That is the boy's name, Mr. Quelch—a boy who has been before his headmaster more than once!"

Mr. Quelch's face grew grimmer. He had deep doubts of that particular member of his Form.

"If you have a charge to make against Vernon-Smith, Mr. Prout—"

"I make no charge, sir," said Prout, with overwhelming dignity. "It is not my business to do so. I bring this matter to your notice as the boy's Form-master, that is all. But if you desire to hear nothing—"

"On the other hand, Mr. Prout, I am bound to hear the whole of it, now that you have mentioned the matter!"

snapped Mr. Quelch. "Kindly proceed." Mr. Prout kindly proceeded.

The Remove master listened with grimmer and grimmer face.

Prout's meddlesomeness was well known on the Greyfriars staff. There was not a master at the school who had not been favoured with Prout's unrequested advice. Prout was always willing—indeed, eager—to place his ripe wisdom at the disposal of less gifted men. Seldom, or never, did he receive any gratitude for the same.

Quelch hoped that this was only some more of Prout's fatuous meddling. But the name of Vernon-Smith dismayed him. And the description of what had occurred that morning, in the corner behind the elms, was convincing, unwilling as he was to be convinced.

"Pray hand me the note, Mr. Prout!" he said, when the Fifth Form master had explained.

"It is here, sir!" said Prout.

He fumbled for the note in the pocket of his gown. Up to that moment he had not the slightest doubt that it was still there.

But a perplexed expression came over his face as he fumbled. He fumbled and fumbled and fumbled.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated at last.

Mr. Quelch eyed him icily.

"Well?" he snapped.

"The—the note appears—appears to be gone!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"What?"

"It was certainly here when I came to your study after third school," said Mr. Prout. "Had you been here—"

"In a matter so serious as the possible expulsion of a boy in my Form, Mr. Prout, I should have expected you to preserve that note carefully for my inspection!" said Mr. Quelch, with a touch of sarcasm.

"I certainly did so!" said Mr. Prout. "I had not the faintest idea that it was gone—it must, I presume, have dropped from my pocket while I was walking in the quadrangle—most extraordinary!"

"Very extraordinary indeed!" said the Remove master. "You have made a most serious accusation against a boy of my Form, but it appears that you have lost the evidence in support of that accusation. Obviously, I can take no action in the matter unless I see the note in question."

Mr. Prout was crimson with vexation.

Quelch, naturally, was far from keen to take a boy of his Form before the Head to be expelled. He wanted definite proof before he did anything of the kind. The proof had disappeared.

"I can remember the purport of the letter, sir!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"No doubt, no doubt!" said Mr. Quelch acidly. "But you will not, I presume, expect me to rely on the accuracy of your memory to the extent of causing a boy of my Form to be expelled in disgrace."

"The letter shall be found, sir—"

"I shall be glad to see it, when found!" said Mr. Quelch. "Certainly I can, and shall, take no action whatever in the matter, unless that letter is placed before my eyes."

Mr. Prout faded out of the study.

He had an impression that Quelch regarded him as a meddlesome old ass, who had probably made some preposterous mistake. That was a very unpleasant impression.

He rolled out into the quad and headed for the walk under the elms, having no doubt that the letter had dropped there, and determined to recover it.

A few minutes later some dozens of Greyfriars fellows had a view, which seemed to amuse them considerably, of a portly figure, bent double, scanning the path under the elms.

Harry Wharton & Co., having escaped from Wibley's study at last, were in the quad, and their eyes turned curiously on Prout. So did Skip's!

So did the Bounder's.

Vernon-Smith had been on tenterhooks ever since Quelch had come in, and Prout had followed him into the House. Every moment he had expected to be called on the carpet. But the call had not come, and he wondered why.

The sight of Prout searching along the path under the elms enlightened him. It seemed too good to be true; but it looked as if the old ass had dropped that letter and was hunting for it!

Smithy could only hope that he would not find it, if that was the case. He watched, from a distance, with anxious eyes.

When the bell rang for classes, Prout was still rooting about. But he gave it up then, and rolled off to the House, red and breathless, and intensely irritated and annoyed.

The Bounder had no doubt now, and as he went in with the Remove he resolved to go out immediately the Form was dismissed and hunt for that letter himself.

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Smithy's luck had always been phenomenal—and he hoped that it was going to stand him in good stead once more!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Luck for Smithy—and Bunter!

SKIP grinned.

When the word was given to dismiss that afternoon, the Bounder pushed ahead of the other fellows, and was first out of the Form-room.

Once in the corridor, he scudded.

He was out of the House, ahead of any other man in the Remove.

Skip grinned as he watched him go.

He had seen Smithy's eyes on Prout, as Prout rooted on the path under the elms before class. So he had no doubt why Smithy was in such a hurry. He wanted to hunt for that letter before Prout got on the scene again—if Prout thought of resuming the vain search.

Nobody was likely to find that letter under the elms at present—as it was in Skip's pocket!

Skip had been rather puzzled what to do with it. It had to get back to the Bounder, to whom it belonged; but after the scene in Study No. 1, Skip did not want to speak to Smithy, or approach him in any way.

He liked Smithy no more than Smithy liked him, and he wanted to keep clear of him. Neither did he wish to make the fellow who loathed him feel under an obligation, which would have been irksome enough to the arrogant bounder.

Smithy had saved his pride, or fancied that he had saved it, by offering the pincher a tip for getting that letter back for him. He had been pitched neck and crop out of Skip's study, in consequence. Certainly, he would never have asked a friendly favour of Skip.

Little as Smithy would have supposed, or believed, that the waif of Slummock's Alley had any delicacy of feeling, Skip did not want to humiliate him, and he had been puzzling how to get that letter into the Bounder's hands without revealing the fact that he had done him that service unasked.

Now he saw the way, as, looking from the doorway of the House, he saw the Bounder cut rapidly across to the path under the elms.

He glanced round at the Famous Five as they came out.

"Race you blokes!" he said.

"Eh, what?" Bob Cherry was on at once. "Go it—after you, old man!"

Skip cut away at a rapid run, and the Famous Five chased cheerily after him, quite ready for a scud in the quad after two hours in the Form-room. Skip led the way and dashed past the Bounder as he was beginning to hunt on the path where Prout had walked before class.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Looking for something, Smithy?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he saw the Bounder's occupation.

Vernon-Smith glanced up.

"Yes—a letter! I say, help me find it, you fellows, will you, now you're here? I believe it's along this path somewhere."

"Oh, all right!"

The Famous Five came to a halt.

Skip, a little ahead, glanced back.

"Hold on, old bean!" called out Bob. "Smithy's lost a letter—come and help us look for it!"

"I don't want any help from that cad!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, don't be a surly ass, Smithy!"

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remonstrated Bob. "Why the dickens can't you be civil to a chap?"

The Bounder scowled and did not reply.

However, the chums of the Remove helped him to hunt for the letter, and they all moved up the path together.

Skip walked on ahead, with a grin on his face which the juniors behind did not see.

His hand was in his pocket, on the letter he had taken from Prout—and it came out with the letter in it. He moved round one of the old elms, dropped the letter, and walked on and disappeared.

He knew that, in a minute more, the searchers would pass the spot—and that letter assuredly would not escape the Bounder's anxious eye.

He was right!

Hardly a minute after he was gone, Vernon-Smith spotted the glimmer of the paper, in the dusk under the elms, and pounced upon it with a gasp of relief.

One glance at it revealed the crabbed "fist" of Bill Lodgey. It was the letter he wanted, and which he had no doubt that old ass Prout had dropped while pacing on the path.

He clutched it up eagerly.

"Got it?" called out Bob.

"Yes!"

"Good! Come on, you men—we'll race Skip all round the quad, if he likes."

Bob Cherry trotted on with his comrades, leaving the Bounder grinning with satisfaction over the letter, and little dreaming how it had reached the spot where he had picked it up.

But Smithy did not linger there.

Already, from the direction of the House, he had spotted a portly figure, rolling towards the spot with slow and stately motion.

He thrust the letter into his pocket and walked quickly away; well off the scene before the slow and stately Prout arrived there.

By the time Prout resumed his futile search on the elm path, Vernon-Smith was tramping up the Remove staircase with the letter in his pocket and a grin on his face.

Tom Redwing, on the Remove landing, glanced at him. He did not speak. The Bounder had been in so savage and surly a temper all day that his chum had left him alone. But Smithy's mood had changed now.

He gave Redwing a nod and a grin.

"Feeling better?" asked Redwing sarcastically.

"Lots!" chuckled Smithy. "Sorry I've been shirty, old chap—so would you have been if a beak had picked up a letter to you from Bill Lodgey."

"Smithy!" gasped Redwing.

"All serene!" said Vernon-Smith, laughing. "That fat ass, Bunter, pulled Quelch's leg and cleared him off, and before he came back that old fool Prout dropped the letter in the quad, and I've found it. Some luck—what?"

Redwing stared at him.

"Pulling my leg?" he asked.

"Honest Injun, old bean! Jever hear of such luck?"

"I certainly never did!" said Redwing. "You have more luck than you deserve, Smithy; but luck like that is a bit extraordinary."

"It's happened, all the same." The Bounder drew the letter from his pocket, twisted it into a spill, struck a match, and lighted it. It burned down to his finger-tips, and he threw the charred fragment out of the landing window. "Prout's welcome to that now—what? The old ass won't get much change out of Quelch now!"

Redwing was silent. He was glad of the Bounder's escape, now that he understood what the trouble was; but his expression revealed plainly enough what he thought of Smithy's dealings with Bill Lodgey.

That did not worry the Bounder in the very least. He was accustomed to his chum's disapproval of his sporting proclivities.

"Luck—tremendous luck!" he said cheerfully. "And all through that fat fool Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Talk of pigs, and you hear them grunt!" remarked the Bounder, looking round as Billy Bunter came up the Remove staircase.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"How are you getting on with your lines, Bunter?" asked the Bounder genially. He was in the best of tempers now, in his relief and satisfaction.

The fact that Quelch had not sent for him, or told him to stay behind after class, was proof that his Form-master had no intention of acting on Prout's report, unless the letter was produced, and assuredly it never would be produced now.

It was to the fat Owl that he owed the respite that had saved him, and he was in a mood to acknowledge that inadvertent good turn.

"Well, I got half of them done," said Bunter dolorously. "Quelch says I'm to hand in the rest before tea. He couldn't whop me, you know, when I showed up half. That was all right. But there's the other half—"

"Like a fellow to help?"

"Eh?" Bunter blinked at him in astonishment. "Yes, rather! I say, Smithy, if you mean it—"

"Come on, Reddy, and lend Bunter a hand!" said the Bounder.

"All right."

They followed the astonished Owl into Study No. 7.

Bunter did not quite believe that the Bounder was serious till he saw him, pen in hand, turning out lines. Redwing followed his example. The fat junior beamed on them.

"Go it, you chaps!" he said. "I say, make your fists like mine, you know! Old Quelch always looks at a fellow's lines."

"Don't forget plenty of blots and smears, Reddy."

It was easy enough to help Bunter with lines. So long as the fist was sprawling and scrawling, looking as if a spider had dipped himself in the ink and crawled over the paper, the handwriting would pass as Bunter's. An allowance of smears and blots added a convincing touch.

With three hands at work, that impot was finished in record time. The lines that had haunted Billy Bunter for days and days were done at last.

Bunter beamed.

Why Herbert Vernon-Smith was in this genial and obliging mood, he did not know, especially as Smithy had been so ill-tempered all day. But he was, and Bunter was the fellow to make the most of it.

"I say, Smithy!" he exclaimed, as the two juniors, having finished the lines, were about to leave the study.

The Bounder glanced back.

"I say, I was expecting a postal order to-day," said Bunter hopefully, "from one of my titled relations, you know."

"And the nobility have let you down?" asked the Bounder, while Redwing grinned.

"Well, there's been some delay in the post," explained Bunter. "The fact is, it hasn't come. I—I wonder whether you could let me have the ten bob,



Mr. Prout was pacing majestically on the path under the elms, when a junior came racing along, stumbled, and collided with him. It was Skip, the ex-professional pickpocket. "Urgh!" grunted the Fifth Form master, as he staggered backward.

Smithy, and—and take the postal order when it comes."

"Pity it wasn't for five!" said the Bounder regretfully.

"Eh? Why?"

"I mean, I could let you have the five."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, now I come to think of it, Smithy, it—it was for five. Just five bob. I—I wonder what made me say ten?"

"Oh, all right! Here you are!"

Billy Bunter gazed at the two half-crowns in his fat hand, almost like a fellow in a dream, as Smithy and Redwing went out of Study No. 7, grinning.

Bunter's celebrated postal order had been cashed before, though it failed to arrive, and he always lived in hope of getting it cashed again. But the Bounder had never advanced cash on that long-expected postal order, and he was almost the last fellow in the Remove whom the fat Owl would have expected to do so. But now he had done it!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

It was astonishing to Bunter—quite a mystery, in fact.

But he did not waste time trying to elucidate the mystery. With five shillings in his possession, the tuckshop called to Bunter, and he promptly obeyed the call.

His lines for Quelch at long last were done, but they were not handed in to his Form-master until Billy Bunter had disposed of refreshments, liquid and solid, to the exact value of five shillings.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Six for Smithy!

"HENRY'S cross!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Bob was careful not to let that remark reach the ears of Henry—otherwise Henry Samuel

Quelch, master of the Greyfriars Remove.

Quelch, probably, would not have liked to hear himself referred to as Henry by a member of his Form.

Bob's comrades smiled at the remark. It was a fact that Henry looked cross. Gazing from his study window into the quad, Quelch undoubtedly did look uncommonly cross.

All the Remove knew why, of course. There had been an inquiry about a spoof call on the telephone that day, and nothing had been discovered.

A good many Removites knew that Billy Bunter was the delinquent, and why. But they were not likely to mention what they knew to Mr. Quelch.

Certainly he did not, for a moment, dream of the fat and fatuous Owl.

Bunter had got by, in the matter of his lines, by playing that trick. He had had sufficient written to satisfy Quelch by the time Quelch was back at Greyfriars, and had leisure to deal with him. But Bunter was not the fellow to be suspected of a wild and reckless prank, with a severe punishment attached in case of discovery.

If Mr. Quelch had remembered the old proverb, that fools rush in where angels fear to tread, he might have thought of Bunter.

As it was, he did not. He thought of the Bounder. That audacious trick was exactly in Smithy's line. He was the fellow to do, from deliberate "check," what Bunter had done from sheer unreflecting fatheadedness.

Still, Quelch was a just man. He was not going to jump on Smithy simply because Smithy was capable of such a jape. Inquiry had revealed nothing, but Quelch still hoped to make a discovery. In the meantime, as Bob expressed it, Henry was cross, and looked cross!

The Famous Five, smiling, strolled on,

but they stopped as Vernon-Smith came up.

Wharton looked at him rather grimly, but the Bounder was cheery and genial, and seemed to have forgotten his offensiveness earlier in the day.

"Seen Prout?" he asked. "I've heard that he's gone out."

"Yes; he went out a quarter of an hour ago," answered Bob. "What the dickens do you want Prout for?"

"I don't; I want his phone."

"Oh, I'd give Quelch a rest if I were you! I've got an idea that he's fed-up on spoof phone calls."

The Bounder laughed and walked away to the House. It was not a jape on the phone he was thinking of. Now that he had read Bill Lodgey's note, he had to get word to Lodgey at the Three Fishers—on the important subject of Black Bunny.

After his narrow escape that day it might have been supposed that the Bounder would walk warily for a time, and at any time it was an extremely risky business to borrow a master's phone to ring up such an establishment as the Three Fishers.

But the Bounder was going to do it, all the same. He had to get word to Lodgey by six, and he was going to telephone that word. All he wanted to make sure of was that the Fifth Form boak had gone out before he borrowed his phone.

Having ascertained that fact, Vernon-Smith lost no time in getting to Mr. Prout's study—tiptoeing past Quelch's door as he went up Masters' Passage.

Mr. Quelch, in the meantime, continued to stand at his study window and stare out crossly into the quadrangle.

Many members of his Form, and of

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(Continued from page 13.)

other Forms, passed under his eyes, among them, in all probability, the fellow who had pulled his leg on the telephone. But which fellow was it?

He beheld Billy Bunter, rolling happy and sticky from the tuckshop, without a suspicion in his mind. His glance rested rather suspiciously on Skinner for a moment or two. But he shook his head. The culprit was, more likely than not, Vernon-Smith, in Mr. Quelch's opinion; but he could take no action without evidence, in this matter, any more than in the matter of Prout's accusation. As he recalled that accusation Mr. Quelch frowned. He had not had a word from Prout since the interview in the study.

If Prout had been right, it was a serious—a most serious—matter! Unpleasant as it was, to tolerate Prout's meddling, it was so serious a matter that Mr. Quelch had to take it up—if there was anything in it!

But was there? Prout was the man to make mistakes—absurd mistakes—and his memory was as unreliable as his judgment. Unless that telltale letter was produced Quelch could do nothing—and Prout had not produced the letter.

He had stated that he was going to find it—and Mr. Quelch, naturally, wanted to know whether he had found it or not—indeed, whether it had a real existence or not!

He crossed the study to the door.

Prout, certainly, should have come to him, with a definite statement one way or the other! As Prout had not come, he was going to Prout.

If that letter really existed he must act on it. If Prout could not produce it, a few sarcastic words would make it clear to Prout that his assistance in the management of the Remove was neither required nor desired.

Mr. Quelch did not realise that in his cross and irritated frame of mind, it would be a relief to utter a few sarcastic words to Prout! But that, as a matter of fact, was the case.

He walked up the passage to Prout's study, tapped at the door, and opened it. As he did so a voice in the study fell on his ears—certainly not Prout's voice.

"Right-ho, then! Good-bye!"

Mr. Quelch gazed, transfixed, at Herbert Vernon-Smith, standing at Prout's telephone, in the act of replacing the receiver.

The Bouncer, thus caught, stared across the study at Mr. Quelch.

For a second there was silence.

Smithy was thankful, from the bottom of his heart, that his talk with Bill Lodgey had been over before that unexpected arrival. Quelch could know nothing of that. But there he was—caught in the very act of using a telephone belonging to a master who had gone out!

"Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"Oh!" stammered the Bouncer.

"Yes, sir!"

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"Have you asked Mr. Prout's leave to use his telephone?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"I thought not!" said Mr. Quelch. "Follow me to my study, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bouncer followed him back to his study.

In that study, Mr. Quelch picked up a cane from his table, and his eyes glinted at Smithy.

Vernon-Smith breathed very hard. He had expected lines or a detention—or, at most, a couple of flicks with the cane. But Quelch's expression indicated very clearly that more than that was coming to him.

"Vernon-Smith! This morning, a trick was played on me, on the telephone, causing me to believe that Dr. Locke had requested me to join him in Friardale. So far, inquiry has failed to reveal the culprit. I think, however, that that culprit is now revealed."

"Oh!" gasped Smithy.

"My suspicions turned on you, Vernon-Smith! Now I have proof—in finding you in the very act of playing such a trick over again on a master's telephone."

"I—I was playing no trick, sir!" stammered Smithy.

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I desire to be just, Vernon-Smith. If you were not using Mr. Prout's telephone for the purpose of playing some such disrespectful practical joke, why were you using it at all?"

No answer.

"I am prepared to hear anything that you have to say, Vernon-Smith. If you used Mr. Prout's telephone for some harmless call, such as an order to a tradesman, or a message to some relative, it was merely a thoughtless act, to be lightly punished. Give me the name of the person you rang up, and I will ring up that person to ascertain whether your statement is correct."

The Bouncer was dumb!

He was not likely to give his Form-master the name of Bill Lodgey, the racing tipster at the Three Fishers. That would have led to something much more disagreeable than a caning from Quelch.

"I am waiting, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

Smithy did not speak. Unless he explained, obviously, Quelch was going to conclude that he was that practical joker on the phone, and that he had been caught at it this time. But he could not explain, in the peculiar circumstances.

"You cannot give me the name of the person to whom you were speaking!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I thought not, Vernon-Smith! My only possible conclusion is that you have been playing such a prank as was played this morning—and I think I need look no farther for the culprit. For the last time, Vernon-Smith, have you anything to say?"

Vernon-Smith had nothing to say. His Form-master pointed to a chair with the cane.

"Bend over that chair, Vernon-Smith."

Silently, doggedly, the Bouncer bent over. He shut his teeth hard as the swipes came down. Mr. Quelch handed out six of the very best, and though the Bouncer went through it in silence, he had to keep his teeth clamped to keep back yells of anguish.

The fool's errand on which he had been sent that morning, his confusion and annoyance when he arrived unexpectedly with Mr. Lambe, were very fresh in Mr. Quelch's mind. He put beef into every swipe!

Smithy was quite pale when he had finished.

"If there should be a recurrence of this trickery, Vernon-Smith, I shall report you to your headmaster for a flogging!" said Mr. Quelch, as he laid down the cane. "You may go!"

The Bouncer went.

He gasped and wriggled as he tramped savagely down the passage.

At the corner he met Billy Bunter. Happy and sticky, after the expenditure of the five shillings, Bunter was arriving, at last, with his lines for Quelch!

He gave the Bouncer a friendly, fat grin. He was feeling quite pally towards the Bouncer, who had been so genial and generous that afternoon. He was unaware that Smithy had had "six" since then, and that his unaccustomed geniality had completely disappeared. Smithy had had that six, as a matter of fact, for the trick Bunter had played on the telephone. He was glad to see Bunter.

"Hallo, Smithy, old chap!" said Bunter. "I say—yaroooh! Why, what—gone mad, you beast? Wharrer you kicking me for, you rotter? Yaroooh!"

Smithy landed three, all good ones, before the astonished fat Owl bolted up the passage and escaped.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Beauty in Distress!

SCREAM!

Skip stared. On Wednesday afternoon, after football practice, Harry Wharton & Co. had gone over to Highcliffe, to see their friends, Courtenay and the Caterpillar, there.

Skip had put in an hour at "swotting" in his study, after they were gone. After which, he loitered about for a time, in the hope of seeing Lord Mauleverer, who sometimes bestowed his noble company on the waif of the Remove.

Mauly was not to be seen, however, and Skip went out on a ramble on his own.

He was quite happy and cheery as he strolled across Courtfield Common, in the bright autumn afternoon, his hands in his pockets, and whistling shrilly.

Since the Remove fellows had "come round," and he was no longer an outcast in his Form, life at Greyfriars had been very bright for Skip.

True, his generous friend and protector, Coker of the Fifth, often forgot his existence, and never found much time to see him, or speak to him. But that, if Coker of the Fifth had only known it, was no hardship to his protegee. Coker had intervened once or twice on Skip's behalf, and made matters worse, so the less the great Horace barged in, the better Skip liked it.

Indeed, Skip contributed to Horace Coker's forgetfulness by keeping out of his way as much as he could.

Not, of course, that he could have had Coker's company in that half-holiday ramble. Coker of the Fifth would not have been found dead walking with a fag on a half-holiday, even if that fag had saved him from having his "nut" cracked!

In his clouded early days at Greyfriars Skip had had many a solitary walk, and had not enjoyed his own company. Now, however, he was merry and bright, and his chubby face beamed as he strolled over the wide common. "Blokes" would be friendly when he got back, especially that most admir-

able of all blokes, Lord Mauleverer. That change was due to his act of courage in rescuing Bessie Bunter from the Sark—which was not, perhaps, logical. But it was very agreeable; and Skip was enjoying life these days.

But he stopped and stared, and ceased to whistle, as a loud scream fell on his startled ears.

Ahead of him, standing under a tall tree, was a plump schoolgirl, whom he recognised at once as the sister of Billy Bunter—Miss Elizabeth Bunter, of Cliff House School.

This was the plump young lady whom he had saved from the river. She was screaming—why, Skip did not know.

Had she been in danger, Skip would willingly have rushed to the rescue, as he had done that day on the river. But he looked round in vain for a sign of danger.

Scream!

Except that Bessie was hatless, she presented her usual aspect, and nothing seemed to have happened to her. But she was screaming on a top note that a prima donna might have envied.

Scream!

Skip hurried on. He could see no cause for screaming; still, it was improbable that Miss Bunter was screaming merely for amusement, and he was ready to render any assistance that might be required.

"Anything up, miss?" asked Skip, as he arrived.

Miss Bunter turned on him the spectacles that were so like Billy's.

"Yes," she snapped. "My hat!"

"Your 'at!" said Skip. "Didn't you never find it, miss?"

He knew that Miss Bunter had lost her hat that day in the river. Indeed, she had attached more importance to the loss of her hat than to the saving of her life!

"Eh? Don't be silly!" said Miss Bunter crossly. "I'm not speaking of that hat! You let that float away. I lost it."

"I'm sorry I never got 'old of the 'at, miss, but—"

"Of course you didn't—boys are so silly, and so clumsy," said Miss Bunter. "I never expect any sense from a boy."

"Oh!" said Skip. "I 'ope you 'ad another 'at, miss."

"Of course I had! Think Miss Bullivant would have taken me out for a walk this afternoon without one?"

"Oo's Miss Bullivant, miss?"

"Our games mistress!" said Bessie.

"She's a cat!"

"Oh!" said Skip.

"A regular cat!" said Bessie. "Marjorie likes her—but Marjorie likes games. I don't! At least, I'm good at games, of course, but I don't see slogging at them. The Bull makes us slog."

"Oo's the Bull, miss?" asked the puzzled Skip.

"Eh? Miss Bullivant, of course—we call her the Bull! She wears big boots, and a horrid hat like a man's straw hat—a regular sketch!" said Bessie. "I say, my brother Billy banged in her hat one day, thinking it was Hazel's. He, he! He didn't see who was wearing it till he had banged it in. She smacked him. But I say, I want my hat."

"You lost another 'at, miss?"

"No, silly! Look!" Miss Bunter pointed to a branch far above her head.

"Can't you see that hat?"

Skip looked up. Perched on the twigs on that branch was a schoolgirl's hat, evidently Bessie's.

How it had got there, Skip could not imagine. But he understood now why Bessie had been screaming. She wanted that hat—and her screams had been intended to summon assistance.

"Yes. I see it, miss!" said Skip.

"Well, climb up and get it for me!" said Bessie. "That cad Ponsonby threw it up there! I'm going to ask my brother Billy to thrash him!"

"Oo's Ponsonby, miss?"

"A Highcliffe boy!" snapped Bessie.

"A beast! I wouldn't have dodged Miss Bullivant if I'd known those beasts were on the common. The Bull would have smacked his head, like she did Billy's. She's got a fist like a leg-of-mutton! What do you think? I was in a hammock, eating toffee, when she came out—and she made me get out of the hammock and come for a walk! She said it would do me good."

Skip made no reply to that. He had not seen the games mistress of Cliff House, but from what he had heard of her, she was rather a fearsome lady. But he could not help thinking that perhaps she was right in considering a walk better for this plump schoolgirl, than sitting in a hammock eating toffee.

"Of course, I wasn't standing it!" said Bessie, with deep indignation. "I dodged her, see? She went marching on, like—a rhinoceros—she's awfully like a rhinoceros—and I sat down to rest. But I wished I hadn't, when those Highcliffe cads came along—Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson. Pon grabbed my hat and threw it up there. More than half an hour ago. I've been waiting ever since for somebody to come along and get it down for me. That's why I screamed when I saw you. Can you climb?"

"Jest a bit, miss!" said Skip, with a recollection of many a difficult climb to high windows at midnight, when he had been the associate of Jimmy the Rat.

"Well, climb up and get that hat down for me!" said Bessie. "Mind you don't crush it! It's my best hat! You see, I had to take my best hat for every day, since you lost that one in the river. I had Barbara's at first, but she made a fuss—and then Mabel made a fuss because I took hers! They're cats! A lot of the girls at Cliff House are cats! Clara rapped my fingers, at dinner to-day, because I took her helping of jam pudding. Marjorie never said anything when I took hers! I like sitting next to Marjorie at dinner! But look here, don't stand here talking—boys keep on chattering and chattering, and never doing anything! Just climb up and get that hat, and mind you don't squash it!"

Skip, grinning, clambered up the tree. He was active and nimble, and it was quite easy for him.

He clambered out on the branch where the hat was perched, a dozen feet over Bessie Bunter's head. She stared up at him through her big spectacles.

"Mind you don't fall!" she exclaimed.

"I'm orl right, miss."

"I mean, you'd come right whop down on my head, if you did."

"Oh!" gasped Skip. "Orlright, miss! I won't drop on your 'ead!"

"Mind you don't!" said Bessie.

Skip reached the hat, and grasped it. There was a scream from Miss Bunter, below, that made him jump.

"Don't crush it! Don't grab it like that! Be careful with that hat! I told you it was my best hat!"

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip.

"I got to get 'old of it, miss! I got it now! Shall I drop it down to you?"

"No! Suppose it fell in a puddle! Carry it carefully! Mind you don't crush it! It's my best hat!"

"Orlright!" gasped Skip.

With great care, holding that hat as if it were a treasure far above rubies,

Skip worked his way back along the branch to the trunk. Miss Bunter watched him with great anxiety! If Skip fell off that branch, there was little doubt that the hat would get crushed—so Bessie had cause for anxiety.

But he reached the trunk quite safely and slithered down. A little breathless, he handed the hat to Miss Bunter.

"There you are, miss!" gasped Skip.

"Look how you've crushed it—"

"'Ave I?" mumbled Skip.

"Blind?" asked Bessie crossly. "Can't you see? Blind as well as clumsy! I think you might have been more careful with that hat—after losing the other one for me! I suppose you can't help being clumsy! Boys are all clumsy! I told Marjorie I would kiss you, when I saw you again, for getting me out of the river. Now I won't—now you've crushed my hat!"

Up to that moment Skip had been sorry that the hat was crushed. But as Miss Bunter made that statement, he could not help feeling a sneaking satisfaction that it was a little crushed.

Miss Elizabeth Bunter jammed the hat on her head and walked away—evidently very cross.

Skip stared after her for a moment or two. He could not help being struck by the remarkable likeness between Bessie Bunter and her brother Billy—not only in looks, but in manners and customs!

When he started again on his ramble, he took the opposite direction from that taken by Miss Bunter! Perhaps he was a little uneasy that she might change her mind, and bestow on him, after all, that reward for getting her out of the river!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Backing Up the Bounder!

"THAT'S the cad!" said Vernon-Smith, with a scowl.

Pon and Gaddy and Monson, of the Highcliffe Fourth, all glanced up. They were seated on a fallen trunk, under a clump of trees in the heart of the extensive common. It was rather a solitary spot—which was the reason why the Bounder had selected it for his meeting with his friends from Highcliffe.

Even at a slack school like Highcliffe, Pon & Co. would not have cared to have it reported that they were smoking cigarettes over a game of banker. As for the Bounder, he had to be more careful than Pon & Co.—for his present occupation would have earned him the order of the "boot," short and sharp, had it become known to Quelch or the Head.

Few pedestrians passed that spot—but one was coming along now, strolling with his hands in his pockets, and whistling shrilly. The Bounder's eyes fixed malevolently on Skip, as he pointed him out to his friends.

Skip did not see them for the moment in the dusky shadow of the trees. He came swinging on, whistling.

"That the jolly old pickpocket you've been tellin' us about, Smithy?" asked Pon, with a curious stare at Skip.

"Yes—that's the rotten cad!"

"They let in all sorts at Greyfriars, don't they?" grinned Gadsby. "But a pickpocket is rather the limit!"

"Oh, no limit's too wide for your show, is it, Smithy?" asked Monson, agreeably.

The Bounder coloured with vexation. His friends had him there, so to speak; and Pon & Co. were the kind of friends who liked to give a fellow a dig.

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Smithy's scowl was transferred from Skip to the Highcliffians.

"Oh, we've got our limit!" said Smithy, savagely. "If you fellows were at Greyfriars, instead of Highcliffe, you'd be turfed out so quick it would make your heads swim!"

Gaddy and Monson made no reply to that. They did not want a row with Smithy—not, at least, till they had made a deeper inroad upon his well-filled wallet.

"Don't they bar the fellow in your Form, Smithy?" asked Ponsonby.

"They did—till he got by with a dramatic stunt of pulling a fool of a schoolgirl out of the river!" grunted the Bouncer. "It was plucky enough—but it made no difference to his being a pincher and a slum rotter, that I can see. But every silly ass seems to think it makes a lot of difference."

He stared at the approaching junior again, and then round at his friends.

"Look here, that cad's walkin' right into it!" he said. "You fellows back me up in handlin' him. No good startin' a rag at Greyfriars now—not a man in the Form will stand for it, as they did at first. But you—"

"Pleased!" yawned Ponsonby. "Any fellow here could handle him easily enough, I fancy! I know I could!"

"Better not try it on!" grunted the Bouncer. "I can scrap a bit myself, but he knocked me out—and he's knocked out Bolsover major!"

"Some scrapper!" grinned Ponsonby. "Well, he doesn't look like a Tommy Farr—and I don't fancy he could handle the four of us. If he's knocked out that lout Bolsover, I shouldn't care to handle him on my own—but we'll back you up, Smithy, if you like."

"Any old thing!" said Gadsby.

The four juniors rose from the log, and stood watching Skip as he came.

The Bouncer's eyes gleamed with rancour—Pon & Co. were idly interested. They were always ready for a rag, if the odds were safely on their

side—and good fighting-man as Skip was, he had no chance against four fellows.

He had seen them now—but he came on indifferently. The Bouncer's black looks did not disturb him—he was used to Smithy's scowling. As for Pon & Co. they were strangers to him, and he had no anticipation of trouble with fellows he had never seen before.

But as he came by, the whole party ran suddenly forward, and surrounded him.

Skip halted.

"Well, what's this 'ere game?" he asked.

"Oh, gad," gasped Ponsonby, "is that how he talks at Greyfriars?"

Skip gave him a dark look.

"I don't know you, 'ooever you are!" he said. "But I don't want any lip from you. If you don't like the way I talk, you ain't bound to 'ear it. Get out of the way, and let a bloke move!"

"Mind your pockets, Pon!" grinned Monson, as Skip made a move to pass the dandy of Highcliffe.

Skip paused—struck by the name. Bessie Bunter had mentioned Ponsonby, and had spoken of him as Pon. Skip guessed that this was the fellow who had flung her hat into the tree.

"Oh, you're Pon, are you?" he said, with a glare of contempt at the dandy of Highcliffe. "You're Ponsonby, are you?"

"Yes, but I don't remember making your acquaintance before," said Pon. "Did I ever come across you, slumming?"

"You ain't never come across me, that I know of, but I'm glad to come across you, and tell you what I think of you!" said Skip, contemptuously. "You chucked a girl's 'at up into a tree, a hower ago, on this 'ere common, you did, and I got it down for 'er. And if I'd been there when you did it, I'd have knocked your face in for you, too. You're a sneaking coward, you are!"

Ponsonby's grin changed to a savage scowl.

"Collar the cad!" he snapped.

Pon was as keen on the rag now, as Smithy!

Skip jumped back as the four rushed him.

"Ands off," he roared. "Smithy, you rotter—oh gum!" He was fighting fiercely the next moment, and had no more time for words.

The Bouncer had told his Highcliffe friends that Skip was a tough proposition, but they had not quite believed it. They had convincing proof of it now, however.

Four to one as they were, and one of them so good a fighting-man as the Bouncer, they were far from having it all their own way.

Skip hit out, and he hit hard and he hit often. Ponsonby went over with a crash, the claret spurting from his nose. By the time

he was up again, Gadsby was down, with his jaw feeling as if a sledgehammer had hit it. And when Gaddy dragged himself into the combat again, Monson was on his back, seeing more stars by daylight than any astronomer ever saw by night. But the Bouncer kept his feet, heedless of hard knocks, and attacking all the time.

For three or four minutes, Skip held his own, against the four. But it could not last—though every one of the four had damages, by the time the waif of Greyfriars was collared, at last, and dragged down.

Once he was down, they were very careful not to let him get up again. The four of them pinned him in the grass under the trees.

"Now, you rotter—" breathed Smithy.

"We've got the cad!" gasped Gadsby, "Oh, my jaw! Ow!"

"Look at my nose!" spluttered Ponsonby. "By gad, I'll give the cad somethin' to make him sorry for it."

"This way!" snarled the Bouncer.

Close by the clump of trees, was a hollow, swamped by recent rain. There were a couple of inches of water, and twice as many of clammy mud.

Skip, panting and struggling, was dragged towards the spot, and rolled headlong in.

He splashed in mud and water. His head disappeared in sticky mud—and rose again to view, covered and smothered with it. He struggled blindly out of the swamp, only to be hurled back by Smithy and his allies, and to splash again, in a sea of clammy mud.

"Urrrrrgh!" gurgled Skip.

He sat up, in the deep, thick mud, and spluttered. The raggers on the bank, grinned at him—ready to hurl him in again if he struggled out.

Skip, caked and blinded by mud, sat dizzily in clammy ooze, and blinked at them.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Bull to the Rescue!

MISS BULLIVANT halted. She stared. The Bull was looking for Bessie Bunter. Somehow she had lost Bessie, in that walk—after covering hardly two miles!

Two miles to the Bull were less than two yards to Bessie. She did not even know that Bessie had dodged. Neither did she guess that Bessie was still dodging. Miss Bullivant enjoyed a long walk—she thought little of ten miles. Bessie preferred sitting it out.

Miss Bullivant had been looking for Bessie for quite a long time. She had covered a great deal of Courtfield Common, in the search. She had not found Bessie. But now, tramping in her heavy shoes near a clump of trees in the middle of the common, she saw a sight that caused her to forget, for the moment, the fat existence of Elizabeth Bunter.

What she saw was a schoolboy in a Greyfriars cap, struggling in the grasp of four others—one in a Greyfriars cap, three in Highcliffe colours.

She saw the four hurl the struggling one headlong into a muddy hollow—and she saw them pitch him in again as he struggled out.

Wrath gathered in the brow of the Bull of Cliff House.

She advanced with long strides towards the clump of trees and the grinning young rascals who were

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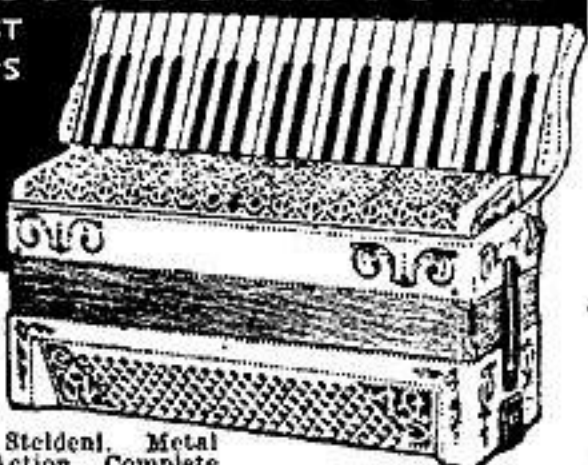
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Skip, panting and struggling, was dragged towards the swampy hollow and rolled headlong in. "Urrrrrgh!" he spluttered. He sat up in the deep, thick mud. The raggers, on the bank, grinned at him—ready to hurl him back again if he struggled out.

ragging Skip. As she advanced she gripped her stick.

Miss Bullivant was a hefty lady, in the vigorous thirties. She wore heavy shoes, and a hat that Billy Bunter had, on an unfortunate occasion, mistaken for a man's hat, and she carried a walking-stick—a thick one, too! She was strong, and thoroughly healthy and fit, with a rather tanned face which was not beautiful. Feminine grace was, perhaps a little lacking—but Miss Bullivant, a thoroughly practical young woman, with her way to make in the world, had absolutely no use for feminine graces.

She would not have shrieked if a tramp had stopped her on one of her long walks. She would have knocked the tramp down, and probably thrashed him with her walking-stick. From a very early age Miss Bullivant had looked after herself—and never had anyone been more thoroughly capable of doing so.

Had Smithy & Co. looked round and seen that formidable young lady advancing on them, they might have been alarmed. Her expression was really terrifying, as she hastened to intervene between the raggers and their victim.

She was not coming to tell them that they were naughty boys! She was coming to handle that thick stick!

But, grinning at Skip as he splashed and wallowed in the mud, the raggers did not look round—and the first intimation they had of Miss Bullivant's approach was a swipe from the big stick, which landed across Smithy's shoulders and made him stagger and roar.

"Oh gad—what——" spluttered Ponsonby, spinning round—just in time to get the second lick. He yelled frantically as he got it.

Gadsby and Monson jumped away, in alarm.

But it booted not. Miss Bullivant

strode after them, her keen, hard blue eyes glinting from her tanned face.

"You cowardly young rascals!" she exclaimed. "Four to one—is that what you call fair play? Take that!"

"Yow-woop!" shrieked Gadsby as he took it.

"And that!"

"Yaroooh!" raved Monson.

They took to their heels, and ran for it. One lick each, from that thick stick wielded in a hefty hand, was enough for them. They raced.

Miss Bullivant turned back to Smithy and Ponsonby. The Bounder glared at her in rage—Pon in terror. Smithy would not run—and Pon, who made an attempt to do so, was stopped by a flourish of the stick.

Both of them backed away from Miss Bullivant till they were on the very edge of the muddy swamp in the hollow, and could go no farther, without going into the mud. There they stopped.

"Look here, what are you up to?" yelled Vernon-Smith fiercely. "Keep that stick away, blow you! If you were a man, I'd jolly well back your shins!"

"You young rascals!" said Miss Bullivant. "Get that lad out of the mud at once!"

"Look here——" panted Ponsonby. "Look here, Miss Bullivant——"

"Go in and help him out!" commanded Miss Bullivant.

"Think we're going into that muck?" yelled Smithy.

"Quit!" said Miss Bullivant calmly. "I am going to throw you in, unless you go of your own accord. If you are cowardly enough to attack another boy, four to one, you will take the consequences."

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Skip, wallowing in mud.

The Bounder flushed crimson. He was, in point of fact, anything but a

coward, and the word came unpleasantly to his ears.

"It's a rag!" he said sullenly. "That cad's been ragged—a rotten outsider who's barged in where he's not wanted. Will you mind your own business, Miss Bullivant?"

"Are you going in for him?"

"No!" yelled Smithy.

"I say, miss, I can get out orlright!" gasped Skip. He had struggled to his feet now, clothed in clammy mud as in a garment. "You keep them blokes off, and I can get out orlright."

Miss Bullivant did not heed. Evidently she had resolved that Smithy and Pon should have some of the mud.

She threw down the walking-stick, advanced on them, and gripped them by their collars.

Punching Miss Bullivant was hardly to be thought of. Neither would it have helped the unhappy raggers—for the Bull could have handled half a dozen of them with ease. With a swing of her sinewy arms, she swept them off their feet, and landed them in the mud.

Splash! Squash!

Smithy and Ponsonby sat in slimy ooze. The Bounder panted with rage—Ponsonby groaned. He was thinking chiefly of his beautiful trousers—now caked with horrid mud.

Miss Bullivant eyed them grimly from the bank.

"Take hold of that boy's arms and help him out," she said, "otherwise I will lay my stick round you!"

"Oh gad!" groaned Pon.

Miss Bullivant picked up the walking-stick. There was no help for it. The two hapless raggers could not get much muddier than they were already—and mud, it was clear, was not going to deter the Bull from getting at them with that stick, if they refused to obey.

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They struggled to their feet, splashed and stumbled to Skip, and took him by the arms to help him out.

Skip grinned at them through the mud that caked his face. This unexpected turn of affairs amused Skip—though it quite failed to have that effect on Smithy or the dandy of Highcliffe.

"Ow do you like the mud yourselves, you coveys?" grinned Skip.

Neither of them answered. Under the grim eye of Miss Bullivant, they helped Skip out, and landed him.

Skip stood scraping off mud. The Bounder glared at Miss Bullivant in speechless rage. Pon looked down at his trousers—no longer beautiful—and groaned.

"You had better go!" said Miss Bullivant contemptuously.

Smithy and Ponsonby tramped away, shedding mud as they went. Gadsby and Monson had already disappeared over the horizon; and the other two were glad enough to disappear in their turn.

Miss Bullivant cast a stern glance after them. Then she turned her eyes on Skip as he scraped mud. His cap lay on the ground—a Greyfriars cap. She looked at it, and looked at Skip, rather puzzled. She had heard him speak, and his mode of speech was hardly in the Greyfriars style.

"Thank you kindly, miss!" mumbled Skip through the mud. "Them blokes 'ad me orlright! I'd 'ave 'andled any one of them—but they was too many for me, four to one! My eye! Ain't I a sketch!"

"You are a Greyfriars boy?" rapped Miss Bullivant.

"Yes, mum!"

"What is your name?"

"Skip, mum!"

"Skip!" repeated Miss Bullivant. "Oh! I remember now! I have heard of you! You are the boy who saved Bessie Bunter from the river."

"I got 'er out, miss!" said Skip. "I got 'er out orlright, though I lost 'er 'at!"

"One of those boys was a Greyfriars boy," said Miss Bullivant, eyeing him very curiously. "The others belonged to Highcliffe, I think. Why have they done this, Skip?"

"That bloke Smith don't like me in his school, miss! The huthers are all right, most of 'em—but Smith don't like a covey like me at Greyfriars! Fat lot I care for 'im and wot he likes!" added Skip independently.

"I have heard of you, Skip!" said Miss Bullivant; and Skip coloured under the mud.

He could guess that more had been heard of him than he liked people to hear. The rescue of Bessie Bunter had brought him into a good deal of prominence; and as his history was known to all Greyfriars, no doubt it had been passed on at Cliff House.

"Ave you, miss?" said Skip. "Well, if you've 'eard that I was a pincher afore Mr. Coker took me up, and his aunt sent me to Greyfriars, you've 'eard right—but I ain't a pincher now, and all the coveys knows it! A bloke what's a lord, has made friends with me in my Form. There ain't nobody agin me now, 'cept Smith—and he's only agin me because he'd like to make out that I'm a pincher, and I blooming well ain't!"

Miss Bullivant's eyes were fixed on him very attentively as he rubbed and scraped mud from his features.

"Have I ever met you before?" she asked.

"Not as I knows on, miss!" answered Skip, in astonishment.

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"Where did you live before you came to Greyfriars?"

"Slummock's Alley chiefly."

"Oh! You have never lived at Brighton?"

"Brighton! That's a place by the sea, ain't it?" asked Skip. "No, I been to a good many places, when I was along of Jimmy the Rat; but I ain't never been to Brighton as I knows on."

"It is odd," said Miss Bullivant. "I have an impression that I have seen you before, somewhere—but I suppose it is impossible. You had better hurry in now, Skip, and change your clothes—or you will catch cold. I will walk with you as far as your school, in case those young rascals turn up again."

"Mo in this 'ere state!" said Skip. "You won't want to be seen with the likes of me, miss!"

"Nonsense!" said Miss Bullivant.

"Oh!" gasped Skip. "Orlright!"

He tramped away, squelching mud, in company with Miss Bullivant. He knew who she was, from Pon's mention of her name—the games mistress of Cliff House, whom the plump schoolgirl had been dodging. But he was far from sharing Bessie Bunter's opinion that she was a "cat." Skip had a grateful heart—and he was grateful to the Bull for the timely assistance she had rendered.

When they reached the road, and passed other pedestrians, many curious eyes turned on the drenched and draggled boy who tramped by her side—not in the least to the discomfort of Miss Bullivant, who was utterly indifferent to glances, stares, and smiles. Near the school gates she left him—to resume her search for the elusive Bessie.

"Thank you kindly, miss!" said Skip; and Miss Bullivant gave him a nod and a smile that made her tanned face seem quite good-looking for a moment.

Skip stood looking after her as she tramped away in her heavy shoes.

"She's a good sort, she is!" murmured Skip. "A blooming good sort—and that fat girl who called her a cat is a blooming idjit!"

And Skip went in at the gates—still squelching mud!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Pally!

"OLD asses!" remarked Coker of the Fifth.

"Shurrup!" gasped Potter of that Form. "Do you want them to hear you, you fathead?"

Coker's voice was a powerful one. It did not seem to occur to him to subdue it, as he made that remark—characterising his own majestic beak, Prout, and the Remove master, as "old asses."

Coker's opinion of them, of course, might be quite well-founded. But it was certain that, if they heard it, they would be offended. Potter and Greene were quite alarmed.

The three men of the Fifth were in the quad in break the day after Skip's adventure on Courtfield Common. Prout came rolling along in his usual majestic way—under full sail, as it were. As it happened, Quelch came from the opposite direction, with his vigorous brisk strides.

Under the eyes of Coker & Co., they passed one another—with the very stiffest and most distant of salutations.

Prout, as he rolled on, had a flushed look. Quelch, as he walked on, wore a frown.

Obviously, there was a rift between the masters of the Fifth Form and the Lower Fourth. They were, in fact, mutually offended.

Open disagreement, of course, was impossible, between two members of Dr. Locke's staff. But icy coldness was possible—and there it was. Which led Coker of the Fifth, in his supreme wisdom, to describe the pair as "old asses."

Fortunately, neither heard him.

With great relief, Potter and Greene saw them pass on, in different directions, taking no heed of Horace Coker.

"Old asses!" repeated Coker—a little more loudly, to show Potter that he did not want, or need, any advice from him. However, he waited till Prout and Quelch were out of hearing, before he spoke. "Those beaks in Common-room are like a lot of old cats—always scratching one another. Look at old Prout now—he's after that letter he lost."

Potter and Greene grinned at their Form-master's portly back, in the distance—bent a little, as Prout scanned the earth, every now and then kicking aside fallen leaves, as if rooting after something that might have been hidden among them.

"From what I've heard," said Greene, "he lost that letter on Tuesday. If he thinks it's still lying about on Thursday—" Greene laughed.

"Blown away long ago, of course!" said Potter. "Just as well for one of those Remove kids that it has, from what I hear."

Quite a considerable portion of Greyfriars had heard about that lost letter. Prout had discussed it among the masters—and words had been dropped here and there, where they were caught by other ears.

Prout, indeed, had asked the members of his Form to keep their eyes open for a lost letter lying about the school somewhere. So everybody knew, officially, that a letter had been lost. And the nature of that letter had leaked out, though Prout had not mentioned that except to other beaks.

The coldness between Prout and Quelch caught most eyes, and caused more attention to be concentrated on the matter.

Every fellow, in fact, who was interested at all, knew that Prout had made some charge against a Remove boy, but had, rather unfortunately, lost the document that would have proved it.

Quelch, of course, was not going to listen to unproved charges against his boys—and when Prout gave the other beaks in Common-room his view of the matter, Quelch had naturally followed on with his version—which was that Prout had made some egregious mistake, led into the same by his ineradicable propensity to interfere in the affairs of other members of the staff!

As every beak of Greyfriars had suffered under Prout's meddling, Quelch's version was the popular one.

Which annoyed Prout intensely—and made it a personal matter with him. He was going, if he could, to prove that charge. For which reason there he was, rooting among fallen leaves, with a lingering hope that that lost letter might turn up, at long last—even after the lapse of days. Which, as the Bounder had burned it on Tuesday, was exceedingly improbable.

Potter and Greene, and a dozen other fellows, grinned as they glanced at Prout. "Old Pompous" rather amused them. But Coker had a thoughtful and worried frown on his brow.

There was a troublesome suspicion in
(Continued on page 22.)

All Present and Correct? Good! Then Off We Go Again with—

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE

A TOUR OF THE SCHOOL

The Imposing Edifice.

(1)
All the time we've been exploring
Cycle-sheds and things like this
We've been steadily ignoring
One important edifice.
It's the school we have our eyes on,
And it's easy to be seen,
Since it fills the whole horizon
With its stones and ivy green.

(2)
Now, I haven't space to lecture
On the history and plan
Of its Norman architecture,
Standing much as it began:
But the building was monastic
In the days of long ago,
Till old Henry, being drastic,
Kicked the friars to Jericho.

(3)
Then the place became a college
"For the sons of gentlemen!"
Though we really must acknowledge
It has changed a bit since then,
For they now let curious creatures
Such as Bunter join the tide.
But enough of outside features,
Climb the steps—we'll go inside!

THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET.

TOM DUTTON,
the deaf junior of the Remove.

D is for DUTTON—and also for DEAF,
So if you would talk to him, take a
deep breath,
Shout till your face is the colour of ink,
Bawl till you're barny, and still he
won't blink!
It isn't good manners, we freely confess,
To laugh and make fun of another's
distress;
It's jolly hard luck to be deaf, and we
try
To sympathise with him—he never
knows why,
For Dutton's contention is rather
unique.



That everyone mumbles whenever they
speak.
And that is the reason (to Dutton quite
clear)
He obviously can't be expected to hear!
He's quite a good chap, and can fight
like a champ;
That's rather unlucky in one of his
stamps,
For when you say something you think
is polite
He may hear an insult—and give you his
right!

ANSWER TO PUZZLE

Brass number-plates for houses, price
3d. per figure.



A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By
**THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER**

GREYFRIARS GRINS

Quelch said the other day that there
are now very few spots on earth where
no human foot has ever trod. Soon
Bunter Court will be the only one!

After Skinner had finished smoking
one of Prout's strong cigars yesterday
he knew what it felt like to be a giddy
goat.

**REPORT OF YESTERDAY'S LEC-
TURE IN THE HALL.**—The lecturer,
Mr. Paul Pontifex Prout, gave a talk
on Big Game, which the audience, Mr.
Paul Pontifex Prout, thoroughly
enjoyed.

What does Gosling do when he has
finished sweeping the leaves? He leaves
the sweepings!

PUZZLE PAR

At the sixpenny stores in
Courtfield there are some articles
for sale, of which you can buy
7 for 3d., 50 for 6d., and 100 for
9d. What are the articles?

Answer at foot of column 2.

The Second Form fags have started
keeping guinea-pigs in their desks. Of
course, the smell is rather bad, but the
guinea-pigs have to put up with that.

Loder isn't very good-natured, but
lately he's been doing the school a
favour. Owing to a footer accident, he's
covered his face with bandages.

Why is the MAGNET like Gosling's
nose?—Because it is "red" to the very
end.

Oliver Kipps, the Remove conjurer,
laid in a spread. But when he went to
his cupboard it had vanished. He
waved his magic wand over the cup-
board: but as that was no good he is
now waving it over Bunter—hard!



AFTER SCHOOL HOURS Bunter Pays a Bill

(1)
When Wingate owed a small account
Of six-and-four to Chunkley's Store,
He handed Bunter this amount,
And asked him if he'd take it down
To pay the bill in Courtfield town,
And gave the Owl a bob
In payment for the job.

(2)
So Bunter started, fit to drop,
In breathless style to walk a mile;
But paused at Mrs. Mumble's shop
To fortify his energy
With just a shilling's-worth of tea,
But found, to his dismay,
He'd one-and-nine to pay!

(3)
Now, giving Chunkley's ninepence short
Was not an act approved by tact,
For Bunter knew that Chunkley's sort
Would possibly be very cross
About this mean and trifling loss,
And so, to get it clear,
He had a ginger-beer!

(4)
This merely made it fourpence worse,
And Bunter knew not what to do,
Because he'd nothing in his purse,
Except the cash to pay the bill,
Which very soon grew shorter still
As Bunter took a snack
Before he journeyed back.

(5)
When Bunter left the tuckshop door
He'd fortified his fat inside
With grub which totalled seven-and-
four.
And, meeting Wingate near at hand,
He tried to make him understand;
But by the way he wailed
I rather think he failed.

Another Tour Next Saturday, Don't Be Late on Parade, Chums!

Coker's mind—which turned on his protégé—the former pickpocket of Slummock's Alley.

Prout, in speaking of the lost letter, had said again and again, how very odd it was that it should have fallen from a pocket in which he often carried papers, never lost before. It was odd—there was no doubt about that—it was, in fact, so odd, that Coker could not help remembering the light-fingered skill of the waif he had brought to Greyfriars.

From what he had heard, that letter meant as good as the "sack" for a Remove kid, young Vernon-Smith, if Prout had it right. Skip was in the Remove. Coker was not good at arithmetic, but even Coker was capable of putting two and two together. It worried him. Coker himself had experienced Skip's skill in the pocket-picking line—so it was really inevitable for him to think of Skip, when something was mysteriously missing from a pocket.

"Have you fellows noticed whether that kid Skip is friendly with that young sweep Vernon-Smith?" he asked suddenly.

"Eh?" said Potter.

"What?" said Greene.

They looked at Coker. Coker, of course, was every known kind of an ass. But was he really ass enough to suppose that Fifth Form men had noticed whether two fags were friendly or not?

It seemed so. He gazed at them with serious inquiry in his gaze.

"Well," he asked, "have you?"

"I'm afraid," said Potter, with elaborate sarcasm, "that I haven't noticed the Lower Fourth at all, Coker. I'm not frightfully interested in fags."

"Who's Vernon-Smith?" asked Greene, still more sarcastic. "I seem to have heard the name. Some fag?"

"Skip!" went on Potter. "Isn't that the name of the kid you found in a slum, or somewhere, or something? I remember now—you got your aunt to stick him in the Remove here. Is he still here?"

Coker had no use for sarcasm. He gave his friends a glare, and turned his back on them, walking away—or, rather, stalking.

Not unhappy at losing Coker's company, Potter and Greene smiled at one another, and strolled on.

Coker, frowning, marched about looking for Skip. He could not help feeling worried about that episode of the lost letter—lost from a pocket from which nothing had ever been lost before or since.

He was sure, of course, that Skip had reformed since he had come to Greyfriars. Coker had ordered him to do so—and that was sufficient—in Coker's estimation, at least!

Still, if he were friendly with that young rotter, Vernon-Smith, he might have done this thoughtlessly. In which case, Coker, as his guide, philosopher, and friend, was going to thrash him with a cricket stump, as a warning for the future. That, Coker felt, was his duty; and he was not the fellow to neglect a duty—especially when it took the shape of thrashing a fag.

Looking about the quad for Skip, he sighted that young gentleman—and the Bouncer at the same time.

He had an opportunity of noting how friendly they were.

Vernon-Smith was talking to Skinner and Snoop. He was talking about the disastrous rag on the common of the previous afternoon.

"That old cat, Bullivant—" he was saying when Skip passed the group; THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,550.

and Skip, with a gleam in his eyes, stopped at once.

"Shut that, Smith!" he rapped.

The Bouncer stared round at him. Skinner and Snoop stared. Coker of the Fifth stared also.

"Did you speak to me, you low cad?" asked the Bouncer, between his teeth, his eyes burning at Skip.

"Yes, I jolly well did!" retorted Skip. "You ain't calling that lady names, not where I can 'ear you. 'Old your row, see?"

"Hoity-toity!" grinned Skinner. "Are you setting up to teach us manners in the Remove—the polished manners of Slummock's Alley?"

"I'll teach you manners fast enough, if you call that there lady names where I can 'ear you!" said Skip. "She's a good sort, she is! I won't 'ave it, see?"

"You won't have it, you slum pincher?" breathed the Bouncer, almost choking with rage. "Well, that old cat—"

Smack!

The back of Skip's hand, coming across his face, stopped him.

Vernon-Smith staggered under the smack.

"Now shut it!" said Skip.

The Bouncer was springing at him in a second.

Skip faced him grimly, hitting out. He was not sorry to give Smithy something back for that rough handling on Courtfield Common.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! A scrap!" roared Bob Cherry, and there was a rush of Remove fellows to the spot.

"Smithy!" exclaimed Tom Redwing.

"Go it, Smithy!" yapped Skinner.

A crowd circled round the combatants. Over their heads, Coker of the Fifth watched the combat. He grinned as he watched. He had wanted to ascertain whether Skip was on friendly terms with Vernon-Smith—on such pally terms that he might have pinched the letter for him from Prout! He was able now to see exactly how friendly they were.

"Ware beaks!" shouted Hazeldene, across the quad.

The sight of Mr. Quelch approaching the spot caused the combat to break off suddenly. Smithy and Skip, with a mutual fierce glare, separated—and the crowd of juniors broke up.

Horace Coker walked away satisfied. He had suspected, and dreaded, that Skip had been "at it" again, to oblige a pal in the Remove. But he was quite satisfied now that Skip hadn't.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Pulling Prout's Leg!

"LOOKIN' for something, sir?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith asked that question, with a lurking grin on his face that Mr. Prout could only consider impertinent.

Prout was, in fact, looking for something. After class, Prout was on the hunt again.

Little hope remained that that wretched letter would ever be found—Prout realised that. But he was going to find it if it could be found. He was going to overwhelm Quelch with that letter, if he could, and change the Remove master's cold, sarcastic look into one of dismay and consternation.

It was up to Prout—if it could be done. All Common-room was going to know that he was right and Quelch was wrong—if only—only he could discover that miserable letter.

So there was Prout, rooting among fallen leaves with a walking-stick, still

feeling a spot of the hope that springs eternal in the human breast.

Fellows, from a distance, smiled at one another when they saw Prout. The Bouncer, with his usual cool hardihood, ventured to join him under the elms and ask him if he was looking for something.

Prout paused, fixed his eyes on Smithy, and frowned portentously. He did not like Smithy's lurking grin at all.

"You are aware that I am looking for a letter, Vernon-Smith," he said in a deep voice; "and if I fail to find it, I shall have little doubt that you have done so already!"

"If I found a letter belonging to you, sir, I should certainly return it to you at once," said Vernon-Smith meekly.

"You are perfectly well aware, Vernon-Smith, that the letter to which I allude to is the one that was thrown over the wall to you by some racing man."

"Oh, that?" said the Bouncer. "You mean the letter that you fancied was thrown over the wall to me, sir?"

"I have no doubt whatever on the subject, Vernon-Smith!" boomed Prout.

"Lucky for me my Form-master has, isn't it, sir?" murmured the Bouncer. "I don't think Mr. Quelch would ever find a fellow guilty on no better evidence than an imaginary letter!"

"A what?" gasped Prout. "How dare you, Vernon-Smith! Go away at once! Do you hear me? Go!"

"Can't I help you look for that letter, sir?"

"Go!" boomed Prout.

And he gripped his stick, obviously very much inclined to lay it round that member of Mr. Quelch's Form.

The Bouncer, with a cheery grin, walked on the path under the elms.

Hardly three or four yards from Prout, and under that gentleman's wrathful eyes, he suddenly stopped and grabbed at the fallen leaves at his feet.

Something white showed in his hand as it came out of the leaves.

Prout fairly jumped.

"Vernon-Smith, give me that letter!" he roared.

It was a folded paper that was visible for a moment in the Bouncer's hand, but only for a moment. The next he had dropped it, and put his foot on it.

"Eh—what letter?" he stammered.

"You picked up a letter from among those fallen leaves!" boomed Prout. "I saw you, Vernon-Smith! You have your foot on it at this very moment!"

"Nothing of the kind, sir!"

"What?" gasped Prout. "You utterly untruthful and impudent boy! Do you dare to deny what I have seen with my own eyes? Remove your foot at once!"

"I never picked up a letter," said the Bouncer coolly, "and I haven't got my foot on one!"

"Upon my word!" Prout could scarcely believe his ears at this statement. He rolled down on the Bouncer. "Stand aside this instant, Vernon-Smith! I will remove you by force if you do not move at once! You have found that letter, and are endeavouring to keep it hidden! Stand aside!"

"Very well, sir, if you insist," said the Bouncer.

And he stood aside, just in time to avoid being shoved out of the way by the angry and indignant Prout.

As his foot was taken away, the paper was revealed. It was a folded sheet, the size of ordinary notepaper. Prout had no doubts. He bent his portly form and grabbed up that folded paper.

"Unscrupulous young rascal!" gasped Prout. "You dared to deny that you



Mr. Prout crossed the study and picked up the strip of cardboard that had been slipped under the door from without. Thunder gathered in his brow as he gazed at the inscription on the card. "An old fool!" breathed the Fifth Form master. "I! Upon my word! Incredible! Unthinkable! Unparalleled! Amazing!"

were concealing this letter, and I have it here in my hand! I shall take this letter to your Form-master at once, and you will follow me!"

"Certainly, sir, if you like!" said the Bounder. "I don't suppose Mr. Quelch will be interested in that paper, but I've no objection."

Mr. Prout unfolded the paper, to make sure that it was the right one, before he carried it off to Quelch. It was just as well that he did so. His eyes almost bulged from his portly countenance as he read what was written on the paper—nothing in the nature of a tip from a racing man.

It was written in Smithy's hand, and it began: "Audio, audis, audit, audimus, auditus, audiunt—" and continued on the same lines. It was, in fact, a Latin verb of the fourth conjugation, active voice, which Smithy had written out—perhaps to refresh his memory; more probably to pull Mr. Prout's majestic leg.

Prout gazed at that Latin conjugation, dumbfounded.

He had had no doubt that Vernon-Smith had seen the lost letter among the fallen leaves, and grabbed it up and tried to conceal it. Certainly it looked like that.

It dawned on him now that the Bounder had wanted it to look like that.

The young rascal had dropped that paper in pretending to pick it up—a harmless Latin exercise. It was not much use taking that paper to Quelch.

It would not have proved any connection between Vernon-Smith and racing men outside the school. It would only have demonstrated what an industrious fellow he was—writing out Latin conjugations over and above his Form work!

Prout gazed at the paper, and gazed at Smithy. He hurled the paper to the earth.

"Go!" he gasped.
"May I take my Latin exercise, sir?" asked the Bounder demurely.
"Go!" gasped Prout.

Smithy picked up the paper, and went—grinning.

That grin did it. Up to that moment Prout had restrained his just wrath, but that cheeky grin was too much for him.

His stick went up—and came down.

Smithy ceased to grin on the instant as it landed on his shoulders.

"Oooo-hoop!" he roared.

He gave Prout a glare, but only one. The stick was rising again. He bolted.

Prout, breathing hard, resumed rooting among the fallen leaves. But he had no luck. He did not find a lost letter, not even a Latin exercise. It was a very disgruntled Prout that rolled in at last to tea in Common-room.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"BUNTER!"

"I didn't!" said Billy Bunter promptly.

The Bounder stared at him. "You didn't what, you fat ass?" he snapped.

"Oh, nothing!" stammered Bunter. "If you haven't missed the bullseyes, all right—I mean, it wasn't me, anyway!"

There was a chuckle in the Rag. Some of the Remove fellows were there before tea, among them Billy Bunter.

Bunter was rather busy at the moment. He was transferring bullseyes from a bag in his pocket, one by one, to his capacious mouth. But he ceased that happy occupation immediately as the Bounder came into the room and called to him. He tried to look as if he had no bullseyes about him, and had, indeed, never heard of such things as bullseyes.

"You fat brigand!" said Vernon-Smith. "You've been bagging bullseyes from my study—is that it?"

"I've just said I haven't!" answered Bunter, with dignity. "A chap in the Fourth gave me these I've been eating. Besides, I haven't been eating any! I

haven't tasted a bullseye for weeks! If you left any bullseyes in your study, Smithy—"

"Oh, shut up, you fat owl!" grunted the Bounder. "You can have the bullseyes, if you like, you bloated bloater!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, in surprise and relief. This was quite unusual with the Bounder, who was far less patient than any other fellow in the Remove, as a rule, in such circumstances. "Oh, thanks, old chap! I say, you have some!"

Bunter drew a sticky bag from a sticky pocket, and held it out generously. It did not look fearfully enticing to any eye but Bunter's.

"Fathead!" said Vernon-Smith. "Look here, would you like a feed in the tuckshop?"

"Eh?"

"Yes, or 'No,' ass?"

"Eh—oh, yes!" gasped Bunter. "Yes! Oh, yes! Yes, rather! Yes!"

His eyes almost popped through his spectacles at Herbert Vernon-Smith. Already the Bounder had astonished him once that week. Now he astounded him—amazed him. Instead of booting him for snaffling the bullseyes, Smithy was asking him to a spread in the school shop. It was dumbfounding!

It astonished other fellows as well as Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. looked quite curiously at the Bounder. So did a dozen other Removites.

"What's the game, Smithy?" asked Peter Todd.

"Game?" repeated the Bounder. "I don't catch on! Bunter's coming to a spread, that's all. You fellows like to come? The fact is, I'd like to make a little party of it. I specially want Bunter, but all are welcome."

"You specially want Bunter?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Yes. Bunter's indispensable."

Skinner and Snoop, who had come into the Rag with Smithy, chortled. It was clear that there was some jest on in connection with standing Bunter that spread in the tuckshop. Skinner and

Snoop plainly knew, but it was quite a mystery to the other fellows.

"First time I've ever heard of Bunter being indispensable!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! I suppose Smithy can ask me to a spread if he likes. We're rather pals, ain't we, Smithy?"

"Not that I know of."

"Beast! I mean, it's all right, old chap—I'll come! I say, though, no larks!" added Bunter suspiciously.

The unexpectedness of the invitation, and the obvious amusement of Skinner and Snoop, made him a little doubtful.

"No larks!" assured the Bounder. "Come on! You chaps come—you haven't had your tea—and I want some good witnesses!"

"Witnesses!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Yes. Some of the beaks don't take my word as they ought—and Skinner wouldn't be believed, as a witness, at any price. Now, you five fellows have spotless reputations—everybody knows that you'd never tell a lie, if you did it with your little hatchet—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be a cheeky ass, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton gruffly. "If this is a lark, I don't see where it comes in! You don't want witnesses to watch Bunter feeding in the tuckshop."

"But I do!" declared the Bounder. "And good witnesses, too! Bunter may have to prove that he was there—"

"Eh? Why?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Otherwise, he might be supposed to be somewhere else at the time. He might get whopped. First-class witnesses like you fellows will be able to prove an alibi for him."

The Famous Five stared at Vernon-Smith. Billy Bunter blinked at him in blank astonishment. The Bounder's words were utterly perplexing.

"I suppose you're trying to pull somebody's leg!" said the captain of the Remove at last.

"Gressed it!" said the Bounder. "What a brain! No wonder the fellows elected you captain of the Form, with an intellect like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you silly ass, you're not pulling my leg, at any rate!" granted the captain of the Remove.

"Not at all! A much more important leg than yours, old bean—important as it is, of course. What about Prout's?"

"Oh, Prout's! And how the thump are you going to pull Prout's leg—by standing Bunter a feed in the school shop?"

"Well, look at the way Bunter spells!"

"The way he whats?"

"Spells."

"What on earth has that got to do with it?" yelled Wharton.

"Lots! Don't you remember, last week, he chalked some rot on the blackboard in the Form-room? Quelch spotted him by the spelling."

The Remove fellows could only gaze at the Bounder. Nobody could make head or tail of this.

"Are you talking out of your hat, or out of the back of your neck, Smithy?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Neither, old bean! Prout's had his tea, and gone to his study. While he's there, Bunter's got to prove an alibi. I want a dozen fellows to rally round him. Witnesses will be wanted—especially witnesses with first-class unspotted reputations, who cannot tell a lie—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

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"I say, Smithy, you're talking rot, you know," said Bunter, "and you're wasting time! I say, I'm ready, old chap!"

"Do come, you fellows!" urged the Bounder. "Quite a nice spread—and it will save Bunter from a fearful row, if he can prove that he was in the school shop, with a crowd of fellows, between half-past five and six! You don't want Bunter to be lagged for something he hasn't done, do you?"

"I say, you fellows, do come, if Smithy makes a point of it!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

He was anxious to start.

"You five, and Toddy, and Russell, and Ogilvy, and Hazel, and Newland!" said the Bounder, glancing round.

"Come on—the whole happy family! Every gentleman present is begged and requested to line up for the spread."

"Oh, all right!" said Wharton, quite mystified, but willing to play up.

It was clear that the Bounder had some "rag" on, of which Bunter might be suspected—and in those circumstances the Famous Five were certainly quite prepared to rally round the fat Owl and prove an "alibi" for him.

The whole party of juniors marched out of the Rag-Skinner and Snoop grinning as they went. The Bounder was grinning, too—evidently backed by his scheme—whatever it was—for scoring over Prout.

As they marched, in a numerous body, towards the school shop, Harry Wharton tapped the Bounder on the arm.

"Look here, Smithy, what the dickens do you mean?" he asked.

The Bounder laughed.

"I mean to make that old ass, Prout, look a fool, and make him sorry for barging into my affairs, and giving me a lick with his stick!" he answered.

"Blessed if I see how!"

"Lot of things you don't see, old scout!"

They arrived at the school shop. Outside that establishment Smithy paused to speak aside with Kenney of the Fourth.

The Famous Five were not on friendly terms with that particular member of the Fourth Form—who was rather a shady young sweep, sometimes pally with the Bounder.

Kenney, however, did not join the party—after Smithy had spoken to him, he stood and watched them go into the tuckshop, and then walked away to the House.

Harry Wharton had no doubt that Kenney of the Fourth was mixed up, somehow, in the Bounder's mysterious rag. But he asked no more questions. Besides, the spread that followed in the tuckshop was worth attention.

Smithy, who had heaps of money, often stood a lavish spread—and on this occasion he was more lavish than usual. Several Remove fellows who happened to be in the shop were invited to join in—which they cheerfully did. Nearly two dozen fellows were soon enjoying the Bounder's hospitality. Prominent among them was Billy Bunter—perched on a high stool at Mrs. Mimble's counter, and parking eatables and drinkables at a terrific rate.

There was a buzz of conversation—but Billy Bunter did not join in it. Bunter was too busy for that!

Why the Bounder was doing this Bunter had not the faintest, remotest idea. But the Bounder was doing it—and Bunter was the man to make hay while the sun shone. Happy and sticky, jammy and creamy, Bunter ate, and ate and ate, in the midst of a

convivial crowd—and had Bunter ever had any doubt whether life was worth living, he would have dismissed it now!

—

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

By Whose Hand?

MR. PROUT sat up in the arm-chair in his study and blinked. He had not heard anyone come up the passage. But a slight sound at the door drew his attention. Someone was there—and expecting a tap, he glanced at the door. Thus he beheld a thin strip of cardboard slipped under the door from without.

This was so surprising that Prout sat and blinked at it for a long minute. The cardboard lay on the floor glimmering white, just inside the door. Staring at it, Prout discerned that it was written upon. He made out capital letters. He rose at last, heaving his weight out of the arm-chair, crossed to the door—bent, and picked up the card.

He gazed at that card.

Prout was already in a cross temper. His vain search for that lost letter had an irritating effect on him. He had abandoned all hope now of ever finding that letter and confronting Quelch with it. This left Prout in a very awkward position.

That young rascal, Vernon-Smith, was already referring to it as an "imaginary" letter. Certainly, nobody was likely to suppose that Prout had made an accusation with absolutely nothing to "go" upon. Still, the fact that he could not produce the alleged letter was awkward and disconcerting.

It really was very odd that he had not taken more care of that letter, if the matter was so awfully serious as he had fancied it to be! It was all the more awkward because Prout, never reticent, had talked about it so much, and nearly everybody knew.

In this irritated frame of mind, Prout's suppressed wrath was ready to go off like a cracker when a match is applied. So it was not surprising that terrific thunder gathered on his brow as he gazed at that card.

On it was written, in large capital letters—which, of course, gave no clue to the writer:

"PROUT IS AN OLD PHOOL!
FROM THE REMOOVE."

"An old fool!" breathed Mr. Prout. "I! Upon my word! Incredible! Unthinkable! Unparalleled! Amazing!"

Never in his life had the Fifth Form master been so insulted. If any fellow at Greyfriars regarded him as an old fool—which was possible—certainly no fellow had ever ventured to tell him so before.

This was from the Remove—Vernon-Smith's Form—Mr. Quelch's Form! That, at all events, was not surprising! The Remove was an unruly Form—a disrespectful Form—a Form of which Prout had the lowest opinion! This was retaliation from the Remove for Prout's accusation against one of their number, which he had not been able to prove—Prout's meddling as the Removites would have called it.

This was from that young scoundrel Vernon-Smith. The spelling, certainly, would have disgraced a backward fag in the Second Form. But Prout was not surprised at that—he would not have been surprised at anything at all in a Remove boy.

Gripping that offensive card in one hand, Prout opened the study door with the other. The fellow who had surreptitiously slipped it under his door was, of course, long gone. Prout had no hope of spotting him. But it was, of course, a Remove boy—Vernon-Smith most likely—and this was a matter for the Remove master to investigate and deal with.

Prout reflected bitterly that Mr. Quelch would not be able to take the view that this was some egregious mistake on the part of an over-officious colleague. He was not going to lose this card, as he had lost the letter. He gripped it in a grip of steel as he rolled ponderously down the passage to Mr. Quelch's study.

He knocked sharply on that door—very sharply—threw it open, and rolled in—a majestic figure of indignant wrath.

Mr. Quelch looked at him, and started a little at the sight of something in Prout's hand. His impression at the moment was that Prout had found that lost letter, and had come to lay it before him.

Which would have been very disconcerting after the view Mr. Quelch had taken and emphatically expressed.

"Sir," boomed Prout, "I have come here to show you this—"

"You have found it?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I picked it up in my study, sir, a minute ago."

"Really, Mr. Prout, it is extraordinary that you should have dropped it in your own study, and it has remained there for days—"

"What? I do not understand you, Mr. Quelch. It was pushed under my door by some boy—a Remove boy—Vernon-Smith, I have no doubt, although I did not see him—"

"It is still more extraordinary if that is the case," said Mr. Quelch. "If that letter compromises Vernon-Smith, I cannot understand why he should bring it to your notice—"

"Letter! What letter? I am not speaking of a letter!"

Mr. Quelch stared.

"Then will you have the goodness to tell me what you are speaking of?" he inquired acidly.

"I am speaking of this card, sir!" boomed Prout.

He stepped to Mr. Quelch's writing-table, and laid—or, rather, hurled—the card down in front of him.

Mr. Quelch looked at it.

He started.

"Disgraceful!" he exclaimed.

"I am glad you acknowledge that, sir!" said Prout, with heavy sarcasm. "I am glad you do not take the view that a Remove boy may describe a member of Dr. Locke's staff as an old fool, sir. That insolent boy, Vernon-Smith—"

"This is not the work of Vernon-Smith, Mr. Prout. There is only one boy in my Form who spells in this way. That boy is Bunter."

"Bunter!" repeated Mr. Prout.

"I have no doubt that that foolish boy Bunter is the author of this," said Mr. Quelch.

Quelch really could have no doubt of it. Only a week ago Bunter had had a thousand lines for chalking on the blackboard in the Remove Room the remarkable sentence: "BEEWAIR OF PIKPOKKETS!" The author of this impertinent message to Prout was Bunter, or nobody.

"Inspired, I have no doubt, by Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Prout bitterly.

"There is no evidence of that," said Mr. Quelch coldly.

"I have little doubt that the boys of my Form, all of whom have heard of your accusation against Vernon-Smith, resent it strongly, in the absence of proof. That, of course, is no excuse for this outrageous insolence, and you may rest assured, Mr. Prout, that Bunter will be severely punished. I shall cane him—"

"You consider, sir, that a caning is an adequate punishment for this insult to a member of Dr. Locke's staff? It is not your intention to take him before his headmaster?"

"A severe caning—"

"I do not agree, sir!" boomed Prout. "Far be it from me to intervene between a colleague and members of his Form. I have no intention of doing so—especially after your very unexpected reception of my statement concerning Vernon-Smith. But this matter affects me personally, sir. I insist upon it being placed before the Head."

"Really, Mr. Prout—"

"You may place it before Dr. Locke yourself, Mr. Quelch—I give you the opportunity by placing it in your hands—but if you do not do so, I most certainly shall!" boomed Prout. "I shall demand the expulsion of the boy who has so insulted me."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard. He was prepared to be very severe, but he did not like taking members of his Form before the Head—still less did he like the idea of a Remove man being "sacked." Still, Prout was within his rights.

"If you insist, sir—"

"I do insist! I insist most emphatically! Dr. Locke, sir, shall judge whether a boy in a junior Form may be allowed to insult a senior master of this school!"

Quelch breathed hard.

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"I will send for Bunter!" he said.

He touched a bell and Trotter arrived.

"Kindly find Master Bunter, of my Form, and tell him to come to the headmaster's study immediately!" said Mr. Quelch.

The House page departed on that mission.

Mr. Prout, breathing indignant wrath, and Mr. Quelch, with set lips, proceeded to Dr. Locke's study, where the offensive card was laid before the Head—and the three of them awaited the arrival of Billy Bunter.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Before the Beak!

"PLEASE, Master Bunter—" "Don't bother!" said Bunter. "But Mr. Quelch says—" "Oh, rot!"

Trotter found the junior he sought in the school shop—enjoying life, in the midst of a crowd of the Remove. Bunter was busy—and did not want to be interrupted—even by a message from his Form-master.

Harry Wharton gave the Bounder a quick look. This summons for Bunter was, as he discerned at once, a part of the Bounder's mysterious game. Smithy had known that it was coming; and that was why he had worked up this unmistakable "alibi" for Bunter. Smithy, meeting the glance of the captain of the Remove, gave him a cheery wink in response.

"Mr. Quelch says you're to go to the Head's study at once, sir!" said Trotter, addressing the back of Bunter's fat head.

"Oh crikey! Tell him he's a beast!" hissed Bunter.

Trotter grinned—and departed; certainly not with the intention of taking that reply back to Mr. Quelch.

"I say, you fellows, what the dickens can the Head want me for?" exclaimed Bunter, almost forgetting jam tarts and cream puffs in his alarm. "It can't be about that telephone call the other day—Smithy's been whopped for that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Something missing from the pantry, perhaps!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I haven't been down to the pantry this week—I mean, I haven't been down to the pantry at all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better go, old fat bean," said the Bounder. "I fancy it's all right. If it's something that's just happened, you can prove where you were at the time."

"So that's the game, is it?" said Johnny Bull.

The Bounder laughed, and made no reply.

Billy Bunter rolled away, alarmed and discontented. It was alarming to be called to the headmaster's study; and frightfully annoying to be interrupted in the middle of the biggest spread of the term. However, there was no help for it—Bunter had to go, and he went.

With visible traces of the feed on his fat face, he tapped at the Head's door and entered the dreaded apartment.

His alarm intensified at the sight of three portentous faces.

Why Prout was there, he did not know, and he did not worry about Prout. But the frown on his Form-master's face, and the Head's grim look, caused him to quake like a fat jelly.

"You—you—you sent for me, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Come here, Bunter!" said Dr. Locke. He pointed to a card that lay on his table. "Did you write this?"

Bunter blinked at the card! He read, in amazement, the startling message: "PROWT IS AN OLD PHOOL. FROM THE REMOOVE."

It was not the spelling that startled Bunter. That, so far as he could see, was all right. But the message itself was startling and terrifying! A fellow might be sacked for this—flogged, at the very least!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, no, sir! I—I never did! I—I wouldn't! I—I've never called Mr. Prout an old fool, in my life, sir! I—I'm much too respectful to tell a master what I think about him, sir."

"What!" ejaculated the Head.

"I am, really, sir! Besides, I—I don't think Mr. Prout is an old fool, sir! Lots of the fellows do, but I—I don't, sir! Never!"

Bunter was not making matters much better, to judge by Mr. Prout's expression.

"Mr. Quelch! You have no doubt that this insulting message was written by this boy of your Form!"

"If it was written by a Remove boy at all, sir, it was undoubtedly written by Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "No other boy in my Form spells in such a manner."

"It ain't my writing, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"It is nobody's writing," said Mr. Quelch. "But it is certainly your spelling, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir! I spell just the same as the other fellows. How can it be my spelling?" groaned Bunter.

The Head looked at him.

"Do you see no fault in the spelling of that message, Bunter?" he asked grimly.

Bunter blinked at the card again.

"It's—it's all right, isn't it, sir?" he asked.

"Of course, I spell just the same as other Remove fellows. But I never wrote that, sir."

The three masters exchanged glances. That, to all three minds, seemed to settle it. Certainly there was no other fellow in the Remove who could have fancied that that spelling was "all right."

"I demand," said Prout, in a deep voice, "the expulsion of this boy! Such an insult to a member of your staff, sir—"

"I do not excuse this boy's outrageous conduct for one moment, sir," said Mr. Quelch; "but I would point out that he is an extremely stupid and unreflecting boy, and that a severe flogging might well meet the case."

There was a horrified squeak from Bunter.

He did not want to be sacked. He did not want to be flogged. Moreover, he was, as it happened, innocent. Seldom or never was Billy Bunter innocent when he was called on the carpet on any charge whatsoever. But this time he was absolutely spotless. He had never even seen that card before, much less written it.

"But I never did it, sir!" yelled Bunter, in terror. "I ain't going to be sacked for nothing! Who says I did it?"

"This card, Bunter, was slipped under Mr. Prout's door a short time ago."

"Precisely ten minutes ago," said

Mr. Prout, looking at his watch. "I did not see you, Bunter, but undoubtedly—"

"Obviously the card was slipped under the door by the boy who wrote it," said Dr. Locke, "and as that boy was Bunter—"

"I never!" shrieked Bunter.

"There can be no doubt—"

"I—I didn't! I—I wasn't! Oh crikey!"

"Is it your opinion, Mr. Quelch as this boy's Form-master, that his word may be taken in a doubtful case?"

"I am bound to say, sir, that Bunter is the most untruthful boy in my Form—indeed, in all my experience as a schoolmaster," said Mr. Quelch.

"In that case, his statements can carry no weight whatever. The matter rests solely on evidence, and the evidence—"

"I think, Mr. Prout, sir, on reflection, will agree that a flogging—"

"Not at all, sir!" boomed Prout. "Such an insult—"

"You yourself, sir, expressed the belief in my study that Bunter's action was inspired by another boy."

"If that is the case, Mr. Quelch, he can say so."

"Bunter," said the Head, "you had better speak out, quite frankly. Did any other boy in your Form suggest your action in slipping this outrageous card under Mr. Prout's door?"

"Oh, no, sir; certainly not!"

"Then you acted entirely on your own initiative?"

"Oh, no! I didn't do it!" wailed Bunter. "How could I, when I wasn't there?"

Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp look.

It was, as he had said, impossible to place faith in a single word uttered by that member of his Form. Billy Bunter's statements on any subject went for absolutely nothing. Indeed, they said in the Remove that if Bunter remarked that it was raining, a fellow had to look out of the window before he believed him. Nevertheless, the fat Owl's terrified earnestness made some impression on his Form-master.

"I think you said that it was ten minutes ago, Mr. Prout, that this card was slipped under your door?"

"Now eleven minutes," said Prout, looking at his watch again.

"Where have you been, Bunter, for the last quarter of an hour?"

"In the tuckshop, sir."

"Alone?"

"Oh, no, sir! A—a lot of the fellows—Wharton, and Bob Cherry, and a whole crowd of fellows!" gasped Bunter.

"At what time did you go into the school shop, Bunter?"

"About half-past five, sir." Bunter remembered that the Bounder had mentioned the time in the Rag.

"It is now ten minutes to six," said Mr. Quelch. "If Bunter has been in the school shop since half-past five, Mr. Prout, it appears that he cannot have been the boy who slipped that card under your door."

Short from Prout.

"On your own words, sir, Bunter's statements are not to be believed, in any circumstances!" he retorted.

"Perfectly so, sir; but he has mentioned the names of boys whose word I would unhesitatingly take in all circumstances," said Mr. Quelch. "Dr. Locke, before this matter goes further, may I ask you to send for Wharton and

Cherry, to confirm Bunter's statement—or otherwise?"

"Most certainly!" said the Head.

Trotter was summoned again, and dispatched once more, this time to seek Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. And the gasp of relief that came from Billy Bunter shook even Mr. Prout's belief in his guilt.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Guilty!

HARRY WHARTON entered the Head's study, followed by Bob Cherry.

Both of them were in a wondering state of mind. They knew that all this was part of the Bounder's rag. They were, so to speak, pawns in his game. But that was all they knew, so far.

"I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, as they entered, "you tell the Head that—"

"Silence, Bunter!" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"Oh, yes, sir! But—"

"Silence! Wharton, Cherry, give me attention! Can you state, with certainty where Bunter has been since half-past five?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Harry, at once. "In the tuckshop!"

"We were there with him," said Bob Cherry. "A crowd of us, too, sir."

"You are sure of the time, Wharton?"

"It chimed the half-hour, sir, as we were going across the quad," said the captain of the Remove. "Bunter was with us, and he went into the shop with us, and never left till Trotter came and called him away."

"I told you so, sir!" squeaked Bunter.

"You say that other boys were present?" asked the Head.

"Nugent and Hurree Singh, and Bull and Newland and Ogilvy, and Todd. They will all say the same, sir," answered the captain of the Remove. He was careful to mention only the names of good and credible witnesses.

"It appears, then, that it cannot possibly have been Bunter who slipped this card under your door, Mr. Prout," said the Head.

Wharton and Bob Cherry glanced at the card on the Head's table. They jumped simultaneously as they saw it. They began to understand now.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob.

"As it was not Bunter who placed the card in your study, Mr. Prout," went on the Head, "we must accept his statement that he knows nothing of it. It would be quite easy for another to imitate his peculiar spelling, in order to turn suspicion on a wrong direction."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. He had not thought of that.

"Oh!" said Mr. Prout. He hadn't, either.

Wharton and Bob Cherry had. They knew perfectly well who had written that card in Bunter's remarkable orthography, and they could guess what it was the Bounder had said to Kenney of the Fourth before going into the tuckshop. They were not likely, however, to state what they knew, or guessed, in the Head's study.

"Thank you, my boys!" said the Head graciously. "Your evidence has cleared Bunter of grave suspicion. Bunter, it is fortunate for you that boys of good and truthful character

have been able to bear witness in your favour. Let this be a warning to you, Bunter, that habitual untruthfulness is not only wrong, but may be very dangerous. I trust that this lesson will not be forgotten."

"Oh, yes, sir! C-c-can I go now?" gasped Bunter.

"You may go, Bunter."

Billy Bunter fairly bolted out of the study. He flew down the passage. Had the Head's study been a lion's den, the fat Owl could not have displayed greater keenness in getting clear of it. Wharton and Bob Cherry followed him.

In the Head's study there was deep silence after the door had closed on the juniors.

Mr. Quelch was smiling faintly. He was deeply relieved by the fact that there was to be no expulsion, or even a flogging, in his Form.

Mr. Prout was not smiling—far from it!

Prout assuredly did not want to be unjust, or to punish the innocent. But he did want, and was determined to have, the punishment of the guilty.

"This matter, sir, cannot end here!" he said in a deep voice. "Bunter, it appears, was not the guilty party! But I have not the slightest doubt, sir, of the name of the guilty party—and that name is Vernon-Smith."

"I see no reason—" said Mr. Quelch.

"Allow me to speak to Dr. Locke, sir. Dr. Locke, Vernon-Smith, of Mr. Quelch's Form, is a boy I have had to report to his Form-master—"

"On no grounds, sir, so far as I could ascertain!" interjected Mr. Quelch.

"That, sir, is immaterial—the boy has, since then, been indescribably insolent to me!" said Mr. Prout, breathing hard. "I have no doubt whatever that this is a new example of his insolence—added to which is his baseness in throwing suspicion on Bunter by imitating his absurd spelling. Dr. Locke, it was Vernon-Smith, of Mr. Quelch's Form, who slipped that card under my door."

"On what grounds—" began the Head.

"I have not the slightest doubt of it, sir!" boomed Prout. "I am as positive of it, sir, as that I stand here. I think that Mr. Quelch himself has little doubt of it. I demand, sir, that that boy be sent for and questioned. And if he cannot, sir, explain, beyond doubt, where he was, and how he was occupied, at the moment that that card was slipped under my door I demand that he be adjudged guilty and expelled from Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch stood silent. This affair was so in accordance with what he knew of the Bounder that he could not help feeling that Prout was probably right.

"I will send for Vernon-Smith!" said the Head.

Once more the bell was touched, and Trotter set in motion—this time to call Herbert Vernon-Smith to his head-master's study.

The Bounder was not long in coming. He was, in fact, expecting the summons. His cunningly laid scheme for making a fool of Prout was working out exactly according to plan. He was, in truth, playing Mr. Prout like a fish. He grinned cheerily on his way to the Head's study.

But his face was very grave as he entered. It gave no sign of his inward amusement.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked meekly.

"Look at this card, Vernon-Smith! It was slipped under Mr. Prout's door

at about twenty minutes to six. Mr. Prout believes that it was by your hand."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed the Bounder. "Surely Mr. Prout does not think that I spell like that, sir!"

"I believe, Vernon-Smith," boomed Prout, "that you have deliberately imitated a foolish boy's spelling in order to divert suspicion from yourself."

"Someone certainly has done so!" said the Head. "I require you to prove where you were at twenty minutes to six, Vernon-Smith."

"I was in the school shop, sir, with some of the other fellows."

"Give me their names, in that case!" said the Head.

"Wharton was one, sir—"

"Wharton!"

"Cherry was another—"

"Cherry!"

"And Nugent and Bull and Inky—I mean, Hurree Singh! And Peter Todd and Ogilvy and—"

"That will do, Vernon-Smith, if you are speaking the truth. You assert that the boys you have named were in your company—precisely the same statement that was made by Bunter—"

"You see, sir, I was standing a bit of a spread in the school shop," explained the Bounder softly and sweetly. "Bunter was one of the party—and the other fellows I have named were all there. I've been in their company ever since half-past five—till now. If you will send for any of them, sir, I am sure they will tell you so."

There was a deep silence in the study! Unless the Bounder was gambling on the Head taking his word without further inquiry, his alibi was complete! The Head touched the bell.

The situation was growing a little ridiculous—as all the masters were aware—but it had to go on to the finish. Trotter, looking quite surprised at these incessant errands, was sent for the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton came back to the study. The Bounder, unseen by the masters, winked at him as he entered—and Wharton changed a laugh into a cough just in time.

"Wharton, was Vernon-Smith a member of a party in the school shop, at which you were present, from half-past five onwards?" asked the Head.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Answer carefully, Wharton!" boomed Prout. "Was Vernon-Smith out of your sight for a single minute after half-past five till Bunter was sent for?"

"Not for a single second, sir!" answered Harry. "He was standing the spread in the shop, so, of course, he was present all the time."

Prout gurgled.

"That is all, Wharton!" said the Head. "You may go—and you also, Vernon-Smith."

"Thank you, sir!" said the Bounder meekly. And he went, and grinned at the captain of the Remove as they went down the passage.

In the Head's study, Dr. Locke looked inquiringly at Mr. Prout.

Mr. Quelch regarded him with open sarcasm.

"This matter must, of course, be investigated!" said the Head. "But if you have nothing further to tell me, Mr. Prout—"

Even the kind old Head was a little sarcastic.

Prout's face was purple.

"I—," he stammered. "I—"

"Is there no other boy in my Form, sir, whom you would like to accuse without the faintest shadow of evidence?" asked Mr. Quelch sardonically.

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"I—I—" stammered Prout. "At the moment I—I—I can say nothing further. That this was the act of a Remove boy I have no doubt, but which—"

The Head took up his pen.

At that very plain hint Mr. Prout faded out of the study! Mr. Quelch followed him, smiling sarcastically.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Safe as Houses!

"H A, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter on the Remove landing. The Bouncer was the centre of a crowd of Remove fellows there—all laughing.

Smithy was greatly elated. He liked to "show off" to the other fellows as a wild and reckless ragger, who dreaded neither masters nor prefects—a fellow whose nerve was equal to anything. And this time he had scored, there was no doubt about that, and he rejoiced accordingly.

By the simple device of establishing that alibi first, and then getting a pal in the Fourth to slip the card under Prout's door, Smithy had carried out his jape with perfect success and security. The headmaster had been disturbed and perturbed, the Remove master annoyed and irritated, and Prout fearfully, awfully enraged and exasperated. And here was the Bouncer, laughing at all three of them in the midst of a laughing crowd. Which was like meat and drink to the Bouncer, who was in very high feather.

"If you fellows had seen Prout's face!" chuckled Smithy. "And I'm not done with the old fathead yet!"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!" came a hasty voice.

Skip came quickly up the Remove staircase.

The Bouncer gave him an angry stare.

"Are you telling me to shut up, you low rotter?" he snapped.

"The 'Ead's coming up!"

"Oh!"

The crowd on the Remove landing fell silent as the headmaster was seen. They wondered why on earth he was coming, and everybody realised that it meant trouble for somebody.

Dr. Locke stepped on the Remove landing.

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir?" If the Bouncer felt an inward tremor, he did not show it.

"Please come with me to your study."

"Very well, sir!"

The Bouncer followed the headmaster up the Remove passage, leaving the other fellows looking at one another and whispering. It was not, apparently, the affair of the card slipped under Prout's door that had brought the headmaster there. But evidently the Bouncer was under suspicion of some sort.

Dr. Locke entered Study No. 4. Vernon-Smith followed him in. Other fellows came along to the door.

In the study Dr. Locke fixed his eyes on Vernon-Smith. The Bouncer met them with calm assurance.

"Vernon-Smith," said the Head quietly, "Mr. Prout has made a state-

ment to me, concerning a certain letter which, he believes, was thrown over the school wall a few days ago for you to pick up."

"My Form-master, sir, is satisfied that Mr. Prout was mistaken!" said the Bouncer coolly.

"No doubt, Vernon-Smith. As Mr. Quelch has not considered it his duty to take the matter up, it is certainly not my intention to do so. I mention the matter merely to explain why I am here. I am sorry to say that you have been under suspicion, on several occasions, of conduct unbecoming a Greyfriars boy. My attention having been directed to you again, it is my intention to make an examination of your study. You understand me?"

"Oh, quite, sir!" The Bouncer smiled. "I have no objection, of course, sir. Here are my keys!" He handed a bunch of keys to the Head.

Dr. Locke had paid that visit without warning. It was a "surprise" inspection. It did not occur to him that Smithy, two days ago, had gone carefully through the study, rooting out everything that could possibly do him harm if seen by the eye of authority.

He proceeded with a careful search. The result was nil.

That was a relief to Dr. Locke. He had felt it his duty to make that inspection, but undoubtedly he was glad that it revealed nothing discreditable to a Greyfriars boy.

"I am glad, Vernon Smith, that I have found nothing here of a dubious or discreditable nature," said the Head, at last.

"Thank you, sir!" murmured the Bouncer demurely.

"You may have your keys."

Dr. Locke laid the keys on the study table. As he did so, he gave a sudden sharp start.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

Fellows in the passage who heard him pressed nearer the doorway. The Bouncer stared at him blankly. Then he saw that the Head was looking fixedly at a blotter on the table. It was there that the Bouncer had sat that afternoon to write the card that Kenney had slipped under Prout's door.

For a moment Vernon-Smith wondered blankly what the Head was looking at with such fixed attention. Then his heart gave an unpleasant jump.

There was an impression on the blotting-paper where something written in capital letters had been blotted.

What the Head was looking at was this, impressed on the blotter:

LOOHP DLO NA SI TWORP
EVOOMER EIT MORE

For a long moment Dr. Locke stared fixedly at that telltale impression on the blotter.

The Bouncer watched him, with sinking heart. Then the headmaster picked up the blotter, carried it across to the looking-glass, and held it up to look at the reflection.

The letters that were backwards on the blotter could now be seen in their proper order in the reflection in the glass. And, of course, they ran:

PROWT IS AN OLD PHOOL.
FROM THE REMOOVE.

The expression on the Head's face was positively terrific as he turned to Vernon-Smith with the blotter in his hand. He had come to that study half expecting to make one discovery; he had, quite unexpectedly, made quite a different one. The Bouncer, with all his nerve, quailed under the headmaster's stern gaze.

"Vernon-Smith," said Dr. Locke, in a deep, deep voice, "what is the meaning of this? What have you to say now?"

Harry Wharton & Co., from the passage, looked on in dismayed silence.

Fellows who approved least of the Bouncer's proceedings, were dismayed to see poor old Smithy caught out like this. With all his keenness, all his cunning, all his resource, he had been given away by an act of sheer thoughtless carelessness, and given away completely.

He stood dumb.

For a moment a pin might have been heard to drop. The silence was quite painful. The Head's stern voice broke it.

"Vernon-Smith, I hold in my hand indubitable proof that you wrote the card that was slipped under Mr. Prout's door this afternoon."

Silence!

"No doubt it was placed there by another hand, but it was you who wrote this insult to a member of my staff."

The Bouncer did not speak. There was nothing for him to say. Either he or his studymate Redwing had written those words, and it certainly did not occur to Smithy to shift it on to innocent shoulders. He was caught—he was "for it"—and that was that! Baiting the beaks was not quite as "safe as houses," as he had declared.

"I shall take into consideration," said the Head, "the fact that you appear to have had some cause of resentment against the master of the Fifth Form. But for that consideration, Vernon-Smith, I should expel you from the school here and now!"

The Bouncer breathed hard.

"I shall, however, administer a severe flogging," said the Head. "I shall endeavour to impress upon your mind, Vernon-Smith, that members of my staff must be treated with respect. Follow me!"

The Head swept from the study, the juniors in the Remove passage making way for him. With a set face the Bouncer followed.

It was some time before the Bouncer was seen again. When he came back to the Remove passage his face was white, his eyes burning, and only too clearly he had been through it, and very severely.

Fellows were sympathetic, but the Bouncer had no use for sympathy. He went straight to his study and slammed the door after him.

THE END.

(Will the Bouncer's narrow squeak teach him a lesson? Time will tell! Watch out next week for "The 'BIG BANG' at GREYFRIARS!" You'll enjoy every line of it, chums!)

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BIRCHEMALL'S BRIGHT IDEA!

Fun Galore in This Week's Instalment of
Dicky Nugent's Spiffing Serial:
"THE ST. SAM'S AMBULANCE!"

THE HEAD'S LECTURE!

"Squad—'shun!"
The Head's command rang out across the quad like thunder, and the ambulance corps obeyed like lightning.

Doctor Birchermall eyed his first-aid squad with something like pride. His lips were twisted into something like a triumphant leer. As he turned to Mr. Lickham, there was something like a choke in his voice.

"This is something like!" he cried. "You see before you, Lickham, an ambulance corps that is trained to the fingertips!"

"Indeed, sir!"
"Yes, indeed, Lickham! There are no slackers in my first-aid squad, I can tell you! Every man is worth his salt—and even if you pepper him with questions you will find him still as keen as mustard!"

"You seem to be paying them plenty of condiments, sir!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "Mite I ask who trained them to this pitch of perfection?"

"Me, of course!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Doctor Birchermall culled feverishly as the master of the Fourth burst into a roar of laughter.

"Dashed if I see anything to cackle at, Lickham!" he snorted. "It's troo, anyway. In the theory and praktiss of first-aid, I'm a proper crack!"

"You mean you're properly cracked, don't you, sir?" sniggered Mr. Lickham. "Nobody but a loony would have thought of running a motor ambulance at St. Sam's. It will never be needed!"

"That's all you know!" growled the Head. "Accidents will happen even in the best-regulated skools, and the motto of the St. Sam's Ambulance is 'Be Prepared.' But enuff of this futile talk. I am just about to deliver a lecture to my corps, Lickham."

The master of the Fourth sat down on the

running-board of the second-hand motor-ambulance which the Head had presented to the corps to listen to the lecture.



Doctor Birchermall turned his attentions to the Fourth Formers who constituted the St. Sam's Ambulance Corps.

"Stand at ease!" he bellowed, in a voice that would have done credit to any sarjent-major.

Then he beckoned to Jack Jolly.

"Mind stepping forward, Jolly!" he asked. "This afternoon's lecture is to be on the subject of 'Common Accidents to the Yewman Body.' I'll use your body as my model!"

Jack Jolly glared.

"Look here, sir, it's a bit thick—"

"Possibly it is, Jolly, but it is not so thick as Tubby Barrell's, and, anyway, it will suit my purpuss!"

"I mean it's a bit thick to use as an iner model the chap who was the kaptein of the corps till you stepped in and took his job!" flashed back Jolly. "Until you put your spoke in, sir, I was the leader of the corps—and a good leader, too, I fancy!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Head's eyes rolled savvidgely as a simper-thettick mermer ran round the ranks.

"Silence, you yung welps!" he roared.

Amid loud booings the Judge said that even a silly chump like Coker was entitled to justice and in the Remove Court he would be sure of getting it. Prisoners would be fined one shilling each and the proceeds would be handed to Mr. Coker.

Immediately his honour had announced the sentence there was an amazing scene. The forty convicted forgers, who had been secretly freed from their bonds during the trial by friends in court, produced pea-shooters and at a word of command from Bolsover major opened rapid-fire on the judge!

Det.-Insp. Penfold was bumped and made to run the gauntlet. The rest of the Remove Police Force escaped by swarming down a drain-pipe outside the courtroom.

We hear that Judge Brown is contemplating barring Mr. Coker from acting as prosecutor in any case under his jurisdiction. But he'll never be able to stop him from acting the giddy goat!

"I'll have dissiplin in this corps if I have to birch you all black and blue to get it! Jolly! You'll stand here at once—or else you won't be able to stand at all!"

"Anything to oblige, sir!" sighed the kaptein of the Fourth.

He stepped to the four, and then the Head picked up a long pointer that lay on the ground and started his lecture.

"Now, boys," he cried, "here we have a common or garden yewman being!"

"Yarooooo!" yelped Jolly, as the Head prodded him viciously with his pointer.

"I propose to deal with the various parts of this yewman being's body, pointing out which parts are most liable to accidental dammidge."

went on Doctor Birchermall, with a leer. "First we have the scalp. Forchuntly, this part of the yewman body is not easily injured. You can hit a man quite hard on the scalp without injuring him. Look at this, for instance!"

Bonk! went the Head's pointer on Jack Jolly's napper, and the kaptein of the Fourth gave another yelp.

"There! No sign whatever of dammidge!" said the Head, triumphantly, as he eggsamined Jolly's head through a magnifying-glass. "Now, boys, descending a little, we find at the side of the face the ears. The ears are quite pliable and can be twisted all over the place without any ill effects. Like so!"

jury, as you can see for yourselves!"

"Yer-ow!" shrieked Jack Jolly. "Leggo by dose!"

"But on the other hand, quite a light punch on this partikular spot is liable to draw blud. Let meshow you what I mean!"

The Head released Jolly's nose and aimed a tremendous blow at it. But Jack Jolly had no intensely of being used as a model for nose-punching eggperiments. He ducked. The result was awfully commical. Instead of hitting Jolly, Doctor Birchermall hit the air, and a moment later he the earth with his own nose. The St. Sam's Ambulance Corps fairly napped, as they saw that he had tapped the elant!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've proved it, sir!"

Proprly speaking, the Head should have been delited with the result of his eggperiment. But, for some reason, he seemed the reverse of delited.

"Yarooooo! Ow-ow-ow! Fetch a doctor! Turned the ambulance! Bandag me up!" he roared, fairly howling with pae and rage.

This ast appeal was too mgh for the yung first-aid students to ignore. There was a rush for the ambulance car and an eager crowd surged across the Head with enuff lndagging for an army.

"Lame do this, you fellows!" cried Jack Jolly.

It was a glorious chance for the kaptein of the Fourth to get a little of his own back. He seized the Head with both hands and started winding him round his face at a speed that made the onlookers quite dizzy.

"Leggo, you yung idjut! That's enuff!" gasped Doctor Birchermall.

But Jack Jolly had by no means finished yet. Not content with bandaging the Head's face, he baniged his neck—and afe: that his shoulders and arms and legs! Doctor Birchermall struggled

gled feveriously; but a crowd of willing helpers held him down, and it was not long before he was changed into an eggcellent imitation of an Egyptian mummy!

Next, they rushed the injured Head on a stretcher into the ambulance car.

Jolly then drove it across to the skool sannytorium and rang the bell. And after that the St. Sam's Ambulance Corps beat a hurried retreat—happy in the nollidge that the Head would give no more first-aid lectures that day!

WHAT TUBBY SAW!

"Anything to report, Jolly?"

Doctor Birchermall poked his ostrich-like neck into the skool garage and asked that question.

It was two days after the Head's disastrous lecture in the quad—two days entirely free from the accidents which the Head so badly wanted to show St. Sam's the troo worth of his ambulance corps.

The old fogey was getting somewhat impatient.

Morning, noon, and nite he kept someone on duty at the ambulance car ready for any emergency. But emergencies obstinately refused to arise!

"Anything to report, Jolly?" repeated the Head, as Jack Jolly clicked his heels and saluted.

"Not a sossidge, sir!" replied the kaptein of the Fourth, with a shake of his head.

Doctor Birchermall tugged his beard uneazily.

"Bless my sole! When ARE we going to get some mishaps?"

"Well, you're a fine one, sir!" laired Jack Jolly. "You sound as if you really want accidents to happen!"

"Of course I do, you yung ass!" snapped the Head. "How can I send in wacking grato bills to patients treated by our Corps unless the accidents happen first?"

"My hat! So that's your little game, sir, is it?"

The Head bit his lip. Unintentionally he had blurted out his secret.

"Nunno, Jolly! Not at all!" he said, with a cough. "My only wish is to help suffering yewmanity. I'd skorn to prophoot out of others' misfortunes!"

"Oh, crums!"

Doctor Birchermall edged off before the kaptein of the Fourth could ask any awkward questions. He left Jolly staring after him with a decidedly suspishus look in his eyes, and tramped off to the tuckshop to



refresh himself with a glass of ginger-pop.

Tubby Barrell, the fattest fellow in the Fourth, was sitting at a table skolling doonnuts when the Head arrived.

Doctor Birchermall was buried too deeply in thought to notice Tubby. But Tubby noticed Doctor Birchermall.

The fat junior blinked when he saw that the Head was talking to himself. Pricking up his fat ears, he listened.

"How to improve trade for the Ambulance Corps? That's the all-important question!"

Doctor Birchermall was saying. "If things go on as they are at present, I shall never even get back the five I paid for the ambulance car—let alone make a prophoot on the deal!"

Doctor Birchermall pawed to gulp down some of his ginger-pop and Tubby gobbled away at his doonnuts.

The next thing Tubby heard was a sudden violent spluttering. The Head had had a sudden

branewave and the egg-sitement had caused some of the ginger-pop to go down the wrong way. But he soon forgot it as he turned over the newly-hatched wheezo in his mind.

"Grate pip! I've got it!" Tubby heard him say to himself. "Why ever didn't I think of it before? If accidents don't happen by themselves, then the only thing to do is to MAKE them happen!"

A moment later, Doctor Birchermall rose from his stool at the counter and stalked out without even a glance at Tubby.

The fat junior rolled



out of the tuckshop, too. His curiosity had been aroused and Tubby had made up his mind to find out eggactly what the Head was going to do.

What Tubby saw in the corse of the next five minnits fairly made him rub his eyes!

First the Head sneaked round to the skool dustbins and fished amongst them till he had brought to light half-a-duzzen banana-skins. Then he proceeded to place the banana-skins in places where fellows were likely to slip up on them.

"Aha!" Tubby heard him mutter, with a sinister lair. "If this duzzent bring us a case or two, I'll eat my mortar-board!"

The Head's next move was to go round lifting the covers off the coal-holes.

When he had completed that task, he obtained a jar of dripping from the skool kitchen and went round stealthily greasing the stairs.

SCHOOL BOOKS SHOULD BE SCRAPPED!

Declares H. VERNON-SMITH

Books, books, books, books!
That's how Bolsover major described the life of a Greyfriars man in the course of a Remove debate last week—and Bolsy's just about right!

There are far too many books in the life of the schoolboy of to-day—particularly the schoolboy who happens to be at Greyfriars!

I'm not going to deny that books can be useful sometimes. A nice heavy Latin dic., so instance, is just the thing to buzz at Bunter's head when he rolls into the study to "borrow" a bob.

But the idea that books are all-important in a chap's education is quite discredited now-a-days. It's time the ruling powers at Greyfriars woke up to that fact!

Modern education experts are all agreed that an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory. Send your boys on a trip to the Arctic circle, they argue, and they'll learn more about geography than they'd learn by reading books on the subject for the rest of their lives. I'm all in favour!

I'd like to start learning geography in the new way right now. And the same goes for other subjects.

How can we ever hope to learn French properly in a stuffy class-room? Give us a trip to France and we'll pick it up in a tenth of the time! Same applies to other modern lingoos. It can't be done, of course, with dead languages like Latin and Greek; but that's merely an argument in favour of abolishing Latin and Greek!

Shakespeare should be acquired in a theatre. I've always thought that, and if the Head ever thinks the same way, you won't find me agitating to go back to Quelch's dreary Shakespearean lectures. I can tell you.

English prose and poetry ought to be read to us—not mugged up during prop. You'd find it would develop our critical faculties far better than present methods—particularly if we were given ink-pellets to shy at the reader every time he read out something we didn't like!

History is another subject that could be learned admirably without books. Films and trips to historical spots would make it far more vivid and real. If there happened to be a war on within a reasonable distance from England, why not a visit to the battle front? That would give you a thrill, lads, with a vengeance!

When I was expounding this idea in the Rag last night, someone objected that there was one subject, anyway, that couldn't be learned without books—maths. He was wrong. Practical maths, in my opinion, should start with noughts and crosses and go on by easy stages to draughts and chess. So that's that!

Education without books is sound all through, as I see it. School books should all be scrapped!

Or alternatively they should be put to a really sensible use—as missiles to chuck at intruders or mawkeweights in booby-traps!

(Don't mind Smithy, you chaps! He's liable to go off like this sometimes.—Ed.)

"That'll do for the present, I fancy!" he grinned, when he had come to the end of the dripping. "Now I'll go and wait for the accidents to happen. I bet it won't be long!"

The Head trotted off chuckling, and Tubby rolled away, feeling quite dizzy over his amazing discovery!

(Will the Head's "sinister" scheme succeed? For the answer read next week's hilarious instalment!)

JUDGE BROWN BECOMES AUNT SALLY!

Forty Forgers Defy Court

Riotous scenes in the Remove Court following the conviction of forty forgers ended in a serious assault on His Honour, Judge Brown.

Space in Court was so severely cramped (writes the "Greyfriars Herald" Police-court reporter) that the Judge was unable to sit at his desk, and had to be lifted up to a perch on top of a cupboard.

The prosecutor, Mr. Horace J. Coker, conducted his own case against the prisoners.

Mr. Coker said that he had put up with a lot of cheek from fags in the past without retaliation (cries of "Great Pip!" and "Draw it mild, old sport!") but this was the last straw. On the previous night he had given a lecture on football. (A voice: "Why

not hopscotch?" and laughter.) He had issued cards of invitation to selected sportsmen and laid in supplies of tuck for the refreshment of his guests. He had anticipated an audience of fifty. To his utter amazement nearly a hundred turned up. They were practically all fags and mostly gained admission on forged invitation cards. Having got in, they calmly ate up all the tuck and then marched out again without waiting to hear a word of the lecture. (A voice: "I don't blame 'em!" and more laughter.)

Det.-Insp. Penfold, giving evidence of arrest, said that it was the biggest job the Remove C.I.D. had ever tackled. Judge Brown (in alarm): "I hope the

prisoners are all handcuffed and chained at present, officer?"

Det.-Insp. Penfold: "Well, not exactly, your honour, but we've got them all tied together with rope—they can't possibly escape."

Mr. Peter Todd, K.C., defending the prisoners, convulsed the Court with his description of the prosecutor. Referring to Mr. Coker as a blundering booby with the brain of a jollyfish, he went on to say that this so-called lecture of his was a typical product of his infantile mentality.

Wasn't it asking for trouble to issue handwritten invites and broadcast the information that there was to be free tuck? Coker deserved all he had got and a good deal more! Mr. Todd concluded with a confident plea for the acquittal of all his clients.

Mr. Todd's confidence, however, proved to be misplaced.

Judge Brown, after a brief deliberation, delivered judgment from his improvised seat and pronounced all the prisoners "Guilty."

"ALIMENTARY," MY DEAR WATSON!

Dick Rake, who played on the wing in a trial game last Saturday, was told that he must always feed his inside-right.

Bunter says he wouldn't need telling a simple thing like that!