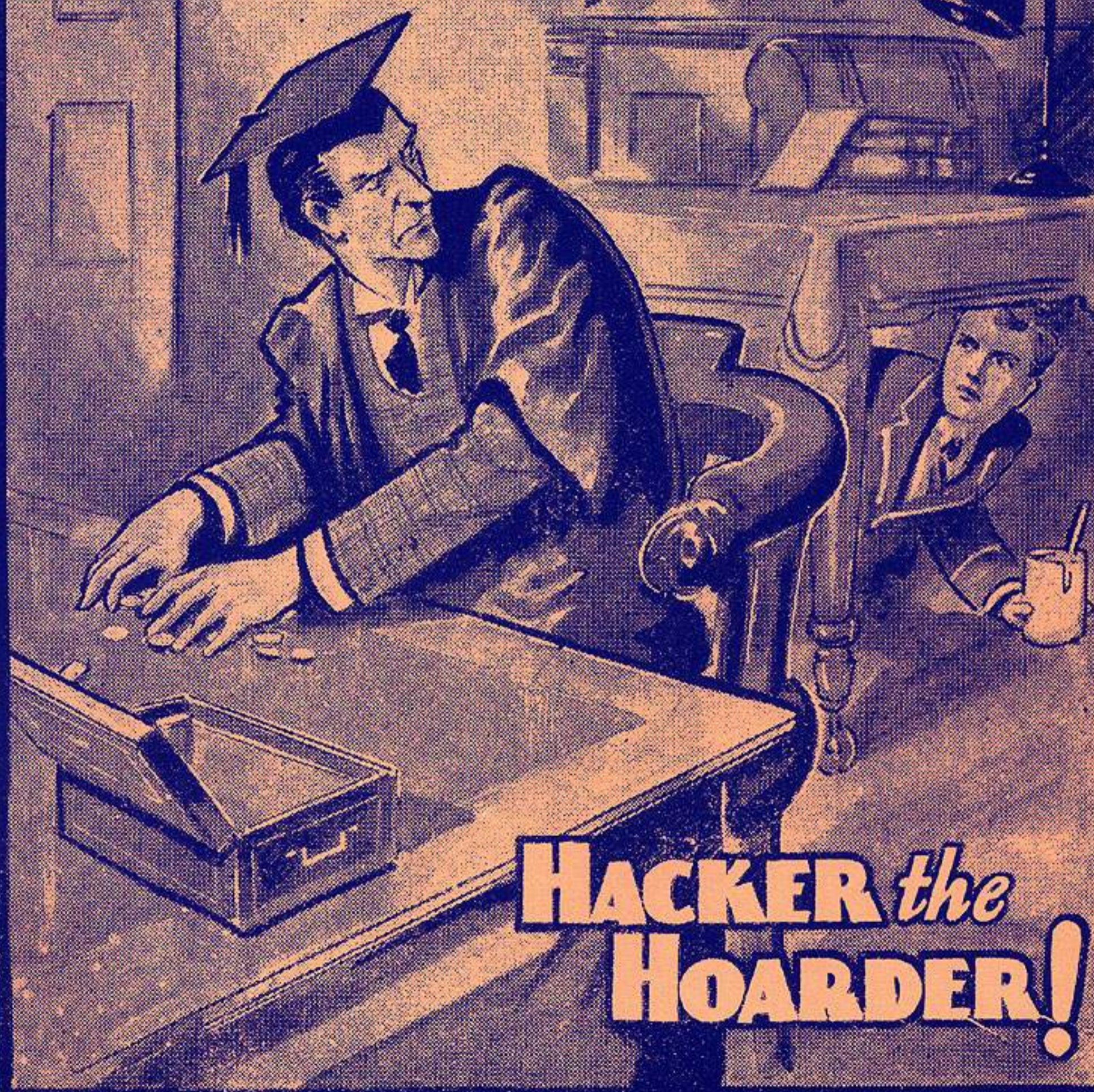


MEET JACK DRAKE, THE SCHOOLBOY 'TEC, AND HARRY WHARTON & CO., INSIDE!

The Magnet ^{2^D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



**HACKER *the*
HOARDER!**



THIS WEEK:

POTTER and GREENE

(Horace Coker's two studymates have collaborated to produce this week's page. We hope Coker reads it!)

WE'RE writing this page together, Greene and myself, and we'll put our initials at the end of whatever we write, so that you'll know who's who. The reason we chose to collaborate was that we each want to talk about Coker, and it might bore you to have two separate pages full of the same opinions. You all know that Coker is a crass fathead—

A burbling, babbling, shrieking, dunder-headed dummy. (W. G.)

A hopeless, helpless, brainless, beetlewitted bandersnatch. (G. P.)

A raving, howling, chattering chump. (W. G.)

A stuttering, staggering—well, anyway, Coker's all that, and lots more. In fact, words fail to describe him. Why his people ever sent him here when there are Homes for Idiots available is a sheer mystery!

Beats me hollow! (W. G.)

But we bear him. He makes life practically loathsome for both of us, but we bear him. One day we shall slay him where he sits; we shall wallow knee-deep in the fathead's gore; but until that happy time, we put up with him. It's all there is to do.

We are going to fill this page with Coker, and get off our united chests a lot of stuff which threatens to choke us. It has to be admitted that Coker is brawny, though not brainy, and when he starts anything, he carries it through to the bitter end. In consequence, having a row with Coker is rather like starting a war. If Greeney and I can stick it long enough, we can get the foot down and jump on him; but by that time we're both practically hospital cases, even though Coker's worse. He never knows when he's had enough—that's his trouble.

One of 'em! (W. G.)

We have tossed up to decide which particular aspects of Coker we shall each deal with, and I'm glad to say I've won Coker's football. (G. P.)

COKER'S FOOTBALL!

Imagine a mad mastodon, the size of a motor-bus, running amuck in the footer field, and you will have some dim and faint idea of what Coker's football is like. It is difficult to describe because there is really nothing with which to compare it. Unless you have seen it for yourself and lived to tell the tale, your brain will refuse to grasp the idea of it.

To begin with, Coker was born offside. As far as I know, he has never been onside in his life—not even at kick-off. If you want to pass the ball to Coker, all you have to do is to kick it to the particular place in which Coker ought not under any circumstances to be. That'll find him first shot.

Coker's charge is like colliding with the 10.30 express, and he reserves this exclusively for his own side. Leaving a trail of bodies behind him—and, of course, the ball—he rushes up the field towards his own goal, and would doubtless damage the goalie considerably if he did not, on the way, become involved in an argument with the ref.

No referee is safe with Coker. He believes in making a terrible example of the referee, because he knows so much more about the game than any ref. Coker will, without the slightest hesitation, biff the referee in the eye. Orders to leave the field are treated with contempt. Coker is quite satisfied with his own play, and we all know that even a pneumatic drill could get nothing through Coker's skull.

To crown all, Coker couldn't kick the ball into the goal if it was standing quite still on the goal-line with nobody anywhere near.

The only time he gets it into the goal is by accident, and always—always—into his own goal. The other team's goalie can take a day off so far as Coker is concerned.

This is the fellow who raves because Wingato won't play him in the 1st XI. One weeps! It's no good talking to Coker. One merely weeps!

The born dummy! (G. P.)

COKER'S SPELLING!

Would you believe that a frumpitious fat-head in the Fifth Form could write a literature exercise like this:

The old Mare klined the belphey tower,
The wringers ran by two, by three.
"Pool, if ye never pooled befour,
Good wringers, pool yore best," kwoth he.
"Play upp; play upp, O Boston bells,
Play awl yore changes, awl yore swells,
Play upp the Brighed of Enderby!"

Prout foamed, of course. He asked if Coker had ever seen a female horse climbing a church tower, and why Coker had alluded to the "mare" as "he." He said he would accept Coker's word that the head of the Boston Town Council was a carhorse, but he could hardly believe that the Boston church bells were played by a set of "wringers," or kitchen mangles.

Coker told us afterwards that Prout was fearfully ignorant.

He said he had a good mind to tell him so. We believed Coker capable of it, but we refused to credit that he had a dashed good mind.

We did not think he had a mind at all.

Coker's spelling, in fact, is on a par with all the rest of Coker's achievements. Only this morning he treated me to an hour's jaw because I ventured to suggest that there was no "j" in "imaginary." (Only an imaginary one.—G. P.) He said I was ignorant. Every one is ignorant, except Coker. The shrieking idiot! (W. G.)

COKER'S CUSTOM!

For some inexplicable reason, H. J. C. thinks himself by far the most important man at Greyfriars. He imagines he's quite safe from the sack because the school couldn't spare him. No amount of argument can change that view.

He seems to think he's a sort of unofficial prefect, and that he has only to give an order for it to be obeyed. If a Remove fag doesn't obey him, Coker calls in the Remove passage to "whop" him. He collects what virtually amounts to manslaughter, but it does no good. He's back again next day for another dose. Short of killing Coker, there's no way of impressing him.

The crass lunatic! (G. P.)

COKER'S CHUMS! By Both Of 'Em

Our study is ah Coker. We don't come into the picture, except to listen while Coker jaws. The fact that we both play in the 1st XI, while Coker wouldn't be picked for a team of bunny rabbits, doesn't count. Potter won the Grammar and History prizes last term. Coker's knowledge of Grammar and History is nil, or even less than that; but that doesn't stop him lecturing Potter on Grammar and History. (W. G.)

Greene won the Divinity and Second Classics prize. Coker's papers took no marks for anything; in fact, he owes a few marks on some of them. That doesn't stop him lecturing Greene on Classics and Divinity. The sniggering bonehead! (G. P.)

The cackling fathead! (W. G.)

The blithering blockhead! (G. P.)

And etcetera! We can't tell you what Coker is, or we shall fill the whole paper. But what we want to know is, would it be counted as justifiable homicide if we did Coker in? Surely no jury in the land could convict us for that? Even if the judge gave us 14 days each for it, we wouldn't mind. We'd do it willingly. What do you think, Mr. Editor?

(EDITOR'S NOTE.—I shouldn't recommend it, personally, unless you could bring it off under the Destruction of Vermin Act.)

Anyway, there it is. Sorry if we haven't told you much about ourselves, but we're nothing, you know. All we can do is to pay our graceful tribute to Coker.

The dummy!
The chump!

GEORGE POTTER.
WILLIAM GREENE.



"THE OLD MARE"

GEORGE POTTER AND WILLIAM GREENE

Fifth Form



George Potter W. Greene

Coker's two chums are normally quiet fellows, studious and well-behaved, with a decided taste for sport. Of the two, George Potter is more assertive and has a stronger character than Greene; but the truth is they are both fellows of much the same temperament. They would prefer to lead a quiet life of study and sport. They never do. Coker's forceful personality sees to that. Against their will Potter and Greene are dragged into all manner of shindies, and are forced to listen by the hour when Coker declaims against beaks and prefects. Most fellows wouldn't put up with it, but their motto is "Anything for a quiet life!" Potter's home is in London; Greene's on the Sussex coast. They are both going to the 'Varsity when they leave Greyfriars, but not with Coker!

(Cartoon By HAROLD SKINNER.)

Backing "certs" is an easy way of raking in the shekels! At least, so thinks Gerald Loder. But instead of winning forty pounds, the sportsman of the Sixth finds himself in debt to the tune of ten pounds! And he doesn't possess as many shillings! What's he to do?

GUILTY GOLD! *By* FRANK RICHARDS



As Crocker untied the knot in the handkerchief, a yellow gleam caught the sunlight from the window. "Quids!" he exclaimed in amazement, "Sovereigns! Great gad! Where did you pick these up, Loder?"

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bob On The Warpath!

"BOB, old man——"

"Rats!"

"Don't be an ass!"

"More rats!"

"Look here, Bob——"

"Are you wound up?" inquired Bob Cherry.

Argument was waxing warm among the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove.

Four members of the famous Co. were trying to dissuade the other member—Bob Cherry! Bob was not to be dissuaded.

Bob's face, generally as bright and cheery as the spring sunshine, was clouded. It was grim with wrath. For once, the best temper in the Remove had failed its owner!

Bob seldom, or never, remembered offences for long. But it was not ten minutes since a heavy hand had boxed his ear! That ear was still scarlet, and had a pain in it!

Not that Bob was a fellow to make a fuss about a spot of pain. But ears were not boxed at Greyfriars School! It was an indignity. It was one of the things that were not done! Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, often did things that were not done! And if Hacker fancied that he could box the ears of a Remove man, Hacker had a lesson yet to learn—which Bob Cherry was prepared to teach!

Bob was at the corner of Masters' Passage—clearly heading for Hacker's

study—when his friends swooped down on him and brought him to a halt. He had a can of red paint in his hand. They could guess what he was going to do with it! And they were going to stop him, if they could!

Masters' Passage was not generally a spot where juniors could gather and argue! But it was safe at the moment—owing to the fact that there was a Masters' Meeting in the library. There was, at the moment, not a single beak

HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS, and JACK DRAKE, the SCHOOLBOY 'TEC, IN ANOTHER EX- CITING SCHOOLBOY AD- VENTURE.

in his study! So the coast was quite clear.

"Bob, old chap——" said Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent together persuasively.

"My esteemed Bob——" urged Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Chuck it, old man!" said Johnny Bull. "Do chuck it! Hacker's no end of a toad, but you can't rag a beak!"

"Can't I?" said Bob Cherry grimly. Bob seemed to think that he could! "I'm going to, anyhow! The Acid Drop pulled Bunter's ear the other day

—now he's smacked mine! He may wish he had kept his cheaky paws to himself when he gets this on his napper when he comes back to his study after the jolly old Masters' Meeting."

"You did bargo into him, you know!" murmured Harry Wharton.

Snort from Bob.

"How could I help barging into him, turning a corner, when he walks as soft as a cat and nobody can hear him coming?" he demanded.

"A fellow ain't supposed to charge round a corner like a bull!" suggested Nugent, with a grin.

"And a beak ain't supposed to creep round a corner like a cat!" retorted Bob. "Anyhow, he could report me to Quelch if he wasn't satisfied. If he smacks my head, he gets something back—and this is it! Now stop jawing and let me pass, before somebody comes along."

"But, look here——" urged Harry.

"Oh my hat!" exclaimed Bob. "Are you going on for ever? It will take some time to fix this up over Hacker's door and get out of his window. Do you want him to come back and catch me at it?"

"Don't do it, old bean! There'll be a fearful row—you really can't fix up booby-traps in a master's study——"

"I'm going to!"

"Hacker will raise Cain——"

"Yes—I want to hear him raising Cain! He will raise Cain all right with this can of paint on his neck!" agreed Bob.

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"You can't—"
 "Hats!"
 "You shan't!"
 "Will you let me pass, fathead?"
 hooted Bob.

"No!" said Harry Wharton determinedly. "I jolly well won't! You're not going to land yourself with a Head's flogging! Bag him, you fellows, and walk him off!"

Four pairs of hands grabbed at Bob. No member of the Co. had any objection in principle to a rag on the Acid Drop. They did not like the Acid Drop, and the Acid Drop did not like them; and a can of red paint on Hacker's head would have entertained them—but for the probable, almost certain, consequences. They willingly admitted that Hacker deserved it, and more; but they did not want Bob Cherry hauled up before Dr. Locke for a flogging! So, as Bob was too excited and wrathful to take care of himself, his friends were going to take care of him! They grabbed at him, to walk him off by main force for his own good!

But if Bob could not take care of himself, he was not an easy fellow to take care of! As his devoted pals grabbed him, he gave Harry Wharton a shove with the can of paint in his right hand that caused the captain of the Remove to sit down suddenly in Masters' Passage. With his left he shoved Johnny Bull, and Johnny sat down on Wharton's legs, bumping.

Almost in the twinkling of an eye he shouldered Frank Nugent, who staggered against the wall, and started up the passage with Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh clinging to his arm. A twist of that arm and the Nabob of Bhanipur was jerked over, falling on his knees.

Bob, for the moment, was free! In that moment he cut up the passage at a speed he had never excelled on the football field!

Wharton and Johnny Bull scrambled up. Four juniors were left staring as Bob reached the door of Mr. Hacker's study up the passage.

"Oh!" gasped Johnny Bull. "The cheeky ass! After him!"

Hacker's door opened and shut. Bob Cherry disappeared into the master of the Shell's study.

"The silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

The Co. exchanged dubious looks. Following Bob into Hacker's study and renewing the argument there was not an attractive idea. True, the masters were all in the library and the coast was clear. But a rough-and-tumble in a beak's study was an awfully serious matter. On the other hand, there was a fearful row ahead of Bob Cherry if he got on with that rag on Hacker.

A fat figure rolled round the corner into Masters' Passage while they stood in doubt. Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"Oh, here you are!" he said. "I say, you fellows, I've been looking for you."

"Go and look for somebody else!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Roll away, Bunter!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"What about tea?"

"Blow tea! Blow you! Blow away!"

"I say, you fellows, are you ragging here?" asked Bunter, blinking at the Co. curiously. "Better not let Hacker catch you at it."

"Hacker's at the Masters' Meeting, fathead!"

"Is he?" grinned Bunter. "He jolly well isn't! If he went, he jolly well left early—I saw him only a minute ago."

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Four fellows jumped.

"What!" exclaimed Harry. "Where?"

"Coming here—"

"Oh crumbs!"

It was utterly dismaying news to the Co. Hacker, of course, might have left Masters' Meeting early; only they had not thought of it! If he was coming there, as Bunter stated—

There was no "if" about it! They did not hear Hacker coming—the Acid Drop was seldom heard coming. But a lean figure in cap and gown came round the corner, hardly a minute after Bunter—Hacker, evidently on his way to his study! The master of the Shell stopped and fixed a cold eye on the flushed juniors.

"What are you Remove boys doing here?" he asked sharply.

"Oh!" stammered Harry. "Nothing special, sir—"

"You are perfectly aware," said Mr. Hacker, "that junior boys are not allowed to gather in this passage. Go away at once."

There was no help for it! Chasing Bob into Hacker's study was not practical politics now. The Co. departed from the spot—Billy Bunter rolling after them; and Horace Hacker, with a grunt, walked on to his study and opened the door thereof.

With his hand on the door he glanced back along the passage.

He was not surprised to see a face peering round the corner; he suspected that those juniors were up to something in that forbidden quarter. Harry Wharton was looking round the corner up the passage, anxious for Bob! Hacker, with one hand on the door, waved the other bony hand at him.

"Go away at once, Wharton!" he called out in his sharpest tones.

The face at the corner disappeared. And Mr. Hacker, with a grunt, turned to enter his study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hacker's Hoard!

BOB CHERRY stared round wrathfully as the door of Hacker's study opened.

Bob was standing at the study table, prising off the lid of the paint-can. When the door opened he naturally supposed that his friends had followed on, and he stared wrathfully, expecting to see them at the door.

He almost fell down at the sight of Hacker.

Hacker, he had supposed, was safe at the meeting in the library with the other beaks. He had supposed that he had ample time on hand. That, evidently, was an error. There was Hacker!

Had Mr. Hacker walked straight into his study after opening the door he could not have failed to see the startled junior there; but as it happened that Hacker was looking down the passage towards the corner where the Co. had been, he did not immediately look into the study after opening the door.

Bob had a few seconds.

He saw Hacker, but Hacker for the moment did not see him. Bob realised that he was not yet seen, and he was quick. One glimpse of that bony profile was enough for him.

He ducked.

In a split second his head was below the level of the study table; in one second more he was under the table, paint-can in hand.

Instinctively he had taken quick cover. His friends' dissuasions had had no effect on him, but he knew what to

expect if the Acid Drop spotted him there with the can of paint.

Hacker would walk him off, either to Mr. Quelch, his Form-master, or to the Head, and that box on the ear which had disgruntled him so much would be a mere nothing compared with what would follow.

Under the study table Bob hardly breathed. He supposed that Hacker had come back for some paper or other wanted at the Masters' Meeting. The sooner he got it and went, the better Bob was going to be pleased.

Hacker walked in.

Obviously he had not seen Bob and did not suspect that he was there. Rather to Bob's dismay, he closed the door; to his surprise and further dismay, he locked it. That did not look as if Hacker had come back to the study for some paper or other; it looked as if he had come to stay.

Likewise, it looked as if Bob's game was up. He might remain concealed for a few minutes; he could not remain hidden if Hacker stayed in the study. If Hacker sat down at the table Bob would be in the way of his feet. Bob Cherry realised just then that he would have acted more wisely in giving ear to the counsels of his friends. He realised that rather too late for it to be of much use to him.

But Hacker did not sit at the table. There was a desk in the corner of his study by the window; he crossed to the desk and sat down at it.

Bob did not stir.

But he had little hope left. Hacker had his back to him, but now that he was sitting down he would see under the table if he glanced round. All depended on whether the Acid Drop glanced round.

However, Hacker did not glance round yet. He took a key-ring from his pocket, selected a key, and unlocked the desk. From the interior of the desk he took a little tin box, which he also unlocked.

Clink, clink, clink!

The musical sound of metal clinking reached Bob's ears. He could only wonder what Hacker was up to.

It was such a sound as might have been caused by some kid handling his money-box. But he could hardly suppose that a Form-master of Greyfriars kept a money-box in his desk.

He heard Hacker give a grunt.

The Acid Drop's face was partly turned, and he could see, staring from under the table, that it was wrinkled with worried thought. And at the same time he could hardly repress an exclamation of surprise as he caught the gleam of gold in the sunshine from the window.

Hacker was counting coins in that tin box at his desk—and they were gold coins. Sovereigns!

Bob could only stare. Every now and then he had seen that agreeable pre-War coin the sovereign—long banished from use and superseded by printed money. He had never expected to see a handful of them. Hacker had a bony hand full, and was clinking them back into the tin box, counting them as they clinked.

"Fifteen," Bob heard him mutter. "Safe so far!"

Then Bob understood.

Hacker was not visiting a store of secret wealth, counting it over like a miser; he was simply ascertaining that it was still safe—for since the Greyfriars prowler had been prowling at night in the school nobody was quite safe from pilfering.

For weeks that prowler had prowled and had never been caught; he had



"Ow! Oooogh! Aytishoo! Grooogh!" gurgled Bunter. "Ow! Beasts! Pip-plp-pepper!" "Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the landing, as the fat Removite, clawing at a large mouth, tottered from Study No. 1.

suffered in several masters' rooms. Hacker evidently was not feeling wholly easy about that tin box in his desk and its contents.

The Acid Drop was a worrying man by nature; he worried his Form and he worried himself; he indulged in worry as if it were a sort of entertainment.

He worried about whether the Income Tax was going to rise, and whether Consols were going to fall. He worried about whether there was going to be a war—and even about whether he would get damaged if there was a war! Hacker's personal safety seemed an important thing—to Hacker—and he worried about it. He worried about whether there would be a food shortage if there was a war. He worried about whether the banks would break, and paper money lose its value. No doubt that was why he had parked that fistful of quids secretly—like other nervous and uneasy people.

Now he had some more cause for his favourite occupation—worry. The mystery man of Greyfriars who prowled by night had pinched from several studies. Suppose he selected Hacker's next!

Hacker had parked that fistful of gold coins for his own behoof—certainly not for the prowler's!

"The bank!" Bob heard him mutter. But he shook his head.

Banks might be bombed if there was a war. And Hacker, like so many worriers, always fancied that war was just round the corner. Every time there was a crisis Hacker fancied that the crash was coming. It never came—but he always expected it at the next crisis.

His little hoard was safer under his hand than in a bank that might be bombed. On the other hand there was that mysterious prowler—prowling week after week with impunity.

Really it was quite an awkward situation for a worrying gentleman whose thoughts and cares were wholly concentrated on himself.

Suddenly Hacker moved, and his glance fell in the direction of the study table.

His eyes met Bob's—staring at him.

Hacker gave such a startled bound at the amazing and unexpected sight that the tin box dropped from his hand, the sovereigns scattered on his desk, and two or three dropped to the floor.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Oh!" echoed Bob.

He was discovered.

He emerged from under the table. The game was up now with a vengeance. Hacker had caught him—fairly caught him!

"Cherry!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

He rose from the desk. The expression on his face was almost terrifying. The paint-can clutched in Bob's hand was in full view. It revealed why Bob was there. Hacker could guess now why the other juniors had been waiting at the corner of the passage; they had known—though Hacker had not—that Bob was in that study.

"You young rascal!" exclaimed Hacker. He clutched a cane from his table. "Cherry, I shall—"

He paused as one of the fallen sovereigns gleaming in the spring sunlight caught his eye on the floor. He stooped and picked it up; he picked up another and another.

Bob watched him. Hacker replaced the coins in the tin box and closed the desk. He turned to Bob with a flushed face.

The cane was gripped almost convulsively in his hand. Plainly he was yearning to lay it round the junior in the study. But he did not—and Bob wondered why he did not. Certainly it

was not for the master of the Sholl to cane a Remove man; he should have taken him to his Form-master. But it was not that consideration that gave Hacker pause.

"Cherry!" His voice came gasping. "You—you have been—been spying on—"

Bob flushed crimson.

"I've been doing nothing of the kind—and you know it!" he almost shouted. "I couldn't help seeing you at your desk as I was here! I came here to rag your study because you smacked my head—and you jolly well know it!"

He expected the swish of the cane after that—but the cane did not swish!

"You—you saw—" breathed Mr. Hacker.

"How could I help it?" snapped Bob. "Think I was going to let you spot me here if I could help it?"

Mr. Hacker's eyes glittered at him. Still he held his temper in check, and the cane did not rise.

"Cherry, you deserve severe punishment—the severest punishment! But—but I do not care to have this—this matter tattled up and down the school. If—if I can trust you not to tattle about this—"

"Oh!" said Bob. He understood now. Hacker naturally did not want his secret store of quids to become the talk of Greyfriars. He did not want to see sarcastic smiles on masters' faces in Common-room. He did not want to become a standing joke among the fags. He wanted Bob to say nothing about those quids. That was why the cane did not whop! "Oh, I'm not a chatter-box, sir! I'm not going to cackle about anything I've seen here—"

Hacker's sharp eyes searched his face. Sharp and suspicious as the Acid Drop

was, even he could not quite distrust that honest face.

"If you give me your word, Cherry—"

"Certainly, sir!"

"I—I shall trust you—"

"I'm not a tattler, sir!" said Bob. "I shall say nothing! Why should I?"

Hacker gave him another searching look. Then he crossed to the door, and unlocked it.

"Very well!" he said. "You may go!"

Never had a fellow been gladder to go! Bob could hardly believe in his good luck as Hacker's door closed after him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bad Luck For Loder!

GERALD LODER, of the Sixth Form at Greyfriars, sat at the side window in the Prefects' Room—and scowled.

Near at hand was the telephone. Every now and then Loder's eyes turned on that instrument, and it was plain that he was expecting a call. When he was not looking at the telephone, he looked out of the window; not because he was specially interested in anything in the quad, but chiefly to keep his face turned from other fellows in the Prefects' Room.

Loder's face was not merely ill-tempered. It was uneasy, apprehensive; and he did not want other seniors to notice that he was in the unhappy state called the jitters.

His pals, Walker and Carne, had spoken to him—receiving only a grunt by way of reply. Upon which, Walker and Carne had walked away rather indignantly, leaving Loder to himself. Walker and Carne were prefects, but

Loder had lost that rank, and their idea was that the chap might at least be civil; he no longer had any right in the Prefects' Room at all, unless a prefect asked him in.

Loder, however, clearly had no civility to waste, even on his pals. He was glad when they went, and he would have been glad if the other fellows in the room had gone; he did not want other ears to hear his phone call, when it came. But the three or four Sixth Form men in the room showed no sign of going.

He scowled again more blackly as he looked from the window. A Remove junior passed in his view: Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

It was Smithy whom Loder had suspected—and still suspected—of being the mysterious prowler. So certain had Loder felt of that, that he had taken measures to prove his case which had evoked the wrath of the headmaster, and caused him to be degraded from his rank of prefect. Bagging a fellow's keys and searching his box was not the sort of thing that Dr. Locke expected from his prefects. Loder had relied on proving his case to justify his methods; but he had failed to prove it.

But Loder did not blame his own methods for his fall—he blamed Smithy, and he gave him the blackest of black looks as he sauntered past that window.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, catching sight of the scowling face, grinned at it, and paused, coming nearer the window, which was open.

"What the dickens are you doing there, Loder?" he asked.

Loder stared and scowled.

"What do you mean, you cheeky young cad?" he snapped.

"You're not a prefect now—what are

you doing in the Prefects' Room? Waiting for Wingate to turf you out?"

Loder breathed hard and deep. In his days as a prefect he would have called the Bounder in and given him six for that! Now he could no more give Smithy six than Smithy could give him six! The glory had departed from the House of Israel, so to speak!

"You cheeky young cub!" he muttered.

"You cheeky Sixth Form swab!" retorted Smithy. And he walked on, laughing, leaving Loder looking blacker than ever. Loder of the Sixth had a lot of this sort of thing to put up with from cheeky juniors. In his days of power he had wielded the official ash rather too freely to make him popular in the Lower School.

He glanced at the telephone again. Still no ring came, and he turned once more to the window. From that side window he had a view of a row of tall windows—those of the Masters' Studies. His glance fell on one window at which a bony figure was visible. He scowled once more at the sight of Mr Hacker in his study.

Hacker had given him no special offence—he had nothing to do with the Sixth. Still, he did not like Hacker—few fellows did, if any. And he was in a mood to scowl at anybody or anything. Loder was up against a spot of trouble—not unconnected with the sport of kings.

Often and often had Loder's gee-gees let him down. He had an unusually generous allowance, but quite a lot of it went in backing losers. Still, he hugged the elusive hope of that wonderful winner which was going to recoup all his losses, and put him in funds again.

If Cheerful Charley won that afternoon, Loder was going to be on velvet. But was Cheerful Charley going to win?

The sportsman of the Sixth had felt quite assured of it when he backed that gee-gee. Since then doubts had accrued—for the price had lengthened and lengthened.

He had backed that gee-gee at four to one—but later, he could have got seven or eight to one, which showed what the bookies thought of his chances. And, in the hope of seeing himself clear by a big win, Loder had put his shirt on Cheerful Charley! If the brute let him down, Loder really did not know what was going to happen!

That was why he was waiting, anxious and scowling, for a telephone call. If only it would come—and put him out of his anxiety! Still it did not come, and for want of something better to do, he stared across at Hacker's window, at the master of the Shell. He was not in the least interested in Hacker, but Hacker was the only person in his view.

Suddenly, however, he became a little interested. Hacker, who was seated at a desk near his study window, made a sudden bound. He had something in his hand which had hitherto been hidden from sight—but as he jumped up it fell from his hand, and Loder saw what it was—a small tin box!

That was not all that Loder saw! In startled surprise, he caught a gleam of gold as a number of sovereigns fell from the falling box.

It was only a glimpse, but Loder had seen it. But for Hacker's sudden bound, he would have seen and noticed nothing, except that the master of the Shell was sitting at his desk. Now, however, he had.

Loder stared, and his lip curled. It was like that nervous old ass Hacker to keep a handful of quids parked in his desk, he reflected.



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Hacker disappeared from his sight, moving farther back in his study. Loder turned once more to the telephone. He wondered if that ring would ever come, and whether he was ever going to get news of Cheerful Charley!

"Loder!" Wingate of the Sixth had come into the Prefects' Room. He glanced round, and came across to Loder.

"Well?" rapped Loder. The captain of the school was the very last fellow he wanted at hand when that phone call came! Sixth Form men, whether prefects or not, were not supposed to get racing news over the telephone; and George Wingate was head prefect, as well as captain of Greyfriars.

"I've been going to speak to you, Loder." Wingate stood by the window, and he spoke in a rather subdued voice, so as not to be heard by the other seniors in the room.

"Another time," muttered Loder. "No time like the present," said Wingate, "and you don't seem fearfully busy at the moment. It's a rather serious matter, Loder."

Loder, breathing hard, hoped that that telephone call would not come through now, anxious as he was to hear it.

"Well, cut it short!" he grunted. "What's the row?"

"I don't know whether there may be a row!" said the Greyfriars captain quietly. "That depends on you. I want to know whether you've had anything to do with that shady sweep Crocker at the Abbot's Spinney."

Loder started. "Of course not!" he stammered. "The Head's put the spinney out of bounds since Sportsman Crocker set up there. Think I'm a fag to go sneaking out of bounds?"

"That man Crocker," said Wingate, in the same quiet tone, "is a bad egg all through. He's an old boy of Greyfriars, expelled twenty years ago for pub-crawling, followed by pinching. Everybody knows that he's come back and fixed himself almost at the school gates, out of malice towards the Head. But that's not all."

"Well?" grunted Loder. "It's more than suspected that he has wangled dealings with Greyfriars fellows—smuggling in cigarettes, and taking bets for fellows who ought to know better. Are you one of those fellows?"

"That question's an insult!" muttered Loder. "Perhaps you think you can talk to me as you like, now I'm no longer a prefect."

"I don't want to rub that in! But—fellows have been seen there, and at least one senior was seen scuttling away the other day—Hacker was passing the place, and actually saw him."

Loder set his lips. "That meddling old goat! Hacker's always discovering some mare's-nest. He's had a row with Quelch this term, from fancying that some Remove kids were up to something—Wharton and his gang—"

"I know. But what he saw, he saw," answered Wingate. "He doesn't claim to identify the fellow. He knows that it was a senior, that's all. But it's rather a serious matter, Loder, so I made some inquiries, and I've found that you were out of gates at the time, and, so far as I can find, no other man in the Sixth was."

"Might have been a Fifth Form man," suggested Loder.

"It might have been, of course," said Wingate slowly. "There are one or two bad hats in Prout's Form. But—"

"But you're rather sure it was a Sixth Form man—especially one named

Loder?" sneered the sportsman of the Sixth.

"No; I only want to know." "Well, you know now I've told you." "Leave it at that, then," said Wingate. "I'm bound to take your word. But—"

Buzzzzzzzz! It was the telephone. Wingate broke off, turned to the instrument, and picked up the receiver. Loder made a convulsive movement.

That call was for him. It might, of course, be a call for some other fellow—perhaps for Wingate himself. But as Loder was sitting there, waiting for a call, ready to grab the receiver at the first tinkle, the probability was that it was the call he was expecting. And Wingate was taking it!

There was no help for it. The head prefect naturally took up the receiver as he was there. Loder dared not claim the call. If it was the one he was expecting, he had to deny all knowledge of it, with Wingate on the spot.

"Hallo!" came a voice through: Loder was near enough to hear it as well as Wingate, and he shivered as he recognised the voice. It was his call. "Hallo! Is that you, Loder?"

Wingate's face had a sudden, startling change. He knew that voice as well as Gerald Loder. He had heard it often enough when Randolph Crocker, the disreputable old boy of Greyfriars, had butted in at the school, to make himself offensive there.

Wingate's face set hard. He answered, very distinctly: "No, Mr. Crocker, it's not Loder!" And he jammed back the receiver, cutting off.

Loder sat very still. He hardly dared raise his eyes as Wingate turned to him.

It was a relief that the Greyfriars captain had cut off so sharply. He had, at all events, heard nothing about Cheerful Charley or Lantham races. But he knew that Sportsman Crocker had rung up Loder on the telephone in the Prefects' Room. Loder's heart almost ceased to beat as he felt Wingate's eyes on his face.

"Well?" said Wingate grimly. "Well?" muttered Loder huskily. "You've just told me that you don't know that man Crocker."

"I don't!" "Crocker's just asked for you on the phone."

"Like his cheek! I know nothing about it," breathed Loder. "One of his tricks, I suppose. He's always up to something to make himself a nuisance."

There was a brief silence. "Very well," said Wingate, at last. "Let it go at that for the present. You had better be careful, Loder. And don't come into this room again, unless the Head puts you back among the prefects. Whether you know Crocker or not, you're not going to get any more calls on this phone. If you've got any sense, Loder, you'll take a tip from this, and steer clear of bad trouble."

Loder, without replying, rose from the window-seat and walked out of the Prefects' Room. He had had a narrow escape, and for some time that was sufficient to fill his thoughts. But the pressing question returned to his harassed mind. Had Cheerful Charley won, or hadn't he? He was not going to learn the result of the four o'clock at Lantham by telephone now, that was clear. And Gerald Loder at last put on his hat and walked down to the gates. Risk or no risk, he had to know. So much depended on the performance that afternoon of that uncertain gee-gee, Cheerful Charley!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Whose Overcoat?

"AN overcoat?" "Yes." "On the statue?" "That's it."

"How very odd!" said James Duck, the now junior, in the Greyfriars Remove, with his innocent blink through his steel-rimmed glasses.

"Ho, he, he!" from Billy Bunter. "Shut up, Bunter! What are you cackling at?" snapped Skinner. "He, he, he!" cackled Bunter, unheeding.

Other fellows in the group in the quad did not find it easy to repress a chuckle, but they tried hard. They did not want to spoil Skinner's jape on that simple new kid, James Duck.

There were a dozen Remove fellows in the crowd. They were standing by the fountain in the quad. In the middle of the big granite basin rose a stone statue—considerably defaced by time and weather, but said to be that of some ancient governor of Greyfriars. James Duck blinked at that stone statue, and then blinked at Skinner.

Harold Skinner's face was perfectly serious. Skinner could keep his face straight when he was telling the tale. But the tale he was telling the duffer of the Remove made it difficult for the other fellows to keep straight faces. It was too much for Billy Bunter. He cackled explosively.

"Every new fellow is expected to do it," explained Skinner. "It's a sort of test of pluck, see? You've got pluck, Duck."

"It's so nice of you to say so, Skinner!" bleated James Duck.

"Oh, yes; I'm a nice chap!" gasped Skinner. "Well, get on with it, old chap. We're all waiting to see you do it. Cut in and fetch your overcoat, and stick it on the statue. Every new fellow does it, and fellows really won't respect you if you funk it."

The juniors gazed at Duck. James Duck was well known, by this time, to be an absolute ass—the biggest dud and duffer that had ever happened in the Greyfriars Remove. Even Billy Bunter was no fool, compared with Duck. But it seemed hardly credible that even an ass like Duck could be taken in with a tale like this.

But Duck seemed to have no doubts. "Thank you, so much for telling me, Skinner!" he said gratefully. "I will go and fetch an overcoat at once."

And the fathead of the Form ambled off to the House.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, who was in the crowd round the fountain. "Is even that ass silly ass enough for that?"

"Isn't he silly ass enough for anything?" chuckled Vernon-Smith.

"Absolute idiot!" said Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows, fancy Duck climbing up there and sticking his overcoat on the governor's statue!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Oh crikey! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he's a coughdrop, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry, laughing. "But you'd better not let him do it, Skinner. There'll be a row if a beak spots an overcoat on that jolly old image."

"That's Duck's look-out!" said Skinner, shrugging his shoulders. "Ten to one he will never get it there; he will flop into the water."

"A hundred to one, I think!" said the Bouncer. "That clumsy ass falls over his own feet! Catch him climbing up on that statue!"

"You snut up, Cherry!" said Bolsover major. "Don't you spoil a jape. A ducking won't hurt Duck—do him good!"

"I say, you fellows, he will get wet!" chortled Bunter. "Ho, he, he!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hero he comes!"

James Duck came cutting back from the House with an overcoat over his arm. He dropped it—in a puddle—as he came, which was just like that clumsy ass Duck, and evoked a chortle from the Removites. He picked it up again, slung it over his arm, and came panting up.

"Now, go it!" said Skinner. "Not funky, what?"

"Oh, no; not at all!" bleated Duck.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob. "Is he really fool enough?"

Evidently James Duck was! With the coat slung over his shoulder, he clambered on the broad granite rim of the fountain. He stood there, watched by every eye, blinking at the stone statue in the centre. It was a wide basin, and quite a good jump was required to land on the pedestal on which the statue stood, just above the level of the water.

That narrow stone ledge was wet and slippery. A fellow landing on it was only too likely to slip off before he could get a safe grasp on the statue and hold himself on, and few fellows would have liked to risk it. Skinner himself, certainly, would never have willingly taken it on.

No one expected Duck to make the jump safely. They fully expected him to splash down into the fountain, overcoat and all. James Duck, the dud of the Form, was really the least likely fellow at Greyfriars to perform such a difficult feat successfully.

The juniors watched him eagerly. He made a sudden jump, but, to the general surprise, no splash followed.

Difficult as that jump was, James Duck landed lightly on the stone ledge by the statue, and grasped the latter, getting a safe hold.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Skinner, rather blankly.

"That chap can't be such a fool as he looks!" exclaimed Bob. "Blessed if I'd like to make that jump!"

"Fools have luck!" remarked the Bounder.

"I say, you fellows, he'll go in, jumping back!" chuckled Billy Bunter.

"Up he goes!" said Bob.

Duck was clambering on the statue. He seemed unexpectedly active for a dud and a duffer. He held on safely enough, while he draped the overcoat round the stone back and buttoned the collar round the statue's stone neck.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors howled at the sight of that ancient statue with an overcoat on! It was the first time it had ever been so clad! James Duck looked round owlishly through his steel-rimmed glasses, as if surprised by the laughter.

"Is that right, Skinner?" he called.

"Ha, ha! That's right!" chortled Skinner. "Leave it there for the fellows to see! Now come back."

James Duck scrambled down the statue and stood on the narrow ledge with his back to it. The juniors watched him breathlessly. He had to jump back across the wide basin flowing with water, and land on the granite rim—and hardly a fellow could have done that without a slip. Skinner cheerfully anticipated seeing him plump backwards into the water.

He jumped, and landed—but he did not plump backwards! He threw his weight forward, and leaped down to the

ground with the same movement! Perhaps it was clumsiness that made him crash into Skinner! Perhaps it was not! Anyhow, he did crash into Skinner, sending that playful youth spinning backwards, with a startled yell.

Bump!
Skinner landed on his back! Duck landed on Skinner! And all the other fellows roared with laughter.

"You silly chump!" howled Skinner, struggling to his feet.

"My dear Skinner—" gasped Duck.

"You blithering fathead!"

Skinner had had a rather heavy bump! But he drew consolation from the sight of the overcoat draping the statue! Fellows were coming up from all sides, as that ancient governor of Greyfriars was spotted in his new garment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker of the Fifth. "Who's done that?"

"What silly ass did that?" howled Hobson of the Shell.

Duck blinked at them.

"I did!" he answered. "Don't new fellows always have to put an overcoat on that statue? Skinner said so."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"Oh gad!" yelled Temple of the Fourth. "Oh, my only Aunt Sempronial! Have you really stuck your overcoat on that jolly old governor?"

"Eh? No, it's not my overcoat!" said Duck simply.

Skinner jumped.

"Not your overcoat?" he exclaimed.

"You silly fathead, have you stuck somebody else's overcoat on that statue?"

"Did it have to be my own overcoat?" asked Duck simply. "I thought that any overcoat would do, so I took yours—"

"Wha-at?"

"Yours!"

"Mine!" shrieked Skinner.

"Yes, yours!" said Duck, blinking at him.

"Isn't it just as good as mine, for sticking on the statue?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar.

Skinner's expression, as he gazed at James Duck, made the juniors fairly shriek.

Greyfriars overcoats conformed to a regulation pattern. There was little to distinguish one from another, except the name on the tag sewn inside the collar. Skinner, and everybody else, had taken it for granted that the fathead of the Form would fetch his own overcoat! Not for an instant had Skinner dreamed that he hadn't! But—evidently—he hadn't!

"Mum-mum-my coat—mum-mum-my overcoat!" stammered Skinner. "You—you've stuck my overcoat up on that statue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Skinner's coat! Ha, ha, ha! You can get it down again, Skinner! Mind you don't splash when you jump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Skinner.

"Get that coat back at once, you dummy!"

"Didn't you say it had to stay there for the fellows to see?" asked James Duck innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get it down, or I'll smash you!" yelled Skinner.

The joke was quite spoiled for Skinner now! Every other fellow was howling with merriment—not Skinner! Skinner seemed to be trying to look like a demon in a pantomime.

James Duck shook his head.

"Oh, no! I might fall into the water!" he bleated. "I've put it up, Skinner, as you told me! You can get it down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Get it down, or I'll knock your silly specs through the back of your silly head!" yelled Skinner.

"You jolly well won't!" grinned Bob Cherry, and he grabbed Skinner's collar as the enraged practical joker pranced up to James Duck, with brandished fists.

"You leave Duck alone, old bean!"

"Leggo!" howled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry did not let go! He had a good grip on Skinner's collar, and he kept it! Really, it hardly looked as if James Duck's life would be safe, if Skinner was let go just then!

Duck blinked at Skinner, owlishly, through his steel-rimmed glasses, and walked away. He disappeared out of gates. He left the crowd in the quad staring at the overcoat—Skinner's overcoat—draped on the statue, and yelling with laughter. Not till James Duck had disappeared from the scene did Bob Cherry let go of Skinner's collar.

"Who's going to get that coat back for me?" gasped Skinner.

"Echo answers who!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner glared up at the coat! Round him the juniors roared—and in the midst of the hilarious crowd, Skinner stood glaring at his coat—the most exasperated practical joker ever!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Loder Takes The Knock!

LODER of the Sixth caught his breath.

He was standing at the back door of the hut on the Abbot's Spinney at the corner of Friardale Lane. Twice he had tapped at that door, without response from within. He was about to tap a third time, when a figure came round the corner of the little wooden building.

Whether Randolph Crocker had got back from Lantham or not, Loder did not yet know. He hoped that he had—he was feverishly anxious for news of his winner—or loser! But if Crocker was not there, Loder had to wait, and was going to wait—safe enough from general view, behind the hut.

He had not approached the hut from the lane. He dared not risk being seen—especially since he had learned from Wingate that the sharp-eyed master of the Shell had spotted him there once.

Loder had circled through fields and meadows and reached the spinney from the direction of the river-bank, creeping across to the back of the hut, never for a moment in sight from Friardale Lane.

If he had to wait for Crocker's return, he was, he fancied, safe enough there; and he was utterly startled when a figure came cutting round the hut from the front garden on the lane.

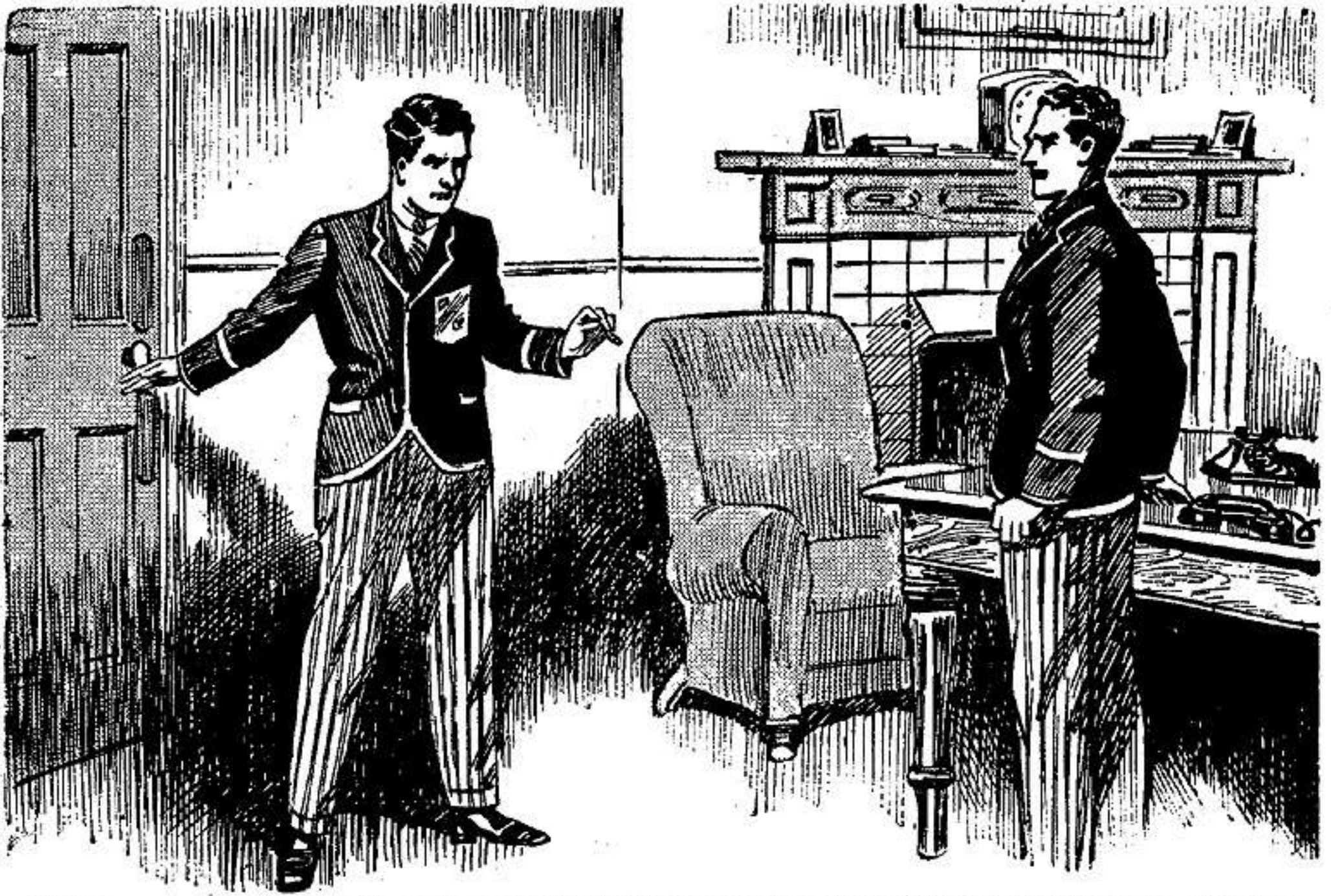
His heart stood still, with the dread that it was Wingate of the Sixth. If Wingate suspected why he had gone out, so soon after that intercepted telephone-call—

Gerald Loder felt quite sick, for a second, at the thought of going up before Dr. Locke; to answer to his headmaster, not only for breaking bounds, but for having dealings with that disgraceful old boy, Randolph Crocker, whose presence near the school was a source of perpetual irritation and annoyance to the Head.

If it was Wingate coming—

But it was not Wingate! It was a junior who came cutting round the hut and dawned on Loder's sight a few moments after he heard his footsteps.

Loder dropped his hand, which had



“That scoundrel Crocker is on the phone, Loder,” said Wingate, “and he refuses to take no for an answer. I’m head-prefect, and I’ve no right to keep it dark. But——” “Give me a chance!” pleaded Loder. “Let me shut the brute off—and have done with him!”

been lifted to knock; and fixed a savage glare on the newcomer.

He knew the fellow by sight, though he had never taken any notice of him—a moon-faced young booby named Duck, new that term in the Remove. He was not at all the sort of fellow Loder would have expected to see there—that is, on an errand like his own! He more than suspected that Sportsman Crocker had dealings with other Greyfriars fellows as well as himself, but certainly he could not suspect that sheepish-looking booby of being one of them.

James Duck gave quite a start at the sight of Loder.

“Oh!” he ejaculated, coming to a quick halt.

He had run round the hut, evidently realising, booby as he was, that a fellow breaking bounds in that direction had better get out of sight as fast as he could; and the hut was actually within view of some high windows at the school.

What he wanted there Loder could not guess; unless it was merely thoughtless curiosity on the part of a particularly stupid fag. But whatever he wanted, it was awkward for the sportsman of the Sixth. Gerald Loder did not want to be spotted there—even by so inconsiderable a person as a new kid in the Lower Fourth.

“You young rascal, what are you doing here?” exclaimed Loder, in his most bullying tone. “Don’t you know this place is out of bounds?”

“Oh, yes!” bleated Duck. “Don’t you?”

“What! Don’t give me any cheek! Clear off at once!” snapped Loder. “Are you waiting to be whopped?”

“Has the Head made you a prefect again, Loder?” asked Duck, blinking at him.

Loder set his lips. He would have put down such a question from the Bounder to cheek—from Duck he attributed it to stupidity. But it irritated him just the same. He made a stride towards the new junior, who jumped back with great activity.

That jump took him past the corner of the building and into the open. Loder did not follow him. Had he done so he would have been in the open, too, and in view from the road, perhaps from the school. He did not dare to take the risk.

He stood where he was, still in cover, and glared at the sheepish-faced junior in steel-rimmed glasses.

“Do you want me to report you to your Form-master, Duck?” he breathed.

“But you can’t report me to Quelch, Loder!” bleated the innocent Duck. “Only prefects can report fellows—it would be sneaking in any other chap! Are you a sneak, Loder?”

Loder almost choked.

“I could report you to the Head, as much as you could report me to Quelch, Loder!” went on James Duck. “Now you’re not a prefect, you know!”

Loder was quite well aware of that. He glared at James Duck.

“Will you get out?” he said, between his teeth. Prefect or not, Loder would certainly have whopped Duck of the Remove just then—but for the necessity of keeping out of sight from the lane.

“Oh, yes, certainly, Loder!” bleated Duck. “My Uncle Percy has told me never to stay where I am not wanted. If you don’t want me here, I will go away at once, Loder.”

And James Duck went—much to Loder’s relief.

James Duck, as a matter of fact, had business at the hut on the spinney which

could not be carried out while a Greyfriars Sixth Former was on the spot, though Loder certainly did not think of guessing that for a moment.

But there was no answer from within, and he had to conclude that Randolph Crocker had not yet got back from Lantham.

He waited impatiently. The hut screened him from the road, but since Duck had chanced on the spot, he did not feel so safe as before. He moved about restlessly as the minutes dragged by.

But he did not go. He could not go! He had to know whether Cheerful Charley had won or lost. If Cheerful Charley had won, he had no smaller a sum than forty pounds to draw from Crocker. But if Cheerful Charley had lost, he had ten pounds to pay to Randolph Crocker—the bet having been made on tick.

In the former case, Loder was relieved from all his financial troubles and set-up for the rest of the term. In the latter case, he hardly knew what he was going to do—for he had not so many shillings as he was due to pay pounds. Putting his shirt on that horse had been rather a desperate venture.

Quite a lot of Loder’s cash had gone Crocker’s way in the past few weeks—and no doubt the Sportsman supposed that he was good for a lot more, or he would not have booked a bet on tick. But Loder was not good for more—he was at the end of his tether.

It seemed an age to Loder before he heard a sound on the farther side of the hut—Crocker had returned and was letting himself in at the front door.

Loder hardly waited for him to get inside before he started rapping at the back door again.

He heard a sound of footsteps within and a bolt was drawn and the back door was open.

It was not a pleasant face that looked out at Loder.

Randolph Crocker had hard features and a large, heavy, ragged moustache. He wore a hat low over his brow and a spotted muffler round his neck, well up round his ears and his chin.

Loder could see little more than half his face; but he could read on it an expression of the bitterest temper. He did not need telling that the Sportsman had himself had bad luck at Lantham races that afternoon.

"Oh! You!" grunted Crocker.

He made a good thing out of Gerald Loder—and was generally civil. But in his present mood he had no civility to spare for Loder or anybody else.

"Cheerful Charley—he's won?" breathed Loder.

"No!"

Loder almost staggered.

"Lost?" he asked huskily.

"Not even placed!" grunted Crocker. "You'd have known sooner if I'd got my call through. Somebody else answered—"

"Lost!" repeated Loder dazedly.

Now that it had happened, he knew that he had been expecting it; he had expected it, dreaded it, ever since he had seen the odds against that wretched horse lengthening. But it came like a stunning shock, all the same.

"I've said so!" grunted Crocker. "You owe me ten quid! Short reckonings make long friends. Step in, Mr. Loder! I'll be glad of the money—I've had the foulest of luck, and I'm fairly on the beach!"

Loder gave him a dazed look. If the Sportsman was on the beach, Loder was not likely to help him out of that undesirable residence. Loder had not five shillings in his pockets.

"I said 'Step in!'" muttered Crocker, eyeing him unpleasantly and suspiciously.

Loder's look, doubtless, told him what to expect, and an extremely ugly expression came over his hard face.

"I—I—I—I can't settle now!" muttered Loder. "Sorry—I can't! You'll have to wait a bit, Crocker!"

"I've told you they cleaned me out at Lantham, and I can't wait!" said the Sportsman roughly. "Don't talk like a fool! The loser pays! Step in and settle and have done with it!"

"I can't!" muttered Loder.

"When, then?" snarled Crocker.

"I—I—I don't know!"

"Don't you?" said the disreputable old boy of Greyfriars grimly. "Then my advice to you is to find out pretty quick! Better come along with the cash to-morrow if you don't want me to walk in at Greyfriars and collect it."

"I—look here—I—"

Slam!

Crocker shut the door in Loder's face. The wretched sportsman of the Sixth almost tottered away.

A quarter of an hour later, James Duck, at the school gates, saw Loder come in—and his eyes, which were very keen behind those steel-rimmed glasses, read his face keenly. Loder did not even notice him standing there—he was too deeply engrossed in his own miserable thoughts.

But James Duck noticed Loder—noticed him very keenly—and his glance was half-contemptuous, half-compassionate as it followed him. Loder of the Sixth was a bully and he

was a bad hat—but if ever a fellow looked as if he had taken the knock Loder did!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Remove Detective!

"DRAKE—"

"Shut up, ass!"

"I mean Duck—" said

Harry Wharton.

"Stick to Duck, then!"

Prep was over in the Remove studies. Frank Nugent had left Study No. 1, and gone down with Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Rain Singh. Harry Wharton remained—with the new junior, James Duck.

Wharton's eyes were on the face of James Duck curiously.

Often and often during the past few days the captain of the Remove had scanned that face, trying to pick out a resemblance to that of Jack Drake, once of the Greyfriars Remove. But he was unable to trace it, though he knew—alone of all the Remove fellows—that James Duck was the Jack Drake he had once known.

It was by accident that Wharton had made that startling discovery. But he knew now that the new junior was, in point of fact, the assistant of Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, sent to Greyfriars to spot the prowler who had prowled the school for so long.

"I don't half like this, Drake—I mean, Duck!" said Harry slowly. "You could trust Nugent—and it would make things a bit easier—now I know."

James Duck shook his head.

"Least said, soonest mended!" he answered. "A secret of that kind can't be kept too dark. A fellow might let out a word without meaning to—"

"I've not let out a word."

"No; but I'd rather you never knew, all the same! Nobody else knows, except Quelch and the Head, and nobody else is going to." Drake smiled. "You can keep a secret, Wharton, but you've called me Drake twice in the last few minutes. If anybody heard you—"

Harry Wharton nodded and stood silent. He realised that Drake was right, and that such a secret could not be too carefully kept. It was not likely that the prowler would be spotted, if he learned that there was a detective in the school watching for him. And a chance word would be enough to set all the school buzzing with the news that Ferrers Locke's assistant was at Greyfriars.

But it was rather a burden on his mind. It was irksome to keep a secret from his friends—and especially from Frank Nugent, who was in the same study.

"Keep it dark, old man!" said Drake. "It mayn't last much longer. I'm hoping to get through here and rejoin Ferrers Locke—he has work for me to do." He paused a moment. "I dare say you've heard of Rupert Crook?"

"Rupert Crook!" repeated Harry.

"Yes; I've heard the name, in the radio news. Some convict or other—"

"The man who escaped from Highmoor, months ago," said Drake. "Ferrers Locke is on his trail, and I was helping, when he let me come here, to oblige his relative, Dr. Locke. Crook has never been traced yet—he seems to have got into a hole and pulled it in after him! You remember that fat ass Bunter spotted the photograph of him that I had in my writing-case—that

shows that a fellow can't be too careful! When I'm through here—"

The schoolboy detective broke off suddenly.

Harry Wharton looked at him.

"When you're through—" He broke off, in his turn, as Drake placed a finger to his lips.

Most, if not all, of the Remove had gone down after prep. Wharton had remained in the study to speak to Drake on the subject of that rather troublesome secret.

Why Drake made him a sign to be silent, he did not know. But he stood silent, staring inquiringly at the schoolboy detective.

To his astonishment, James Duck went on, on quite a different subject.

"There's a jam tart left in the cupboard, Wharton."

"Eh? What? I know—what—" ejaculated the captain of the Remove, in astonishment.

"I fancy I'll shove it under a dish, out of sight."

"Eh! Why?"

"Might disappear, you know!"

Harry Wharton could only stare. Jam tarts left in Remove study cupboards were rather liable to disappear mysteriously if Billy Bunter happened to be about. But Bunter, so far as Wharton knew, was not about—he supposed that the fat Owl had gone down to the Rag with the rest of the Form. Moreover, he could not suppose that Jack Drake cared very much whether a single, solitary jam tart disappeared or not.

James Duck crossed to the study cupboard and opened it. There lay the last of the jam tarts on a plate.

Under Wharton's astonished eyes, Drake took a spoon and excavated a cavity in the jam. Then he filled the cavity with pepper and carefully replaced the jam over it.

Then he placed the jam tart out of sight under an inverted dish.

There was a cheery grin on his face as he turned from the cupboard and met Wharton's amazed stare.

He crossed on tiptoe to the study door. Grasping the doorhandle suddenly, he jerked it wide open.

There was a startled squeak, and a fat figure tottered into Study No. 1 and sprawled on hands and knees.

"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton stared at the sprawling fat Owl blankly.

Bunter, evidently, had been at his old keyhole game, though Wharton had not been aware of it. But he could guess that the keen ears of the schoolboy detective had caught some sound that had placed him on his guard.

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

Jack Drake's secret would not have remained a secret much longer, had the two juniors discussed it with Billy Bunter's fat ear at the keyhole!

"You fat sweep!" exclaimed Harry.

"Wow!" gasped Bunter. He wriggled away just in time, as the captain of the Remove drew back his foot. "I say, you fellows— Keep off, you beast! I say, I wasn't at the keyhole really—"

"Not?" grinned James Duck.

"Oh, no! I never wondered what you two were staying up in the study for—never thought about it!" spluttered Bunter. "I'm not the fellow to listen at a keyhole, I hope! I was simply stooping down to tie my shoelace—I suppose a fellow can tie his shoelace, if he likes—"

"I'll jolly well—" exclaimed Wharton.

"Keep off, you beast!" roared Bunter. "I say, Duck, keep him off! I wasn't

anywhere near the keyhole! I was picking up a pencil—"

"As well as tying your shoelace?" asked Duck.

"Oh, yes! No! I mean, I was tying a pencil—that is, I mean, I was picking up a shoelace—I mean—"

"You were listening at the door, you fat frog!" roared Wharton.

"I wasn't!" yelled Bunter. "I never heard Duck say anything about a jam tart. I couldn't find that shoelace I dropped—I mean, I had to tie up that pencil—I mean—"

Harry Wharton made a forward movement.

Billy Bunter made a backward hop. He shot into the passage.

"Let's go down," said James Duck, and he caught Wharton's arm.

"I'll jolly well boot the fat villain!" "Oh, let him rip!"

James Duck drew the captain of the Remove away, and they went down the passage to the landing. From the doorway of Study No. 7, a fat face and a big pair of spectacles watched them go.

When they had turned the corner, Billy Bunter emerged from his study and tiptoed along to Study No. 1 with a fat grin on his podgy visage. The jam tart that had been hidden under the dish was not likely to remain hidden long.

Round that corner, James Duck came to a halt.

"Hold on!" he murmured. "Listen!"

Harry Wharton stared at him for a moment and then laughed. He understood now Duck's mysterious proceedings with the jam tart and the pepper.

They listened. For a long minute there was silence. Then from the Remove passage came the sound of a sudden explosion of howls, squeaks, squeals, and splutters.

"Oo-oh! Woogh! Groogh! Oh crikey! Ooooooch! Yarooop! Woogh!"

Evidently Billy Bunter had found that jam tart. Equally evidently he had bolted it, and was not finding the result grateful or comforting.

"Ooogh! Ooow! At-chooh! Aytishoo! Oh crikey, it's pepper! Beasts! Wow! Choo-choo-aytishoo! Ooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the

landing. The two juniors looked into the passage. Billy Bunter was tottering from Study No. 1, clawing at a large mouth with two fat hands—sneezing, coughing, gasping, spluttering, his face crimson, his eyes and nose streaming. A mouthful of jam—with pepper inside—was getting in deadly work.

"Ow! Ooogh! Aytishoo! Groogh!" gurgled Bunter. "Ow! Beasts! Wow! Ooogh! Pip-pip-pepper! Woooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Urrrrgh!"

Bunter tottered away up the Remove passage to the tap at the upper end, to wash that burning jam out of his mouth. He sneezed and spluttered as he tottered. He gurgled and splashed and gasped under the tap. And Harry Wharton and James Duck, chuckling, went down the stairs and left him to it.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Loder Is Wanted!

"CHERRY!" "Yes, Wingate!" "Find Loder, will you, and tell him to come here. He's out of the House somewhere."

"Oh, all right!" Wingate of the Sixth was looking out of the window of the Prefects' Room.

There was a deep and dark frown on his face—from which Bob Cherry could guess that Loder, when he came, was not booked for an agreeable interview with the captain of the school.

Remove fellows did not fag, but any fellow was glad to do anything for "old Wingate," the most popular man in the school. So Bob set off cheerfully in quest of Loder of the Sixth.

It was after class, and there were plenty of fellows to be seen, but Bob did not spot Gerald Loder among them.

"Seen Loder?" he asked, as he came on his friends in the quad.

"Blow Loder!" answered Johnny Bull. "What the dickens do you want that rotter for?"

"I don't! Wingate does!" explained Bob. "Looks as if he's going to comb his hair for him, too! Seen the swab?"

But the Co. had not seen Loder, and Bob went farther afield. He asked fellows right and left—Remove fellows, and Fourth and Shell, but nobody seemed to have seen Loder. Wingate had said that he was out of the House somewhere, and Bob wondered whether he had gone out of the gates.

Mr. Hacker was standing at the gates, looking out, and Bob cut down in that direction. He was not keen on speaking to the Acid Drop, but he saw no reason why he should not ask even the Acid Drop whether he had seen Loder of the Sixth go out.

To his surprise Mr. Hacker glanced at him with a smile—smiles were seldom seen on the acid face of the Acid Drop. For some reason or other Hacker seemed to be amiably disposed towards that member of Quelch's Form.

Bob was quite surprised for a moment—then he remembered the episode in the Acid Drop's study.

It was two or three days since that episode, and Bob Cherry had, as a matter of fact, completely forgotten all about what he had seen there. He had said nothing of Hacker's hoard, and it had quite slipped from his memory—Bob not sharing in the very least Billy Bunter's interest in the affairs of others.

But Hacker, of course, had not forgotten. He had let the junior off, though he had come to rag in the study, and hoped, but did not quite believe, that that junior would not tattle. But the lapse of several days had reassured him on that point.

Had that junior tattled about what he had seen, the story of Hacker's hoard would have been all over the school by this time.

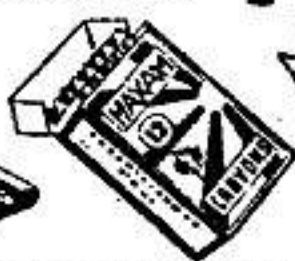
There had not been a word or a whisper on the subject. Evidently, therefore, that junior had been discreet, and had said nothing. Hence the unwanted amiability of the Acid Drop.

"Excuse me, sir—" said Bob. "Certainly, my boy—what is it?" asked Mr. Hacker, with a benevolence worthy of the Head himself.

"I've got to find Loder of the Sixth,

(Continued on next page.)

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sir. Perhaps you've noticed whether he's gone out."

"I think not," said Mr. Hacker. "I have been here some time, Cherry, and I have not seen him."

"Thank you, sir."

Bob cut back into the quad, thinking that even the Acid Drop was not quite so acidulated, when he was stroked the right way.

Harry Wharton called to him from the door of the changing-room.

"Coming down to the footer, fat-head?"

"I've got to find that swab Loder!" hooted Bob. "Hacker says he hasn't gone out. Where the thump is he, then?"

"Looked in the Cloisters?" asked Vernon-Smith, glancing out at the doorway with a grin.

"What the dickens would he be doing in the Cloisters?" grunted Bob.

The Bounder laughed.

"Guess!" he answered.

"Oh!" said Bob, and he cut off to the old Cloisters—a secluded spot, where fellows who felt an urgent need for a cigarette sometimes skulked to indulge in the same unnoticed.

There, leaning on the old ivied wall at the end of the Cloisters, he spotted Loder of the Sixth.

Loder was there—but he was not, as the Bounder had hinted, smoking. He was leaning on the old wall, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, his eyes fixed on the ground, with such an expression of despondency in his face, that Bob started to see it.

He did not look up as the junior approached, being too deep in his dismal reflections, whatever they were, to heed his footsteps.

"Loder!" called out Bob.

The Sixth Former gave a sudden start and looked up. The despondency in his face gave place to an angry glare.

"What do you want? What—" He snarled out the words, and made a stride towards Bob with hand up-lifted.

Bob promptly jumped back.

"Keep your wool on, old sport!" he said cheerfully. "Wingate wants you in the Prefects' Room—think I'm looking for you because I like bad company?"

Loder started again, and his face paled. Bob stared at him. It seemed as if all the colour had drained out of Loder's face, leaving it like wax.

"Wingate!" repeated Loder huskily.

"Yes; he told me to find you."

"Oh! All right! You can cut!"

Bob Cherry cut, wondering as he went. Wingate had looked as if trouble awaited Loder in the Prefects' Room; Loder looked as if he expected very bad trouble there. It was no business of Bob's; but he could not help wondering what was up—though he dismissed the matter from his mind, when he joined his friends in the changing-room.

Loder, though summoned by the head prefect and captain of the school, did not go immediately. He stood where Bob had left him, with a pale face and a crumpled look.

It was several days since he had seen Crocker. He had sent the man no word—and so far, he had not heard from him. But every day, every hour, he dreaded to see the impudent face and swaggering figure coming in at the gates.

Crocker, he knew, was hard up. His pretence of a cobbler's business at the hut on the spinney was sheer pretence; he never did any work. How he contrived to pay his rent to Mr. Pilkins at Courtfield and to live at all, would have been a mystery to Loder, had he

thought about it. Wherever the man obtained money, when he had any, it mostly went the same way as Loder's—on horses and dogs. He was in need of the tenner Loder owed him—Loder knew that. It made no difference—Loder could not pay ten pounds with five shillings.

Every effort to raise the wind in the past few days had failed. His friends Walker and Carne were beginning to be shy of him—they were not prepared to finance a hapless sportsman who had come a mucker. Urgent letters home had produced not cash, but inquiries as to what such a sum as ten pounds was needed for.

A run of bad luck had landed the sportsman of the Sixth fairly in the soup. That final effort to get out by backing Cheerful Charley had put the lid on. The last few days had been a hard punishment for the fellow who could not keep straight.

Now, he had no doubt, the blow had fallen. That unscrupulous, shifty rascal, Crocker, was about the last man in the wide world to be done by a schoolboy. Something had happened now—and the wretched Loder had little doubt that it had all come out, and that Wingate was waiting to take him to his headmaster. He groaned aloud as he thought of that.

He moved at last and went slowly to the House—trying to pull himself together, so that fellows should not read in his face what he dreaded. But his heart was like lead, as he almost limped into the Prefects' Room.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The End Of His Tether!

GEORGE WINGATE was standing by the telephone in the Prefects' Room, when Loder came slowly and heavily in.

No one else was in the room, as Loder was glad to see. He noted also that the receiver was off the telephone—and guessed who was at the other end.

"Shut the door, Loder!" snapped Wingate.

Loder shut the door.

"I suppose you can guess who's on the phone," said the Greyfriars captain contemptuously. "I've got the other fellows to clear. Gwynne took the call when it came, and shut the man down. He rang up again—and again—do you understand?"

Loder nodded in wretched silence. It was Crocker on the phone, and he was not to be denied. He was going to ring, and ring, till he got Loder. That was why Loder was sent for.

The shifty, unscrupulous rascal cared nothing for the risk to his dupe. It was that risk that he was using as a form of pressure on the sportsman who could not pay.

"You told me you knew nothing of Crocker, and had no dealings with the man," said Wingate. "I suppose you're not keeping that up now?"

Loder did not answer. It was not much use attempting to keep that up, with Crocker hanging on the telephone for him.

Wingate's look was dark and angry and scornful. But it relaxed a little, as he read the misery in Loder's face. He gave a grunt.

"Look here, Loder, that scoundrel's on the phone, and refuses to take 'No' for an answer. If a master got this call, you know what would happen. I'm head-prefect, and I've no right to keep it dark. But—"

"Oh, rub it in!" muttered Loder, "I've been a fool, and my game's up

here. Go to the Head if you like. I'm not the only fellow here who's fallen into that brute's clutches. Go to the Head, if you like, and get me bunked. I don't care!"

"I don't want to get any man bunked. But this sort of thing can't go on. You know that! That scoundrel is going to ring up till he gets you—and you needn't tell me what that means—I know! And the Head ought to know."

"He'll know soon enough," muttered Loder. "The rotter wouldn't think twice about walking into the school to see me."

"I'd like to see him here—he was booted last time, and, by gad, I'd like to use my boot on him again!" said Wingate savagely.

"I dare say that's why he's phoning instead! Look here, Wingate." A faint hope came into Loder's heart as he could see that the Greyfriars captain was undecided. "Look here, give me a chance! Let me shut that brute off—and have done with him. I—I can do it!"

"If you're going to have done with him—"

"Do you think I like this sort of thing?" muttered Loder.

Wingate gave a curt laugh.

"No. I suppose not. Get it clear, Loder—this is your last chance! You can speak to the man and shut him off. If it happens again, it will have to go to the Head. I'm stretching a point too far now and you know it."

"It—it shan't happen again."

"See that it doesn't," said Wingate, and he walked out of the Prefects' Room and shut the door after him, leaving Loder to take his call.

Loder picked up the receiver. He almost groaned into the transmitter. A sneering, sardonic voice came back:

"Oh! You at last, Loder! What?"

"You fool!" said Loder huskily.

"Do you want to get me sacked?"

"Like I was twenty years ago!" came Crocker's answer, with a laugh. "Why not, my festive young friend? Do you think that I am a man to be diddled, or what?"

"I'm going to square—" faltered Loder.

"You are!" said Crocker. "You seem to fancy you're not—but you are! You'll drop in to-day with a tenner, or—"

"I can't!"

"Then expect another solo on the telephone bell!"

Loder licked his dry lips.

"You've given me away already," he muttered. "I've had to beg mercy from a fellow I loathe. If you ring again I'm done for."

"Better not let me ring again, then!" came the old boy's sardonic voice.

"You're for it if you do."

"You'll have to wait—"

"I've waited."

"I—I mean—"

"Yes, I know what you mean. And you'd better understand what I mean. I mean business."

The receiver trembled in Loder's hand. He was dealing with an unscrupulous and unpitying rascal; but it was his own dingy, disreputable folly that he had to thank for it. That was no comfort to him.

"Well?" rapped Crocker. "I can't hang on for ever! I'm paying for too many calls already. What about it?"

"I can't—"

"O.K.! Get off the phone! I'm going to ring till somebody else comes! If I'm paying for telephone calls I'm going to have my money's worth."

Loder gripped the receiver almost convulsively.

"Look here—"



"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, rolling hurriedly up. "That pound note's mine. Where is it?" "You fat villain!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "It's not a pound note—it's a golden sovereign." "Wha-a-at?" stuttered the fat Removite.

"That's enough! Cut off!"

Loder did not cut off. He dared not let the telephone bell ring again.

"Give me a chance," he breathed. "I've written home; there's a chance of getting what I want. Give me your word not to ring again and I—I'll see what I can do."

"Chuck it!"

"To-morrow!" said Loder desperately. "Only till to-morrow. I may get a letter to-morrow with what I want in it."

How much hope there was of that Loder knew only too well. But his sole thought was to bar off the Sportsman—to gain time. Something might turn up—some happy chance.

There was a pause, and then Crocker's voice came again.

"O.K.! That's the limit! To-morrow's a half-holiday at your school, I believe—you can get out. I'll wait for you here! Better come as early as you can, or—"

"I'll come!" groaned Loder.

He put up the receiver. He stood by the telephone, wiping the sweat from his brow, dreading to hear a ring. But no ring came, and he left the Prefects' Room at last and went out into the quad.

Two or three fellows glanced at him as he went curiously. He realised that his face betrayed him, and tried to pull himself together.

He walked away towards the old Cloisters—to get out of sight and to think over his problem. He passed Mr. Hacker in the quad, and noticed that the Acid Drop's sharp eyes turned on him. He scowled blackly as he went on his way.

It was that prying old goat who had spotted a Greyfriars senior about the spinney, and mentioned it to Wingate! Not that that mattered—Wingate knew all about it now! Everybody would know all about it in twenty-four hours—

that was all that he had gained—he knew that he could not satisfy Crocker and that the malicious rascal would not spare him. Little in the way of kindness was to be expected from a man who had been expelled from his school for theft, and who had turned up, after twenty years, to worry and persecute his old headmaster.

But the sight of Mr. Hacker had brought another thought into Loder's tormented mind.

That nervous old ass, with his uneasy fears and his predilection for worrying, had a fistful of golden quids in his study desk. They were of no use to him; they never would be of any use—more than enough to see Loder through his trouble, and hoarded uselessly by a frightened old ass against a time that was never likely to come, against a contingency that never would occur.

Loder gave a sudden start at the dreadful thought that came into his harassed mind, and shuddered. He drove that thought away.

But as he paced the Cloisters with irregular steps it came back—and came back again. He wished from the bottom of his heart that he had never caught that gleam of gold at Hacker's study window a few days ago. But he had—and he knew. Twenty years ago that scoundrel Crocker had been in a similar scrape, and had thought of the same way out—disastrously! Surely that was warning enough for any other fellow—more than enough! Loder knew it, yet the thought of Hacker's hoard would not leave his mind.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Golden Quids!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Whose quid?"

"What?"

"Great pip!"

Bob Cherry spotted it first as the

Remove fellows, coming from their dormitory, crossed the big landing to the stairs. A gleam of spring sunshine happened to fall upon it from a window as he passed. He stopped and stared.

Quids were seldom seen at Greyfriars—or anywhere else, in the days of paper money. Bob certainly had seen a fistful a few days ago in Hacker's study. But the sight of one lying on the dormitory landing was really astonishing.

"It's a sovereign!" exclaimed Harry Wharton blankly. "Somebody has dropped it here. Whose quid?"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled hurriedly up. "What's that? Did you say a quid? It's mine!"

"Yours?" yelled Bob.

"Yes, mine!" declared Bunter firmly. "I dropped a pound note as we came up to the dorm last night, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I tell you it's my quid!" hooted Bunter. "Where is it? Gimme my quid!"

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

The short-sighted Owl had not spotted the sovereign. Hearing that there was a quid on the landing, Bunter naturally took it for granted that it was a quid in the form of a pound note! And he promptly laid claim to the same!

"You can cackle!" hooted Bunter indignantly. "I can jolly well tell you that's my pound note!"

"You dropped a pound note last night?" chortled the Bounder.

"Yes, I heard it drop," declared Bunter.

"Why didn't you pick it up again?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You see, I never noticed it at the time."

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"It's mine, you know. I had it in a letter from Bunter Court yesterday!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, where's that pound note? It's mine, you know."

"You fat villain!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "It's not a pound note; it's a golden sovereign."

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!" Bunter, following the general stare, spotted the quid at last. "Oh, it's a sovereign! I say, you fellows, I—I think it must be mine! I had a sovereign once, and—and lost it."

Billy Bunter stooped to pick up the sovereign.

Bob Cherry reached out with his foot, landing the same on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars as Bunter stooped.

"Wow!" gasped Bunter.

He did not pick up the sovereign. He pitched headlong over it, and roared.

Harry Wharton stooped and picked it up.

"Better take this to Quelch," he remarked. "Goodness knows whose it is. I never knew anybody here had golden quids."

Bob opened his lips, and closed them again. He knew at least one man at Greyfriars who had golden quids. But he had undertaken to say nothing about Hacker's hoard, and he said nothing.

From where that quid had come was quite a mystery. Obviously it had been dropped there, apparently in the night. But it did not seem likely to Bob that it was one of Hacker's gold pieces. Hacker was the last man in the world to drop money carelessly about, and there seemed no imaginable reason why he should have extracted his hoard from his locked desk and carried it upstairs.

"Must belong to somebody," said Frank Nugent. "Quelch is the man to take charge, anyhow."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Kick Bunter, somebody!"

"Yaroo!"

The juniors went down the staircase. On the next landing stood Coker of the Fifth, with a puzzled expression on his rugged face, and a round gold coin in his hand. He was staring at it blankly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob. "You found one, too?"

"You kids know anything about this?" asked Coker. "I've just picked this up on the staircase. Whose the dickens is it?"

"Well, this beats the band," said Peter Todd. "Somebody's been up in the night chucking sovereigns about!"

"That's two, anyhow," said Vernon-Smith. "Wonder if there's any more about?"

"Look!" yelled Johnny Bull.

He pointed to a glimmering object on the edge of the stairs, between two banisters.

"Great pip!"

"That's another!"

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"Well, this takes the cake! Who the dickens—"

Frank Nugent picked up the third sovereign, and handed it to the captain of the Remove. There was a buzz of amazement from the Removites, joined in by other fellows who were coming down. Among them was Hobson of the Shell, and Hobby was holding up yet another sovereign between finger and thumb.

"That's four," said Bob.

"Anybody know whose this is?" asked Hobson. "I picked it up on the landing."

"Blessed if I know!" said Bob.

"Nobody knows," said Harry Wharton. "That's four altogether."

"The knowfulness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is a preposterous mystery."

"I guess it's the bee's knee," said Fisher T. Fish. "Say, you guys, them quids are worth over thirty bob each these days! I guess some galoot has been hoarding them quids."

"And scattering them about like confetti," said the Bounder. "Somebody must have had a big hole in his pocket."

"I say, you fellows, what about findings keepings?"

"Kick him!"

"Ow! Beast!"

"Well, I'll take this to Prout," said Coker; and he went on down the stairs.

"I'd better take mine to Hacker, I suppose," said Hobson. "What are you going to do, Wharton?"

"Take them to Quelch," answered Harry.

At the foot of the stairs, as the Greyfriars fellows came down, three masters were seen in a group. They were Quelch, Hacker, and Prout. All these looked unusually serious—especially Hacker. Every eye turned on Mr. Hacker's face—white and furious. Hacker was often seen in an acidulated state, but seldom, or never, had he been seen so deeply disturbed and enraged before. The juniors simply stared.

James Duck glanced very curiously from face to face of the three masters. Obviously something was up, and the schoolboy detective wondered whether the prowler had been prowling again in the night. It was nearly a week since the mystery man had prowled, and some fellows fancied that he had got a scare, and chucked prowling. But that opinion was not shared by Ferrers Locke's assistant.

Mr. Quelch gave him a glance—a hard, cold glance. The Remove master's faith in the schoolboy detective had fallen to the lowest ebb. For many days he had treated Drake exactly like any other member of the Remove, and seemed to have forgotten that he was a detective at all. Now he seemed to remember it, only to give him that icy grim glance.

Drake coloured, and several fellows, noticing Quelch's look, wondered why he was rattled with the fathead of the Remove.

Mr. Hacker was speaking, but he broke off as the swarm of juniors came down. And he gave quite a jump as Hobson of his Form approached him, holding out a golden sovereign between finger and thumb. He stared at that sovereign with popping eyes.

"I found this on the landing, sir," said Hobby. "I thought I'd better bring it to you. Oh!" He gave a startled exclamation as Hacker grabbed, or rather snatched, the sovereign from his fingers.

"This is one of the missing coins!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "Obviously this is one of them!"

"Is it yours, sir?" asked Hobby, in wonder. "I picked it up on the landing. I thought somebody must have dropped it."

"The thief dropped it, I presume," said Mr. Hacker bitterly. "He must have dropped it, returning to his dormitory."

There was a general gasp. This was the first hint of what had happened.

Bob Cherry whistled softly. He knew now that Hacker's hoard had been tampered with. This was the cause of the expressive expression on the face of the Acid Drop.

"Is this one yours, too, sir?" asked Coker.

Hacker made another grab.

"What have you there, Wharton?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Two sovereigns, sir," answered Harry. "We picked them up on the landing and the stairs. I was going to hand them to you."

"Hand them to Mr. Hacker, please. They are Mr. Hacker's."

"Yes, sir."

Four sovereigns reposed together in Mr. Hacker's palm. The Greyfriars fellows went on, leaving the three masters together.

James Duck dropped behind for a moment, and glanced at his Form-master. But Mr. Quelch did not look at him again. The schoolboy detective, with compressed lips, followed the other fellows out into the quad.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Prowler!

"THE prowler, of course," said Loder of the Sixth.

He made that remark to a group of Sixth Form men, who were discussing the latest excitement after breakfast—as was every fellow at Greyfriars just then.

It was hardly necessary for Loder to suggest that it was the prowler again. Everybody took that for granted. The prowler was on every tongue that morning.

"That rotter again!" said Wingate, with a nod. "By Jove, it's getting altogether too thick! It's been going on for half the term, and we seem as far as ever from spotting him."

"There's one thing clear now," remarked Walker.

"What's that?"

"Nobody can fancy after this that the prowler's a Sixth Form man. From what I hear, he seems to have dropped a lot of his loot going upstairs—that means that he was going back to a dormitory."

"That's so," agreed Wingate.

"Yes, that's so," said Loder. "The fags seem to have picked up four of Hacker's quids on the stairs, and I've heard that Trotter found another near the foot of the staircase. A hole in his pocket, I suppose."

"Anyhow, he was going up to a dorm," said Gwynne, "and that washes out the Sixth."

That was a satisfactory reflection to Sixth Form men. It was well known that the prowler was a hefty man physically. He had handled Loder of the Sixth on one occasion in the dark, and Mr. Quelch on another. From which everyone concluded that he was a senior man—probably in the Sixth.

Loder, indeed, had always persisted in his belief that it was Vernon-Smith of the Remove. But nobody agreed with Loder on that point.

Now it seemed clear that no man in the Sixth Form could be the man. The

trail of dropped sovereigns up the stairs seemed to make that clear. The Sixth Form studies, which were also bed-rooms, were on the ground floor—and it looked as if the prowler had gone back to the dormitory.

Every Form but the Sixth had a dormitory, so every other Form at Greyfriars might come under suspicion—but no longer the Sixth.

"But who—?" said Wingate, with a wrinkled brow. "It beats me hollow! Nothing of the kind's ever happened here before—not, at any rate, since that swab Crocker was here donkey's years ago. Who the dickens—?"

But that was a question no one could answer.

Loder strolled away from the group. Loder's face was a little pale that morning, and his eyes had rather a strange look. But nobody specially noticed Loder or his looks. Everyone was thinking of the prowler, and what had happened to Hacker's study in the night.

"I say, you fellows!" Loder heard Billy Bunter's fat squeak as he passed a group of Removites in the quad. "I say, fancy old Hacker hoarding quids! I say, did any of you fellows know the Acid Drop was hoarding quids?"

"How could anybody know, fat-head?" said Harry Wharton. "Hacker wouldn't be likely to let them be seen."

"But somebody must have known," argued Bunter. "Somebody went straight to the spot and got them."

"Just rooting about for what he could pinch," said Nugent.

"I don't know," said Herbert Vernon-Smith. The Bounder's face was very thoughtful. "Looks to me as if somebody knew."

Gerald Loder came to a stop, his eyes on the group of juniors. He seemed to be interested in Smithy's remarks.

"How do you make that out, Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry. He was uncomfortably conscious at the moment that he had known of Hacker's hoard—probably the only fellow at Greyfriars who had.

"Well, look at it!" said Smithy. "Hacker's door was locked and the blighter opened it with a chisel or something. The desk was locked, and he cracked it open. But nothing else was touched. There were other things locked in Hacker's study and he never touched them."

"No; that's so!" agreed Johnny Bull. "Only that little desk in the corner where the quids were parked."

"He's always made a clean sweep before!" said the Bounder. "This time he touched only one thing—that desk. It jolly well looks as if he knew that Hacker had something valuable in it."

Loder of the Sixth stood quite still. None of the juniors noticed him, or they might have noticed that his face was paler.

"By Jove, it does look like it, now you mention it, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton. "But who could have known anything about Hacker's quids? It's not the sort of thing he would talk about—he looks an awful ass now it's come out. Bet you he never said a word about it to a soul."

"Not likely!" agreed the Bounder. "Man who does a silly thing like that would keep it dark. Might have been spotted all the same. Did you know anything about it, Bunter?"

"Why, you beast, Smithy—" howled Bunter.

"Well, you know everything and a little over!" grinned the Bounder. "Have you been at Hacker's keyhole lately?"

"Why, you—you—you swab!" howled Bunter. "As if I'd look through a key-hole! Am I that sort?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bunter never knew!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "If Bunter had known, all Greyfriars would have known."

"Well, somebody knew!" said Vernon-Smith.

Loder walked away quickly.

"By gum, it does look as if somebody knew!" said Peter Todd thoughtfully. "Nothing was touched except the desk where the quids were. The prowler seems to have known where to go for them."

"Bet you!" said the Bounder confidently. "I don't know what the beaks are going to do about it—but I know what I should jolly well do if I were Hacker. I'd jolly well find out who knew about those quids—and I fancy I shouldn't have much farther to look for them."

"What utter rot!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, his face very red.

The Bounder stared at him.

"Hallo! What's biting you?" he asked. "If you don't agree with a fellow's opinion, old bean, there are politer ways of saying so."

"Oh, rot!" grunted Bob, and he walked away—several of the fellows glancing after him in surprise.

Why Bob Cherry should display irritation at Smithy's suggestion was rather a mystery to them. Most of the fellows agreed with the Bounder's view that it looked as if the prowler had known where to lay hands on Hacker's hoard.

What the beaks were doing about the matter—if they were doing anything—no one knew, so far. The Greyfriars fellows went into Form when the bell rang—buzzing with the latest excitement.

In the Remove Form-room, Harry Wharton glanced several times curiously at James Duck. Knowing what he did—that the dud of the Form was in reality Ferrers Locke's assistant and at Greyfriars to track down the prowler—he naturally expected him to be busy that morning—not on school work.

But James Duck was in Form with the rest of the Remove—apparently no more concerned in what had happened than any other Remove fellow. But when the Remove were dismissed in break, Wharton noticed that Duck stayed behind when the rest went out. Nobody else gave any attention to the duffer of the Form.

Mr. Quelch, gathering papers from his desk before leaving the Form-room, did not appear to notice that Duck had stayed. Or perhaps he did not choose to notice.

Duck did not speak till all the Form were gone. Then he addressed his Form-master in quiet tones.

"Have you nothing to say to me, sir?"

Mr. Quelch glanced round—grimly.

"Nothing," he answered. "You may go."

Drake set his lips.

"That will hardly do, sir!" he said. "Even if you have lost faith in me, you must at least let me carry on with my work."

The Remove master's gimlet eyes fixed on him.

"You can do nothing here, Drake!" he said very distinctly. "Other—and older—heads must deal with this matter. I desire to hear no more wild theories or surmises from you. You have stated positively that the person

called the prowler is some outsider, not belonging to the school. You adhere to that."

"It is a fact, sir!" said Drake quietly.

"It is not a fact! All the evidence is to the contrary—and this latest occurrence is conclusive proof. Obviously no one outside the school can have known, or guessed, that there was a sum in gold in Mr. Hacker's desk."

"I admit that! But—"

"Someone in the school knew," said Mr. Quelch. "That is clear! Nothing else has been taken—nothing else was touched! It was the work of a Greyfriars boy who knew that the money was there—having, I must suppose, spied it out. That is perfectly clear."

"But—"

"This matter is beyond you, Drake! I regret now that I ever advised Dr. Locke to send for you. Leave the Form-room."

"But, sir—"

"I said leave the Form-room!" Jack Drake, with deep feeling, left the Form-room.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Fellow Who Knew!

"NONSENSE!"

"I say, you fellows, Quelch's going it!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Some of the fellows grinned. After third school, Mr. Quelch had gone to his study. The window of that study was open, letting in the fresh air and spring sunshine. It also let out the voice of the Remove master—in unusually emphatic tones.

Quelch, no doubt, was unaware that his emphatic voice reached ears outside. He seemed a little excited.

A dozen fellows glanced towards that open window.

"Oh! The Acid Drop!" said Harry Wharton.

The bony figure of Mr. Hacker could be seen in Quelch's study. Apparently Mr. Hacker was having a very irritating effect on Quelch! It was rather uncommon for a Form-master to rap out "Nonsense" in such emphatic tones in speaking to another member of the staff.

"Something's up!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Hacker's fearfully shirty this morning!"

"The old ass!" said Johnny Bull. "Everybody knows now that he was hoarding! If he looks a fool, it's his own fault!"

"Nonsense!" came Mr. Quelch's deep voice again.

"Oh crikey! I wonder what they're rowing about?" breathed Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Quelch sounds fearfully waxy!"

Slam!

The window closed suddenly! The Remove master seemed to have become aware that his remarks might reach ears for which they were not intended.

Having shut the window, he turned to Mr. Hacker again. His gimlet eyes gleamed at the bitter, acidulated face of the master of the Shell. Hacker, who often looked unpleasant, was now looking his most unpleasant.

"If that is your reply, Mr. Quelch—" he said.

"I said nonsense, and I mean nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I have heard more than enough, Mr. Hacker, of your unfounded suspicions of boys in my Form. Only a few weeks ago you fancied—I say fancied—that several of the very best boys in my

Form had taken to questionable ways—and on investigation, it proved to be a ridiculous mare's-nest."

"Will you hear me, or shall I go to the Head?" asked Mr. Hacker, between his closed lips. "I shall not submit patiently, sir, to a theft—committed by a boy in your Form."

"I repeat, nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Do you hint—do you venture to hint, Mr. Hacker, that the rascal called the prowler is a Remove boy? Are you going to repeat Loder's absurd suspicions of the boy Vernon-Smith?"

"Whether the boy is the prowler, or whether he has followed that rascal's example, I will not undertake to say!" replied Mr. Hacker. "But it was a Remove boy who pilfered my desk last night."

"Nonsense!"

"You have said yourself, sir—it is common knowledge—that the pilferer must have known that the money was in the desk. No attempt was made to open any other lock—"

"You are telling me what everyone knows, sir!" interrupted Mr. Quelch. "I have no doubt that the prowler had somehow spied out your hoard!"

Mr. Hacker winced at that disagreeable word. Probably he had not regarded that secret store of gold as a hoard.

He went on, in bitter tones:

"You admit, at all events, that the pilferer knew that the money was there, Mr. Quelch."

"I do not admit it—I state it!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You are not, I presume, going to tell me that any boy in my Form knew that it was there, in a locked desk."

"That," said Mr. Hacker, "is precisely what I am going to tell you, Mr. Quelch, if you will have the kindness to listen."

"Then I can only say again—nonsense!" said Mr. Quelch, more forcibly than before. "No Remove boy ever enters your study; no Remove boy could possibly know—"

"A Remove boy did know, and will not venture to deny it, I think," said Mr. Hacker.

Mr. Quelch, about to say "nonsense" again, paused. There was, as he was well aware, at least one Remove boy who took a deep and abiding interest in matters that did not concern him, and whom he had, in fact, caned more than once, on finding him too near keyholes.

"If you allude to Bunter—" he said slowly.

"I do not allude to Bunter."

"Then who—"

"Cherry!"

Mr. Quelch almost jumped.

That was about the last name he would have expected to hear. If there was one fellow in the Remove who could not imaginably be suspected of prying or spying, that fellow was Bob Cherry.

"Nonsense!" Quelch almost roared.

"I repeat—"

"Cherry!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"You venture—indeed, you dare—to accuse him of spying in your study—a boy absolutely incapable of such an action—"

"Last Friday," said Mr. Hacker grimly, "Cherry was in my study. As I left the Masters' Meeting unexpectedly early, I came back and found him there."

Mr. Quelch opened his lips and closed them again. To a positive statement like that he had nothing to say.

"I do not accuse the boy of spying," went on Mr. Hacker, "but he certainly saw me open the desk, and saw what was in it. As he had a can of paint in his hand, I presumed that he was there for

what he would doubtless have called a rag. He concealed himself when I entered, and I did not for some minutes know that he was in the study at all."

"I have heard nothing of this," said Mr. Quelch, in rather halting tones. "Why was not this reported to me?"

"I had a reason for dealing leniently with him. The tin box in which the sovereigns were kept was in my hand, when I suddenly saw him and dropped it. He saw all that it contained. On his promise to say nothing about the matter, I allowed him to go."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch, rather blankly.

"I will do him this justice—he has said nothing about the matter," added Mr. Hacker sardonically. "It never even crossed my mind that he might have dishonest intentions. You are pleased to call me a suspicious man, Mr. Quelch, but I most certainly did not suspect that. But since he has taken the money—"

Again Mr. Quelch opened his lips, and again he shut them. The anger had died out of his face now, leaving dismay there.

He had said himself that the pilferer must have known what was in that desk. He had said so to Jack Drake, as a conclusive proof that the prowler was not, as the schoolboy detective believed, an outsider. Now it transpired that a boy in his own Form had known what was in that desk.

"No one else knew," said Mr. Hacker. "Of that I am positive. I had never mentioned the matter to anyone, and I never unlocked that desk without first locking my study door. Occasionally I looked at the tin box to assure myself that it was secure, since the prowler began his depredations in the school. Only on this occasion was I overlooked when doing so. Robert Cherry knew that the sovereigns were in my desk, and no one else knew."

"You are sure you never mentioned—"

"Was I likely to do so?" sneered Mr. Hacker. "Do you think I was eager to hear such remarks as I have since heard?"

"Cherry may have spoken of the matter thoughtlessly."

Hacker's lip curled. Quelch seemed to him like a man catching at straws.

"In that case he can give the names of the boys whom he told," he answered. "Will you question him—in my presence?"

"I will do so at once!" said Mr. Quelch, and he touched the bell.

Trotter, when he came, was dispatched to find Robert Cherry and send him to his Form-master's study.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Loses His Temper!

BOB CHERRY tapped at his Form-master's study door and entered. His face was fresh and ruddy and cheery. He had been punting a footer with his friends when the House page called him in.

Looking at him as he came in, fresh and healthy, it was hard to believe that he was a fellow with a guilty secret on his mind, and Mr. Quelch, at all events, did not, and could not, believe so. But the Acid Drop's face was set grim and hard.

"You sent for me, sir?" asked Bob.

With the corner of his eye he noted the Acid Drop and his grim, bony countenance, and his own face became a little less cheerful. He supposed that Hacker had been making some com-

plaint or other—not an uncommon proceeding on the part of the Acid Drop.

"Yes, Cherry," said Mr. Quelch, rather heavily. "Close the door, please! Now, Cherry, I desire you to answer some—some questions, and take time to think carefully before you answer."

"Yes, sir," said Bob wonderingly.

"A few days ago, I hear from Mr. Hacker, you were in his study and saw what was kept in his desk."

Bob started, and his eyes gleamed round at the Acid Drop for a moment.

"That is true, sir," he answered. "I never expected to hear of it again, as Mr. Hacker let the matter drop; but it's true."

"You were aware that Mr. Hacker had a number of sovereigns in a tin box locked in a desk."

"I couldn't help seeing them, sir, as I was in the study when Mr. Hacker was counting them over."

"Yes, yes, yes! That is not the point. Mr. Hacker is not raising the question of your presence in the study. You saw the sovereigns?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Have you mentioned the matter to anyone?"

Bob flushed crimson.

"I told Mr. Hacker I would not do so, sir. That is why he let me off. If he thinks I have told anyone, I cannot help it. If he can't trust a fellow's word, that's not my fault."

"That is not an answer!" broke in Mr. Hacker. "Give a direct reply, Cherry. Have you told anyone, or have you not told anyone?"

"You've no right to ask such a question!" exclaimed Bob. "I gave you my word."

"Answer Mr. Hacker, Cherry!" said the Remove master.

"Very well, sir. I have not told anyone. I said I wouldn't, and, of course, I haven't. If I had, Mr. Hacker would pretty soon have heard of it—it would have been all over the school."

Bob's face was flushed with indignation. He thought that he knew what the matter was now. Hacker fancied that he had been tattling. He was soon to learn that it was worse than that.

"You are absolutely certain, Cherry, that you did not mention this to a single person?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Of course I am, sir! I'd forgotten about it," said Bob. "I don't suppose I should have remembered it again, only when the sovereigns were found this morning, of course—"

"Five sovereigns were found," said Mr. Hacker. "There were fifteen in all. Where are the others, Cherry?"

Bob stared at him.

"Where are the others?" he repeated. "How should I know?"

"Do not bandy words!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "You knew that the sovereigns were in the desk. No one else knew, and you have just admitted that you told no one else. Your own Form-master will tell you that he is assured that the money was taken by someone who knew that it was there."

Bob stood as if dumbfounded, staring at Mr. Hacker.

Back into his mind came what Smithy had said in the quad that morning—that it looked as if the prowler had known just where to go for the hoard.

Evidently the same idea had occurred to Mr. Hacker.

Bob stood speechless. Slowly he realised that he was suspected.

There was a long silence in the study. Mr. Quelch stood with a deeply troubled face. His own belief had been stated that the pilferer knew that the hoard was there. Bob Cherry knew that it was there, and no one else, it



Crocker did not know that anything was happening, till a clenched fist, that felt like a hammer, crashed behind his ear. That sudden, terrific jolt landed, with every ounce of Jack Drake's strength behind the punch, and Crocker went stumbling forward!

seemed, knew. Yet he could not, and did not, believe Bob guilty.

Bob found his voice at last. His eyes seemed like blue flame as he glared at the master of the Shell.

"You rotter!" he roared.

"Cherry!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Boy!" spluttered Mr. Hacker.

"Do you think I touched your measly money?" bellowed Bob, his face burning, and his eyes blazing. "Oh, you rotter!"

"Boy! How dare you—" gasped the Acid Drop. It was the first time that Horace Hacker had ever been addressed in such terms.

"How dare you?" bawled Bob. "Are you trying to make out that I've got your putrid quids? Think I'd touch them?"

Bob Cherry seemed to have forgotten that he was a junior in the Lower Fourth and that Mr. Hacker was a member of the staff. If he had not forgotten, he did not care.

"Cherry, calm yourself—" gasped Mr. Quelch.

Bob turned to him.

"Is that man going to call me a thief?" he exclaimed. "Are you going to let him, and you my Form-master?"

"Be silent!"

"He's always suspecting somebody of something!" panted Bob. Only a few weeks ago he made out that I and my friends went pub-crawling—and he had to own up that it was all rot! Now he suspects me of thieving in his study! He ought to be jolly well ashamed of himself!"

Mr. Hacker clenched his hands.

"Will you keep this boy in order, Mr. Quelch?" he asked, through his teeth. "I will not endure this insolence from a pilferer—"

"Who's a pilferer?" roared Bob.

"Mr. Quelch, you don't believe a word of that man's rotten suspicions."

"That man" fairly quivered with rage.

"You must calm yourself, Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch. "I can understand your feelings, and make allowance for them; but you must address Mr. Hacker with respect."

"Respect—a man who calls me a thief!" Bob choked. "You don't believe a word of it, sir—I jolly well know you don't."

"I cannot!" said Mr. Quelch. He shook his head. "Nevertheless, Mr. Hacker has just grounds for such a suspicion. It has been agreed that the pilferer knew that the money was there. You knew, Cherry—and you say that you told no one?"

"No one!" said Bob. "I said I wouldn't, and I didn't! Nobody heard of it from me."

"I believe that much!" said Mr. Hacker bitterly. "But on your own words, you are condemned. No one else knew—"

"You can see, Cherry—" said the Remove master, deeply troubled.

"I knew that I never gave a thought to the mouldy money," said Bob. "I knew it was there, certainly. Somebody else may have known—must have known—all the fellows are saying that it was the prowler who did it—"

"Quite!" snapped Mr. Hacker.

Bob stared at him.

"Is he going to accuse me of being the prowler now?" he exclaimed. "Does he think I'm the fellow who pinched in the Head's study—the fellow who knocked out Loder of the Sixth one night? Oh, this is getting funny!"

"Either you are the person who is called the prowler, or else you have followed his iniquitous example!" said Mr. Hacker, in a grinding voice. "I demand the return of the money taken from my study. This instant!"

"Oh, don't be such a fool!" said Bob. "Wha-at?"

"Cherry, will you curb your tongue?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I order you to speak respectfully to Mr. Hacker."

"I will hear no more from that boy!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker, his face livid. "As you cannot, or will not, deal with this matter, Mr. Quelch, I shall place it before the headmaster. That young scoundrel will be expelled from the school—and I shall demand a search of his belongings before he leaves—I will not allow him to carry away his plunder from Greyfriars."

"Mr. Hacker—"

"I will not remain here, sir, to be flouted and insulted by this boy of your Form!" roared Mr. Hacker. "I shall go to Dr. Locke!"

And with that the Acid Drop hung out of the study, closing the door after him with a bang.

Bob stood breathing hard.

Mr. Quelch, dismayed and troubled and uncertain, gazed at him with a clouded brow.

"You can't believe this, sir!" said Bob, at last.

"No!" said Mr. Quelch slowly. "I cannot, Cherry! But the matter will now be in Dr. Locke's hands—it has passed out of mine. You may leave my study, Cherry—but you must be prepared to be called before your headmaster."

Mr. Quelch was left with a deeply corrugated brow, when the door closed on Bob. He did not—he could not—believe what Hacker believed; and yet, on his own words, Hacker's belief was justified. Unless it could be found that someone else had known of that hidden board— But who else?

The prowler—but who was the prowler? No one knew—no one could guess. There was a detective in the

school—Ferrers Locke's assistant, specially called in to elucidate this harassing mystery. And he could do nothing—nothing! All that Jack Drake could do was to form wild theories—he could not lay his hands on the Greyfriars prowler!

Mr. Quelch paced his study, in a disturbed and harassed frame of mind, till the dinner-bell rang.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Called Before The Head!

BOB, old man—
 "What on earth—"
 "What's happened?"
 "My esteemed Bob—"

The Co. came up with a rush as Bob Cherry reappeared in the quad with a flaming face. Other fellows gathered round—Billy Bunter's eyes almost popping through his spectacles in his curiosity.

"Quelch bitten you, old man?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Another row with the Acid Drop?" asked Peter Todd.

"Bob, old chap—what—" exclaimed Harry Wharton. He grabbed Bob by the arm. "What the dickens is the row?"

"I'll tell you!" Bob's voice came husky with rage. "I'll tell you the Acid Drop's latest! He thinks I've pinched his filthy quids."

"What?"
 "The mad old ass!"

"Rot!"
 "The terrific old toad—" gasped Hurreo Janset Ram Singh.

"Oh gum!" exclaimed Skinner. "That's rather rich—even for the Acid Drop! What will the old goat think next?"

"But why—" howled Johnny Bull.

"Why?" roared Bob. "Oh, they've got it worked out that the prowler knew that the quids were there, see? So I'm the prowler, or else following in his footsteps. Hacker doesn't seem sure which, the dear man! All he's sure of is that I've got his putrid quids in my trousers pocket."

"But what on earth's put it into his silly head that you knew the quids were there?" asked the Bounder.

"Must be as mad as a hatter," said Harry. "How could Bob know anything about his rotten hoard?"

"I did know!" said Bob.

"Wha-a-at?"

"You did know?"

"Yes!" Bob's face flamed redder, as every eye fixed on him. "It's all come out now, so I can tell you. Hacker's telling the Head this blessed minute, anyhow. I saw his rotten hoard that day I was in his study—"

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"You fellows wondered why I never got into a row, as he spotted me there. Well, that was why! He let me off because he wanted me not to mention it! I never did mention it, either."

"Oh gad!" said Vernon-Smith. His eyes were fixed very curiously on Bob's flushed face. "So—you knew?"

"Yes, I knew! The only fellow who did, it seems!" said Bob. He glanced round, and the colour died out of his face. He could not fail to read the startled expressions on many faces. "I knew—but if any fellow here thinks—"

There was a sudden silence. The Co. gazed at their chum, almost in stupefaction.

Every fellow was of Smithy's opinion, that the pilferer was someone who knew

about it. Now they knew that a Remove fellow did—Bob Cherry.

The Bounder whistled. "I never said anything, because I told Hacker I wouldn't!" said Bob, his voice a little husky. "If the prowler knew, whoever he is, he never got it from me. I don't suppose he did know—he was just rooting about after what he could pinch, and happened—"

"He happened to go straight to that desk in the corner, and leave everything else alone?" asked Vernon-Smith dryly. "He happened to spot the right spot first shot? He happened to guess that an old tin box, when he saw it, had quids in it? Don't be an ass, Cherry!"

"He knew all right!" said Skinner, with a very peculiar look at Bob.

"If he knew, he never heard it from me," said Bob. "And if any fellow here thinks that I sneaked down from the dorm last night to pinch Hacker's quids—"

"Nobody thinks that!" said Harry Wharton. "That's utter rot! But—it's horribly unfortunate that you knew anything about those mouldy quids."

"Frightfully!" murmured Skinner.

"What did you say to Hacker?" asked Harry.

"I told him he was a rotter!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Time somebody told him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"But—but—but what's going to happen now?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Hacker's a suspicious old ass—but he's got something to go on. What are they going to do?"

"Hacker's gone to the Head!" answered Bob. "I think Quelch is standing by me—he knows it's all rot!"

"The rotfulness is terrific! But—"

"It's rot!" said the Bounder. But he spoke very slowly. What it looked like was only too clear. "It's time they nailed that prowling blighter. That fool, Loder, put it on me once—and then they fancied Wharton had a hand in it—and now it's you. And the prowler, whoever he is, is laughing in his sleeve all the time."

"They jolly well ought to call in a detective, if this is going on," said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton gave a start at the word. He knew, though no one else in the Remove did, that a detective was in the school. He glanced round over the crowd of fellows—but the sheepish face and steel-rimmed glasses of James Duck were not to be seen.

"Here comes Trotter!" muttered Nugent.

The House page had come out and was glancing about him. He came across to the group of Removes. All the juniors could guess what he wanted.

"Master Cherry—" said Trotter.

"Well?" grunted Bob.

"The 'Ead's sent for you, sir!" said Trotter.

"All right!"

Bob stalked away to the House. His friends hurried after him—leaving the other fellows in a buzz.

"Mind how you speak to the Head, Bob!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"Keep your temper, and don't play the goat!"

Bob Cherry gave a snort.

"Nobody's going to call me a thief without getting back what I think of him!" he snapped.

Bob Cherry tramped into the House, to go to the Head's study. His chums were left in utter dismay.

"Well, this is a go!" said Johnny Bull. "If that fathead had let us keep him away from Hacker's study, the other day—when we tried—"

"Seen Duck?" asked Harry.

"Duck! Blow Duck! What do you want that silly owl for?"

"He went up to the study after class," said Frank Nugent. He stared, as the captain of the Remove, leaving his friends, hurried into the House. "What the thump does he want Duck for?"

"Goodness knows!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Blow Duck! Bother Duck! What the dickens is going to happen to old Bob?"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Bull! I say, this is a bit of a surprise, ain't it?" asked Billy Bunter, blinking seriously at the three juniors through his big spectacles. "What I can't make out is, whether Bob Cherry was the prowler all the time, or whether this is the first time he's pinched? What do you fellows think?"

Bob Cherry's friends did not state what they thought. They grabbed the fat Owl, up-ended him, and rolled him over in the quad—amid anguished and indignant yells from Billy Bunter.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Up To Drake!

DR A K E!" panted Harry Wharton.

"Chuck it, ass!"

"Oh, don't be a fool!

You've got to do something now."

James Duck was in Study No. 1 when the captain of the Remove burst breathlessly in and flung the door shut behind him.

The schoolboy detective was not in a pleasant or happy mood. Mr. Quelch, who was the cause of his presence at Greyfriars, had definitely turned him down, and declined to make any further use of his services. He did not conceal his opinion that Ferrers Locke's assistant might as well leave the school. He could hardly send him away; but he made it quite plain that he saw no purpose in his remaining.

Drake was quite determined not to go until his work was done. He was not going to report failure to Ferrers Locke, to please Mr. Quelch or anybody else. But it was awkward to remain, in the circumstances.

Success, too, was only a matter of time; he was sure of that. He had his eye on the man he wanted, and that man was Randolph Crocker, the disreputable old boy of Greyfriars.

He suspected, or rather he knew, that it was Sportsman Crocker who prowled and pilfered in the school from which he had been expelled so many years ago. But pinning the rascal down and proving his case was another matter—a matter of time. The wary Sportsman was not an easy man to pin down.

Now, it appeared, the prowler had prowled again; but Drake was not wanted. Quelch had no use for him, and declined even to discuss the matter with him.

It was unpleasant enough for Ferrers Locke's assistant, and he was thinking the matter over in the study, with a knitted brow, when the captain of the Remove burst in.

"What the dickens is the row?" asked Drake, staring at Wharton over James Duck's steel-rimmed glasses. "If you're going to shout my name out all over the place—"

"Never mind that. Look here, you've got to do something—it's time you did, if you're ever going to!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Thanks!" said Drake dryly. "I've had enough of that from Quelch. I don't really want any from you."

"You're a detective. You came here to get the prowler. You've told me so."

What the thump have you been doing all these weeks? Pulling Skinner's leg to fill up time? Making all the fellows believe you're a perfect idiot? I'm beginning to believe they're right, too!" said Harry.

"Thanks again. What's biting you?" asked Drake. "Is it any special bizney of yours, if you don't mind my asking?"

"I should jolly well think it is!" panted Wharton. "It looks as if every fellow is going to be suspected, one after another, if that scoundrel isn't caught. That fool Loder fixed it on Smithy once, and he came near getting sacked—then it came my way, as you know—and now it's Bob—"

"Bob Cherry?" exclaimed Drake. "They're after him now!" said Wharton savagely. "Hacker's got on his track, and he's with the Head now."

"What utter rot!" said Drake blankly. "I haven't heard—"

"I'm telling you! It's come out that Bob knew of that old ass having quids parked in his study—"

"Oh!"

"So Hacker fancies he was the man. Got that?"

"Oh!" repeated Drake.

His face was very grave. It was news to him, as to the others, that Bob had known anything about Hacker's hoard. And it was startling news.

"Why, you—you—you fool!" gasped Wharton. "You don't believe there's any possibility—you dummy—"

"No," said Drake. "I knew Bob when I used to be here—I know him rather too well to think anything of the kind. But—"

"But what, then?" snapped Wharton. "Hacker's got a right to suspect him, if Bob knew. Anyone can see that the fellow who snaffled those sovereigns knew just where to lay his hands on them. If Hacker knew that Bob Cherry knew, he was bound to think of him."

"He's the sort of man that would," said Wharton savagely.

"Hacker doesn't know Bob as we know him!" said Drake quietly. "He knows that the pilferer knew where to look for the quids, that's all. That points to Bob, if he knew. How did he know?"

Wharton snapped out an explanation. Drake's face became graver and graver as he listened.

"It might have been anybody!" said Harry. "Any fellow in any Form except the Sixth—"

"All the evidence points to the Sixth, if it's a Greyfriars man at all!" said Drake.

"Fathead! What's happened clears the Sixth!" snapped Wharton. "The rotter dropped some of the quids, going back to his dormitory—"

"Has the prowler ever dropped any of his loot about the House before?" asked Drake dryly.

"No. What—"

"Why did he this time then?"

"What the dickens do you mean? He did—we found the sovereigns on the landing, and up and down the stairs—"

Drake laughed.

"I know that. Think he had a hole in his pocket?"

"It looks like it. What do you mean?"

"I mean that as soon as those quids were found I knew that they had been spotted about intentionally, to lay a false scent."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"That's what beats me so far," said Drake, while the captain of the Remove stared at him amazed. "That trail was laid to lead suspicion upstairs—to the dormitories. I don't get it yet."

"Oh!" gasped Harry again. "If

you're right it can only mean that the prowler's a Sixth Form man and that he chucked away a third part of his plunder to lay a false trail."

"Only he's not a Sixth Form man!" said Drake. "If what happened last night was the work of the prowler, he's playing a new game that I don't get. Was it or was it not some hard-up Sixth Former following in his footsteps?"

Drake was speaking rather to himself than Wharton. He was puzzled by this new development—in which Ferrers Locke's assistant had seen more than anyone else at Greyfriars dreamed of seeing.

"The prowler doesn't care where suspicion falls," he went on. "Why should he throw away good money to draw suspicion off the Sixth? That's what he did, and I don't get it—yet!"

"You say he's not a Sixth Form man. Does that mean you've got your eye on somebody?"

Drake did not answer that question. Harry Wharton did not repeat it. He went on hurriedly:

"If you can do anything, Drake, do it now! Bob's with the Head, I tell you. Everybody knows he knew about Hacker's hoard. They can't say he did it from that. But it looks—he knew; and the sovereigns were dropped by some chap going back to a dormitory—at least, everybody thinks so. Some of the fellows believe already that he did it; I could see it in their faces. He's going to be under suspicion, even if they don't make out that he did it—"

"I know."

"Well, can't you do anything? If you call yourself a detective—" broke out Wharton. "What's the good of sticking here week after week and nothing coming of it? Can't you do anything?"

"I'm going to try," said Jack Drake quietly. "Leave it at that, Wharton; you needn't say any more."

With that Jack Drake left the study. Harry Wharton followed him slowly.

When he rejoined his friends in the quad, Bob was still with the Head, and he caught sight of James Duck going out at the gates. His brow darkened as he saw him. Bob Cherry was with the Head, suspected if not accused of having pilfered Hacker's hoard; and Ferrers Locke's assistant, it seemed, was going for a walk before dinner.

Harry Wharton's opinion just then was that of Mr. Quelch—that Ferrers Locke's assistant might as well return to Baker Street, for all the use he was at Greyfriars.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Cornered!

RANDOLPH CROCKER locked the door of the hut on the spinney, put the key into his pocket, and lounged away down Friardale Lane.

Every day—or nearly every day—the Sportsman did the same about the same time, as one fellow at Greyfriars was aware.

But as that time coincided with the time of the school dinner, no Greyfriars fellow had ever noticed the Sportsman's manners and customs in that respect, excepting the one who was specially interested in him.

Camping at the hut on the spinney, cooking on an oil-stove, it was natural for the old boy to walk down to the Cross Keys in Friardale for his midday meal—especially as he often found congenial spirits there for billiards or banker in the afternoons.

On this occasion, though the Sportsman was not aware of it, a keen pair of eyes—over a pair of steel-rimmed glasses—watched him from a clump of trees as he went.

When he had disappeared down the lane James Duck emerged from the trees and hurried up to the deserted hut.

At Greyfriars the bell was ringing for dinner.

James Duck was generally very careful to observe all the rules of the school, but this time he disregarded them. There was a vacant place at the Remove table in Hall.

Mr. Quelch, who seemed determined now to regard Drake merely as a Remove boy, and not as a detective, was likely to be annoyed. That also Drake calmly disregarded.

He cut behind the hut, which screened him from the lane, and stopped at the back door. It did not take him long to ascertain that that door was bolted on the inside, and he moved along to the window.

But there was no access by the window. It was boarded over inside, the boards nailed or screwed fast.

Drake set his lips.

That the mystery man of Greyfriars was Randolph Crocker he knew. How the rascal entered and left the school without leaving a trace behind he did not know—but he suspected. It was to Billy Bunter that he owed the clue.

Only a few days ago the fat Owl, dodging Smithy, had dodged into the hut on the spinney, getting in at the window. Bunter's strange tale had been laughed at by the Remove fellows; it had sounded to them like one of Bunter's tallest yarns.

According to Bunter, he had found the back room of the hut locked on one side and bolted on the other, and the window also fastened. Bunter had had to knock out a pane to unfasten it and get in.

How a man could lock or bolt all the exits from a room and then get out was a mystery to Bunter. It was no mystery to the fellows to whom he told the tale, for they simply did not believe it.

But it had given Ferrers Locke's assistant a spot of light.

That hut was built on the site of the old abbot's cell on the spinney, once the property of Greyfriars. The old flagged floor of the cell was now the floor of the hut.

If a man had disappeared from a locked room, it might mean that Bunter had let his fat imagination run away with him—or it might mean that there was a secret exit from that room.

If there was, it led somewhere—and might account for the fact that the Greyfriars prowler, though outside the school, entered and left without a trace whenever he desired to do so.

Randolph Crocker was an old Greyfriars man. Long ago he had spent years at the school. Had he in those days discovered a secret, of which he was now making use?

It seemed probable to Drake, but it could only be verified by a close search of the interior of the hiker's hut.

That was not an easy matter, for Crocker was generally to be found there, keeping up his pretence of carrying on a cobbler's business. Drake, on the other hand, had to keep up the appearance of being an ordinary Remove boy, and could not cut classes or meals without drawing unwanted attention to himself. Masters and prefects kept an eye on that hut—to take care that Greyfriars fellows did not break bounds in that direction. So far the schoolboy

detective had had no opportunity of putting Bunter's strange tale to the test.

Now he was making one—by cutting the school dinner. It was rather a departure from his usual cautious line of action—but so far as Crocker was concerned, at any rate, he was secure. The Sportsman was likely to be gone at least an hour—and if he stayed on to play billiards at the inn, as he sometimes did, he might be two or three hours away.

But the occupant of the hut on the spinney had boarded up the broken window at the back—and boarded it up very securely. Drake had hoped to effect an entrance at the back of the hut, but he had to give up that idea now.

He circled round the wooden building again, his eyes on the alert. He was not likely to be seen by anyone at Greyfriars while the school was at dinner; but it was a half-holiday that afternoon, and before long there would be plenty of fellows about.

But any eye might fall on him from the lane now that he was in front of the hut, which faced the lane. He could not risk any eye falling on him—and what he was going to do.

A country cart lumbered by, the carter glancing and grinning at the hut on the spinney. The old boy of Greyfriars was the talk of the neighbourhood, and the hut a centre of local interest and gossip. The name of Randolph Crocker was on every tongue for miles round the school from which he had been expelled so long ago.

The cart lumbered on out of sight; then a pedestrian passed, and Drake had to wait till he was gone.

Then, at last, the coast was clear—though how long it would remain clear he could not tell—and he lost no time.

He stepped quickly to the door. That door had been carefully locked by Randolph Crocker when he went; but Ferrers Locke's assistant had a certain knowledge and skill in such matters, and in a couple of minutes the lock was unlocked and the schoolboy detective was inside the hut.

He shut the door quickly and locked it again, safe against any chance visitor.

Then he stepped to the middle door that gave access to the back room, which Crocker used as both bed-room and kitchen. In a moment he had passed through into the back room and shut the door after him.

It was from the back room, according to Bunter, that the occupant of the hut had so mysteriously vanished.

Jack Drake's eyes gleamed round the room, dim from the boarded window.

It contained only a few wretched articles of furniture and utensils. The walls were of wood, except where, here and there, some fragment of the old stone walls of the abbot's cell had been built in.

The schoolboy detective turned on a pocket torch, and began to scan the massive stone blocks that formed the ancient floor.

If there was a secret exit, that was where it lay. It was likely enough, for the ancient pile of Greyfriars had many such secrets. Drake, in his time at the school, had known of a once secret passage that led from the school vaults to the old priory in Friardale Wood. Was there another such which had never yet been discovered, or discovered only by the Sportsman in his days at the school?

Drake was almost sure of it. How else was the prowler able to come and go without leaving a sign? He had vaguely suspected something of the

kind, even before he had heard Bunter's strange tale of the man who had vanished. Since then he had felt very nearly certain.

But if such a secret was there, it was not easy to spot.

Every one of the ancient stone blocks, as far as Drake scanned them, seemed as firm and immovable as the rest.

If there was a secret way below, it was well hidden.

Yet surely there was. There must be! It was not only to annoy the headmaster that Randolph Crocker had fixed his abode at that spot almost at the school gates. He had another reason—access to the interior of the school, to carry on the pilferings by which he lived in dingy idleness—Drake could not doubt that.

Once he knew the secret, the prowler's game was up. To follow it to the Greyfriars end—to keep watch at that end for the prowler when next he prowled—that was the schoolboy detective's plan. Then the handcuffs would click on the wrists of the mystery man of Greyfriars, and Jack Drake's task at the school would be done.

Block after block of ancient, time-worn stone he scanned with keen, searching eyes. But he had not yet covered the whole extent of the floor, when a sudden sound caused him to start up, and shut off the light of the torch.

It was the click of a key in a lock.

Drake caught his breath.

Randolph Crocker had returned.

The front door of the hut opened, and he heard the man tramp into the front room.

Drake stood quite still, his heart beating.

He had counted on at least an hour—perhaps longer. It was hardly over half an hour since Crocker had gone, and now he had returned. For some reason unknown to Drake, the Sportsman had returned earlier than was his wont.

Drake shut his teeth.

It was an unexpected blow. He did not fear Crocker; but if the rascal found him there, he would be put on his guard instantly. He was not likely to continue to believe that James Duck was the sheepish schoolboy he looked—if he learned that James Duck had entered a locked hut without leaving any trace on the lock!

Drake had little time to think.

The footsteps of the man who had returned were crossing towards the middle door. There was no concealment in the room. There was one chance, and Drake swiftly and silently backed behind the door.

The next moment it opened. It was flung carelessly open, and shut Drake against the wall.

Crocker came from the front room.

Through the slit between door and doorpost, Drake had a momentary glimpse of him. Had he shut the door the schoolboy detective would have been immediately revealed. But he left it wide open as he walked into the back room. He had not come there to remain.

He threw a coat and a hat on the camp-bed at the end of the room, stood for a few moments while he lighted a cigarette, and then walked back into the front room. He did not take the trouble to close the door after him. And Drake's brief hope of escaping unseen by the back door died away.

The Sportsman threw himself into a chair near the doorway, crossed his legs, and smoked the cigarette.

He was hardly more than a yard from Drake. The schoolboy detective

could not leave his precarious hiding-place without being immediately seen. He had to remain where he was, and he remained without stirring, hardly breathing.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Under A Cloud!

"I SAY, you fellows, Duck's cutting tiffin!"

Few fellows at the Remove table heeded Billy Bunter, or the fact that the dud of the Form was cutting tiffin.

Mr. Quelch certainly observed it, and frowned. But the Remove master, like the Remove, had quite other matters to think of.

Bob Cherry sat at the table with the rest, his face paler than usual, his eyes on his plate.

Almost all other eyes at the Remove table turned on him, from time to time, with varying expressions.

Bob did not meet a single glance.

The outbreak of fierce anger with which he had met Hacker's accusation in his Form-master's study had passed. His resentment towards Hacker was as deep as ever, though since he had reflected he had to admit that the Acid Drop, from his own point of view, had something to go upon.

Quelch was standing by him. The Head had been kind and considerate, though a little dubious, and plainly influenced by Mr. Hacker's fixed belief that his missing sovereigns were in Bob Cherry's possession.

So assured was Hacker that he had taken it for granted that Bob Cherry would be condemned on the evidence, sacked from the school, and compelled to disgorge his plunder before he went.

The Acid Drop found that he had taken a good deal too much for granted. That suspicion rested on Bob was clear—all the known circumstances pointed to him. That suspicion amounted to evidence, in a sense, but certainly not to conclusive evidence.

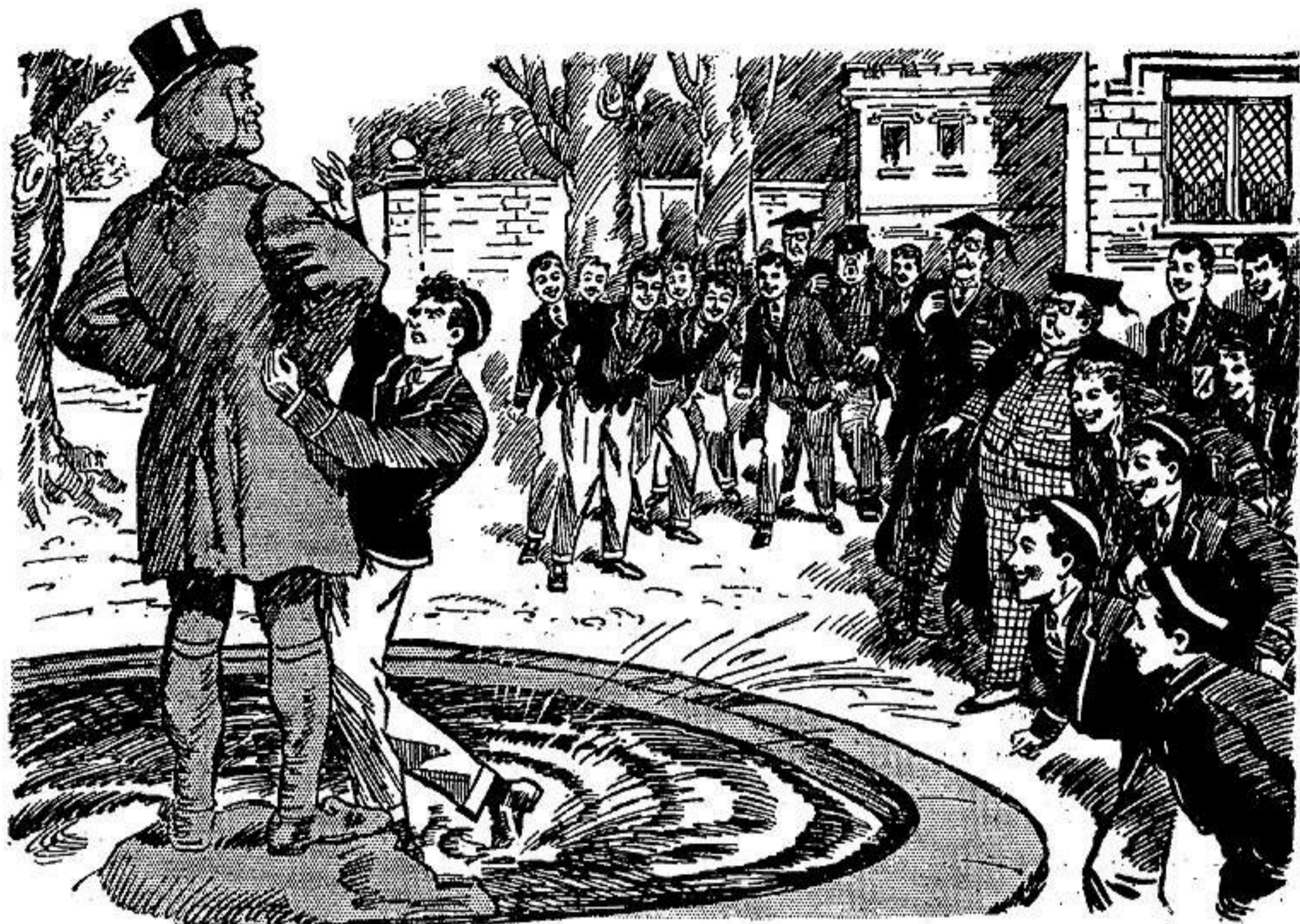
The interview with Dr. Locke had been unsatisfactory to Hacker, and unsatisfactory to the accused junior. It amounted to the Scottish verdict of not proven.

The evidence convinced Hacker. It convinced others, as well as Hacker, and made still more regard Bob dubiously. Nevertheless, the matter was still in abeyance, and Bob rejoined the Remove, knowing that he was doubted, and knowing that some of the prefects had been instructed to search his study and his box in the dormitory.

Bob, who generally had a very healthy appetite, ate little at dinner. He did not raise his eyes from his plate. He was feeling dismayed and wretched now that the first anger and indignation had passed. He had nothing to be ashamed of, but the thought that Remove fellows might think the same as Hacker was overwhelming. So far, the matter had not gone outside the Remove; but it would not be long in spreading to other Forms. All the school would know before the day ended.

Some of the Remove doubted him, if they did not believe exactly like Hacker—and they knew him well enough. Other fellows who did not know him so well—fellows in the Fourth and the Shell—what were they likely to think and believe?

Dinner that day was a painful ordeal to Bob and to his friends. After it was over the Co. gathered round him as the Remove went out. Wharton and Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree



All eyes were on Hobson, as he clambered up the statue. One leg slipped into the water, and Hobby uttered a loud "Ow!"—which was answered by a ripple of laughter. However, Hobby clambered, and reached for the top-hat that adorned the head of the statue.

Singh wanted to make it quite clear, to all whom it might concern, that they were standing by their chum.

Lord Maulverer made it a special point to come up and speak to him, at which Bob grinned faintly. That was just like old Mauly.

Some other fellows did the same. Others, perhaps by accident, seemed to be steering clear of him. Bob drove his hands deep into his pocket, and tramped away across the quad, his friends keeping him company. Seldom had Bob's sunny face been so blackly clouded.

"What's a fellow to do?" he said, breaking a long silence. "What the dickens is a fellow to do? It's not a thing a chap can get hold of and squash. I can't knock a fatheaded idea out of Hacker's silly old head, can I?"

"Bother him!" growled Johnny Bull. "As if I'd touch his mouldy quids," said Bob. "The old ass! All the same, I can't help seeing that the blighter, whoever he was, must have known they were there. I knew. I wonder who else did?"

"The prowler," said Nugent.

"Yes—but who is he?" groaned Bob. "If they snaffled him, he might have the quids on him, or in his things. That would prove it. But they won't snaffle him all of a sudden, after weeks."

Harry Wharton shook his head. He had had a momentary hope in Jack Drake. But that hope had died. Drake could do nothing.

"There's one thing," said Bob, "the brute who pinched those quids will have to be careful how he gets rid of them. Quids attract attention these days,

You hardly ever see one. He may have to keep them back, and get shut of them one at a time—at a distance, too! So if they did get the prowler, he would have some of them on him. But they won't, I suppose."

"It does not seem terrifically likely!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, his dusky face deeply clouded.

"Let's get out," said Bob restlessly. "A spot of fresh air will make me feel a bit better."

"Cherry!" It was Mr. Hacker's sharp voice as the Famous Five went down to the gates.

A Sixth Form man was just going out—Gerald Loder. He glanced round as the master of the Shell called or rather shouted.

Bob did not look round. He set his lips and went on. There was a patter of feet—Hacker was actually running! He called out as he ran:

"Loder! Stop that junior—stop, Cherry!"

Loder gave an angry grunt. Loder had affairs of his own on his mind that afternoon—pressing affairs. But he could hardly pass a master's voice unheeded, and he stepped into the way of the juniors.

"Stop!" he snapped. "Can't you hear Hacker?"

Bob glared at him. He knew why Hacker had called. The Acid Drop fancied that he might be going out of gates—with his plunder! It was for the Head, or Quelch, to gate him, if they chose so to do; and they had not done so. He had no intention of heeding orders from the Acid Drop.

"Get out of the way, Loder!" he snapped. "Do you fancy you're still a prefect, you fool? Get out of it!"

"Stop!" snapped Loder. "Shift that cheeky fool!" roared Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five shifted Gerald Loder promptly. They charged in a bunch, and Loder of the Sixth went over backwards and rolled out of the gateway into the road. He yelled and scrambled to his feet, his face red with rage.

"Have some more, you swab!" snorted Johnny Bull. "Lots more if you want it."

Loder did not seem to want any more. He gave the Famous Five a scowl, and walked quickly away. But the brief delay enabled Mr. Hacker to reach the spot.

"Cherry! Stop at once!" panted the Acid Drop, as he came breathlessly up. "Go in immediately."

"Rats to you!" retorted Bob. "I order you—"

"You're not my Form-master! You can order me till you're black in the face, and I shall take no notice!" snapped Bob. "Go and eat cooko!"

"You—you impertinent young rascal—you—" gasped Mr. Hacker. He made a clutch at Bob's collar.

The Famous Five could not deal with Hacker as they had dealt, unceremoniously, with Loder! They would willingly have done so—but members of Dr. Locke's staff were not to be barged over!

Bob dodged the clutching hand, and cut out of the gateway.

"Come on!" he called. "I order you to come back, Cherry!" shrieked Mr. Hacker. "I will not allow you to go out and conceal your plunder!"

"Shut up, you old ass!" THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,623.

"Wha-a-t?"

Mr. Hacker stared—he rather gibbered after the Famous Five as they went. He was left gibbering as the chums of the Remove walked away down Friardale Lane.

Johnny Bull gave a grunt as they passed the fence of the Abbot's Spinney. The juniors glanced towards the hut—to see Loder of the Sixth disappearing therein! That, it seemed, was where Loder was going that afternoon!

But they gave only a passing thought to the sportsman of the Sixth as they walked on. The miserable trouble that had so suddenly fallen on Bob Cherry occupied their minds—and they little dreamed how Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form and his visit to Crocker's hut were connected with it.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Paid in Gold!

RANDOLPH CROCKER grinned through the smoke of his cigarette as the front door of the hut opened, to admit Loder, and closed after him.

He had warned Loder to come early; and Loder had come early; as soon, in fact, as he could get away after dinner. The Sportsman was there to see him—that was why he had returned early from the Cross Keys.

"So you've come!" he grinned. "I was going to give you an hour before I started on the telephone."

"I've come!" muttered Loder.

He stood leaning on the bench, facing Crocker. The Sportsman's eyes scanned his face curiously.

He could see that there was something amiss with Loder. If that meant that he had not brought the tenner, he had little pity to expect from the rascally adventurer.

Crocker's eyes glinted unpleasantly.

"If you've not got the tenner—"

"I've got it!"

Crocker grinned again.

"I fancied you would!" he said.

Loder, still leaning on the bench, made no movement to produce that

tenner. It was a cold day, but there was perspiration on his brow.

"Well?" rapped Crocker, puzzled.

"Look here!" Loder's voice came uncertain and husky. "Look here, Crocker! My horse went down, and I owe you the money! I know that! I've had a lot of bad luck this term—but—later—I can raise the wind! A couple of weeks—"

"Cut all that out!"

"If you'd give me the time, it would make more difference to me than you can guess!" muttered Loder hoarsely.

"I think I said cut it out."

Loder's hand went into his pocket, and his face, already pale, grew paler. But the hand did not come out of the pocket again. It seemed glued there.

Crocker stared at him, irritated and puzzled.

Another pair of eyes—unsuspected by either—watched Loder curiously from behind the middle door of the hut.

Jack Drake was as puzzled as Crocker by Loder's strange aspect. He was not surprised to see Loder there—he knew already that the sportsman of the Sixth had dealings with the former Sportsman of Greyfriars. But he was surprised by Loder's look—by the pale, haunted wretchedness in his face. He watched in silence through the narrow aperture between the door and the jamb, wondering whether Loder's visit might give him the chance he wanted of dodging out unseen by Crocker.

"Look here, Crocker!" Loder's voice was hardly more than a husky whisper. "I—I've got the money! But—but—I'm asking you, begging you, to let me leave with it in my pocket. I—I've got reasons."

"Do," sneered Crocker, "and I'll walk back to the school with you." He half rose.

Loder did not speak. But he drew a tied handkerchief from his trousers pocket, and threw it across to the Sportsman.

There was a clink as it landed on Crocker's knees. There were coins tied up in that handkerchief.

Crocker caught it, staring at it in astonishment. Jack Drake came near

betraying himself at that moment. But he shut his teeth and kept silent.

"What the dooce—" exclaimed Crocker.

He untied the knot in the handkerchief. A yellow gleam caught the sunlight from the window.

"Quids!" exclaimed Crocker, in amazement. "Sovereigns! Great gad! Where did you pick up a handful of sovereigns, Loder?"

Loder did not answer that question. His face was colourless, and the sweat ran down from his forehead.

Crocker whistled softly. He did not need an answer.

That the money was not Loder's, he knew at once. It was not, and could not be—no schoolboy could have had ten sovereigns in his possession—a fellow, moreover, who had had nothing the day before. Loder of the Sixth had followed in the footsteps of that old boy of Greyfriars—he had done what Crocker had been expelled, years ago, for doing. The rascal knew that as well as if Gerald Loder had told him so. The junior hidden in the back room wondered for a moment whether even that bad and hard-hearted man would stand for this. But he did not wonder long.

"Gad!" said Crocker at last. "Gad!" He counted the sovereigns, clinking them in his hand. Then, knotting them in the handkerchief again, he slipped the little bundle into his pocket—Loder's despairing eyes watching it disappear.

"Pull yourself together!" he said contemptuously. "You'll give yourself away with a face like that!"

Loder did not speak. He could not. Up to the very moment when he had parted with the sovereigns, he had hoped that he might yet pull through without becoming actually a thief. If that dastardly rascal had given him a chance, gladly, how gladly, he would have restored what he had taken from Hacker's study, in the still hours of darkness. Up to the last moment, the last second, he had hoped—but hope was dead now.

Without a word, he turned and left the hut.

He walked almost blindly back to Greyfriars. He was done with Crocker now—and he was safe, so far as that went, at the school. Everybody put the theft down to the prowler—so far as Loder knew, at all events. Nobody could suspect that the prowler, or the wretched sportsman who had imitated him—was in Loder's Form at all; he had taken care of that.

He was safe—from all but a tormenting conscience.

He walked blindly. It was a curious stare from Coker of the Fifth, coming out at the gates, that recalled him to himself.

Coker stopped.

"I say, you look ill, Loder," he said.

Loder walked on without answering him; but he made an effort to pull himself together. Crocker's advice was good—he did not want his face to give him away. After all, he was safe!

There had been fifteen sovereigns in Hacker's hoard. Ten were wanted to satisfy Crocker—but Loder had had to take all; the prowler would hardly have left any behind. He would have shuddered at the thought of keeping any of them—beyond what he needed to save his skin. Five had been used to lay a false trail—to lead suspicion away from the Sixth!

Not that Loder would have dreamed of throwing suspicion on any particular person; he would have shrunk in horror from such a thought. That trail of gold, false as it was, led in the right direction, according to his belief

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—he was assured that the prowler was not in the Sixth. There were a couple of hundred other fellows to choose from—and that false trail led to no one in particular. It simply confirmed the belief that the prowler, when he prowled, came from one of the dormitories.

Not from the Sixth—not from Loder's Form—that was the important point. He was safe—perfectly safe—the whole thing would be put down to the prowler—and Loder had only his conscience to dread.

So, at least, he fancied—till, as he went towards the House, he caught a remark from a group of Fifth Form men.

"Can't be much doubt!" Price of the Fifth was saying. "From what I hear, it's come out that he knew that Hacker had a hoard of quids—"

Loder stopped dead.

"Then they know who it was!" said Hilton.

"Looks like it! I hear that Hacker saw him go out just after dinner, and thought—"

"What's that?" Loder tried to speak naturally. "Has—has anything been found out, Price?"

Price glanced round at him.

"Yes—they know who had Hacker's quids," he answered.

Loder's knees almost failed him.

"Who?" he managed to utter.

"A Remove kid—"

"Oh!"

Loder walked on. His relief made him almost giddy.

They fancied they knew who had had Hacker's quids—and they were thinking of a Remove kid! What had put such an idea into anybody's head? Loder could not even guess. Then it came to him in a flash—Vernon-Smith!

He had always believed—he believed still—that Vernon-Smith of the Remove was the prowler. If they had got the young scoundrel at last, he could answer for this along with the rest! It would not hurt him to have one more pilfering put to his tally, after so many.

Had they got an innocent fellow, Loder hardly knew what he would, or could have done. But if they had got the guilty man, all right! Loder went to his study, nothing doubting that it was Herbert Vernon-Smith who had been spotted at last—what other Remove kid could it possibly be? And the prowler, if he was caught at last, could answer for Gerald Loder's sins as well as his own!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Knocked Out!

JACK DRAKE did not stir. But his thoughts were racing, as he stood silent behind the door in the back room of Crocker's hut.

The whole thing was clear to him now—all the circumstances that had puzzled him about the theft of Hacker's hoard explained by what he had seen.

His feeling towards Loder was one of contemptuous compassion. The misery and remorse of the wretched fellow, who had been driven and frightened into this act by a ruthless rascal, had been only too clear in his looks. But for Crocker, his loathing was too deep for any words to have expressed it.

This wretch, a pilferer himself, had driven his dupe into pilfering.

Jack Drake clenched his hands hard. He would have been glad to drive his knuckles into the sardonic, rascally face

that he could see grinning through the crack of the door.

But he did not stir. Crocker, lounging in the chair in the outer room, lighted another cigarette.

Drake's thoughts moved quickly. He had hoped that his visit to the hut on the spinney would lead to a discovery—but he had never dreamed of such a discovery as this!

He was not thinking of a search for the secret passage now. He was thinking of the sovereigns that the wretched Loder had brought to the hut and that were now stowed in Crocker's pocket. His mind was made up that the purloined money should not remain in Randolph Crocker's keeping. That was fixed and resolved in his mind.

That money was Mr. Hacker's! It was going back to Mr. Hacker! Loder, in spite of himself, was going to be saved from the burden of guilt that weighed on him like a load of despair. Bob Cherry was going to be cleared of the suspicion that had fallen on him like a blight.

Drake had no time to form definite plans. If he could handle this, and clear Bob, without giving Loder up, he was going to do it. Loder might well be left to his conscience and to the terrible lesson he had had—if his act of dishonesty could be undone. But, for the moment, the schoolboy detective's thoughts centred on one thing—getting Hacker's sovereigns back from that grinning rascal.

He was no match for the man physically, strong and sturdy as he was. He had learned that on the night he had struggled with the prowler in the dark. But he had to get the upper hand of him if he was going to recover the stolen sovereigns. And he was grimly, savagely resolved that he was not going to leave the hut without them!

He had to take the scoundrel by surprise—knock him out before he could bring his superior strength to bear! And he was at that moment as ruthless as Crocker himself—he was ready to deal with the villain as with a wolf or a mad dog.

If Crocker came into the back room again—

Drake waited, his heart beating, but his head cool, his hands clenched, his eyes gleaming. Loder had been gone half an hour.

The Sportsman, lounging in the chair in the front room, smoked cigarette after cigarette. He had reached out for a newspaper—Drake could see its title; it was a Lantham paper. He could see that Crocker, as he smoked, was scanning the page on which was given a list of the Lantham races that day.

It was easy to read the man's thoughts.

He was in funds now, and there were races at Lantham that afternoon. That was the way Mr. Hacker's quids were to go—unless Ferrers Locke's assistant succeeded in saving them! Scattered in reckless gambling—while Bob Cherry, at Greyfriars, was under the suspicion of having pilfered them! Drake was not likely to hesitate at much to set that right!

He knew now what he could do—what he was going to do! The Sportsman glanced at his watch and rose from the chair.

He was going! He would have to step into the back room for the coat and hat he had flung on the bed there. Drake tensed as he watched.

Crocker threw down the paper. He put his hand into the pocket where he had placed the coins tied in the hand-

kerchief, and there was a musical clink. He laughed.

Then he stepped to the doorway and passed through. He faced in the direction of the camp-bed, his back partly turned to Drake.

What followed was like lightning.

Crocker heard no sound, saw no movement. He did not know that anything was happening till a clenched fist that felt like a hammer crashed behind his ear.

That sudden, terrific jolt landed with every ounce of Jack Drake's strength behind the punch.

Crocker went down like a log.

He did not even utter a cry. The jolt crashed like a mallet and scattered his senses. He crashed on the stone floor and lay prone.

Drake was bending over him the next second.

Crocker was stunned—for the moment! In less than a minute, it was likely, he would be himself again. But much less than a minute was enough for Ferrers Locke's assistant, used to quick action.

In hardly more than a second the tied handkerchief with its contents was in Drake's hand, and shoved into his pocket. In another, he was in the front room and had pulled the door shut after him.

He crossed the room to the front door in two bounds. He tore the door open and leaped out. He went down the path to the gate as if it had been a cinder-path. He leaped the gate without a pause—landed in the lane, and cut off towards the school.

Then he dropped into a walk. It was Jack Drake, detective, who had acted so promptly and decisively in the hut on the spinney. But it was James Duck, the sheepish new boy, who ambled in at the school gates, blinking round him sheepishly through steel-rimmed glasses.

In the hut on the spinney Randolph Crocker stirred and groaned. He sat up on the stone-flagged floor and put a hand to an aching head, staring round him dizzily.

For a minute or two he sat there, dazed, unable to realise what had happened. But the bruise behind his ear, the ache in his head, told him; and he staggered to his feet, his hard face convulsed with rage. He glared round the room and then tottered, his hand to his head, into the front room. The front door stood wide open and he tottered to it, and stood leaning on the doorpost, staring out. No one was to be seen.

He tried to think it out. Someone—he could not begin to imagine who—had been hidden in the back room—must have entered and lain in wait for him while he was gone to the Cross Keys. He must have been there hidden when Crocker came back! But who? And why? Whoever it was, he had knocked him out and escaped while he lay senseless.

Then it came into his mind that the unknown must have been there during his interview with Loder—must have seen—

At that thought his hand shot to his pocket! It came out empty! The tied-up sovereigns were gone! That, then, was why the man, whoever he was, had knocked him out!

For the next ten minutes Randolph Crocker, old boy of Greyfriars, was making a series of remarks that might well have turned the atmosphere blue! That—such as it was—was the only comfort he had left!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing To Report!

"ASS!"
"Fathead!"
"Jevver hear of such an ass?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Go it, Ducky! Tell us another funny story!"

Mr. Quelch, as he walked in the quad after tea, glanced at the group of Remove fellows standing by the fountain and frowned a little. They were gathered round James Duck; and Duck—as usual—seemed to be the object of good-humoured derision.

Most of the juniors were laughing. One face was darkly clouded—Bob Cherry's. Harry Wharton was looking very curiously at the simple, sheepish face of James Duck. Quelch frowned at it.

Quelch was in a harassed mood that afternoon. He clung to his belief that Robert Cherry, of his Form, knew nothing of the disappearance of Hacker's hoard. The headmaster, so far, had been unable to decide—but Hacker, at least, had no doubts. Hacker had told him, bitterly, that there was now no hope of recovering the lost sovereigns—since Cherry had been allowed to go out of gates. Those sovereigns, the Acid Drop was assured, were now hidden in some safe spot outside the school, known only to the young rascal who had pilfered them!

The Remove master scouted that idea—yet he could not help wondering a little—a harassing doubt would creep in! And all the time there was a detective in the school—and it was up to that detective to clear up the whole matter! Instead of which, there he was—the butt of his Form! No wonder Quelch gave James Duck a grim frown.

James Duck did not notice him in the offing; or did not, at all events, heed him. He blinked at the grinning juniors through his steel-rimmed glasses and went on in his mild, meek voice.

"Don't you think so? I shouldn't wonder; you know! Fellows keep on playing practical jokes—I'm always having practical jokes played on me."

"Fellows don't play practical jokes on Hacker, you ass!" said Vernon-Smith. "Hacker bites."

"The bitfulness of the absurd Hacker is terrific, my idiotic Duck!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"But think how nice it would be if it turned out to be only a practical joke!" persisted Duck. "My Uncle Percy always says that one should look on the nice side of things—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You silly ass!" grunted Bob Cherry. "What's put that fat-headed idea into your silly head? The prowler had Hacker's quids—"

"Had he?" murmured Skinner; and Snoop giggled.

"I say, you fellows, if Bob took them for a joke on Hacker— Yaroooh!" Bob Cherry's boot interrupted Bunter's remarks.

"Well, I shouldn't wonder," said Duck placidly. "Of course, only a silly chump could think that Cherry had anything to do with it—"

"Thanks!" grunted Bob.

"And what I mean is this—if it was a practical joker pulling Hacker's leg to frighten him about losing his money, of course he will let it turn up again!" bleated Duck. "I feel sure that he will lose no time about it, either, now that a fellow is suspected. Don't you think so?"

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"
"Goat!"

Those replies, and others in a like strain, told what the Removes thought of Duck and his extraordinary idea that the disappearance of Hacker's hoard might be only a practical joke on the Acid Drop!

"But isn't it rather nice to think that it may be nothing worse than that, after all?" bleated Duck. "How pleased Mr. Hacker would be if his sovereigns turned up in the school after all. I shouldn't wonder."

"Everybody else would!" chuckled Vernon-Smith. "You howling ass, how would a japer know anything about Hacker's quids that he kept under lock and key in his study?"

"Somebody knew—not a japer!" grinned Skinner.

"The prowler knew!" said Bob, with a glare at Skinner.

"I've been thinking about that since it all came out!" bleated Duck.

"You've been thinking!" snorted Johnny Bull. "I'd like to know what you've done that with?"

"Yes, really, you know!" said Duck. "You see, that day Cherry was in Hacker's study Hacker was startled and dropped that tin box—we know that now! Well, that desk's quite near his window. Suppose some chap was passing at the time!"

"Oh!" said Bob.

"Oh!" said the Bounder. He stared at James Duck. "Well, that's a spot of sense from a silly ass, and no mistake. Was Hacker near the window when he dropped that box of quids, Cherry?"

"Yes!" answered Bob.

"Then a fellow who happened to have his eye on the window might have seen them!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"I suppose so—if he happened to be looking at the window at just that minute!"

"Likely!" murmured Skinner.

"Do you think it's likely, Skinner?" bleated Duck, apparently oblivious of Skinner's sarcastic tone. "That's so nice of you! You are so much cleverer than I am, Skinner; I am so glad you agree with me."

"Idiot!" was Skinner's reply.

"By gum!" said Johnny Bull. "Duck's the biggest chump that ever was, but that's sense, and no mistake! Nobody else seems to have thought of that! Why, that's how the pincher knew Hacker had the quids."

"Fancy Duck talking sense!" grinned Peter Todd.

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—" chuckled the Bounder. "I'll bet Duck's guessed that one! Somebody spotted Hacker at his window—I'll bet any man ten to one in doughnuts."

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath. He had no doubt that James Duck was right; but he knew that this was not a guess by the duffer of the Form; it was a careful calculation worked out by the keen mind of Ferrers Locke's assistant. Jack Drake had not been, after all, so idle as he had supposed!

"That's right!" said Harry. "That's how it happened! Somebody ought to have thought of that—"

"And it was left to the fool of the Form!" said Nugent. "How did you do it, Duck, with a brain like yours—if you call it a brain?"

"I am so glad you agree with me," bleated Duck. "And I do so hope that it will turn out to be a practical joke on Hacker. Wouldn't that be nice?"

"Fathead!"

On that point, at all events, nobody seemed likely to agree with the dud of the Removes!

Mr. Quelch, with compressed lips, approached the group.

"Duck!" he rapped. The steel-rimmed glasses turned on him.

"Yes, sir!" bleated Duck.

"Follow me to my study."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

The Remove fellows looked after Duck as he ambled in the wake of his Form-master to the House, most of them grinning.

"That silly chump in a row again!" said Toddy. "I wonder what it is this time. Poor old Ducky!"

"Quelch heard what he said!" remarked Skinner. "May be going to jaw him for talking such rot."

"He wasn't talking rot—he was talking sense!" snapped Bob. "And the only fellow in the Form who's talked sense on this subject, too."

"You'd say so!" grinned Skinner.

"He, he, he! That suits Cherry's book, don't it?" chuckled Billy Bunter. "Wouldn't he like to make out that somebody else knew about Hacker's quids. He, he, he! Wow! Leggo!"

"Leggo!" yelled Skinner simultaneously.

Bob Cherry did not let go! With an iron grip on two collars, he brought two heads suddenly together with a resounding concussion.

Bang!

"Yoo-hoop!" yelled Skinner.

"Wow!" roared Bunter. "Ow! Wow! Beast!"

Bob Cherry hurled Bunter to the right, and Skinner to the left, and they sprawled. Then he stalked away with a red face and a dark brow. His friends followed him—Johnny Bull lingering a moment to stuff Skinner's cap down the back of his neck before he went.

Meanwhile, James Duck followed Mr. Quelch into the Remove master's study. There the gimlet eyes fixed on him grimly.

"I heard what you were saying to the other juniors, Drake!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "You have made a suggestion that is, at least, possible."

"Thank you, sir!" murmured the schoolboy detective demurely.

"You were absent from dinner to-day!" went on Mr. Quelch. "I shall not punish you for this, Drake—"

"Thank you again, sir!"

"You will kindly refrain from adopting a sarcastic tone in speaking to your Form-master, Drake!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I repeat that I heard what you said. Does this mean that you have been making some sort of an investigation into the matter?"

No reply.

"Am I to understand," continued Mr. Quelch, "that you have formed a theory that the pilfering of Mr. Hacker's sovereigns was, after all, nothing but a stupid practical joke on the part of some foolish boy?"

Still no reply. Only a faint smile glimmered on James Duck's face.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Will you answer me, Drake?"

"No, sir."

"Wha-a-t?"

"I have nothing to report to you as a detective, sir," said Jack Drake calmly. "If I have made any discovery, I am entitled to keep it to myself. You have chosen, sir, to treat me as a schoolboy and not as a detective. You have declined to make use of my services as a detective. I am bound to point out, sir, that you cannot have it both ways!"

The gimlet eyes glittered at him.

"Drake!" breathed Mr. Quelch.

"Duck, if you please, sir!" said the

new boy in the Remove quietly, but very firmly.

"Have you anything to tell me?" asked Mr. Quelch, breathing harder.

"No!"

"Do you mean that you have made some discovery which you do not intend to tell me?"

"Yes!"

Mr. Quelch appeared to be on the point of choking for a moment. But he controlled his exasperation. There was a brief silence.

"In the circumstances, I admit that you have some right to take this attitude, Drake," he said. "But you will tell me, at least, this—have you learned anything that clears Cherry of a miserable suspicion?"

"I will tell you that, sir—yes!"

Mr. Quelch's brow cleared.

"Are you certain of that, Drake?"

"Quite!"

"Will that fact be made clear?"

"Perfectly."

There was another silence.

"Very well, Drake," said Mr. Quelch at last. "I shall hope that you are right—it will be a very great relief to my mind. You may go."

Quelch was left in a very thoughtful mood when Drake went. His faith in the schoolboy detective was down to zero; yet, in spite of that, he drew comfort from what Jack Drake had said.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

In Hacker's Hat!

GOSLING was the first to see it in the bright spring morning.

William Gosling was an early riser.

He snorted when he saw it.

"Them dratted boys!" said the ancient porter of Greyfriars School, as he gazed at it. "Wot I says is this 'ere, them dratted boys!"

And Gosling proceeded to report what he had seen.

Other eyes were soon upon it! The Greyfriars fellows, turning out at the clang of the rising-bell, gathered in crowds to gaze at it, amid laughter. Masters gazed at it from windows. Mr. Hacker gazed at it, with the most acidulated expression that had ever embittered his acid face. For Mr. Hacker had missed a silk hat. Now he guessed what had become of it!

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a ripple of merriment from the quad.

"He, he, he!" squealed Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, there's a top hat on the governor's statue! I say, look!"

That was the surprising sight that had greeted Gosling's ancient eyes—and that now met some hundreds of other eyes!

The statue in the middle of the old fountain, which a few days ago had been garbed in Skinner's overcoat, was now adorned by a top hat!

That hat, glistening in the morning sunshine, had been placed on the statue's head—by some unknown hand!

Some fellow, evidently, had got out of the House after dark, climbed the statue, and crowned it with that silk hat!

The statue's aspect, with a top hat on, was really extraordinary. Fellows crowded round, yelling with laughter.

"Whose hat?" chuckled the Bounder.

"Not the japer's own, you bet!" grinned Hobson of the Shell. "I say, the Acid Drop was grousing last night about somebody pinching his Sunday hat!"

"Hacker's hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goodness gracious, is that a hat on the statue?" exclaimed James Duck, staring up at it over his steel-rimmed glasses. "What a very odd idea to put a hat on the statue!"

"Some jape on Hacker, if it's his hat," said Johnny Bull. "I'd like to see Hacker climbing up for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd thickened round the fountain. Wingate of the Sixth and other prefects arrived on the spot—masters came out of the House—nearly all Greyfriars gathered to gaze up at that hat!

"Extraordinary!" boomed Mr. Prout. "Unprecedented!"

"A foolish, thoughtless act!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Who—?"

"It is my hat!" came grinding through Mr. Hacker's set lips. "I have no doubt that it is my hat—I have missed my hat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Wingate, kindly ascend the statue and recover that hat!" yapped Mr. Hacker. "You should have removed it at once!"

(Continued on next page.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

THE first letter in my mail bag this week comes from Sam Hardy, of Stoke, who tells me that he wants to be a private detective.

My chum opens his letter in a way I am rather used to. He praises the good old MAGNET in such enthusiastic terms that were I not accustomed to them by now it would be almost sufficient to turn my head. Our present series of Greyfriars yarns, featuring Jack Drake, Ferrers Locke's assistant, appeal very much to Sam. So strongly has the series caught hold of my chum's imagination that he asks my advice as to how he may become a private detective himself.

The question Sam puts to me is a poser indeed. Successful private detectives, it can truthfully be said, are born, not made, and unless my chum possesses exceptionally keen faculties and great ability of the particular kind necessary to this most difficult profession, I strongly advise him to give up the idea of taking up this occupation. In any case, it is early yet for friend Sam to make up his mind as he is, he tells me, only thirteen years of age. True, Jack Drake himself was only a youngster when he joined forces with Ferrers Locke, but his is a very exceptional case, and he has had considerable training in the expert hands of the famous Baker Street criminologist.

Now for a word of advice to a Devonshire reader who asks me if I think it is safe to ride pillion on a motor-bike? Candidly, I don't think it is, chum. Nowadays, the traffic on our roads is very formidable, accidents are far too frequent, and among them pillion-riders figure very largely. I know there is a thrill about pillion-riding, but every son has a duty to his parents. Think of the anxiety when their boy is out pillion-riding on a chum's motor-bike! Is it worth while to run this unnecessary risk? You know the answer,

chum, I feel sure, without consulting me.

Here are some brief replies to readers' queries:

JOHN STACE (Cricklewood).—The "Schoolboys' Own Library" is published the first Thursday in the month.

HARRY TINDALL (Windsor).—Pack up the late hours, even if it means giving up your pal. Early to bed and early to rise makes a chap healthy, wealthy, and wise.

DORIS CORBETT (Exeter).—Certainly there is no harm in reading the MAGNET on a Sunday. It's clean, healthy literature. More people read on a Sunday than any other day in the week.

Now for NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME!

"THE CLUE OF THE PURPLE FOOTPRINTS!"

By Frank Richards, is the title of next week's extra-long story of your old favourites, Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, with Jack Drake again taking the leading role. For the first time the mystery man of Greyfriars, who has been prowling at night, leaves a clue behind him—a clue which does not need a detective to follow up, either. And Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch are not slow to follow up the trail. But where does it lead them? You'll be surprised when you read next Saturday's top-notch yarn and find out. Next on the programme is another news-in-a-nutshell edition of the "Greyfriars Herald," written and compiled by Harry Wharton & Co. And, last but by no means least, our popular "My Page" feature, contributed by Harold Skinner. A strong programme, you will agree, chums. Make certain of next Saturday's MAGNET by ordering it in advance. Cheerio till next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,623.

Wingate looked at him. He did not like Mr. Hacker's tone, neither did he like the idea of clambering up that statue in the midst of a laughing crowd.

"Gosling had better get his ladder, sir," he said.

"Nonsense! Loder, kindly get that hat down!" yapped Mr. Hacker.

Loder did not even answer. He was less inclined than Wingate for such a clamber.

And Loder had trouble on his mind that morning, much more serious than anything that could have happened to the Acid Drop's Sunday hat! Loder had learned that it was not Vernon-Smith, but Bob Cherry who was under suspicion of having pilfered Hacker's hoard—and since he had learned that, Loder had been in a state of conscience-stricken misery that almost drove him to the Head to confess—though not quite! Loder was not likely to bother about Hacker's hat!

"Hobson!" The Acid Drop called to a member of his own Form. "Hobson! Kindly fetch that hat down!"

"Yes, sir!" answered Hobby cheerfully. Hobby did not mind clambering up the statue.

All eyes were on Hobby as he clambered. He did not seem quite so handy at that game as James Duck had been. One long leg slipped into the water and Hobby uttered a loud "Ow!" which was answered by a ripple of laughter.

However, Hobby reached the statue, clambered on it, and reached the top hat that adorned the head. Holding on with his left, he hooked off the hat with his right.

"Hallo! There's something in it!" exclaimed Hobson.

"Ha, ha, ha! What's in it, Hobby?" yelled a dozen voices.

"Something tied up in a hanky!"

"Bring down that hat at once, Hobson!" hooted Mr. Hacker. "Throw it to me—you may drop it! I will catch it, Hobson! Throw!"

"Yes, sir."

Hobson slung down the hat. Perhaps he threw it clumsily, or perhaps Hacker grabbed clumsily. It landed on the Acid Drop's mortar-board with a bump and dropped off to the ground.

"Ow!" ejaculated Mr. Hacker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hobson clambered down. Mr. Hacker picked up the hat. He stared into it, and a crowd of eyes stared, also: every fellow wondering what it was that was tied up in a handkerchief in the hat.

The handkerchief was knotted. One corner was pinned to the lining of the hat to keep it inside. Hacker jerked out the pin, took out the tied handkerchief, and laid the hat on the

granite rim of the fountain—a strange, amazed expression growing in his face.

He could not yet see what was tied up in that hanky. But he could feel with his bony fingers. And he could hear—and other ears could hear! From that tied hanky came a musical clink! That hanky contained coins!

"What—" exclaimed Mr. Quelch breathlessly, as he heard that clink of coins. "Is it possible— Can it be possible—"

Hacker, dumb with amazement, untied the knot. There was a gleam of yellow metal in the sunshine. A little heap of sovereigns reposed in the handkerchief. Innumerable eyes stared at them, and there was a roar.

"The quids!"

"Hacker's quids!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the—the quids!" stuttered Bob Cherry. His face lighted up and his eyes danced. "Oh, my only hat! The quids—Hacker's quids!"

Mr. Hacker stared blankly at the quids. Mechanically he counted them. There were ten. Evidently they were the missing sovereigns—not pilfered by the prowler, not hidden out of gates by Bob Cherry, but there in Hacker's own hand, taken out of his hat!

"Amazing!" boomed Prout.

"I say, you fellows, Hacker's got his quids back!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, Duck said it was only a practical joke on Hacker—"

Mr. Quelch gave the master of the Shell a grim look.

"Those are the missing sovereigns, Mr. Hacker!" he snapped.

The Acid Drop gasped.

"Yes, it—it would appear so—"

Hacker stuttered.

"And what becomes now, sir, of your accusation against a boy of my Form, sir, of pilfering them?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Ah! I certainly supposed— Ah!"

"The whole thing," snapped Mr. Quelch, "was evidently a foolish practical joke on the part of some unthinking, foolish boy. Do not push me, Loder, please!"

Loder of the Sixth did not heed.

He pushed forward to stare at those sovereigns. His eyes popped almost from his head as he stared. Every fellow there was surprised to see the quids. But Gerald Loder was not merely surprised; he was amazed, dumbfounded, unnerved; he fancied that he must be dreaming.

Hacker's sovereigns—that he had handed over to the Sportsman the day before at Crocker's hut! Here—found in Hacker's hat! What did it and could it mean?

James Duck, glancing at Loder's dumbfounded face over his steel-rimmed glasses, could have told him.

"Oh!" gasped Loder. He backed away through the crowd again, some of the fellows staring at him.

It was no good trying to understand it. He could hardly suppose that Randolph Crocker had put the quids there by way of a joke. But if Crocker hadn't, who had? And why? Loder walked away with his brain in a whirl, but conscious of an immense relief.

"There is a note!" Prout pointed with a plump finger and boomed. "You are overlooking the note, Mr. Hacker."

A folded paper lay among the sovereigns. Hacker gave it no heed; but Mr. Quelch picked it up and unfolded it. His eyes—and many eyes—fixed on it. It bore a message in capital letters that gave no clue to the writer.

**"ADVICE TO ACID DROPS!
DON'T HOARD,
OR YOU MAY GET ANOTHER
FRIGHT!"**

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell. Even Mr. Quelch smiled. Prout's plump face was irradiated by a broad grin. Everybody else laughed loudly.

Mr. Hacker, with a crimson face, stalked off to the House—his hat in one hand, the hanky full of sovereigns in the other. He left the crowd in the quad rocking with laughter.

"ONLY a joke on Hacker, after all!" said the Bouncer.

"Thank goodness the silly ass let the quids turn up!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath.

"But what silly chump—"

"What howling ass—" said Johnny Bull.

"What terrific fathead—"

"I say, you fellows, it serves Hacker jolly well right for hoarding! But fancy the quids turning up in his hat! He, he, he!"

"And fancy that blithering goat Duck being the only fellow to guess that it was a joke on the Acid Drop!" said Vernon-Smith. "That chap can't be such a fool as he looks!"

"More in him than meets the eye and no mistake!" said Bob.

"Lots!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

The captain of the Remove, at least, knew that there was more—much more!—in James Duck than met the eye.

THE END

(*"THE CLUE of the PURPLE FOOTPRINTS"* is the title of the next yarn in this grand series. Watch out for it next Saturday, chums!)

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GETS CASH FOR CARVINGS!

Remove Sculptor Makes Art Profitable

Since Dick Russell went in for sculpture, he has given a jolt to some of our old ideas about art and artists.

Most of us in the Remove used to think you couldn't possibly be an artist unless you wore baggy velvet trousers, a big fancy bow, a rustic smock, and a beret, stuck well on the side of the head.

But when Russell went artistic, he affected none of this exotic clobber. He just stuck to the old blazer and flannel bags and, when necessary, rolled up his shirt-sleeves—like a dashed workman, by gad, as one of his Upper Fourth patrons observed!

Why, he didn't even try to grow a beard, which we always thought to be absolutely essential!

Another original touch about Russell was that he had no objection to turning an honest penny out of his art. In the past, we have all taken it for granted that the mere mention of money was sufficient to make any artist or sculptor recoil in horror. But Russell didn't recoil. Not he! He turned his carvings into cash like any common or garden tradesman.

"I'm just supplying a demand, and that's all there is to it," he told a "Greyfriars Herald" representative,

this week, in the box-room that he has converted into a studio. "The chaps want carvings and busts and statues to decorate their studies with, and I turn 'em out. That's all!"

"Your modesty is most refreshing, old bean," said our representative, "But I believe, nevertheless, that you have quite a flair for this kind of thing. In fact, I'm told that many of your works show great promise."

"Yes, I've heard something about it myself," grinned Russell. "Funny thing is, though, the chaps who pretend to know something about it always praise the duds and object to the good 'uns. For instance, I had Temple here this afternoon; he's frightfully keen on art, he says. What do you think he said about this bust of Coker?"

"If he had any sense, he said it was jolly good," our rep. replied, with an approving glance at the plaster bust in question. "Am I right?"

"Dead wrong!" chuckled Russell. "He said it was ghastly! Photographic he called it—just like Coker himself!"



CHERRY IS BOXING CHAMPION AGAIN!

Says TOM REDWING (Asst. Sports Editor.)

To the cheers of the biggest crowd ever seen in the Greyfriars gym., Bob Cherry won the boxing championship of the Remove from his closest pal Harry Wharton, on Thursday evening.

It was a great sporting occasion. Mr. Larry Lascelles arranged a fine programme of exhibition contests, as a prelude to the big fight, and the audience had the unusual treat of watching Wingate boxing Faulkner, and Blundell in opposition to North, among other tit-bits. The enthusiasm, however, was naturally reserved for the last item of the programme and a great roar of cheering went up when Wharton and Cherry entered the ring with their seconds.

Right from the start of the scrap, it was obvious that the close friendship between the two principals was not going to effect their keenness to win. Wharton took the initiative at first, and drove Cherry back under a regular rain of blows; and from that moment on there was plenty of hard hitting.

The first round was unquestionably Wharton's. Bob is inclined sometimes to be slow off the mark and on this

occasion he took an entire round to settle down properly. In the course of that exciting three minutes, Wharton penetrated his defence again and again, and the points were all his when the gong announced the suspension of hostilities.

Wharton's supporters were in high feather in the interval, while Cherry's seconds, Linley and Brown, looked quite concerned when they attended their man.

In the buzz of talk during the interval, I caught many remarks indicating surprise at the way the fight had begun. One or two men in other Forms expressed the opinion that Cherry must have been overrated.

When the second round opened, however, Cherry's detractors soon found that they had been a little too quick with their criticisms. Not a whit the worse for his rough passage in the first round, he came up smiling, and sailed in to the attack with a calm confidence that showed he had plenty up his sleeve yet. Wharton, still in aggressive mood, sailed in at the same time, and there was a merry little mix-up for half a minute. At the end of that time, Wharton was seen to be falling back on the defensive, while Cherry was attacking more fiercely than ever. Before the round ended, Wharton had to take back a lot of the

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CAREERS For BOYS!

This Week's Bright Idea

By HARRY WHARTON

Before I say anything else this week, I should like to say "Thank you" to all the fellows who have written to condole with me over my losing the boxing championship to Bob Cherry.

When the eliminating bouts began some weeks ago, I remember expressing somewhat pained surprise at the glee with which many Greyfriars men seemed to be anticipating my defeat. Now that the anticipated defeat has materialised, I must say I am equally surprised at the number of chaps who have taken the trouble to sympathise!

It was a good clean scrap, and I can honestly say I enjoyed the first four rounds thoroughly. As for the fifth—well, it would, I suppose, be contrary to the laws of nature for any man to enjoy being knocked out! I've no regrets, anyway. The better man won; and I feel relieved that the championship is now in the hands of a man whose right to hold it will not be disputed. Ever since the revelation was made that Bob Cherry was unwell on the occasion when I beat him, I have felt that I had no real right to the title; and, really, I feel much more comfortable now that Bob has taken it from me!

Now for this week's bright idea, which comes from a reader who signs himself with the non-de-plume "Ambitious." "Why," asks "Ambitious," "don't you have a weekly article on the careers you fellows intend to map out for yourselves after you leave the glories of Greyfriars behind you? I am as keen as mustard to know what you are all going to be when you step out into the Great Big World!"

Thanks a lot, "Ambitious"! Speaking for myself, I would very much like to run such a series in the "Greyfriars Herald." I have an idea it would be rather entertaining. The projected careers of Bunter and Coker and Dicky Nugent and one or two others should certainly make good reading! The only doubt I have is, would it meet the wishes of the majority of our readers? Judging by my postbag, most of my chums are more concerned with what we are doing right now than what we are likely to be doing in ten years' time. Still, I must think it over and see if we can put it across in such a form that it will please "Ambitious" and be equally acceptable to everybody else!

About my own career, I have little doubt. My uncle is a colonel in the Army, as most of you know, and his example has inspired me with similar ideals. I can think of no finer career than serving my country in the same way. It may be that I shall be more attracted to the Air Force than to the infantry or the artillery—that's perhaps natural, in these air-minded days—but I shall certainly be satisfied with nothing less than one or other of the Services.

I think that the same goes for my pal and recent victor, Bob Cherry; but I would rather leave the rest of the school to answer for themselves, if and when we give them the chance.

Meet you all again, next week, chums!
HARRY WHARTON.

FIFTH WIN MARATHON—REMOVE WIN CUP!

By H. VERNON-SMITH

With a view to adding interest to the Open Cross-country Race which was run over a seven miles and a half course last Wednesday, Mr. Larry Lascelles put up a silver cup for presentation to the Form giving the best performance of the day. The first six men in each Form ranked for scoring purposes, and their score was to be based on their position at the winning-post. First man in would score one point, second man two points, and so on; and naturally, the Form with the lowest number of points would win the cup.

Larry's generous gesture resulted in a record entry and great enthusiasm. Shrewd handicapping gave every Form in the school the feeling that they stood a fair chance of bagging the trophy, and Form leaders from Wingate down

to Nugent minor of the Second, saw to it that their best men put in an appearance.

To describe a cross-country run adequately is an almost impossible task for any man. It applies particularly to me, for I was a runner myself and was naturally more concerned with winning the race than collecting data for a description. In the course of my journey, however, I did manage to pick up a few impressions, which I gladly pass on to you.

My first impression was of the very high standard of running set by most of the seniors. Fellows such as Wingate, North, Blundell, and Fitzgerald major ran with a smoothness and an accuracy of timing that would not have disgraced professionals.

Other impressions were of the gallant show put up by Lord Maulverer who looked like being very much concerned with the finish till he sprained an ankle—the dogged determination of Coker, who made the elementary mistake of galloping the first three miles and yet came near to

winning—and the excellent record of the runners generally.

The finish, I understand, was very exciting, Blundell and Wingate and our own Dick Russell covering the last 100 yards at a sprint pace. Blundell just drew ahead in the last few paces, and Wingate came in second, Russell having to content himself with third place.

The best is yet to come, pals. For when the "also-rans" started arriving, it quickly became apparent that the Remove were going to be a near thing for the cup; and after a few minutes there were loud cheers when our sixth man arrived to give us a good majority over all the other Forms.

Here's how we finished up:
REMOVE. Russell, 3; Wharton, 5; Vernon-Smith, 7; Cherry, 8; Bull, 13; Todd, 19. Total 55 points.
Sixth 66 points
Fifth 89 points
Shell 150 points
Upper Fourth 167 points
Third 185 points
Second 236 points

THEY THOUGHT BUNTER BARMY!

Then Crowd Learned Amazing Truth!

A series of thunderous crashes, nerve-racking thuds and reverberating bangs drew the curious to the Remove passage the other evening.

Investigation showed that the sounds came from Study No. 7. The crowd leaped in, quite expecting to see Peter Todd indulging in a general massacre of his co-tenants.

They were surprised to find Bunter alone. What surprised them still more was to see the Porpoise gripping the mantelpiece and standing on one fat leg, while he slowly lifted the other fat leg in the air behind him.

The crowd rubbed their eyes. They asked Bunter what he was doing. There was no reply.

Eventually, with a mighty effort, Bunter threw back his head and managed somehow or other—goodness knows how—to kick himself in the middle of his back. But he overbalanced himself in the effort and washed on the floor with an impact that shook the Remove passage.

The grinning crowd waited to hear the long chorus of howls and yells that Bunter usually inflicts on his listeners after sustaining the slightest

injury. To their utter amazement, however, he was grinning like a Cheshire cat when he stood up again.

"I've done it!" he gasped. "I say, you fellows, I've done it!"

"Done what?" "Landed myself a back kick, of course! Didn't you see me do it?"

"But why did you do it, anyway?" hooted half a dozen fellows simultaneously.

Bunter had no time to answer them. He had turned his attention to another weird caper.

First he stood on his right leg and hit the floor a resounding clump with his left foot. Then he stood on his left leg and kicked the floor with his right foot. He performed these peculiar movements with slow and ponderous deliberation at the rate of about twenty kicks a minute.

"What I want to know is—what is it?" demanded Brown, wonderingly. "Is it Swedish drill, Bunter?"

"Shouldn't be surprised if it's shadow-footer!" grinned Ogilvy. "On the ball, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The crowd roared—though inwardly most of them favoured the simpler explanation that Bunter was barmy!

Bunter carried on regardless. Suddenly, he changed his tactics completely and tried to throw both legs sideways at the same moment.

The result was very unfortunate. Bunter was

"Blessed if I see what all the mystery's about!" he snorted. "Surely any chap with half an eye could see what I was doing. I was dancing, of course!"

"Eh?" "D-d-d-dancing?"

"Yes, dancing!" hooted the jolly old Owl. "I'm going in for the tap-dancing contest at the Courtfield Empire next week, and I'm jolly well going to win the fiveer they are offering! Yah!"

"Ye gods!" The crowd nearly collapsed!

All sorts of guesses had been made as to what Bunter had been doing; but it had not occurred to anybody that he could possibly be tap-dancing!

But there it was, anyway. Bunter said he was tap-dancing and he was certainly in a position to know.

If Bunter performs the same movements at about fifty times the speed, omitting the falls and doing without the support of the mantelpiece, he should stand a jolly good chance of winning that fiveer.

But we can't really see him pulling it off!



Answers to Correspondents.

R. NUGENT (Second): "I am considering riting you a new cereal that will hold people enthralled."

If you write it like that you will certainly exercise over our readers a very strange "spell"!

"SPORTSMAN" (Remove): "When I go out poaching I always get a bag."

If you keep it up much longer you will probably get the sack!