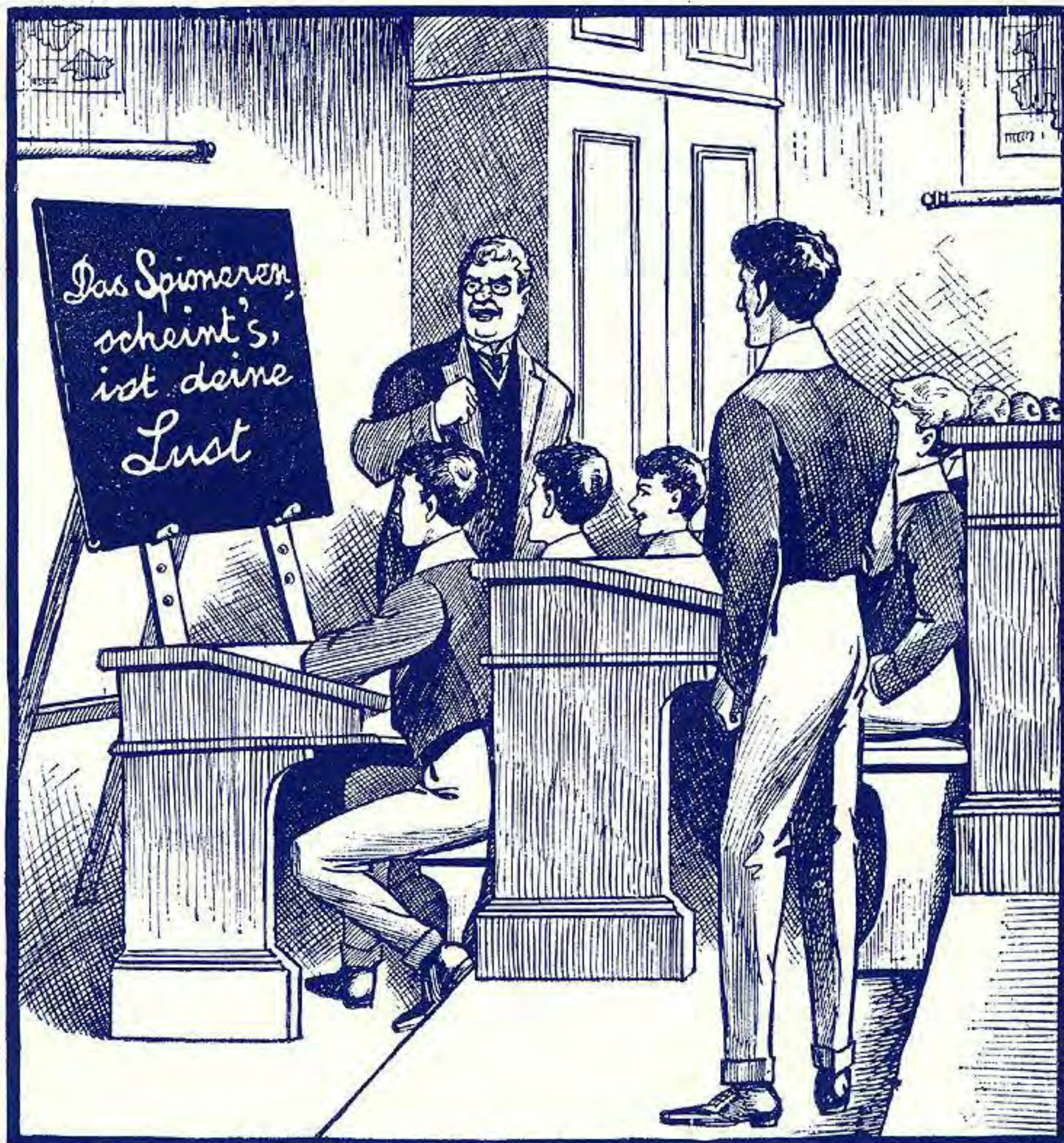


BUNTER'S LATEST!



A QUOTATION—OR AN INSULT?

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9-3-18

A Magnificent New
Long Complete
Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co.
at
Greyfriars School.

BUNTER'S LATEST!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Trouble with the Hun!

"WOW WOW-WOW-W-W-W!"
Billy Bunter rubbed a fat ear as he made that remark. The fat ear was crimson, and Bunter was crimson, too, with indignation and rage.

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped on their way to the Remove-room for afternoon classes as they spotted the fat junior in the passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Been in the wars, fatty?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Wow-wow-wow!"
"Is the esteemed ear suffering from the pullfulness?" asked Nurree Jamset Ram Singh sympathetically.

"Yow-ow! That beastly Hun!" groaned Bunter.

"What Hun?" asked Nugent. "Do you mean Bolsover major?"

"Yow-ow! I mean that German beast, old Gans!" howled Bunter. "He's pulled my ear—actually laid his nasty Hun paws on me, you know! Yow-ow! Why don't they intern him? Yow-ow!"

"But where was your ear?" asked Harry Wharton. "Was it at the key-hole?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"If you think I would listen at a key-hole, Wharton—" began Bunter, with great indignation.

"Why, you fat duffer, you've been caught doing it a dozen times!" exclaimed Harry.

"Nearer a hundred!" granted Johnny Bull.

"I've been the victim of misunderstandings sometimes," said Bunter. "A fellow can't tie up his shoelace without a fellow suspecting him of listening. I merely happened to be outside old Gans' door. How could I know he was going to open it suddenly—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. Yow-ow-ow! I wasn't interested in what he was saying to Mr. Quelch—only asking questions about whether the new music-master is coming to-morrow. Yow-ow! But he flew at me like a wild beast! Yow-ow! I'm jolly well going to the Head about it. I'm not going to have my ears pulled by a beastly Hun!"

"It's a shame," said Skinner, joining in.

"Oh, rats!" said Harry. "Bunter shouldn't listen at doors."

"I wasn't listening!" howled Bunter. "I simply happened to hear the Gander asking Quelch whether Bloomfield, the music merchant, is coming here to-morrow. What did that matter? Old Gans is getting more of a Hun every day. We shall have a beastly time with him this afternoon. Yow-ow!"

"Better mind your p's and q's," remarked Frank Nugent. "The Gander can be very ratty when he likes."

"Yow-ow! I'm not going to stand it. Why should we be bullied by a German?" demanded Bunter. "They're killing Huns out in Flanders—hundreds

a day. We oughtn't to have a Hun here. It's unpatriotic!"

"Hunpatriotic!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"I'm willing to give up German lessons for the duration of the war," continued Bunter wrathfully. "I'm patriotic. I'm willing to make sacrifices. It's been suggested to shove Russian into the curriculum instead of German, but the silly governors can't make up their silly minds. It ought to be done. Yow-ow! My belief is that the Gander is a German spy. Skinner says so."

"No! where the Gander can hear him!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Better get into the Form-room," remarked Johnny Bull. "First lesson this afternoon is German, and it's time."

"I say, you fellows, you back me up, and come to the Head!" said Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five through his big glasses. "Let's point out to old Locke that we don't want Huns here in war-time. He's bound to take notice of it. You back me up, and I'll tell old Locke plainly—"

"You'd better let the Head hear you calling him 'old Locke'!" chuckled Nugent. "Dry up, Bunter!"

"All the same, it's a shame," said Skinner. "I believe the Gander is a German spy!"

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton. "Do you think the Head would have him here if he wasn't to be trusted?"

"You can't trust a German," said Skinner. "They're born spies and rotters."

"Well, lots of them are," admitted Wharton. "But the Gander is a decent sort—for a Hun."

"I don't believe any Germans are decent! I believe the Gander's a spy, and that music merchant from Courtfield is no better," declared Skinner. "They know one another, I know that. And Bloomfield looks like a German. I dare say his name isn't Bloomfield, either. I suspect them both—"

"You generally do suspect somebody of something," remarked Bob.

"Skinner's right," said Bunter. "Look at my ear! I've been handled by a vile German! A low, sneaking Hun—"

"Shurrup!" muttered Bob. Cherry suddenly, as he caught sight of the portly figure of Herr Gans in the passage coming towards the Form-room.

But Billy Bunter had his back to the German master, and did not see him. So he did not shut up. He went on loudly:

"A rotten, sneaking Hun! Same kind of rotter who murders people in Belgium! He's a spy—a sneaking spy—and I dare say he makes signals to submarines and Gothas and things, and sends off wireless news to Germany! That's the sort of spying, sneaking, treacherous Hun old Gans is—"

A heavy hand dropped on Bunter's shoulder from behind.

The Owl of the Remove gave a gasp of terror as he was spun round, and

found himself blinking at the German master.

Herr Gans' fat face was generally good-natured; but it was not at all good-natured now. It was red with rage. His very spectacles seemed to glitter at the terrified Owl.

"Punter!" he gasped.

"Ow! Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "You spick of me, isn't it?"

"No, sir! Oh, no!" stuttered Bunter. "I—I was making remarks in—in a general way, sir."

"Vat?"

"I—I was proposing to these fellows, sir, to go to the Head and—and protest against having Russian lessons instead of German, sir—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Punter! You talk of spying and treachery—"

"I—I was alluding to—to the Dutch, sir."

"Vat?"

"I—I mean to the Chinese, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Punter, you tell me lies!" exclaimed Herr Gans.

"Oh, no, sir! I couldn't! I'm a very truthful chap, sir," groaned Bunter. "These fellows will tell you so. You speak up, Wharton! You tell Herr Gans whether you've ever known me tell a cram."

"Oh, dear!" gasped Wharton. Certainly it would have been difficult for the captain of the Remove to testify to that effect.

"Punter! You spick of me mit insults," said Herr Gans. "You are a pad and untrootful poy. How dare you spick of me as a spy?"

"I—I didn't, sir."

"I hears you mit mein ears!" shouted Herr Gans.

"You—you misunderstood, sir. I I was simply telling Skinner that he was mistaken in thinking you a spy, sir—"

"Skinner! You dare to say tat—"

"Not at all, sir," stammered Skinner.

"Bunter's trying to put it on me!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Punter! You gum mit me!"

"Oh, dear!"

With a heavy hand on Bunter's shoulder, Herr Gans marched the fat junior away to Mr. Quelch's study. The Remove-master looked up in surprise as they came in.

"What is the matter, Herr Gans?"

"Herr Quelch!" spluttered the German master. "You know me—you had known me long time, isn't it? You tink tat I am spy?"

"What? Nonsense!"

"Is it tat poy shall call me a spy?" howled Herr Gans. "I am honest man! Is it tat a man cannot be honest because he is born in Chermanny? In Preussen—vat you call Prussia—tat is so. Dese Preussians are rasgals! But I am Saxon—"

"Herr Gans—"

"I leaf it to you, Herr Quelch! If I am spy, let me be taken by der police, und shot like van rasgal! Am I spy?"

"Bunter! Have you dared to say—"
 "No, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't, sir! Herr Gans is quite mistaken! I—I really meant to say, sir, that we all respect Herr Gans very highly—"

"Mein Gott!"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

Swish, swish!

"You will take care, Bunter, not to make such despicable and ridiculous remarks in future!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study squeezing his fat hands. He rejoined the juniors outside the Form-room, groaning.

"I say, you fellows— Yow-ow-ow! I say, I believe old Quelch is hand-in-glove with the Gander!" he mumbled.

"What?" ejaculated Wharton.

"That's what it looks like to me," said Bunter. "I believe he's a traitor—hand-in-glove with a German spy! Ow-wow-wow! Don't you think so?"

"You utter idiot!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Here comes the cheery old Gander!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Better cut!"

And the Remove fellows went into the Form-room.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Skinner Is Too Funny!

MOST of the Remove made up their minds to be very circum-spect during German that afternoon. As a rule, Herr Gans was good-tempered and patient, and it was safe to "pull his Hun leg" a little in class. But he did not look as if it would be safe on this occasion.

The German master was in a rather unfortunate position. Greyfriars fellows could not be expected to like Huns. The brutal atrocities of the Prussians in Belgium, the dastardly conduct of the German Government all through the war, had their natural effect on the Herr's pupils.

Individually, the Herr was a quiet, good-tempered old fellow, but he was a German. And even Wharton, who rather prided himself on keeping a level head in war-time, could not help feeling a certain amount of repulsion in his case on that account.

But there were some points in the Gander's favour. He belonged to Saxony, and hated Prussians with a deadly hatred. His grandfather had been killed in the old Prussian-Saxon War. As for his being a spy, very few fellows heeded Skinner's insinuations on that subject.

Skinner always had trouble with the German master, because he hated German. In fact, Skinner hated work any-way.

Still, the least Herr Gans could expect was civility.

Most of the fellows were civil enough. When some, like Skinner and Snoop and Stott, ventured upon impertinence, the Gander generally affected not to observe it. But he had a temper, and it was not safe to go too far.

His knitted brows showed that he was ruffled now, and the lesson began in a somewhat thundery atmosphere.

Perhaps it was a sense of duty towards a backward pupil, or perhaps it was irritation, that made the Herr give Harold Skinner his special attention.

Skinner had done no work, as usual, and he blundered, as usual, and he looked sullen and savage when the Herr rated him.

"You are vun stupid poy, Skinner!" exclaimed Herr Gans at last. "Poys in Lower Form speak potter Cherman as you!"

"It's difficult to speak, sir," said Skinner. "It doesn't seem to me really like a human language at all."

"Vat?"

"I don't see how a fellow could speak German well without having a mouth like a horse," said Skinner.

Some of the Removites grinned. Snoop gave his chum a warning look. The Gander was not in a mood for Skinner's pleasantry.

"Skinner! You are impertinent!"

"I was only saying what I thought, sir."

"I tink you mean to insult your master, Skinner. You are also lazy poy. I giff you ten lines to learn from Goethe, and you learn none of dem. You do not understand tat great poet at all."

"What great poet, sir?"

"Goethe."

"Was he a poet, sir?" asked Skinner innocently.

"Mein. Gott! You know not tat Goethe was a poet?"

"I thought he was a Hun, sir."

"Vat?" shouted Herr Gans.

"Wasn't Goethe a Hun, sir?" asked Skinner.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Bob Cherry.

"Rats!" whispered back Skinner.

Herr Gans was quite purple. Like most Germans, he worshipped Goethe, and to hear his great poet described as a Hun was too much. Besides, it was not a fair description, for Goethe lived and died long before Prussian militarism had turned the Germans into a nation of Hunnish ruffians.

Rap, rap!

"Yaroooh!" roared Skinner, as he received the pointer on his knuckles.

"You vill not talk to me of Huns, Skinner!" snorted Herr Gans.

"Yow-ow! It was your own rotten Kaiser who first called the rotters Huns!" howled Skinner.

"Te King of Prussia is not mein Kaiser, Skinner," said Herr Gans. "Wilhelm is rasgally upstart, and not true Deutsch Kaiser. You are ignorant poy! After te war, tat Prussian upstart he shall be pulled down, and mein beloved Saxony shall be free country."

This was Herr Gans' favourite topic, though he had never confided it to the Lower Fourth before. Some of the juniors grinned, and the Herr recollected himself, and went on hurriedly with the lesson.

Skinner sat scowling, looking a good deal like a Hun himself.

The Herr came back to him presently.

Skinner proceeded to make a mixture of der and die and das, though he was quite well grounded in the declension of the article, as a matter of fact. Herr Gans restrained his wrath.

"You are stupidest poy in te class, Skinner!" he snapped. "But I tink tat you pretend, isn't it? I wastes no more time on you. You shall write out a Cherman sentence, and if he is wrong I canes you. Write him on te plackboard mit chalk."

Skinner's eyes glistened.

"May I write something from the great poet Goethe, sir?" he asked meekly.

Herr Gans looked a little mollified.

"Yes, mein poy, if you remembers him."

"Very well, sir."

The Herr transferred his attention from Skinner, who was left to write out his sentence on the blackboard.

Skinner had his sentence in mind already. He had happened to come across the verse while working—very un-

willingly—on Goethe's "Faust." He had hoped for a chance of working it off on the German master, and now his chance had come.

Skinner took the chalk, and proceeded to write on the blackboard. Some of the fellows watched him, and there was a general grin. What Skinner had written was a line from Faust's speech to Mephistopheles in the poem:

"Das Spioneron, scheint's, ist deino Lust."

There was a chuckle in the class as Skinner went back to his place. Herr Gans glanced at him, and then at the blackboard.

"Ach! You have written him alretty, Skinner?"

"Yes, sir. I think it's right."

Herr Gans blinked at the line on the blackboard, which, being translated, meant:

"Spying, it appears, is your delight."

The Herr's fat face grew redder and redder as he looked.

"Skinner!" he stuttered, at last.

"Yes, sir?"

"How dare you, you vicked poy!"

"I don't understand you, sir. I've done exactly as you told me," said Skinner, with an air of surprise. "That's a line from Goethe, sir."

The Herr gasped.

It was true enough. It was a line from Goethe, and correctly written. Skinner had him there.

"You vicked poy!" stuttered Herr Gans. "You vish to repeat tat silly and vicked ting tat Punter say, tat your Cherman master he is a spy!"

"Oh, sir, how could Goethe have meant that you were a spy?" asked Skinner. "He died before you were born, sir."

"Ach!"

"He may have meant, generally, that most Germans were spies," continued Skinner calmly. "I suppose he knew them, being a German himself. Do you think he meant that, sir?"

"Ach! Mein Gott!"

Herr Gans really had no excuse for going for Skinner this time, as the humorist of the Remove had exactly carried out his instructions. But the pointer came into play again, all the same.

Rap, rap, rap!

Skinner yelled.

"Take tat, and tat, and tat!" gasped Herr Gans. "I vill not be insulted in Form-room! Take tat, and tat!"

"Yaroooh! Stoppit! Yoooop!"

"You are pad poy, Skinner! I am ashame of you! I speaks to you no more in dis lesson."

Which was good news to Skinner, at least.

When the German lesson ended, and Mr. Quelch came in to take his Form, Skinner was scowling savagely and still rubbing his knuckles. Herr Gans left the Form-room with knitted brow. His position at Greyfriars was awkward enough anyway, and Skinner's line of conduct made it still more uncomfortable. But there were other worries of a more serious kind on the Herr's mind, as the Removites would have guessed if they had seen him pacing his study with wrinkled brows and excited gesticulations.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Music Merchant!

"HIS coming this afternoon."

Hoskins of the Shell made that remark, addressing Frank Nugent, who was chatting with his chums in the quad after dinner the following day.

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Nugent switched off the subject of footer and asked:

"Who?"

"Who?" sniffed Hoskins. "Bloomfield, of course!"

"Oh, Bloomfield!" said Nugent.

Claude Hoskins had a wrinkled brow. He was evidently giving the matter deep thought. And the Famous Five grinned as they observed it.

Nugent was the only member of the famous Co. to whom the coming of the new music-master made any difference, Nugent being a music student.

The gentleman who had previously visited Greyfriars to give instruction in piano, harmony, and composition had been called up, and a new man was coming in his place while he was at the Front. Mr. Bloomfield, the music professor at Courtfield, had the good—or bad—luck to be over forty-one.

To Hoskins of the Shell the matter was awfully serious.

For Hoskins recognised in himself a musical genius of no ordinary ability. He was prepared to put in any amount of work at music preparatory to taking the world by storm later on as a tremendous composer. Hoskins often confided to his study-mate, Hobson, that he was going to do great things in music some day—apparently going to put in the shade such small fry as Handel, Schubert, and Beethoven.

What Hobson did not know about music was an enormous amount. But he cordially agreed that a Greyfriars fellow ought to be able to put Beethoven & Co. into the shade. They were only Huns, anyway, Hobson said.

Hobson's hobby was sometimes a worry to his study-mate, who thought more of football and boxing than of any arts. Hoskins carried a tuning-fork about with him, to keep his "pitch" in order, he explained, and he would tap it to "get his note" in the most unexpected places. He had been known to tap it on a fellow's head in an absent-minded way. Once or twice, in the Shell-room, lessons had been interrupted by a sudden "pong!" much to the astonishment and wrath of Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell.

"I wonder what Bloomfield will think of my Sonata in D," Hoskins went on. "I hope he's a musical man."

"He's got a lot of letters after his name," said Nugent, with a smile.

Hoskins nodded.

"Yes; I dare say he's all right. But I'm rather anxious. I wonder whether he's strong on counterpoint."

"I wonder!" said Bob Cherry, with deep sarcasm, which was quite lost on Hoskins.

"The wonderfulness is terrific!" murmured Huree Singh.

"And whether he will take an interest in a fellow's work," continued Hoskins. "That's important. If you chaps were musical—"

"I play the concertina," said Johnny Bull.

"The what?"

"Concertina!"

"I was talking about music."

"Why, you ass, isn't a concertina music?" demanded Johnny Bull. "You've heard me play 'Tipperary' on the concertina!"

"'Tipperary'?" gasped Hoskins.

"Yes; isn't that music?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Hoskins.

"Better than the row you were kicking up in the music-room yesterday, anyway!" said Johnny Bull warmly. "Better not let Bloomfield hear you doing that if the poor chap's got any ear-drums."

Hoskins glared at him.

"You crass ass!" he said witheringly.

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"What you heard me playing yesterday was my March in C sharp!"

"A march, was it?" said Bull. "Isn't a march supposed to have some tune in it?"

"Fathead!"

"It was a dashed row!" said Johnny Bull. "All discords from beginning to end."

"You don't know anything about modern music," said Hoskins scornfully. "Look at Strauss, for instance!"

"Rot! The 'Blue Danube' is ripping!" said Bull.

Hoskins roared.

"You ass! I don't mean that tinkling old Strauss! I mean Richard Strauss—the new Strauss!"

"I've heard that," grinned Wharton.

"It sounded to me like a bull in a china-shop, with an earthquake or two thrown in."

"That's the new style," said Hoskins loftily. "Why, a modern German composer would be ashamed of himself if you detected anything like a melody in his work."

"Just like a Hun!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm down on German music, if it is music!" declared Johnny Bull. "Chuck it out, and let's have British composers."

"You've got to find them first!" grunted Hoskins. "But some day there's going to be British music on the grand scale!"

"That's where you'll come in—what?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"I hope so," said Hoskins calmly.

"Look at my March in C sharp!"

"Nearly all consecutive fifths and minor thirteenth and things!" grinned Nugent.

"Oh, you've no ear!" said Hoskins.

"Bloomfield will like it, if he's got any ear. I wonder—"

"I was wondering—" began Bob Cherry.

"Oh, you're thinking about it, are you?" asked Hoskins, in surprise.

"Not at all. I was wondering whether the ground's too bad for some footer practice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hoskins snorted, and stalked away.

Although Harry Wharton & Co. did not share Hoskins' anxiety as to the new music-master's professional capacity, they were rather interested in him. His somewhat mysterious connection with Herr Gans was in their minds.

"I'm rather keen to see how the Gander will treat that Johnny," Bob Cherry remarked. "You remember we saw them the other day on the common, and Herr Gans was calling Bloomfield names?"

"I expect he'll keep out of the man's way," remarked Nugent. "No need for them to meet. Queer that they should be enemies, though!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the Gander!"

The juniors glanced at the German master as he passed them in the quadrangle.

Herr Gans was stalking along with a wrinkled brow, evidently in deep and troubled thought. He did not notice the juniors.

"Poor old Hun!" murmured Wharton.

"He's got something on his mind."

"Perhaps it's because Bloomfield is coming here," suggested Nugent. "Still, I don't see why it should worry the Gander."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, fatty!"

"Old Bloomfield's coming to-day," said Billy Bunter, with a grin. "Skinner says—"

"Oh, bother Skinner!"

"But Skinner says he believes Bloom-

field is a naturalised Hun, and he's hand-in-glove with the Gander!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Harry Wharton irritably. "Do give the poor old Gander a rest! Take a little run, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I think Gans—"

"Shut up, you ass! Here he comes!"

Billy Bunter shut up very promptly. The Herr passed the juniors again, going into the House. He remained in the deep doorway, however, blinking over his spectacles into the quad.

The Co. exchanged glances.

They wondered whether the German master was waiting to see Mr. Bloomfield when he arrived. His first visit was to take place early that afternoon.

However, it did not concern the Co., and they strolled away; but when they came in for afternoon lessons they found Herr Gans still adorning the doorway with his portly person.

Claude Hoskins was also waiting in the hall. He wanted to see the new music-master as soon as he arrived.

Billy Bunter joined the Famous Five in the passage.

"I say, you fellows, you can see old Gans," he murmured. "He seems to be glued at the door. I say, what a chance to get into his study—"

"What?"

"And rag the German beast!" said Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his spectacles. "You know how he treated me yesterday."

"Serve you right, tubby!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Better let his study alone!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, he wouldn't know who did it," argued Bunter. "Besides, he would most likely suspect Skinner. I've got a bottle of glue. Well, suppose one of you fellows cut in and filled his slippers with it."

"Bow-wow!"

"He won't come in," urged Bunter. "He's stuck there, you can see for yourselves. It's as safe as houses."

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter snorted, and, after another cautious blink at the broad back of the master in the doorway, he rolled away. Evidently he did not intend to waste that glue, and, having taken the trouble to procure it, he was going to use it.

Bob made an angry gesture.

"I've a good mind—" he began.

But before Bob Cherry could make up his mind, William George Bunter had disappeared into the German master's study. And the juniors forgot all about Bunter as they suddenly heard the deep, guttural voice of the German master in the doorway.

"Ach! Den you haf gum!"

"The music merchant!" murmured Wharton.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Scene!

MR. BLOOMFIELD had arrived. He was a portly gentleman, with blonde complexion and hair, and certainly he looked every bit as much like a German as Herr Gans did.

His face was different in expression, however. The features were hard and sharp, the eyes shifty and of uncertain colour.

He started, and stopped, as Herr Gans met him in the doorway.

The juniors looked on, breathless. Hoskins of the Shell simply stared. For Herr Gans was barring the way of the music-master, as if fully intending to keep him from entering.

It was so amazing a proceeding on the

part of Herr Gans that the juniors fairly blinked as they saw him.

Mr. Bloomfield's hard face hardened more, and a glitter came into his eyes. But he spoke civilly.

"Ah! Good-afternoon, Herr Gans!"

"I say not good-afternoon to you!" snapped Herr Gans. "I ask you why for you haf come to dis school?"

The music-master compressed his lips.

"My dear Herr Gans—"

"Stuff und nonsense!"

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, in wonder. "Looks as if there's going to be a merry scrap!"

"By gum!"

The juniors were breathless now.

"I do not understand this, Herr Gans."

Mr. Bloomfield's voice was calm. "You are aware, I believe, that I have been appointed temporary music-master at Greyfriars."

"I know tat."

"Very well. Kindly allow me to pass, as I must see Dr. Locke, and then have a lesson to give this afternoon."

"I not lets you pass!"

"What?"

"You gum not into dis school!" said Herr Gans, pointing an accusing fat forefinger at the musician. "I forbids it!"

"Sir!"

"You go to te Head," continued Herr Gans, "and I goes too."

"Are you aware that there are boys listening to what you say, Herr Gans?" muttered the music-master, his voice trembling with suppressed rage.

"I cares not! Tat is notting to me. You gums not into dis school, rasgal tat you are!"

"I have an appointment with the Head—"

"If you keep him, I keep him mit you, and I explains to te Head!"

"Herr Gans!"

"Das ist genug! Go away mit you!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Bob Cherry. "This takes the cake!"

It was easy to see that the sallow-faced musician was putting a strong control on himself. His eyes glittered like those of a savage rat. More fellows were gathering round now at the sound of the altercation.

"Herr Gans, you—you appear to be under a misapprehension," said Mr. Bloomfield, at last. "Let us have a talk in your study—"

"I haf talked to you in your own house, mein Herr, and again I have talked to you on Courtfield Common, and each time I haf said tat you shall not come to dis school!"

"Let us go into your study," whispered the exasperated musician. "I—I will do exactly as you wish."

Herr Gans eyed him doubtfully.

The music-master's evident desire was to get the altercation over behind a closed door.

"Ferry well," said the Herr at last. "Gum into mein study. But I tells you plainly—"

"Let us go in."

"Gum mit me, den."

Herr Gans led the music-master towards his study, followed by amazed stares from the fellows looking on. The Herr was evidently reckless of appearances—a feeling not at all shared by the gentleman from Courtfield.

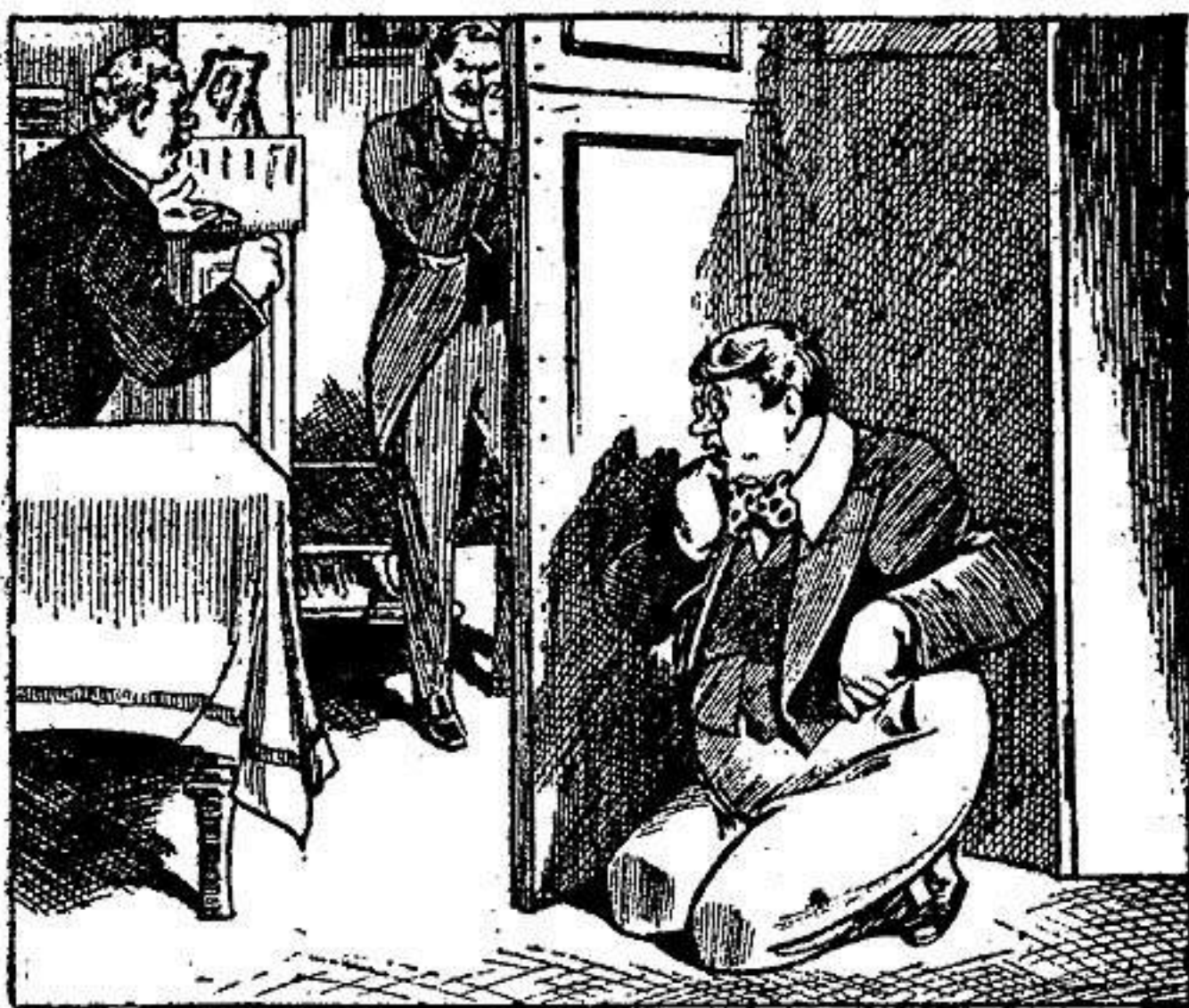
"By gad!" stuttered Hoskins, when they had disappeared. "Wh-w-wat on earth does that mean? Is that old Hun mad?"

"Mad as a hatter, I should think," remarked Hobson, in equal wonder. "The music-merchant is humouring him."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another in bewilderment.

"What does it mean?" muttered Bob Cherry.

"It's a giddy mystery!"



The old game! (See Chapter 5.)

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Bob, remembering. "They've gone into the Gander's study—"

"What about it?"

"Bunter's there!"

"Phew!"

"The silly ass!" muttered Wharton. "The Gander isn't in a temper for foolery now. He will get skinned!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Time's up!"

The Removites went to their Form-room, and Mr. Quelch came in. Billy Bunter did not appear.

Apparently the fat junior had not been discovered in the study by Herr Gans and his visitor.

Possibly he had heard them coming, and had taken cover.

At all events, he did not turn up in the Form-room, and Mr. Quelch noted his absence at once.

"Bunter is not here!" exclaimed the Remove-master. "Do you know where Bunter is, Wharton?"

"I—I think he's in a study, sir," stammered Harry.

"Please go and look for him, Wharton."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch laid a cane on his desk in readiness for the Owl. He was a stickler for punctuality.

Harry Wharton left the Form-room, feeling rather dismayed. He could guess where the Owl of the Remove was, but he could not well look for him in Herr Gans' study, where the German master had a visitor. If Bunter was there, he must certainly be lying very low; and terrific results awaited him if he was found hiding there.

Wharton went up to the Remove passage and looked in the study, in order to have something to report to Mr. Quelch, and then came back to the Form-room.

The Remove-master eyed him as he came in.

"Where is Bunter?" he exclaimed.

"I've looked in the studies, sir," answered Wharton diplomatically. "He's not there."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Very well, Wharton! You may go to your place."

Harry Wharton sat down at his desk,

and the lessons proceeded—minus William George Bunter.

But the Famous Five gave more thought to the unfortunate Owl than to their lessons. They wondered when he would turn up, and what he would look like when he did.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Spy!

BILLY BUNTER was not in a happy position.

He had just finished emptying the bottle of liquid glue into Herr Gans' huge carpet slippers when he heard the German master at the door.

Bunter did not stop to think.

He acted upon instinct in getting out of sight, and it was fortunate for him that he did. In a twinkling almost the terrified Owl of the Remove had dodged behind a Japanese screen in the corner of the study, and he crouched there against the wall, palpitating, as the door opened.

"Gum in mit you!"

Mr. Bloomfield entered in response to that not very polite invitation, and the Herr followed him in and closed the door.

Bunter suppressed a groan.

If the Herr should take his slippers now—suppose he guessed the japer was still in the study!

Herr Gans, however, was not thinking about his slippers just then. He did not sit down, or ask his visitor to be seated.

They stood looking at one another with glittering eyes.

Now that he was in the study, Mr. Bloomfield did not take so much trouble to compose his feelings, and his expression was one of bitter malice. He looked more like a Hun than Herr Gans did at that moment.

"Now, sir, vat have you to say?" demanded Herr Gans. "I vill listen to you, Mr. Bloomfield."

The Herr put a sarcastic emphasis on the name.

The music-master seemed in too hurry to speak.

"You have gum here to see te Head, THE MAGNET LIBRARY. No. 525.

isn't it? You are going to give music lessons? I think not. I think that you turn your back on Greyfriars, and go back to where you came—heim?"

"Herr Gans—" "Ja oder nein?" demanded Herr Gans.

"I am in your hands, Herr Gans," said the music-master between his teeth. "You know that."

"I do know that, Hermann Blumenfeld," answered Herr Gans sharply; "and I order you to get out mit you!"

"That is not my name." "The Herr laughed scornfully. "It was your father's name," he answered.

"That is neither here nor there. My name is Bloomfield, as you know, and I was born in England—a born British subject."

"If you are British subject, you are a traitor!" said Herr Gans. "If you are Cherman, you are a spy!"

"I tell you—"

"You will tell me cowardly lies, like a Prussian, as you are," interrupted Herr Gans. "I know, Hermann Blumenfeld. You are Cherman, and I am Cherman, but there is no love lost between Prussian and Saxon. But even if I were Prussian I would not betray those whose bread I eat. Mein Gott! You and your sort, you have made the name of Chermany to smell in the nose of all the world. In every country to people say 'liar,' and 'barbarian,' and 'traitor,' when they speak of Chermans. And I, a Cherman, cannot say that they are wrong. It is you, and such as you, that have made me shed tears for the shame of mein country!"

The music-master gave him a deadly look.

"You are a spy!" resumed Herr Gans. "You have the impudence to think that I help you in dirty work because I am Cherman. Thinking so, you give yourself away to me, and it is too late to tell me Prussian lies. Under pretence of being music-master, you spy for your friends in Berlin. I know that. And you are rasgal enough to think that I help you!"

"Herr Gans!"

"Talk not to me! I tell you that I do not permit you to gun to dis school as music-master. Vy you come? You have lamp, perhaps, to make signals to the Zeppelins. Is that it?"

"I have to earn my bread—"

"Your Prussian masters, they do not pay you enough?" sneered Herr Gans. "Tell them that they must pay you more."

"Oh, you are mad!" muttered the music-master savagely.

"I am an honest man," said Herr Gans. "Here I eat the bread of these peoples, and I will not pay them with treachery. That is good enough for a Prussian. But I am not Prussian. I spit on Prussia, and on your rasgal Kaiser!"

The music-master's eyes blazed.

He made a furious movement towards the German master, who blinked at him contemptuously over his glasses.

"Ach! That touches you, isn't it?" said Herr Gans. "Yet you tell me you are British! Ach! I know how British you are! I tell you, Hermann Blumenfeld, your rasgal King of Prussia is not true German Kaiser—that upstart Hohenzollern! After the war there shall be new things in Chermany. Your Hohenzollern, he shall go out, pag and paggage, and mein beloved Saxony shall be free country."

"Fool! Fool!"

"It is you Prussians that are fools," said Herr Gans. "You think that such wickedness shall last for always? You are fools, and your Kaiser he is a madman and a rasgal! There was time when the brave Saxons chased the Prussians before them."

like sheep, and at that time shall come again."

"Fool!"

"That is enough," said Herr Gans. "I speak to you plainly. You shall go away from Greyfriars. And that is not all. You go away from England, too. I will not allow you to remain and spy. If I allow that, I am rasgal as well as you. I tell you, Herr Blumenfeld, that if you are still in England after three days, I go to the police!"

The music-master clenched his hands. There was no doubting the grim earnestness of Herr Gans. The Gander was fairly on the war-path.

"Listen to me," said the music-master at last. "I will not attempt to deceive you, Herr Gans. Let us speak plainly. I serve my country—my own country. You, as a German, are bound to serve your country, too."

"Some day I serve my country by helping to throw over that rasgal Kaiser," said Herr Gans. "But neither as a spy!"

"You must be out of your senses. You are a German. If you refuse to help me, it will be known in Germany, and you will be a marked man. You will be arrested the moment you set foot in Germany after the war."

"I know that."

"You will be condemned. It means the rest of your life in a dungeon!" said the music-master savagely. "Do you understand that?"

"I understand him—so long as those rasgal Prussians rule in Chermany. But after the war to Germans rise against that rasgal Kaiser. Now they cannot rise. There is military discipline to keep them down. But when peace comes you shall see strange things in Chermany. That is why the war-lords wish not to make peace, they are afraid of what will follow."

"Oh, you are mad!"

"That is enough! I tell you, Herr Blumenfeld, that you shall go. Go you to the Head now to keep your appointment, and I go to the police-station to denounce you!"

The music-master clenched his hands with rage.

"Have you anything more to say?" inquired Herr Gans ironically.

"Only that you shall repent this!" muttered Bloomfield.

"That is as it may be. I think not. But even for life itself I do not become spy and rasgal! Are you going?"

The music-master drew a deep breath.

"I must go. But you shall repent this!"

"Rubbish!"

Herr Gans threw open the door.

"I gum mit you to the gate," he said.

"I see you off, isn't it? I do not trust that rasgal Prussian vum inch!"

Without a word more the music-master left the study, and Herr Gans followed him out of the house.

And then Billy Bunter came out from behind the screen, his round eyes open like saucers behind his spectacles.

Bunter was fairly gasping.

He had heard every word spoken by the two Germans, and it had taken his breath away. He blinked cautiously from the window, and saw Herr Gans marching the music-master down to the gates.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Bunter.

He rolled out of the study. His eyes were gleaming now. He, William George Bunter, was in possession of a thrilling secret—he knew where to lay his fat fingers on a German spy! He thrilled with the consciousness of his importance. Mr. Quelch had called him for referring to the Gander as a spy, but Mr. Quelch would have to listen to him now. True, what he had heard completely exonerated Herr Gans—even the obtuse Owl had to admit that. But

Bloomfield was a spy. There was his own admission on that point.

The Owl of the Remove hurried away to the Form-room, with the intention of acquainting Mr. Quelch immediately with what he had discovered—as indeed was his duty. He had forgotten all about Herr Gans' slippers. Ten minutes later Herr Gans came back into the study, breathing hard, but looking relieved and satisfied. He took off his boots and shoved his big feet into his carpet slippers, and then there were sounds in the German master's study that told of volcanic wrath.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

No Glory for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER rolled breathlessly into the Remove Form-room.

Mr. Quelch turned round from the class, and fixed a freezing glare upon him.

"Bunter!" he rumbled.

"Yes, sir? I—"

"You are half an hour late for lessons, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir! I—I—I—"

"How dare you, Bunter, remain away from lessons without permission?"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

"Come here, Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch took the cane from his desk.

Billy Bunter gasped. He had quite a lot to say, and he decided to say it at a safe distance from Mr. Quelch. So he did not heed the order to "come here."

"If you please, sir, I—I've been in Herr Gans' study!" he stuttered. "I've heard him talking to a German spy, sir!"

"What?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"A—a German spy, sir!"

Mr. Quelch's look was not promising. Bunter had expected him to be awfully impressed. But he wasn't! He was only angry.

As a matter of fact, Bunter's statement, though it happened to be true, sounded rather too steep. The Removites were grinning, and Mr. Quelch frowning thunderously. Bunter's fertile imagination and his disregard for truth were too well known. Even an ordinary statement by Bunter was not accepted without corroborative evidence. And this statement was not an ordinary one—it was extraordinary—very extraordinary.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at the Form-master in dismay. It was the first time it had occurred to him that his information might be disbelieved.

"Bunter! You utterly ridiculous boy—"

"I assure you, sir—"

"Come here!"

"If—if you please, sir, I—I'd rather not! I—I—I assure you, sir, that I have seen a German spy—"

"Bunter!"

"It—it's the new music merchant, sir—old Bloomfield," stammered Bunter.

"You absurd boy!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "I really begin to believe that you are out of your senses, Bunter!"

"It's true, sir! I heard them talking—"

"Do you mean to tell me, Bunter, that you have overheard a conversation in Herr Gans' study?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter, glad to see that the Remove-master was under standing at last.

"In that case, Bunter, you must have been concealed in the study!"

"Behind the screen in the corner, sir," answered Bunter, recovering confidence. "Of course, the Huns didn't know I was there. They wouldn't have talked if they had known. They might have murdered me, sir!"

"What?"

"Murdered me, sir!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Spies would murder anybody, sir, rather than be shot! That's the kind of rotters they are. That villain Bloomfield—"

"Are you speaking of the new music-master, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch, with a terrifying look.

"Yes, sir! He's a Hun!"

Mr. Quelch strode towards Bunter.

"Bunter, you have already made this absurd and insulting suggestion with regard to Herr Gans, and I have caned you."

"I was mistaken about him, sir! He's not the spy! It's Bloomfield—"

"Whether you are making a foolish mistake, Bunter, or whether you are slandering this gentleman intentionally, I do not know. But I must impress upon you, Bunter, that you cannot make such wicked statements with impunity. Hold out your hand!"

"M-m-mum-my hand, sir!" stammered Bunter, in dismay.

He seemed as surprised as if Mr. Quelch had told him to hold out his foot.

Really, this was not a suitable reward for a fellow who was prepared to denounce a rascally German spy. But a fellow who confessed that he had got his information by eavesdropping could hardly expect to be believed.

"At once!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"B-b-but, sir—"

"Hold out your hand!"

"But—but that German spy, sir—"

"Will you obey me, Bunter?"

"He—he ought to be arrested, sir—"

"For the last time, Bunter!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Bunter.

He held out a fat hand, and the swish he received elicited a terrific yell.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "The other hand!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Swish!

"Yoooooop!"

"Go to your place, Bunter!"

"Oh, dear!" moaned the Owl of the Remove.

"Do you hear me?"

"Ye-e-es, sir. But—but—"

"But what?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"That German spy, sir—"

The Form-master almost gasped, and the Remove stared. That Bunter should repeat his absurdities after being caned for uttering them took both Form and Form-master by surprise.

"Bunter! Do you venture to repeat your childish statements after I have just punished you?"

"It's true, sir!" howled Bunter. "I heard them—"

"On your own showing, Bunter, you have acted like a cowardly spy and listener. You have misunderstood something you have heard, with your usual stupidity. You are the most obtuse boy at Greyfriars. Now go to your place."

"But I assure you, sir, that spy—"

Swish!

The cane came down across Bunter's fat shoulders. The Form-master's patience was exhausted. Bunter gave a howl, and fled for his place.

The fat junior sat in a state of suppressed indignation and wrath during the remainder of afternoon lessons.

His wondrous tale had not been listened to. The German spy was still at large, and Mr. Quelch evidently intended to take no measures for apprehending him. Bunter had his own reputation to thank for that unfortunate state of affairs, though he did not look at it in that light. Had a fellow like Wharton or Vernon-Smith made such a statement, the Form-master would have listened to it patiently, though perhaps with incredulity. But he knew Bunter too well.

The Remove fellows were grinning over it. They expected Bunter to drop his "latest," now that he had been caned for it. Their surprise was great when, lessons being over, the fat junior stopped to speak to Mr. Quelch as the juniors were going out.

"If you please, sir—" began Bunter.

"Well?" snapped the Remove-master.

"About that German spy, sir!"

"What?"

"Oughtn't something to be done, sir?"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, exasperated. "I have never heard of such stupidity and obstinacy. Bunter, if you dare to utter one more word upon that subject I will take you to the headmaster for a flogging!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Now go, and restrain your foolish imagination in the future, Bunter!"

"I—I think I ought to go to the Head about it, sir."

The Form-master frowned at him. Then he smiled.

"You may certainly go to the Head, Bunter, if you choose. Dr. Locke will punish you more severely than I have done."

"I—I think it's my duty, sir, as that German spy—"

Mr. Quelch reached for his cane, and Bunter made a bolt for the doorway. The subject was dropped very abruptly.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo, you fat duffer—"

"You burbling ass—"

"You chump!"

The Removites surrounded Bunter in the passage, most of them laughing.

"What do you mean by spinning such a yarn to Quelch?" demanded Wharton.

"It's true!"

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"I heard every word!"

"I've told you about eavesdropping before, Bunter," said Peter Todd severely. "Come up to the study, and I'll give you a stamping."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You beast, Toddy!"

"I shouldn't wonder if there's something in it," remarked Skinner.

"Fathead!"

"Rot!"

"Piffle!"

"The rottenness is terrific, my esteemed Skinner!" remarked Hurrey Singh. "The worthy fat Bunter has been dreaming dreamfulness."

"Tell us an easier one, Bunt!" suggested Squiff.

"Not so highly coloured, you know!" grinned Bolsover major.

"It's true—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you know what a truthful chap I am—"

"Ha, ha! We do!"

"We do! Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked furiously at the doubting Thomases. His thrilling yarn was taken only as a subject for merriment.

"I'm jolly well going to the Head about it!" he exclaimed at last.

"Do!" said Wharton, laughing.

"You'll get a flogging instead of a caning."

"That fellow Bloomfield is a German. Gans called him Blumenfeld in speaking to him."

"That's only the German pronunciation," said Hazeldene.

"But he admitted it—"

"Rats!"

"He admitted that he was a Prussian spy—"

"Cannon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gans made him leave the school," said Bunter despairingly. "He had an appointment with the Head, and he was going to give a music lesson here this afternoon, and he went away instead—"

"Pile it on!"

"I say, you fellows, you might believe a chap when he's telling the truth—"

"When!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The wheedlingness is terrific, my esteemed fibbing Bunter!"

"I'll jolly well go to the Head, then—"

"Let's see you do it!" roared Bolsover major.

"I—I will, only—only he mightn't believe me, like Quelch—"

"He mightn't, that's a cert. Two to one in quids that he doesn't!" said the Bounder, with a chuckle.

"But it's true—"

"Still sticking to it?" asked Bob Cherry. "Why don't you tell us that Bloomfield is the Crown Prince of Prussia in disguise? He might be, you know. Or the cheery old Kaiser-bird himself!"

"Or the Tsar of Russia!" chuckled Nugent. "They say Nicky has escaped from Siberia, and is at large again. Are you sure that Bloomfield isn't the merry old Tsar-bird in disguise?"

"Look here, you silly fatheads—"

"Draw it mild, Bunter!" urged Wharton.

"I'm going to the Head!" said Bunter determinedly. "I can't let that villainous German spy go on with his work, can I?"

The juniors yelled.

"Let's see you go, Bunt!"

"We'll come and watch you."

"Well, I'm going!"

"We're waiting to see you start. Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter started for the Head's study. The grinning Removites followed him in a crowd.

They fully believed that the Owl was bluffing, and that he would turn back before he reached Dr. Locke's door.

Somewhat to their surprise, Bunter marched on till he reached the door of the study. Then he paused.

"Knock!" grinned Bolsover major.

"I—I say, you fellows, you come in with me and back me up—"

"Catch us!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"No fear. We haven't spotted any German spies," chuckled Johnny Bull. "You have, so it's up to you."

Bunter raised a fat hand to knock at the door, but lowered it again. For once he had a true tale to tell; but would he be believed? He felt a sinking of the heart at that question. The Head did not know him quite so well as Mr. Quelch did, certainly, but he knew enough of him not to take an unusual statement from him without strong evidence.

"Look out!" whispered Nugent suddenly.

The juniors melted away round the nearest corner, as the stately form of Dr. Locke was seen coming from the direction of the Sixth Form-room. As it happened, the Head was not in his study just then. Bunter was hesitating whether to tap at the door, and did not see the Head coming, as he had his back to him. He gave a jump as he was tapped on the shoulder from behind.

"What are you doing here, Bunter?"

The Owl of the Remove spun round.

"Oh!" he stammered.

"Well?" said the Head sternly.

"I—I—I—"

Dr. Locke could hear a suppressed

chuckle from round the corner, and his face grew very severe.

"Were you about to play some trick in my study, Bunter?" he demanded.

"Nunno, sir!"

"Then what were you doing here?"

"I—I came to speak to you, sir—"

"You may speak, Bunter."

"I—I—I—"

"Well?"

"I—I've come here to denounce a German spy, sir!" gasped Bunter.

The Head started back.

"A what, Bunter?"

"A wicked Prussian spy, sir!"

"Are you wandering in your mind, boy? How could you possibly have come into contact with any person of that description?"

"Here, at Greyfriars, sir—"

"Oh, I think I understand. I have heard that some evilly-disposed boys have made very disrespectful remarks about Herr Gans. Is it possible, Bunter, that you venture to come to me and repeat such things?"

"Nunno, sir, not Herr Gans. The other Hun—"

"What?"

"The music johnny, sir—I—I mean the music merchant—that is, the music-master!" stammered Bunter. "He's a Prussian villain, sir—"

"Come into my study, Bunter."

"Yes, sir."

To Bunter's dismay, the Head took up a cane from his desk. Bunter blinked at the cane.

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

"I—I say, sir—"

"You cannot be allowed to make such foolish and reckless statements, Bunter. You must learn to keep your imagination under control."

Swish, swish!

Dr. Locke pointed to the door with his cane.

"You may go, Bunter."

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"Go!"

And Bunter went.

He blinked dolefully at the grinning juniors, who were waiting for him at a safe distance, as he squeezed his fat hands under his arms.

"You've done the Head," remarked Bob. "Now you'd better go to the police-station with your merry information, Bunter. The police are very keen on German spies."

"Do you think they'll believe me?" asked Bunter hopefully.

"Of course they won't, fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" groaned Bunter.

"Here I'm caned for trying to do my duty as a patriot, and all the while that Prussian beast is spying! Yow-ow-ow!"

And Bunter rolled dismally away, leaving the Removites roaring.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

An Apology is Required!

"BUNTER'S latest," as the juniors called it, was a great topic in the Common-room that evening.

The Remove, the Fourth, and even the fags of the Third chuckled and roared over it.

Billy Bunter was called upon to spin his yarn in the Common-room, which he did, interrupted continually by loud chuckles.

Skinner professed that he thought there was something in it. But he was alone in that opinion. Even Snoop and Stott joined in the general incredulity.

After Bunter had told his yarn he was called upon to tell it again, and he did.

so willingly; and Peter Todd, the amateur lawyer, compared the two yarns, and found that they did not agree.

Bunter's besetting sin had overtaken him again. He simply could not keep to the facts, even when he was telling the truth for once. His fertile imagination was not to be restrained. Unconsciously the story grew as it was repeated, till it was much more incredible than at first.

In the second edition it appeared that Mr. Bloomfield produced a revolver—and the juniors yelled over the revolver. Probably if Bunter had told the story a third time it would have grown into a duel in the study.

Harry Wharton & Co. were still laughing when they went up to their quarters to do their prep. Bunter's interesting fairy-tale, as they considered it, had kept them rather late.

Billy Bunter was frowning wrathfully as he rolled away to No. 7 to get on with his neglected work. The fellow who had spotted a German spy naturally expected some credit. But Bunter hadn't received any. He had only received two canings, which could not possibly be regarded as an adequate reward.

After the reception of his yarn by his Form-master and the Head and the Lower School generally, he hesitated to communicate it to the police. He thought of going to the station, but abandoned the idea.

He felt that he would only meet doubting Thomases there, as at Greyfriars.

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In Study No. 7 Bunter scamped his prep, as usual. He had finished before Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, and he waited impatiently for them to get done. When Todd put his books aside, Bunter began at once.

"I say, Toddy—"

Peter held up his hand.

"Not spies, Bunter!" he said warningly.

"But really, Toddy—"

"You've worn that out," Peter explained. "Get on a new gag, or dry up!"

"But it's true, Peter!" said Bunter, almost tearfully. "And—and I've got it on my conscience, you know. That filthy Prussian is spying—"

"Chuck it!"

"You ought to take the matter up, Peter—"

"I'll take a stump up if you don't give me a rest!" answered Peter Todd. "And if I do, you'll know it, you owl!"

"But, I say—"

"How can you expect anybody to take stock of such a yarn?" demanded Peter. "Yesterday you were accusing the old Gander of being a spy. Now you've got on to Bloomfield. You'll make it Mr. Quelch next!"

"I was mistaken about the Gander—"

"And you're mistaken about Bloomfield, ass! You were in such a blue funk in the Gander's study that you heard it all wrong."

"I didn't, you know, and—"

"And your yarns don't agree, either. You've told lies since you started on the fairy-tale. Now give us a rest!"

Bunter gave Peter Todd up in despair. He turned to Tom Dutton, who had just finished his work. The deaf junior grinned at him. He had heard the yarn, and laughed over it with the rest.

"I say, Dutton—" began Bunter.

"Eh?"

"You've heard what I said about that spy—"

"Good!" said Dutton. "I must say I didn't have a very good tea. I can do with some supper. Where is it?"

"Eh? Where's what?"

"The pie."

"Pie!" howled Bunter. "Who's talking about a pie?"

"Pork pie?" asked Dutton. "Well, that's all right! But where is it?"

"Oh, you ass! There isn't any pie!" shrieked Bunter. "I was talking about a German spy!"

"That's rot, Bunter! You can't possibly have a German pie here! Do you mean a Strassburg pie?"

"Not a pie—a spy!" yelled Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Spy!" roared Bunter.

Dutton jumped up.

"Who are you calling a spy?" he exclaimed. "Why, you cheeky fat villain, you're the worst spy at Greyfriars yourself! What are you calling me a spy for?"

"I—I didn't! I—I wasn't—"

"Spy—eh?" continued Tom Dutton, with rising indignation. "I like that from you! Why, you've been kicked by every fellow in the Remove for listening at doors, and things like that! You call me a spy!"

"I didn't! I tell you I—"

"Eh?"

"Not you!" yelled Bunter. "I never—"

"Well, if you take it back, all right. But you ought to apologise, all the same, for calling a chap a spy!"

"I—I—I—"

"Apologise!" roared Dutton.

"Look here! I— Leggo!" howled Bunter, as his study-mate seized him by the collar.

Shake, shake, shake!

"Yaroo! Make him leggo, Peter!"

"I'll let go when you've apologised!" exclaimed Tom. "Calling me a spy, by gum! Apologise, or I'll shake you till you burst!"

"Yow-ow-ow! I apologise!" shrieked Bunter.

"All right, then," said Tom, releasing him. "Mind how you talk to a fellow after this, Bunter. Some fellows would have licked you for calling them such names!"

"Grooogh!"

Billy Bunter did not attempt to explain further. He rolled out of the study, leaving Tom Dutton frowning, and Peter Todd yelling.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Takes a Hand!

VERNON-SMITH and Skinner had finished their prep in No. 4 when the Owl of the Remove presented himself in that apartment. The Bounder grinned at the sight of him. Skinner laughed.

"Caught any more spies?" queried Smithy.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Would you like to know how to bag that Prussian, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather! I—"

"Put some salt on his tail," said the Bounder seriously. "That's a first-class method for catching birds, and it ought to work with Huna."

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Look here! I came to speak to you, Skinner. You know that fellow Bloomfield is a spy, don't you?"

"I know the Gander is," said Skinner. "Because he makes you mug up German," chuckled the Bounder.

"He isn't," said Bunter anxiously. "Tain't the Gander, Skinner. I tell you he was denouncing Bloomfield, and threatening to give him up if he doesn't get out of England."

"Piffle!" said Skinner. "Tell me they were plotting together, and I might believe you!"

"You would!" remarked the Bounder.

"But they weren't!" said Bunter. "That music merchant is a Prussian spy, and he thought the Gander would help him because he's a German. Somehow, the Gander won't. I admit I was surprised. But he's a Saxon, or something, and he hates Prussians. I believe there used to be wars between Prussia and Saxony."

"There did," remarked the Bounder. "About a third part of Saxony was annexed by the Prussian rotters a hundred years ago. And all Saxony is under the Kaiser's thumb now. They can't love Prussians, I should say."

"That's what the Gander was saying," said Bunter, "and he's going to give Bloomfield away unless the villain clears off. He said so. I don't think he ought to be allowed to clear off. Do you?"

"Not if he's a spy," grinned the Bounder. "But he isn't, fathead!"

"He said so himself—"

"Bow-wow!"

"He made the man clear off, instead of keeping his appointment with the Head—the Gander did," said Bunter. "Don't that prove it?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Hold on, though!" said Skinner. "That can easily be proved, anyway. We know that Bloomfield came here to give a music lesson. Easy enough to find out whether he did or not."

"Of course he did, if he came to do it," answered Vernon-Smith.

"I'll jolly soon see!" remarked Skinner, rising. "After all, I don't trust Bloomfield!"

"You don't trust anybody."

"Oh, rats! I told you before, Smithy, that I was thinking of joining the music class, to keep an eye on Bloomfield. I think his acquaintance with the Gander wants explaining."

"According to Bunter's yarn the Gander is true blue."

"Well, yes," admitted Skinner, "that's rather thick. But, all the same, I don't trust Bloomfield. I believe he's a Hun. I suspect—"

"Oh, give your suspicions a rest!" yawned Vernon-Smith. "You always suspect something or somebody. Take a rest."

"Rats!" retorted Skinner.

He left the study, leaving Bunter arguing with the Bounder, and Smithy yawning. Skinner repaired to the Shell quarters, and looked in on Hoskins and Hobson in their study. He found Hoskins in an indignant and eloquent mood, boring his study-mate dreadfully on the of music and music-masters.

"It's simply unheard-of!" Hoskins was saying. "What does the man mean by it? He came here—I saw him. I had to go into class; and bless my hat if I saw anything more of him! What does he mean, I say?"

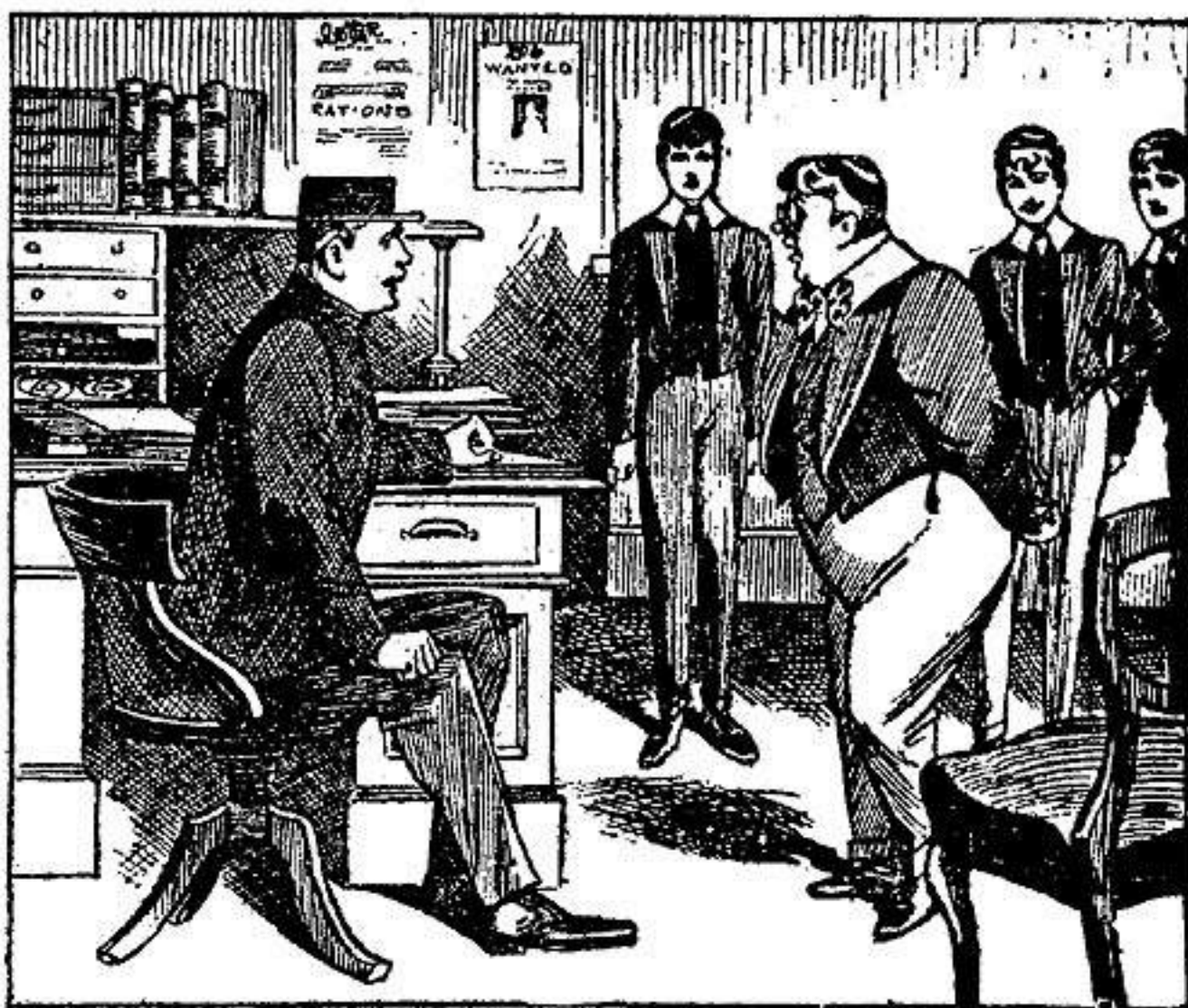
"Blessed if I know, or care," yawned Hobson. "Perhaps he'd heard about your March in K major—"

"C major, you ass!"

"Well, perhaps he'd heard of it, and cleared off in case you should play it to him," suggested Hobson.

"You silly chump!" roared Hoskins.

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Bunter tells his tale! (See Chapter 3.)

"I say, you chaps," remarked Skinner.

"Oh, buzz off!" said Hoskins.

"What about the new music johnny?" asked Skinner, unheeding. "I hear that he was to give a lesson here today. He came, I think."

"Yes, he came," growled Hoskins. "Must be potty, I think. I turned up in the music-room, and found he wasn't there—and he never turned up. Simply came and went."

"Then he didn't give any lesson after all?" exclaimed Skinner.

"No, he didn't, the chump!"

"Sure he was expected to give a lesson?"

"Of course, ass! We were told to be in the music-room at three-thirty for him."

"And he never came there?"

"I've told you so!" grunted Hoskins.

Skinner left the study, looking very thoughtful. As he came back into the Remove passage he heard Billy Bunter's voice in Study No. 1. Bunter had given up the Bounder, and was trying it on with the Famous Five, who had gathered in Study No. 1 after prep.

"I say, you fellows, it's true, you know!" Bunter was pleading.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner looked in.

"Here's another!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Come and tell us your latest spy-story, Skinner. You're nearly as good as Bunter."

"I fancy there's something in Bunter's yarn, after all," said Skinner.

"Good! You believe that Bloomfield had a battery of cannon in his trousers-pocket?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was a battery of cannon, wasn't it, Bunter?"

"That's all Bunter's rot, of course!" said Skinner. "I don't believe in the revolver. But it's true that Mr. Bloomfield came here to give a lesson, and after seeing the Gander he left at once, without giving the lesson."

"Poof!"

"I've asked Hoskins. He turned up for the music-lesson, and Bloomfield never showed up at all. Hoskins is ratty about it."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Didn't I tell you so?" chuckled Bunter. "That settles it!"

"Well, that does look queer," remarked Bob Cherry. "It was a queer scene in the hall, when Bloomfield came. It's odd enough, if the Gander really turned him out."

"Well, he did!"

"Looks like it, at least," said Skinner. "I think Bunter ought to go to the police-station with his yarn."

"You come with me, and I will!" said Bunter.

"I—I couldn't exactly do that, but —"

"Why not?" demanded Johnny Bull. "If you believe Bunter, why can't you back him up?"

"Well, you see—" hesitated Skinner.

Johnny Bull sniffed.

"You know the bobbies would cackle at such a yarn," he said. "Whatever Bunter heard, he's got it all mixed, and misunderstood it—and he's such a liar he doesn't know whether he's telling the truth or not."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"First he spins a yarn that Gans is a spy, then he tells us that somebody else is a spy, and that Gans is going to denounce him. Next time it will be some other stunt. Bunter ought to give his lower jaw a rest."

"I don't say Bunter's evidence is much good," admitted Skinner. "But, at least, we ought to keep our eyes open. If it's true, Bloomfield won't dare to come to Greyfriars again. Well, there will be a fuss about that, as he's taken on the job of music-master."

"Rot! He will come as usual!" said Bull.

Skinner left the study, and Bunter was beginning again, when Nugent took him by one fat ear and led him into the passage and closed the door on him. Study No. 1 had had enough of William George.

"All the same, it's a queer bizney," Harry Wharton remarked. "It will be rather interesting to see whether Bloomfield comes as usual for the next music-lesson."

"That will settle the matter," remarked Bob Cherry. "And if he does,

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Bunter's yarn is all gas, and I suggest giving him a jolly good ragging for inventing such a fairy-tale."

"Hear, hear!"

Bob Cherry's suggestion was passed unanimously.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Spider and the Fly!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, sir?"

Mr. Quelch was at his study door, and he had called to the Remove captain in the passage.

It was a couple of days since the affair of the music-master and Bunter's thrilling yarn, and the juniors were forgetting the matter. Bunter certainly was sticking to his story; but in the face of unanimous incredulity he had to give the subject a rest.

Harry Wharton turned back as his Form-master called to him.

"Wharton, please tell Herr Gans that someone has called him up on my telephone," said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir!"

The juniors proceeded to Herr Gans' study. Lessons were over for the day. He found the portly Herr taking his ease in his armchair, filling the study with thick smoke from his meerschaum.

"Gut in, mein poy!" said Herr Gans, with a kind smile. "Gut in! Dere is goot news in der baper dis day, Wharton." The Herr had a "Daily Mail" spread on his podgy knees.

"Yes, sir, is there?" asked Wharton, wondering what kind of good news a German was likely to find in the "Daily Mail." That newspaper was not exactly one to give a German any kind of comfort.

Herr Gans beamed over his spectacles. "Te Prussian Guards, dey get it in vat you call der neck," he remarked. "You are surprise that I call dis goot news—vat? But tat is goot news to me. But tat is ferry good news, Wharton. Many, many years ago I leaf mein beloved Saxony because I vill not live under dose rasgal Prussians. Saxony, he is small. Prussia, he is big; but after dis war, Wharton, Prussia vill not be so big, I tink. Ve shall see vat ve shall see." Herr Gans rubbed his fat hands. "But you come to see me for sometings, Wharton?"

"Someone has rung you up on Mr. Quelch's telephone, sir."

"Tank you, mein poy. I goes, isn't it?"

And the Herr went.

He rolled into Mr. Quelch's study. The receiver was off the telephone, and the Remove-master politely left the study while the Herr took his call. Herr Gans picked up the receiver.

"Hallo! Who is dere?" he asked.

"It is I, Herr Gans."

The German master started.

"Mein Gott! Tat is Bloomfield?"

"Yes. Are you alone?"

"I am alone, you Prussian rasgal, but I vishes not to spick mit you!"

"I am obeying your order, Herr Gans. To-morrow morning I leave Courtfield for good."

"You leafs to country also. Herr Blumenfelt, or you goes to prison!"

"You received my letter?"

"Ja, ja!"

"You did not answer me."

"I have noddings to say to Prussian rasgals!"

"That is why I have rung you up." Mr. Bloomfield's voice was quite calm and even. "I leave by the first train in the morning, Herr Gans. But it is very difficult to arrange my affairs in so short a time."

"Tat is your pizness!"

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"Yes, yes. I am not complaining. I know that I am at your mercy."

"Goot!"

Herr Gans grinned over the telephone. It was a satisfaction to him to have the Prussian fairly down.

"But there are some affairs I cannot arrange in the time. There are debts to pay and business matters to settle. If you will give me another week—"

"I vill not giff you anoder day!"

"You are determined upon that?"

"Ja, wohl!"

"Then you must help me obey your order. If I leave the papers and the money with you, will you see that my accounts are paid?"

"Yes, I vill do tat mooch. Tat is all right!"

"Then, if you will call upon me, I will hand them over to you, and explain the matter fully. If I should leave debts unpaid here, it might raise difficulties about my leaving the country."

"I vill do tat."

"I shall be finishing my packing this evening," said Mr. Bloomfield. "If you call in at any time you will find me."

"I calls in about ten o'clock."

"Very well!"

Herr Gans put up the receiver. He was grinning with great satisfaction. His victory over the Prussian was complete. True, the Prussian's turn would come after the war, if the Gander ever sought to return to his native land. But Herr Gans was nourishing great hopes and dreams of the downfall of Prussia after the war, and of the independence of his native state in Hunland.

Some of the juniors noticed Herr Gans as he rolled back to his own study, still grinning, and Skinner remarked that the Hun seemed to be jolly well satisfied with himself.

The juniors were in their dormitories that night when Herr Gans quietly let himself out and trudged away down the misty road to Courtfield.

He reached the town, and stopped at a house near the High Street, with a long, dark garden in front of it. There was a brass plate on the railings, announcing that it was the residence of Mr. Bloomfield, the music-master.

Herr Gans tramped up the path to the house, which was in complete darkness. He gave a loud knock at the door.

It was opened at once.

A dim light glimmered out on the fat German master, and it showed up Mr. Bloomfield standing within.

The music-master's face was pale, his brow lined.

Herr Gans noted it, and smiled.

"I haf gum!" he announced.

"Please come in, Herr Gans."

"Ferry goot."

The German master entered, and Mr. Bloomfield closed the door.

"I am busy packing," he observed, with a sidelong look at the German master. "Do you mind waiting a few minutes?"

"Not at all! I smokes mein pipe, isn't it?"

"Please step in here."

Mr. Bloomfield threw open a door leading off the hall.

Herr Gans passed him, and trod heavily into the room.

He heard a sudden movement behind him, and swung round quickly, though his slow brain was not on the alert.

Before he had half-turned a crashing blow descended on his head. It was dealt by a heavy life-preserver in the hand of the Prussian.

"Ach!"

The Herr staggered back.

Crash!

It was another savage blow as the unfortunate German master staggered.

Herr Gans fell headlong to the floor.

He did not move again. The second blow had stunned him.

The music-master stood looking down at the motionless form at his feet, his face white, and the perspiration thick upon his brow. He was listening, as if uneasy lest the sound of the portly German's fall might have been heard without.

He bent over Herr Gans at last. A savage smile flickered over his colourless face.

"Dummkopf!" he muttered. "Fool! You have come here, but you will not find it so easy to go again. Fool!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Disappearance!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's on?" Bob Cherry asked that question the next day.

Since early morning all Greyfriars had been aware that something unusual was on.

The masters wore serious looks, and the prefects seemed to be discussing something among themselves. It was known that the Head had been busy with his telephone.

Then it was announced that the German lesson, due that afternoon, would not be given.

"It's something to do with the Gander," Johnny Bull remarked sagely. "Has something happened to him, I wonder?"

"What could have happened?" said Wharton.

"Blessed if I know!"

"I say, you fellows, perhaps he's been arrested!"

"Dry up, Bunter, you ass!"

"Well, you know, he knew all about that spy in Courtfield—"

"Dry up!" roared Bob.

Through Bunter and Skinner and other fellows of an investigating turn of mind, it came out that the unusual stir in the school did indeed concern the German master.

Herr Gans was missing!

His bed had not been slept in the previous night, and it was clear enough that he had left Greyfriars overnight of his own accord. And he had not returned.

Nothing had been heard of him since.

For a master to leave unexpectedly and stay away all the following morning without a word to the Head was extraordinary enough; and the German master, as an enemy alien, could hardly have intended to do anything so injudicious. It appeared that the Herr had gone out, and had met with some accident. No other conclusion could be drawn.

But the Head's inquiries at the police-stations in Friardale and Courtfield had no result.

Nothing was known of any accident to any person who answered to the description of Herr Gans. But the fact that he was a German naturally caused some attention, and later in the day Inspector Grimes came over from Courtfield to see the Head about it.

Skinner had his own theory on the subject. He surmised that his own original theory concerning the German master was well founded. Herr Gans was a spy, and he had found himself in danger of discovery, and had bolted.

"Rot!" growled Bob Cherry, when he heard Skinner propounding that charitable theory in the Common-room.

"Well, where is he, then?" sneered Skinner. "Kidnapped—eh? He left the school of his own accord, that's a cert!"

"Might have got run over by a car."

"They'd have found him before this,

then. Besides, old Grimes has been to see the Head about it!"

"He's bolted, right enough!" said Snoop. "I agree with Skinner. He was a spy all along. All Germans are spies!"

"Lots of them," admitted Bob. "But among seventy million people there must be a few decent; and the Gander was one of that kind. He was as blind as an owl, and he's walked into a motor-car or something."

"They'd have found his carcass before this."

"Oh, don't be a cad, Skinner!"

"Well, you'll see."

"Rats!"

But Skinner's theory found some favour with the juniors, especially those who had lines to do for the German master.

"It looks like it," said Bolsover major. "There's Bunter's yarn, too. He says he heard Gans denounce Bloomfield as a spy. Well, he got it wrong. You know what a fool he is. It was very likely Bloomfield who found out that Gans was a spy, and that's why the Gander's bolted."

"Very likely," agreed Skinner.

"Let's ask Bunter."

Bunter was asked, but, to the exasperation of Skinner & Co., he persisted that his yarn was true.

Bolsover major pulled his ears, which he felt was all he could do under the circumstances.

The afternoon passed without news of the Herr. But Hoskins of the Shell was made happy by a visit from Mr. Bloomfield to give the music-lesson.

Mr. Bloomfield turned up as expected, and such of the fellows as took music had the pleasure of receiving instruction from him. Harry Wharton & Co. observed him rather curiously when he came.

They had agreed that if there was anything in Bunter's yarn Mr. Bloomfield would not visit Greyfriars again. And here he was!

That settled the matter, to their minds.

But when the Famous Five were at tea in Study No. 1 the Bounder dropped in, with an unusually thoughtful expression on his face.

"Pile into the substitutes, old chap!" said Nugent hospitably.

The Bounder shook his head.

"I want to speak to you fellows," he said. "Doesn't it strike you as being rather queer about old Gans?"

"The queerfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy."

"And Bloomfield?" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, he's all right!" said Bob Cherry. "He's come, after all. Hoskins seems quite pleased with him. He knows all about C sharps and K flats, and minor hundredths and things."

"But is he all right?" asked the Bounder.

"Well, it looks like it," said Harry Wharton. "He's come back, and we took that as proof—if it was needed—that Bunter's yarn was all piffle."

"If he had come back while Herr Gans was here," said the Bounder. "But, you see, the Gander isn't here."

"Bloomfield couldn't have known he wasn't here."

"I'm not so sure of that."

Bob Cherry stared.

"What rot, Smithy! How could he have known? The Gander went out late last night, and got knocked over in some accident, most likely. The bobbies haven't any news of him, so it isn't likely Mr. Bloomfield has."

"I think it's very likely, if——"

"If what?"

"If Bunter's yarn was true!" said the Bounder quietly.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Has To Go!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. ceased their operations upon the war-bread and kippers, and stared at the Bounder.

"Smithy!" murmured Wharton. "You don't suggest——"

"Look at the thing!" said the Bounder quietly. "Bunter's yarn was a staggerer, I know. I never believed it. But it's certain that Bloomfield cleared off that day after seeing Gans without giving the lesson he came for."

"That's so."

"He did not show up again till Herr Gans wasn't here. Doesn't it look, a bit, as if he knew the Gander wasn't here?"

"Yee-es. But——"

"Gans went out last night. You remember once he visited Bloomfield at night—the night you mopped mixture over him in mistake for Carne of the Sixth!"

"That's true enough."

"Suppose Bloomfield got him to visit him last night?"

"Phew!"

"Mind, I didn't take any stock in Bunter's yarn," said the Bounder. "But old Gans' disappearance puts a new complexion on the matter. If Bunter's yarn was true, it's exactly what might have been expected to happen. Well, it has happened; and it follows that Bunter's yarn may be true."

"You—you don't think that Bloomfield has knocked him on the head?" ejaculated Johnny Bull incredulously.

"If Bunter's yarn is true, the man is a German spy. If he's a German spy, he would do anything to save his neck."

"Smithy!"

"Not that I think the rotter would quite risk knocking Gans on the head," said the Bounder. "But he would, if he could, put him somewhere where he couldn't talk. He wouldn't want to be hanged. As a spy, he's more likely to be imprisoned than shot, even if it was proved. But hanging would be a certainty if it was brought home to him that he had done for Gans. If Bunter's tale is true, he would try to get the Gander to his place and keep him there—in a cellar, most likely. If the Gander hadn't disappeared, I shouldn't think a word about it; but the Gander has disappeared, and that alters the case."

"But an accident——"

"It's not an ordinary accident that keeps Gans away. You know how careful he was about keeping well within the five-mile limit for aliens. Well, if a man had been knocked over in an accident within five miles something would be known about it before this."

"Well, that's so, certainly," admitted Wharton.

"Then you really think Bunter had it right all along?" exclaimed Nugent.

"I don't know," confessed the Bounder. "But I think now that it looks very likely. I think Bunter ought to go to the police-station, and tell his yarn there. They can act on it if they like."

"He won't if it's not true."

"But if it is true he will—if we go with him and back him up."

"Call Bunter here," suggested Bob. "We'll make him spin the yarn over again, and see if there's a fraction of truth in it."

"That's a good idea."

Billy Bunter was soon found, and brought to Study No. 1. He came very cheerfully, as it was tea-time.

"Anything specially good?" he asked, as he rolled in. "I've had a rotten measly tea in my study. Got any cake?"

"You haven't come to tea, fathead!" growled Bob.

Bunter's face fell.

"What do you want, then?" he demanded. "If you want to borrow money off me——"

"You duffer!"

"I'm not going to lend you anything, Wharton," said Bunter. "You refused to cash a postal-order for me yesterday!"

"Oh, dry up!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently. "We want to hear your yarn about Herr Gans over again, and see if there's anything in it!"

"Oh, all right! Perhaps you'll believe me now!"

"The perhapsfulness is terrific, my esteemed Ananias!"

"Look here, Inky——"

"Go ahead with the yarn, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter, nothing loth, went ahead. Once more the thrilling yarn was told, and this time it was more thrilling than ever. The oftener Bunter told a story the further he got from the facts. This time it appeared Herr Gans had seized Mr. Bloomfield by the throat, and hissed: "Ha, you Prussian dog!" Billy Bunter thought that rather effective, and he was surprised when there was a general howl of:

"Shut up, you fat spoofer!"

"Well, you asked me!" said Bunter, in an injured tone.

"We asked you for the truth, you owl!"

"That's the truth. The Gander seized him——"

"Chuck it, for goodness' sake!"

"Well, at least he called him a Prussian rascal," said Bunter, getting a little nearer to the facts.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "He's such an awful liar, there's no telling," he said. "But all the same, the Gander has disappeared, and I think Bunter ought to be taken to the police-station. Grimey will keep him to the facts—if there are any facts!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I don't want to go to the police-station!"

"Why not?" demanded Wharton.

"They won't believe me, and if it's reported to the Head, I shall get a flogging. You know what old Quelchly said!"

"We'll go with you," said Harry.

"That won't make any difference."

"Well, you've spun the yarn, Bunter, and you've got to take the consequences," said the Bounder. "We'll come and back you up; but you've got to go, anyway."

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Here's your cap," said Vernon-Smith. "Let's get off now, you fellows, before the gates are closed."

"I—I say——"

"Come on!"

Billy Bunter, in a very doubtful and hesitating frame of mind, was marched away by the Removites. Bunter was very keen to tell his yarn—if it would be believed. He felt that he had not received the limelight that was his due. But if he was not believed, and Mr. Grimes reported his startling story to the headmaster, the consequences might be painful. Bunter was torn two ways—between desire to shine and anxiety to avoid a possible flogging. But as it happened it was not left to Bunter to decide one way or the other. The Famous Five meant business, and they marched him out of gates, still hesitating.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Brought to Light!

"I SAY, you fellows: you back me up, you know!" mumbled Bunter, as they walked along to Courtfield. "If old Grimey wants to know the kind of chap I am, THE MAGNET LIBRARY. No. 526.

"For instance, you'll swear you know me to be thoroughly truthful—"

"Perjury's against the law," answered Bob.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Grimes can hear you, and use his own judgment," said Vernon-Smith. "If you've been lying, all the worse for you."

"He—he may think it isn't true, you know."

"That's your own fault for being such a Prussian."

"Oh, dear!"

The knowledge that it would be his own fault if he got flogged did not seem to afford Billy Bunter any comfort. But the die was cast, and he arrived at Courtfield police-station with the six juniors.

They found Inspector Grimes there.

"Any news of the German master, sir?" Harry Wharton asked, by way of a beginning.

Mr. Grimes shook his head, with a rather peculiar smile.

"No, Master Wharton."

"Isn't it queer that he hasn't been found, if it's an accident, Mr. Grimes?"

"Very queer indeed!" answered the inspector drily.

"You know a man in Courtfield named Bloomfield, a music-master?" asked Harry.

The inspector gave him a very sharp look.

"Yes," he said, "I know him."

"Well," said Harry, coming to the point, "Bunter here has some information to give you, Mr. Grimes. We don't know anything about it ourselves, but I think I ought tell you that on one occasion we saw Herr Gans having a row with Mr. Bloomfield on the common, and he called him by the name of Blumenfelt."

"Mr. Bloomfield's father's name was Blumenfelt," said the inspector. "He changed it when he became a British subject."

"Then the man is a German!" exclaimed Harry.

"A born British subject," said the inspector very drily.

It occurred to Wharton that Mr. Grimes had already given some little attention to the Courtfield music-master on account of his origin.

"Go ahead, Bunter!" said Vernon-Smith.

"What have you to tell me, Master Bunter?" asked the inspector.

Bunter coughed.

"I—I say, Mr. Grimes, it's all true—"

"Well, go on, then."

"I'm an awfully truthful chap—these fellows will tell you so—"

"The fact is, Mr. Grimes, Bunter is an awful fibber," said Harry. "We laughed at his yarn—before Herr Gans disappeared. Now we think you ought to hear it, as it may be true. I've no doubt you can tell."

"Very probably," smiled the inspector.

"I'm waiting for you, Master Bunter."

Billy Bunter got it out at last.

Inspector Grimes listened quietly, only interrupting the Owl of the Remove now and then with a dry interrogation. Somehow, the inspector seemed able to keep Bunter to the facts. For once in his life Bunter related a story without adding details due to his fertile imagination.

The inspector's face was very grave when Bunter had finished.

"Did you not tell this to your master at school?" he rapped out.

"He wouldn't believe me," said Bunter sorrowfully. "He wouldn't even listen. He c-c-caned me!"

"Bunter's got a reputation for yarning, sir," said Nugent.

The inspector nodded.

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"I understand. I'm very glad you've come here and told me this, young gentlemen. Don't say anything about it till you hear from me."

"Right-ho, Mr. Grimes!"

The juniors left the station.

"I—I say, you fellows, do you think he believed it?" asked Bunter anxiously, as they walked home to Greyfriars.

"I think he did," remarked the Bouncer. "You toned down the yarn a good bit for him, Bunter. You left out the revolvers and the Prussian dogs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could only wait and see.

That evening they heard nothing. But on the following morning, when Greyfriars came down, there was news. Herr Gans was back again, and he was in the school sanatorium, under the doctor's hands, and seriously ill.

That news ran through the school like wildfire.

Skinner was quite taken aback. It was clear enough that the Gander had not bolted after all.

After breakfast seven juniors of the Remove were summoned to the Head's study. They were Vernon-Smith, Bunter, and the Famous Five.

Billy Bunter palpitated as he rolled away to obey the summons.

"I say, you fellows, you own up that you made me go to the station," he mumbled. "If the Head's waxy—"

"I don't think he's going to be waxy," said Wharton.

Certainly Dr. Locke did not look waxy when he received the juniors in his study. He gave them a very kind glance.

"Doubtless you are aware why I have sent for you, my boys," he said. "Inspector Grimes has informed me of your visit to him yesterday."

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "I—I say, sir, it was all true—"

"Herr Gans has been found," resumed the Head, without heeding Bunter. "He has been saved from a dreadful fate by the information you gave the inspector. It appears that Bloomfield, whom I supposed to be an Englishman, was in fact a man of Prussian descent, who has kept up his connection with Germany in spite of the fact that he was a born British subject."

The juniors exchanged glances, and Billy Bunter brightened up. The Owl of the Remove realised that this could not be leading up to a flogging.

"Herr Gans has told the inspector all," continued the Head. "He learned that Mr. Bloomfield, whose real name is Blumenfelt, was a spy in the service of the enemy. He should have denounced him certainly; but he appears to have given him three days in which to leave the country, under threat of exposure. We must make allowance for the fact that Herr Gans is a German himself. Mr. Bloomfield tricked him into visiting him last night, and struck him down in a cowardly way from behind."

Billy Bunter began to swell with importance. In his mind's eye he saw himself the hero of the hour.

"After receiving your information," said Dr. Locke kindly, "Inspector Grimes went to Mr. Bloomfield's house with a body of constables, and searched the place. Herr Gans was discovered shut up in an underground cellar, a prisoner. The rascally Prussian evidently intended keeping him there, in order to secure himself and carry on his wicked work. Herr Gans was removed, and Mr. Bloomfield immediately arrested. He will take his trial on a charge of espionage, and Herr Gans will be a witness against him when he recovers. He has received a very severe injury to his head, and may be confined to the sanatorium for some weeks. My dear boys, I have told you this so that you may know what

a very great service you have performed, and also so that all the school may know that Herr Gans was loyal and faithful to his adopted country."

"I—I say, sir—"

"Well, Bunter?"

"Shall I have a medal, or something, sir?"

"What?"

"I suppose there will be some reward, sir?" said Bunter. "I did it all, sir—practically off my own bat."

Dr. Locke gave Bunter a very stern look.

"I have to speak to you very severely, Bunter!" he said.

"Me, sir?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes. You were aware of these circumstances, it appears, some days ago, and it was your duty to inform the authorities, so that the wicked rascal in Courtfield could be apprehended. If you had done so Herr Gans would not have received his injury."

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter, with breathless indignation. "I—I tried to tell Quelch—I mean Mr. Quelch—and he wouldn't listen. I tried to tell you, sir—"

"That is quite correct, Bunter. You were not listened to because you are well known to be untruthful and given to gross exaggeration."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Had you borne a different character, Bunter, notice would have been taken of your statement, startling as it was. Very much harm, Bunter, has been done by the fact that your word could not be trusted."

"Oh!"

"But for the fact that the matter has, after all, turned out well, I should consider it my duty to punish you," said the Head severely. "I trust, Bunter, that this will be a warning to you. Endeavour to restrain your foolish propensity to exaggeration—"

"Oh!" stuttered Bunter.

"And make an effort to become truthful, Bunter. Your untruthfulness is really the cause of Herr Gans' having received an injury. Reflect upon what I have said, Bunter, and do your best to deserve a better opinion. You may go!"

Outside the Head's study, Bunter blinked at the juniors in breathless wrath.

"What do you think of that?" he gasped.

"I think you're lucky not to get flogged," said Wharton.

"Why, you—you—you—"

Billy Bunter rolled away, words failing him. His indignation was too deep for mere words. He was not the hero of the hour after all. He had been soundly rated for being an untruthful young rascal. It was really too much.

The story made a sensation at Greyfriars; and Herr Gans, in the sanatorium, had the good wishes of all the school. Even Skinner was rather sorry. Bob Cherry remarked sagely that there were Huns and Huns; but he opined that the Gander's kind was in a very small minority.

Billy Bunter, who did not count modesty among his weaknesses, laid claim to all the credit for the Prussian spy's capture; but, greatly to his exasperation, the Greyfriars fellows refused to give him any credit at all. They agreed that Bunter had done no end of harm owing to his reputation as an Ananias, and Bolsover major even proposed giving him a Form ragging. That was all the glory Billy Bunter received. And it was really all he deserved!

(DON'T MISS "A BIRD OF PASSAGE!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

A RYLCOMBE MYSTERY!

By HARRY MANNERS.

I.

IT was a fine Sunday evening in the summer, and we—Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and I—were strolling along the lanes after church just as the sun was setting.

"Evenin'! Nice weather for the cricket!" remarked a voice, coming from someone we could not see—at least, until after we had heard the voice. Then the head of Tom Wragg, a fellow we knew very well and liked, appeared above a hedge.

"Topping!" answered Tom. "No chance of a match with your village team this season, I suppose?"

Tom shook his head. He was a farmer's son, and farmers' sons were having a pretty busy time of it.

"There ain't the half of a team left," he said. "I haven't touched a bat this season, an' before next I expect to be over there—an' dead, very likely."

We told him that it didn't follow that he would be dead because he was "over there." But Wragg did not really need cheering up. He was ready to go when his turn came, though he might have claimed exemption.

"Well, I must be goin'," he said, after we had yarned with him for five minutes or so. And he passed on his way.

Within a hundred yards or so he met two old chaps well known to him—Daniel Ledbitter, the timber valuer, and Ratty Danny, from the Wayland Workhouse.

Daniel was a curious old fellow. No one was a better hand than he at estimating the cubic contents and the value of a tree-trunk. Yet he could not read or write. He had never had any education, and his ability seemed a sort of natural gift.

Ratty was a black sheep. He had earned good money as a rat-catcher, and might still have been earning it. But he drank hard, and his habits had brought him to the workhouse. He would come out now and then, but he always went back.

These two men had been boys together, and Dan'l always stood treat to Ratty if they met where it was possible. But it was more difficult in these days to stand treat, and that caused Ratty to bear a grudge against his old comrade, for there was not much reason in Ratty, and no gratitude at all.

"Just the young man as I wanted to see, Mas'r Tom," said Dan'l.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Ledbitter?" asked Tom Wragg.

"It's this here note as I'm worried about. Mr. Green's agent give it to me last night up to Shaws, for the work I'd done there vallyin'. Looks all right to the front of it, it do, but there's a two-three names writ on the back. Does that make him a bad 'un, Mas'r Tom? Looks like to me the bank had had him afore, an' I dunno as how they'd cash him twice."

He took a ten-pound note out of an old iron tobacco-box with a spring lid. Tom saw that there were other notes in the box, folded up to fit behind a coil of pigtail.

"That's all right," Tom said, after a glance at the note. "Folks often write their names on the backs, though there's no real use in it. Wish I'd a hundred like that, Mr. Ledbitter!"

"One'd do me!" growled old Ratty, with envious eyes on the note.

"Here, you come along, Danny! You got to fetch the doctor, you know," Ledbitter said, catching his old pal by the arm.

"Anybody ill at the workhouse?" asked Tom. "But, of course, you wouldn't come to Rylcombe for a doctor."

"I'm out," said Ratty Danny ill-temperedly. And the two old boys moved on together.

Tom Wragg went on his way, too. He wondered how decent old Dan'l Ledbitter could put up with Ratty's crustiness.

Then a nightingale began to sing in a copse, and Tom stopped to listen. Most

country chaps don't seem to care about such things; but he did.

A murmur of voices came to his ears, and next moment Jack Blake, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby came round the corner of the lane.

"Hallo, Wragg! Seen any of our chaps—Merry and that crew?" asked Blake.

"Yes. I left them not so many minutes ago," replied Tom. "I fancy they were going back along the towing-path."

"Right-ho! We'll get after them," Blake said. And the four went.

Tom stood there, still listening to the song of the nightingales, when, on a sudden, there came to his ears a hoarse, strangled cry.

He dashed away in the direction from which it seemed to come, through the copse, where the thick undergrowth tripped him up more than once in the gloom.

The Four Fourth-Formers had also heard that cry. They stopped in alarm.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Gussy.

"Somebody's hurt!" said Blake. "Come on, you chaps! This way!"

He led the way, and the other three followed, hot foot.

As they came round a bend in the lane they almost ran into two people.

They recognised them at once as the master and mistress of the Rylcombe village school. The mistress held something in her hand, and both were looking curiously at it.

"Did you hear that frightful yell, Mr. Hughes?" asked Herries.

"We heard something. But just then my wife picked up this."

Tom Wragg came stumbling down the bank from the copse above.

"What's the matter? Anyone here hurt?" he jerked out. His face and hands were scratched, and he was panting for breath.

As they looked curiously at him his eyes fell upon the box in the hands of Mrs. Hughes.

"That's old Ledbitter's!" he said. "It isn't a quarter of an hour ago since I saw it in his hand."

"Why, there's blood on it!" said the schoolmaster, in horror; and his wife dropped the box, with a faint cry of alarm.

At this moment P.-c. Crump arrived on the scene. We jape old Crump, of course; and he really is a pompous old ass. But I don't know that he is a duffer, as village policemen go. You cannot expect them to be quite the equal of Sherlock Holmes.

He had heard the cry, though from farther away.

"Did any of you 'ear a cry for 'elp jest now? When I says jest now, what I mean is a few minutes ago?" he inquired.

"I thought I did," answered Mr. Hughes.

"I'm sure I did," said Tom Wragg.

"Wathah!" corroborated Arthur Augustus.

"Ah, I thought my ears couldn't be mis-taken," said P.-c. Crump.

He looked at the four Fourth-Formers, and it was plain that he considered them too young and innocent to be of any use.

"You young gents," he said persuasively, "had better get off 'ome and to bed."

"Rats!" replied Blake. "We're going to know more about this mystery first! There was that cry, and now here's a blood-stained tobacco-box. Tom Wragg says it's old Ledbitter's. Looks as if the old chap had been assaulted. Think we're going home till we know more about it?"

"Not likely!" chorused Gussy and Herries and Dig.

Perhaps Crump felt that he would need assistance. He didn't seem able on the spur of the moment to think of anything that he could do on his own account. He picked up the tobacco-box very gingerly.

"This 'ere's evidence," he said. "I dunno what it's evidence of, not yet, but I dessay I shall find out all in good time. Anyways, to 'eadquarters it goes. As for you young gentlemen, the on'y place for you—"

"Rats!" said Blake again. "We're going to help look round."

"Ow do you know as this 'ere terbacker-box belongs to Dan'l Ledbitter, Thomas Wragg?" said Crump, with heavy solemnity.

"How do I know my trousers belong to me, Mr. Crump?"

"Your trousers don't come into this 'ere case—leastways, not at present. If blood was found on them—"

"Look inside the lid of the box," said Tom Wragg, who had only used his trousers as a kind of illustration, and did not want to argue about them. "Ledbitter can't write, but he always marks his things with the same mark—a pair of callipers. I fancy you'll find them scratched inside the lid."

"That's so," said Crump.

Tom told how he had met the two old boys, and of the query put to him about the note. The box was now empty. After thinking that circumstance over for a bit, Crump came to the conclusion that there had been robbery with violence. Everyone else had come to that conclusion earlier.

They had also come to the conclusion that the case looked pretty black against Ratty Danny. But Crump hardly appeared to have got as far as that yet.

Mr. Hughes took his wife off home. She was badly shaken, and the constable's warning that her evidence might be required did not improve her condition.

The rest helped Crump to search. There were more marks of blood, but no body was to be found, and it seemed impossible that it should have been moved far. When Blake & Co. chucked up the search and made for the school, they were rather inclined to think that nothing worse than a quarrel between the two old friends had taken place. The blood might easily have come from a tap on the nose, and it was just as likely to have been Ratty Danny's nose as Dan'l's, for old Dan'l was tough. The tobacco-box might have fallen in the struggle. As for the cry for help, either of them might have called out—Dan'l when attacked, or Ratty when he found he was getting the worst of it.

Anyway, as Blake said in the Common-room after they had got in, "and were chortling over us because they had dropped into a bit of excitement that we had just missed, there couldn't very well have been a murder without leaving a body behind. And to that we all agreed."

II.

BUT next morning there was a fresh development that put a different aspect on things.

Daniel Ledbitter and the old rat-catcher were both missing!

The Head told us that. Foul play was feared, he said, and the Chief Constable had been sent for. He warned us that the lane and the copse were placed out of bounds for the time being.

I suppose the warning was necessary. We were all interested and excited, and lots of us would have gone along there to see if we could light upon a clue, which might have handicapped the police a bit. We might be cleverer than old Crump, though that was not a dead cert in a matter of this kind; but we had to admit that the Chief Constable and the men he would bring along were likely to be a trifle ahead of us.

Figgins maintained that the thing to do would have been to give Kerr his head. But Kerr was more modest. He said he hadn't had much to do with murders yet, and he was not quite sure they were just his line.

You must not imagine from all this that we took the thing as a joke. We didn't, of course. It was beastly serious. But we had only known old Ledbitter and Ratty Danny by sight, and we couldn't feel as cut up as Tom Wragg did. He had thought a good deal of the shrewd and yet simple old timber valuer.

The search in the dusk had been fruitless.

but they did not find out much more when they went over every foot of the ground near in broad daylight. There were certain signs that pointed to a struggle; but that was not getting much forwarder. The cry for help made it fairly clear that a struggle had taken place.

By-and-by the excitement died down, and the lane was no longer out of bounds. It became accepted, as almost a certainty that Ratty Danny had tried to rob his old friend, and had probably killed him. But there still remained two mysteries—what had become of the body, and what had become of Ratty?

He had disappeared from the neighbourhood, it seemed. Ledbetter had gone, too. The opinion of the great George Alfred Grundy, who had worked out the case in what he calls his mind, was that they had gone off somewhere together. But that did not account for the cry for help or the dropped tobacco-box. Grundy considered those things as mere trifles. He was doubtful, indeed, whether there had been any cry for help, which, as at least eight people had heard it, seemed carrying doubt a bit too far, and caused Grundy to be bumped.

And in the end the affair was all found out through Gussy, though it was not through any detective ability, or by any display of his famous tact and judgment. In fact, it was through his soft heart, not his head—if I said that that is soft, too, he might not be pleased—that the secret was discovered.

Quite a month had passed since the affair, when Gussy expressed an intention of going to see "his friend Jackie Wandwell."

It was just like our Gustavus, I don't think any of us except him would have spoken of poor, half-witted Jack Wandrell as a friend. He is a youngster living outside Rylcombe, who is in the condition popularly known as "not all there." But there is nothing repulsive about him, and he is not an absolute idiot—only queer, and very, very simple.

"Gussy knows where to find congenial company," said Lowther. "Do you find that maintaining a conversation with Jackie is a terrible strain on your intellect, Gussy?"

"Wats, Lowther! I am not at all such that my friend Jackie has not more brains than you have!" retorted our swell, flushing pinkly.

"Jackie likes Gussy because he finds it easy to talk to him, of course," said Blake. "But I don't mind owning myself that I'd as soon listen to Jackie as to Lowther. If I must have my ears assailed by an idiot, I'd prefer he shouldn't be a funny idiot!"

"It is because I neva' wag him that Jackie likes me," said Arthur Augustus. "The poor chap has been deprived by Natchah of much that makes life worth livin', an' I considah that those among us who are more fortunate should do our best to make him happy. I am certainly not in the vewy least ashamed of callin' poor Jackie my friend."

"Of course you're not, old scout!" said Monty, clapping him on the back. If Gussy only knew it, our funny ass understands him as well as anyone, and thinks as much of him. And Monty's as good-natured as the next chap, too, though he might draw the line at paying friendly visits to a poor potty fellow. But ever since Gussy had rescued Wandrell from a crowd of teasing village ruffians, he had been in the habit of looking him up once in a way.

He did not see him this time, however. It appeared that Jackie, who was capable of work that did not need too much thinking about, had somehow managed to break his leg while at a job, and had been taken off to the workhouse infirmary at Wayland.

It was the next morning that Toby came into the Fourth Form-room and announced that the Head wanted to see Master D'Arcy at once.

"You may go, D'Arcy," said Mr. Lathom. And Gussy cut off, wondering what had been found out about him, I suppose.

But it wasn't a row.

"I have had a communication by telephone from the master of the Wayland Workhouse, D'Arcy," said the Head, very kindly. "It seems that they have in the infirmary there a lad to whom you have been kind. He is somewhat deficient in intelligence, but he appears to have had sense enough to recognise kindness, and I am glad to know that you have won his affection. The worldly-wise may scoff, my

boy; but believe me that I can appreciate the good heart that cares for the weak and the simple."

Gussy blushed and fidgeted. He didn't tell us so, but I know that. He always does blush and fidget when anyone but Arthur Augustus is praising Arthur Augustus.

Poor Wandrell was in rather a bad way, it seemed, very feverish; and he had been asking constantly for D'Arcy. They could not make out what he meant at first, but in the long-run Gussy was identified by his window-pane—I mean his eyeglass—the frame of which had penetrated even to Wayland.

Some of us offered to ride over with him. We were just coming out of classes as he came from the Head's study.

Blake and I were allowed to visit Jackie with him, too, when we got there. That was more than any of us had expected. But the master said two might accompany him, and Gussy picked us out as being most personally acceptable to his chum Jackie. Lowther thought it was no great compliment, and Tom and Herries and Dig pretended to agree with him. Blake and I did not mind that much.

"Hallo, deah boy!" said Gussy at Jackie's bedside. He spoke just as he might have spoken to any of us. "Sowwy you are cwooked, you know."

"I be so glad you be come—so glad!" said the poor chap. "There ain't nobody else as I can trust. It's the pigs, you know."

"The pigs at Fwoggatt's Farm? But they will be all right, Jackie, I am suah. You used to feed them, I know; but someone else will do that till you are bettah, deah boy."

"Not the big 'un as can talk. He won't come out an' eat alonger t'others. It's a secret of mine, like, about he."

We stared at him. What could the poor, bemused brain have in it?

"Pigs don't talk, Jackie," said Gussy, very gently. He did not even smile. "You're fancyin' it, deah boy."

"This 'un talks. Not every time. But he talks. An' he won't eat same food as t'others. I know he'll die if you don't go an' feed 'im."

And the poor, potty chap started blubbing.

"Look heah, you know, deah boy, don't do that! I'll go an' see the pigs. Where is the big one that talks?"

"You mun crawl under t' litter back of sties to find 'un. I used to take 'un half o' my bread, an' all the best bits what was put out for t'other pigs. I never see 'un, but he talked to me."

Gussy promised that he would go and see the pigs, and Jackie Wandrell turned over and went to sleep. He seemed to have absolute faith in Gussy.

But the most curious thing was the way D'Arcy took it. His face was shining, and his eyes gleamed. When, outside, he told us what he thought, we all said he was off his rocker.

Blake and I were not so sure about that as the rest, however. For most certainly Jackie believed in the pig that talked; and though Gussy's notion that it was one of the two old men who had so mysteriously disappeared seemed very wild, yet—

Well, it's no good making any bones about it. For it was!

Gussy was right, and we were wrong.

Ratty Danny, very near indeed to death, was found behind the pigsties at Froggatt's Farm; and he had been hiding there for weeks, kept alive by the food brought him by poor, simple Jackie!

There was a lot more litter there than a farmer ought to have had about a place, and the roof of an old barn helped to protect the rascal from the weather. It was summer, too, and he had been used to rough lying. As for the scent of the pigs, it did not appear that he had ever thought of that as an objection.

Double pneumonia, or something like that, had got him when he was found, and, of course, starvation had helped.

There never was any chance of his recovery, tough as he was. But before he died he was able to clear up the mystery.

He had killed Daniel Ledbetter. He had not meant to; but a sudden whirlwind of envy and hate had seemed to seize him when Daniel had told him that he had as many as two hundred more ten-pound notes saved up at home, and he had compared

his own miserable condition with the wealth of his old pal.

A sudden assault had tumbled Daniel over before he guessed what was happening. He fell with the tobacco-box in his hand, and Ratty's heavy boot came down upon the hand, smashing the fingers. One call for help the poor old chap gave, and then he was senseless. For Ratty Danny kicked him on the head. There is no doubt that the kick killed him.

The thing was horribly brutal; but Tom Wragg says that if we had known Danny we should have understood easily how he could have acted like that, and should not have been surprised that he had found it possible to live for weeks at the back of the pigsty. He said Danny had become, with drink and rough living, little better than a wild beast. I suppose it's some excuse; but I hate to think of that decent, hard-working old man killed like that by the old pal of his boyish days, to whom he had never shown anything but kindness.

The scoundrel got the old man's body into the copse somehow. If Crump had started his search sooner he might have been caught. But by the time it was started he was some distance away, and it was nearly dark in the wood. He must have been strong, for he carried the body a mile or more across the fields, and disposed of it by dropping it down the well of a deserted cottage.

Then fear came upon him. Probably he had not meant to stay in his hiding-place more than a few hours. With the notes he had taken from the tobacco-box in his pocket, he must have dreamed of getting away and going on a long drinking bout. But he dared not stir. Then the notion of making use of Jackie occurred to his mind, which was not much more enlightened than Jackie's own, I dare say. He pretended to be a talking pig, and Jackie believed him, and brought him food, and told him news—the news of the search being made for him and the man he had killed among it. By the time Jackie met with his accident the disease of which he died had already seized Ratty Danny, and even if he had dared he could not have fled.

Yes, we found him. Crump went with us, though to this day I don't know how he was persuaded to go. It's a horrible yarn, in a way; and yet not so bad if you look at it another way. One thing seems to me to redeem it a bit, and that is the fact that it was through the great-hearted kindness of our Gustavus that the truth came to light; and the man who had killed without meaning to kill was able to confess before he died, and to feel sorry for what he had done. I don't know that it will make me paler with the next half-witted chap I meet; but, anyway, we don't chip Gussy about "his friend Jackie Wandwell" now, for poor Jackie is dead, too. And we know—though we have never been told—who got that stone cross put at the head of his grave in the churchyard at Rylcombe.

THE END.

NOTICES.

Back Numbers, Etc., Wanted.

By Percy F. Smith, 54, Aldworth Road, West Ham Lane, Stratford, E. 15—"Boys' Friend," No. 813—clean—8d. offered.

By F. Watson, 1, Kilwick Street, West Hartlepool—"Surprising the School," "Bunter the Blade," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves," "The Greyfriars Cyclists"—offers double price.

By R. Pepperdine, East Lodge, Charterhouse, Godalming—"Skinner's Scheme"—clean.

By Robert Elliott, 129, Crimea Street, Belfast—"Wun Lung's Secret," and Nos. 119, 120, and 121 of MAGNET.

By Thos. Donovan, 7, The Avenue, Southampton—any back numbers of "Gem."

By S. C. Pashier, 277, Bramford Lane, Ipswich—any back numbers of "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library; also early numbers of "Gem" and MAGNET.

By T. Johnson, 25, Chatham Street, Bolton—"Through Thick and Thin," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Bunter the Blade," "Hidden Horror," "For Another's Sake."

MORE IMPRESSIONS OF THE METROPOLIS!

By a Youthful Member of the Editorial Staff at Fleetway House.

SUDDENLY (I think "suddenly" is a splendid word to begin a yarn with. It makes readers expect all kinds of unexpected things, such as secret panels sliding back, and hands gripping daggers appearing!) suddenly remembering that I had the misfortune to have a brother in Mudanslush (though it is really good fortune to have him there, and not here!), and being overcome by an extraordinary desire to gaze upon him again, I resorted to the Zoological Gardens as the nearest thing to seeing him. The money I got for my first "Impressions" was not enough to buy me a return ticket to Mudanslush; but if I don't get more for this lot—well, I suppose I sha'n't. (I was going to put it more strongly, but the Editor is a lot bigger than I am, and actually seems to have a kind of notion that he is more important!)

I had not very much difficulty in distinguishing the people from the animals at the Zoo. The animals were in cages, and the people were allowed to walk about wherever they chose. That made the difference quite clear.

I could have spent all the afternoon before each cage. There was one panther, with a doleful expression on his face, gazing at something about nine thousand miles away, who seemed to be thinking mournfully of the jolly old times in the jungle, where dusky joints were the order of the day. Perhaps that is not right, though, as the inscription said he was born in the menagerie. But he looked as if his thoughts ran that way.

I stayed a long time in the reptile house. Two poor frogs were having a frightfully lively time in a case with a couple of colubrine snakes. "Take cover" has to be their maxim. Every time they received a prod from a fang they jumped almost up to the roof of the case. I wondered how the snakes managed to get down the grub to feed such bodies as they had, for they seemed to have only a tiny little hole of a mouth through which the fang kept shooting. But one of them opened such a trap, and snapped up a frog and made off with it that I nearly let out a yell. But the frog struggled and kicked furiously, and succeeded in leaping clean out of the huge mouth into the pool, where it sat gasping. I don't envy those frogs! No doubt they achieve wonderful agility, but they have a price to pay for it.

In the middle of the reptile house a number of sleepy alligators have their abode. An Army man gave one an affable whack on the nose with his walking-stick. The terrific snort it replied with made him bolt! He was not wearing the V.C., by the way.

Then the tortoises! I think the hare in the fable must have been lame as well as lazy to be beaten by such creatures.

And if Mudanslushians think that hyenas spend all their time smiling and chortling they're very much mistaken. Hyenas seem to do nothing but scowl and snort. Nary a smile!

The parrots are all right to look at, but their voices are not quite like nightingales! The two giraffes look like a couple of village idiots. The heads of the ostriches aren't big enough to be very intellectual. But the rhinoceroses, with bulging foreheads and little eyes three-quarters of the way down their ponderous faces, look like the victims of continual overstudy.

I have seen the "fretful porcupine" at last; and if the ghost of Hamlet's father could have made Hamlet look anything like that he must have been a very accomplished ghost indeed!

Altogether I spent a delightful afternoon at the Zoo; and it will not be the last.

As I ambled out of Regent's Park I recollected that on the night of my arrival here, as I was heading for London Bridge, on a rather circumlocutory route to Blackfriars, I had chanced to spy a large object, labelled "The Monument. Admission three-pence." So thither I went, and, after carefully inscribing a "3" in the pencil column of my expenses book, I prepared to sail magnificently in.

But here I experienced a check. I looked at the notice again, and saw that it went on to state that business was postponed until 3 a.m. next day. So I failed to get in. There was that 3d. in the expenses book. Honestly

said "Scratch it out!" Neatness said "Don't! It will look bad." Neatness won!

Being of a naturally philosophical disposition, I contented myself with standing back a few paces from the Monument and allowing my mind to wander back to the magnificent times when (probably) Hengist and Horsa and their colleagues swooped down upon the Monument, and the noble London citizens dashed into the fray with firearms (tongs and shovel) and mighty battle-cries.

But my martial dream suffered an awful slump as I caught sight of another notice, which said that the police had orders to arrest anybody caught heating muds or carpets against the Monument!

That knocked the romance out of the whole thing, and I stalked off with an exceedingly bad impression of that quarter of London.

Buckingham Palace gave me a bit of a surprise. I had expected—or half expected—to see swarms of kids round, cheering and waving flags; and perhaps the King smiling out of a window, and dropping pennies if he happened to be in funds. But it was very much like a bigger edition of an ordinary mansion in the East End, save that the Queen wasn't sitting on the doorstep—not at the moment, at any rate.

Bedlam gave me another shock. Instead of being deafened by the tumult, and chased down the street by swarms of wild men with shock heads of hair, all was as quiet and sedate as the drive of a cemetery.

Then the Strand of a Saturday evening! I boarded a 'bus in Ludgate Circus, fearing that it would take me hours to battle through the crush to Piccadilly. And behold, Fleet Street and the Strand were even as the High Street of Mudanslush! Who would have thought it possible?

I missed the Lord Mayor's Show—at least, I only saw the top half of a Tank come down Ludgate Hill and go up Fleet Street. By that I mean the top half of it only was visible to me over the heads of the crowd. (Query—between the legs?—Editor.)

But I didn't see the Lord Mayor, so I won't be able to describe his august appearance for your benefit here. I didn't know he was coming along after the Tank, or I'd have stayed. But I got fed up with being squeezed in the crush, and went to get something to eat. (I hope old Rhondra don't get to know that I went on eating after I was fed up, though!)

And it was all through a want of politeness on my part that I missed the J.M.! You see, a great admirer of the "Union Jack Library" (do you read it?) had called in for a chat with the overworked (?) sub-editor of that paper. After speaking at great length and in loud tones of the excellent qualities of the renowned Sexton Blake, he wound up by saying that I was the luckiest fellow on earth for having the advantage of reading the stories in proof before other readers feasted their eyes on them. Now, taking into consideration the fact that for the last hour I had been trying to read a rather urgently wanted proof, but couldn't because of his voluble remarks, this was just a little too, too, too! (Makes six all together.) I gave politeness the Nelsonian ogle after that, and bounced out of the room as soon as poss.

The point of all this is that if I had waited until the visitor had been taken out by the cap—politely ushered off the premises, I mean—and had left the officers with my elbow resting on the "C. J." sub-editor's shoulder, as is my custom if hope to goodness he doesn't see this!), I'd have had a sight of the Lord Mayor!

I must confess I didn't stay long in Westminster Abbey. I merely peered into dusky Poets' Corner on the look-out for any fellows I happened to know, and Dryden and Longfellow constituting about the lot, I went into a cheery old place known as the Cloisters. (Longfellow was not buried in Westminster Abbey.—Editor.)

There, after nearly falling down three dark steps, what should meet my penetrating vision but an elderly lady haranguing a number of young ladies—that is to say, the elderly lady was most certainly elderly; but

the most conspicuous characteristic of the young ladies—most of whom wore spectacles—did not appear to me to be their juvenility. Being a sad sort of a dog, from my birth in Mudanslush, I joined this fair contingent without any symptoms of giddiness—or even of shyness—and had my mind greatly improved by seeing the elderly lady point out the east and the west without the aid of a compass. The Chapter House, she said, was more beautiful than mere words could describe; but she used quite a lot, all the same. So far as I could judge, she was pointing to some romantic scaffolding and a picturesque pile of bricks which had fallen in from somewhere, and which bore unmistakable signs of someone's having given up trying to build anything worth building as a bad job.

Realising that such bliss was never intended for me, I did not accompany the fair bevy to the scene, but hobbled back to my old pals in Poets' Corner. There I should undoubtedly have spent ever so many hours wrapt in profound thought, had not a gentleman with a bald head lighted some candles and displayed startling symptoms of preparing to read something out of a big book. At that I beat a hasty retreat.

Now, though this account occupies more than five bobs' worth of space, I did not occupy the Abbey much more than five minutes. If I could keep it up like that—but there's no chance!

Like Dick Whittington, I turned again; not with any intention of becoming Lord Mayor, however, but because I had left my hat behind. Then once again I was on the weary road—nearly on my back on it, in fact; but the 'bus just failed to biff me.

"Better luck next time!" I thought I heard the driver mutter. He was evidently of a hopeful disposition.

I will round up these impressions with a list of expenses entailed, which I hope to get refunded at once. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," as Dryden, or somebody said.

	£	s.	d.
'Bus to Zoo	0	0	3
Charge for admission	0	0	6
Admission to Monument	0	0	3
Total	£0	1	6

(You were not admitted to the Monument, on your own showing. Your addition is faulty. And as for the nuts for the monkeys and the banana for the elephant at the Zoo, which you seek to have added as a supplementary note, do you think I would be a party to cheating the Food Controller?—Editor.)

(Not for the sake of elephants or monkeys. I am sure, sir! I wanted to get into the Monument, and I did not want to spoil the look of my expenses book. But you can cut that down to half-price if you like. I know I am not very good at mathematics—literary geniuses seldom are—but I think I am correct in saying that that makes 1s. 7½d., or, if the supplementary vote of 6d. passes, 2s. 2½d.—SHAKESPEARE THE SECOND.)

—:o:—

COKER'S MISFORTUNE.

By Peter Todd.

His face was contorted with fear;
His cheeks were a hideous hue.
He knew that his duty was clear,
Yet shrank from the thing he must do!

He hated to do it—and yet
Could think of no other resort.
Useless to sit there and fret!
Moreover, he wasn't that sort.

So Coker arose, with a sigh.
A hero undoubted—for he
Was determined to do or to die,
Whatever the issue might bet

Maybe he'd do both! He agreed
That matters might reach such a pass.
So, steeling his will to the deed,
He looked at himself in the glass!

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 62.—MAJOR ROBERT CHERRY.

MAJOR CHERRY is just about what one would expect Bob's father to be. As a boy he was exactly the same type of boy as Bob, one feels certain.

And he has not entirely left off being a boy yet, as the story which Mark Linley told a fortnight ago proves. It was a very boyish impulse which tempted the veteran soldier to hurl a snowball at Mr. Quelch. It was boylike to want to conceal the guilt. And it was like Bob the younger to own up when the question involved another. Bob would have suffered the penalty of his father's crime cheerfully; but, much as the major detested having to confess to Mr. Quelch his lapse, he would not have that!

It is good to have a father like that. It is also good to have a son like Bob. Bob is not perfect, but his faults are such as one can easily bear with. Some people make heredity account for almost everything. It certainly counts for something; but what the scientific folk call environment—that is, the influence of the people one is brought up among and the place one grows up in—accounts for much more. Bob is what he is partly, no doubt, because he is his father's son, but still more because he had his father's example before him during the tender years when his character was receiving its first formation.

The major showed up strongly when Bob was "Driven from School." In the story with that title Bob incurred the enmity of a junior named Heath. He caught Heath shooting with a catapult at a cat, and Heath had the cheek to ask him if he would like a shot. It made Bob furious, of course. The offender refused to fight, and Bob gave him a good licking. Soon afterwards Frank Nugent had a postal-order stolen. Bob might have stolen it—if he had not been Bob Cherry! He had had the opportunity. But it is more than opportunity that makes a thief.

The order had come from Alonzo Todd in repayment of a loan that Frank had made him. Lonzy was away at the time, and Frank wrote to him for the number. It was sent. Uncle Benjamin had told Lonzy always to make a note of such things, and what Uncle Benjy says goes with Alonzo.

And then it appeared that the order had been cashed at Friardale post-office; and the postmistress allowed Frank to see it, and the signature was "R. Cherry"—in what seemed to Nugent unmistakably Bob's handwriting, too! Worse still—the postmistress identified Bob as the boy who had cashed the order!

In the face of such evidence there seemed no room for doubt. Harry Wharton was away, as was Inky. Not even Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent were proof against what seemed such overwhelming evidence of guilt. Only loyal Mark Linley stood by Bob.

Bob refused to be expelled. He was innocent, he maintained, and he would not go. But he had to go at length. He was put out by force.

At the station he met Harry, on his way back. And Harry was staunch. Bob went home with words of comfort ringing in his ears.

"Good-bye, Bob, old son! And keep your pecker up!" said Wharton. "Remember you've got friends here working for you—working to clear your name!"

Robert junior went. And Robert senior came!

The major descended upon Greyfriars in a whirlwind of wrath. Whatever the evidence might be, he knew that Bob was innocent—knew it! And to him it seemed that others should have known.

He roared at the Head. Dr. Locke had seldom had a visitor who made him feel so extremely uncomfortable. Coker's Aunt Judith—a very terrible lady—was not to be compared for a moment with Major Robert Cherry on the ramp.

"I call it nonsense, sir! I call it stuff, sir! Yes, sir, I call it piffle—piffle, sir, by Jove!" roared the major, when the Head had said tartly that he called the evidence complete and incontrovertible.

The Head said that the matter was closed and ended. But the major would not have that. Was his son's career to be closed and ended? No! The governors of the school

would have to meet an action for libel and defamation of character!

Perhaps the major was unreasonable. There were other points of view besides his. But what a loyal champion—what a prince among fathers! One loves the man for taking it like that. Even if he had been wrong—but how could he have been wrong, seeing that Bob was Bob?

Meanwhile, Harry and Mark had got to work. Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent did not like it. They had been forced to believe Johnny's common-sense—which is an element of strength—and the slight weakness which Frank has more than once shown, worked through different channels to the same end there. Johnny had had it proved to him, and there seemed to him no more to be said. Frank had been wounded to the quick, and he did not want the wound renewed.

But Mark and Harry had the same sturdy faith that was in the major. They could not ramp and roar as he did, but they worked. Nugent fancied that they would drop Bob when they learned that an action was actually to be brought against the ruling body and the headmaster of Greyfriars. They did nothing of the sort. They went on working—hopelessly, it might seem—but in the end they triumphed.

The major was very angry with Bob when the boy objected to the legal proceedings. Bob admitted what his father would not—



that his conviction was not unjustified on the evidence.

But they made up that. The major was determined. If the case had to be carried to the House of Lords it should go on. And Bob argued against it no more.

Then Heath was found out. He had forged Bob's name. He had disguised himself to look like Bob. It was a plot to ruin the boy he hated. And it had come very near success.

Bob came back to a very great reception. And you may guess what sort of feeling his warm-hearted father had—and has yet—for Mark Linley and Harry Wharton. He bears no grudge against Johnny and Frank; he likes Inky; but always Harry and Mark must be dearer to him than any of his boy's other chums.

Some of you will remember "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," the story which told how the major was wrecked in the Red Sea, and how the major's son and his chums went in search, and, after many adventures, found him. They were not alone, of course; they were under the charge of Colonel Wharton, Harry's uncle and the major's oldest friend.

There is a very strong bond of union between those two gallant officers. They were boys at Greyfriars together; they have served together in more than one part of the world; both helped to give Kruger what he asked for; and now, in middle age both are doing their duty in the greatest war the world has ever known.

But of Colonel Wharton there will be more to say a little later.

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"A BIRD OF PASSAGE!"

By Frank Richards.

This story tells of a fellow who came to Greyfriars, to stay for but a very brief time. It has a resemblance to the fine stories of Tom Redwing, in a sense; but you will find it very different in most ways. Verney plays his part at the school under the name of another fellow; but his reasons are very different from those which moved the sailor's son. Quite as interesting as Verney is the fellow whom he replaces. Drake comes to Greyfriars with rather absurd ideas. His father, who might have known better, has contributed to the swank that is in him, and has set him a task beyond his powers. Drake also is a bird of passage, though his stay is somewhat longer than that of Verney.

TOM REDWING.

The stories which dealt with the Hawks-cliff lad were very popular, and I am sure my readers will be glad to hear that before long they will be hearing of Tom Redwing again. Mr. Richards has promised to tell us something about what happened to him after he left Greyfriars, and how his friends there met him again, and what happened then.

NOTICES.

Football.—Matches Wanted By :

ST. ELIZABETH'S ATHLETIC—C. McGlone, 34, Kilburn Street, Litherland, Liverpool.

WEST END JUNIORS—average age 14—2 mile radius.—F. Bolton, 19, Hull Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

ABERGAVENNY WEST END UNITED—10—15 mile radius.—A. J. Protman, 10, King Street, Abergavenny.

Other Footer Notices.

Wanted, pair of second-hand footer boots, size 4—state price.—J. Morton, 1, Sussex Road, Worthing.

Wanted, cheap pair of second-hand footer boots, size 5—state price.—E. Madeley, 103, Princess Street, Bradford, Manchester.

ALBANY F.C. wants players.—W. Oliver, 6, Heath Street, Barking.

Clifford Holt, age 13, 39, Princes Road, Altrincham, wants to join team—wings, goal, or back.

Wanted, two players for City team—right-back, outside-right, or inside-left.—Sec., Continental F.C., 29, Tower Hamlets Road, Forest Gate, E. 7.

Cricket.

Players wanted, two bowlers especially others also.—F. A. Wickes, Ivy Athletic, 78, Vestry Road, Camberwell, S.E. 5.

Leagues, Etc.

200 more members wanted for the Dare Correspondence and Exchange Club—monthly magazine free—stamped and addressed envelope for details, please.—H. Williams, Dolcoed, Abernant Road, Aberdare, Glam.

Members wanted for Chums' Correspondence Club—stamped and addressed envelope to R. W. Sampson, 10, Hunt Street, Everton, Liverpool; J. C. Adams, 80, Upper Pitt Street, Liverpool; or Chas. L. Etherington, 139, Welland Avenue, St. Catharines, Ont., Canada.

Snapshots from Home League is in great need of helpers—object, to supply soldiers with free snapshots.—S. Macknelly, 68, Walton Road, Upton Park, E. 13.

Readers wanted to join "Gem" and MAGNET League.—J. A. Sloan, New Inn, New Chester Road, Higher Tranmere, Cheshire.

John Wm. Mayer, 556, Oldham Road, Bardsley, Ashton-under-Lyne, wants partners—14-15—for patter and comedy work at charity concerts.

Your Editor