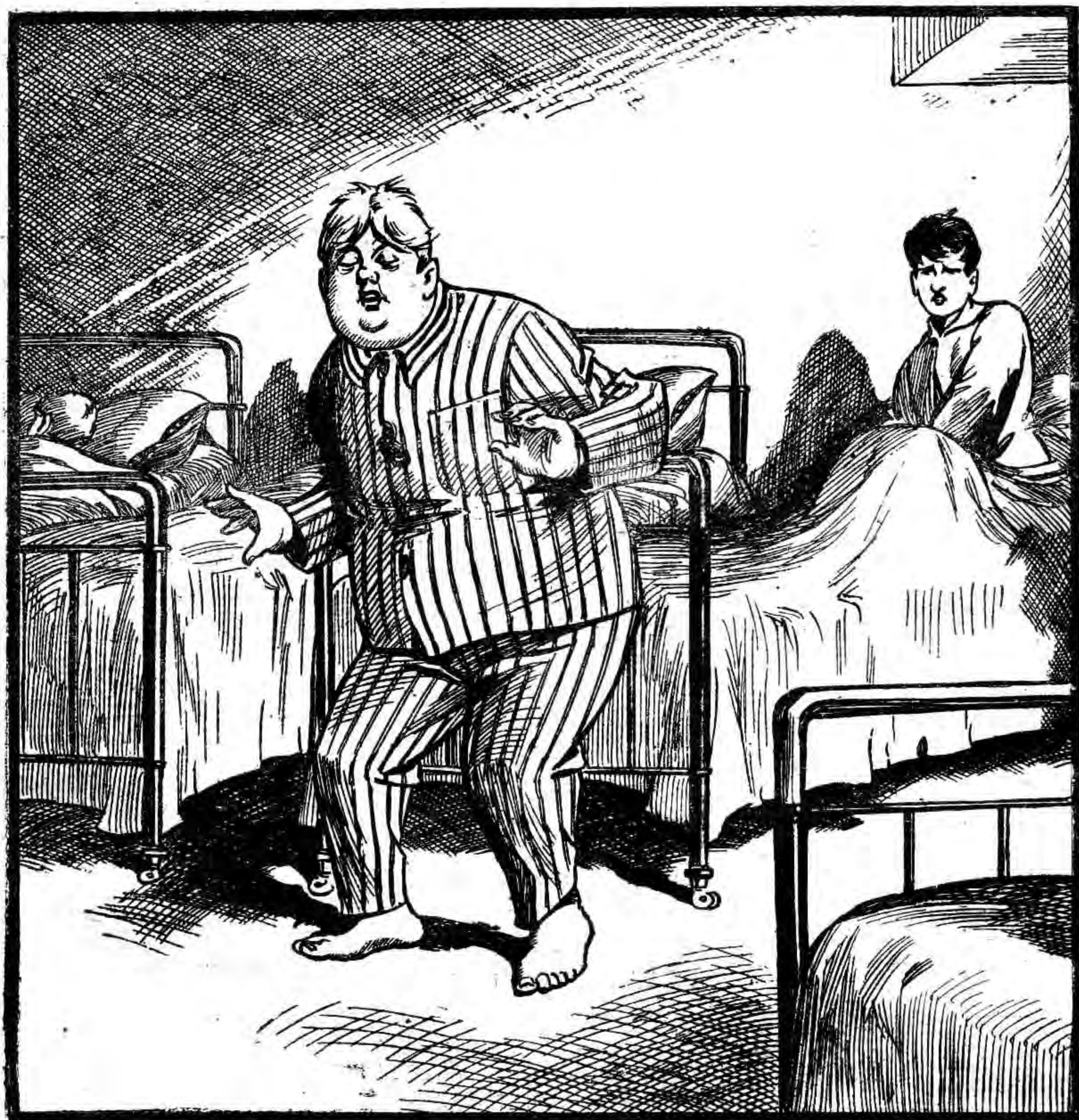




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THE SECOND FORM MYSTERY!



SAMMY THE SLEEP-WALKER!

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THE SECOND FORM MYSTERY!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Unpopularity of Shylock!

THERE he goes! Look at the rotter!"

It was Dicky Nugent—Nugent minor—of the Second Form at Greyfriars who spoke thus.

The fellow to whom he referred was crossing the quad, with his hands in his trousers-pockets and his shoulders rather hunched up. He did not look a particularly pleasant specimen of the fag tribe. And he was not.

He had a cunning face, which made him look older than his supposed years. And his ways were as cunning as his face. The Second did not cotton to Spring at all. His only pal in the Form was Sammy Bunter, whom everyone else despised.

"Here, I say, Bolsover!" yelled Spring.

Bolsover major, who had almost reached the gates, turned his head.

"What do you want?" he roared.

"I want to speak to you!" shouted back Spring.

"Well, that can wait, can't it?"

"No, it can't!"

Bolsover halted, his heavy face flushed with wrath. Napoleon Dupont, the French junior, who had become quite a chum of Bolsover's, and was then going out of gates with him, also halted.

Spring hurried to come up to them.

"He's going to dun Bolsy," said Myers. Myers and Gatty were, as usual, Dicky Nugent's companions.

"Let him!" growled Gatty. "It's no bizney of ours, is it?"

"We've stopped his Shylock games in the Second," said Dicky. "No affair of ours if he goes lending his cash to the chaps in the Remove."

"I ain't so sure we've stopped them," said Myers, shaking his head. "He's a cunning beast. He knows how to lie low, you bet! But this ought to be funny, and I don't a bit see why we shouldn't hear."

"I don't, as far as that goes," replied Dicky. "Come along, Gatty, old top!"

The three quickened their pace a bit. When they came near enough to hear, it was plain that Spring had already made his demand for the return of a loan made to Bolsover, for the burly Removeite was saying:

"Rats! I'll pay you when it suits me, so don't let me have any of your rotten cheek!"

"But you promised to pay a fortnight ago," answered Spring sulkily.

"Dare say I did. I expected to have a remittance by this time. Matter of fact, I've had one; but I wanted that for something else. You must wait till I get my next, now!"

Spring looked sulky and furious. He had begun to doubt whether lending to fellows in the Remove was going to turn out quite the profitable game he had imagined it.

Two or three had borrowed and cashed up. They did not appear inclined for further dealings. Something of the un-

popularity which Spring had earned in the Second had spread to the higher Forms. There was a pretty general idea that he was a cunning young cad, and decent fellows preferred to have as little to do with him as might be.

Bolsover major, who was only a decent fellow by fits and starts, and Skinner, Snoop, and Stott, who were not decent fellows at all, also preferred at present to have very little to do with Spring.

All of them had borrowed money from him, and none of them had repaid it. They knew that further borrowing was hopeless till they had cashed up; and it seemed to them simpler not to cash up. As Skinner remarked, Spring, going on in the way he was going on, stood a very fair chance of getting kicked out before the end of the term; and if he had to go, he would probably have to go in such a hurry that there would be no possibility of his getting in his debts before making his departure—which would be all to the good for Skinner & Co.

"I don't mean to wait any longer for my money!" said Spring.

"Oh, don't you!" returned Bolsover, standing with his great arms akimbo.

"Better that you pay him, ees it not, Bolsover, mon ami?" inquired the French junior gently.

"I haven't the oof, fairhead!"

"I vill to you lend—"

"No, you won't! You're a pal. I should have to pay you back, even if it wasn't convenient."

Bolsover had evidently his own peculiar notions as to the decent thing to do.

"You've got to pay me back!" snarled Spring. "I'm no pal of yours—I wouldn't care to be—but I've got to be paid!"

"Well, you're going to be paid—some day," replied Bolsover coolly. "And the rotten interest is mounting up all the time, so I don't see what you've got to grumble at."

"Interest ain't any use to a chap if he doesn't get it!" growled Spring.

"You ought to have thought that out before you lent the chink," said Bolsover. "It's a bit late in the day now."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the other three Second-Formers.

Spring darted at them a savage glance. Bolsover only grinned. He did not appear to mind their hearing about his private affairs.

"I mean to have it!" said Spring determinedly. "You'd better borrow from Dupont, if he's fool enough to lend anything to you, for I've got to be paid back, and that's all about it!"

"What shall you do if I don't pay?" inquired Bolsover.

"You'll see!" snapped Spring.

"Well, then, I'll see. I should rather like to see, you know, young Shylock. Shall you put Twiggy or Quelchy on my track?"

Bolsover was quite cool about it. He knew that Spring would not dare to go to either Form-master with such a complaint. Too much would come out to suit Spring if he tried that.

But one could never count on Bolsover's remaining cool for long, though anyone who knew him well could have counted with certainty on his coolness deserting him at Spring's next words.

The new Second-Former backed a bit, to take himself out of the reach of Bolsover's heavy hand. Then he shrilled:

"Yah! Thief!"

Bolsover made one prodigious bound. Spring sprang. Bolsover clutched at his collar. Spring tumbled, catching his foot against a brick which should not have been there.

"A thief, am I, you young rotter?" roared Bolsover, clumping the head of the fag as he dragged him up. "Say it again, and I'll give you—"

"Yes, you are a thief—a beastly, low thief!" snarled Spring, all a-tremble with rage.

The heavy hand fell again. Spring squealed.

Dicky Nugent did not quite like it. Spring was no credit to his Form. Still, he was Second Form, and one of the most cherished traditions of the Second was the resentment en masse of any injury inflicted upon a member of the Form by a bigger fellow.

"Oughtn't we—" began Dicky, in doubt.

"Hanged if I care whether we ought or not!" growled Gatty. "I'm jolly well not going to!"

"Same here!" said Myers. "I draw the line somewhere, and I'm not going to risk being whacked by Bolsover for the sake of a cad like Shylock!"

"But he's Second, you know," pleaded Dicky. "We can't—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you killing the kid for, Bolsy?"

It was Bob Cherry of the Remove who spoke thus, and with Bob were five of his chums—Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Hurree Janset Ram Singh, generally called Inky, and Mark Linley.

Bolsover ceased to whack, but still gripped the collar of the squirming Spring.

"The young rotter called me a thief!" he growled.

"Well, you ain't that," said Johnny Bull candidly. "You're lots of other things that you'd better not be; but I must say you ain't that."

The bully of the Remove did not look highly pleased with this testimonial to his character.

As he did not care to retort upon Bull, he gave Spring another hearty clump.

"That's about enough, I should think, Bolsover," said Harry Wharton mildly.

"I'm not asking you what's enough, Wharton, so you can mind your own bizney!" growled Bolsover.

And, to show his perfect independence, he clumped Spring again.

"What's it all about, kids?" asked Bob Cherry of the three chums.

"Shylock dunning Bolsover," answered Dicky, with commendable brevity.

"Have you been borrowing money of that kid, Bolsover?" demanded Wharton sharply.

"Yes, I have. And I shall pay him back—when I think fit. I'm not going to be called a thief, though. What is it to do with you, anyway, Wharton? You're too jolly nosy!"

Wharton flushed. His anxiety for the credit of the Form which he captained did now and then lay him open to that reproach.

"I don't think it's quite the right thing to do," he said, keeping his rising temper well in leash.

"I don't care a scrap what you think. The young cad lays himself out for it—does a blessed moneylending trade with anyone he can rope in."

"Well, better let him go now, anyway," said Harry pacifically.

"I'm not going without my money!" whined Spring.

"Stay, then! You don't expect me to collect your debts for you, do you, you young Shylock?" Harry snapped.

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull. "A chap like you is a giddy disgrace to Greyfriars, Spring!"

"You're right there, Bull!" growled Gatty.

It was not often that George Adalbert Gatty found himself in complete agreement with a Removite, but he was so just then.

"You ought to stop the young rotter, Dicky," said Frank Nugent. "You pretend to be skipper of your Form—"

"No pretence about it, fathead! I am—everyone jolly well knows that!"

"Well, then, why don't you—"

"I do, duffer! I've stopped young Shylock's games in the Second all serene. 'Tain't my bizney to be protecting you Remove bounders, I s'pose? You're big enough, and ugly enough, to take care of yourselves. Look at Bolsover, f'rinstance!"

"Look here, young Nugent—"

"Don't care to, thanks, old Bolsover! Plenty of prettier things to look at!"

"You'll get a thick ear—"

"You'll have to catch me before you can give me one, cocky! Better hand it to Shylock—you've got him!"

It was not a thick ear that Bolsover major gave Spring. He only bestowed upon him another sounding slap of the head.

Wharton looked daggers. But he passed on without saying anything more.

Bolsover was always ready for a row. But it was not worth while to quarrel with Bolsover for the sake of Spring.

Moreover, Bolsover was in the wrong, for he should certainly have settled up his debt.

But neither the Famous Five nor Dicky Nugent & Co. had any sympathy to waste upon young Shylock. If he had taken a few slaps of the head that he might not have deserved, he deserved many that he did not get!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Major and Bunter Minor.

"I TELL you I haven't, Sammy!"

William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, spoke thus to his minor, Samuel Tuckless Bunter, of the Second Form, in the Remove passage.

Sammy's fat face—as fat as that of his major, and even more discontented—was full of wrath and disbelief.

"You're a liar, Billy!" he said, with more candour than politeness. "Everybody knows you're a beastly liar. They say you can't tell the truth if you try; but I don't believe you ever do try. I'm not going to be stuffed up with a whacker like that, anyway!"

"Oh, really, Sammy, I can't understand why you should be so disbelieving! It ain't brotherly!"

"Brotherly be blessed! I wish you

were't my brother—I tell you that straight! What's the good of a major that everybody despises? Nugent major ain't so mean as you. When he gets a remittance from home he always whacks out to young Dicky."

"I tell you I haven't had any remittance, you young fathead!" snorted the Owl.

"Tell that to someone softer than I am! I saw the letter. It was the mater's writing. Come to that, I've got a right to read it—she's my mater as well as yours, I s'pose. But I don't mind not reading it as long as I have half the postal-order."

Neither of the Bunters was exactly a model of the filial virtues.

"You may have seen a letter. That's got nothing to do with it. It was my letter, anyhow; and I don't see why I should show my correspondence to fags in the Second!" answered William George loftily. "But you didn't see the postal-order—I mean, there wasn't any postal-order!"

"Yah! You wouldn't have said it like that if there hadn't been. How much was it for, you rotter? I'm going to know, and I'm going to have half of it!"

"Oh, really, Sammy! Can't you take my word?"

"Of course I can't! Anybody who did would be a jolly mug, I reckon. Was it a quid?"

"No, it wasn't, then! I'm not going to tell you how much it was. As a matter of fact, there wasn't a postal-order at all!"

"There was—I know there was! I swear there was, you great, fat pig!"

"Shouldn't swear, Samivel," spoke the voice of Squiff—otherwise, Sampson Quincy Ifley Field—from the rear. "Swearing ain't really quite gentlemanly; and you are such a nice little gentleman, aren't you?"

"Yah! You shut up, Squiff" squeaked Sammy.

Squiff took him gently by the ear.

"Be a little gentleman, Sammy, even if it hurts!" he said.

"I don't want to be—I won't be! You're hurting. Leggo my ear, you beast!"

"Not so—not so, sweet child!" murmured Squiff.

Billy Bunter thought he saw a chance to roll away.

"Here, stop!" howled Sammy. "Stop that fat rotter, somebody! He's got—"

"Wherefore this haste, Bunter, my fat tulip, and what is it that you've got?" inquired Peter Todd, appearing suddenly round the corner of the passage, and barring the Owl's path.

Peter was thin, and he left quite a wide space open. But Bunter was fat and clumsy and lazy. Moreover, it was a hot day, and he did not feel at all equal to the physical exertion of trying to dodge Peter.

"It's no bizney of yours, Toddy," he said peevishly. "And that little sweep of a minor of mine is lying, anyway."

"You surprise me, Bunter! Surely no scion of your ancient and honourable house could stoop to a lie?"

"You think you're clever, Peter Todd; but I don't want any of your sarc. Lemme pass, can't you?"

"I can; but I'm not going to just yet. What's the row, young Sammy?"

"That beast has got a remittance from home—a postal-order—"

"What? Not really?" gasped Squiff.

"Who says the days of miracles are past?" said Peter Todd solemnly.

"You could knock me down with a crowbar after bearing that," Squiff said.

"It ain't true!" howled Billy Bunter.

"What do you think, Squiff?" asked Peter Todd. "Here is a problem worthy to engage your massive brain. They're

both—er—shall we say, seldom truth-tellers? There's nothing to choose between them on that score."

"Except that our beloved Bunter has had more practice at not being a George Washington, as he's older," replied Squiff, with a grin.

"As they contradict one another, they can't both be lying," went on Peter. "It seems unlikely that either can be telling the truth—"

"Oh, really, Toddy! You, at least, ought to know how perfectly truthful I am!" said William George, in accents of deep reproach.

"I do, exactly!" returned Peter.

"Well, then—"

"Dry up, Bunter!" snapped Squiff. "This is indeed a problem, as you say, Toddy. It wants weighing up very carefully. Stand still, Samivel! You can go if you like, of course, but I'm keeping your ear; and, though it's no ornament, and not too clean, you may have some future use for the thing."

"We have to take into account the extreme improbability of Bunter's getting a P.O.," said Peter Todd, wrinkling his brow in deep thought.

"He always has them coming, but they never come," rejoined Squiff. "If one really has come now—"

"It hasn't!" howled Bunter.

"That would seem to argue that it has," Peter said. "It's always safest to believe Bunter's statements inside out, so to speak."

"If it has, I shall take it as a happy omen," said Squiff. "It means that the war will end next week, or next month, or next year—sometime, anyway!"

"Oh, chuck all that rot!" equeaked Sammy. "I thought you fellows would see fair play; but you keep on talking silly piffle instead. I know he's got it, and that proves it!"

"Hardly, I think!" said Peter Todd drily.

"I haven't got it, you young fibber!" howled William George. "And it was for me—there wasn't a single word said about whacking it out with you. I don't see why Toddy and Squiff want to meddle—it ain't their bizney, I suppose?"

"He hasn't any P.O.," said Squiff, with a judicial air.

"Point number one," said Peter Todd.

"And the P.O. he has is for him alone. Samivel has no right, title, property, or interest in it."

"Point number two."

"And it's nothing to do with either you or me, Toddy."

"Point number three. And there really is something in that point, Squiff. Let's get down to cricket."

"That's an idea. After all, why should we take trouble for the sake of Samivel, who, I fear, will never be a really nice little gentleman? He's too suspicious. He thinks his major untruthful."

"I jolly well know that he's the biggest liar at Greyfriars!" hooted Sammy.

"Well, that's knowledge, for what it's worth. Come along, Toddy, old bean, and leave the merry Bunters to it."

Sammy set up a howl of disappointment as the two Removites went. His hopes of gaining something from their intervention were dashed completely.

"Stop that row, you fat little sweep!" snorted William George.

"Sha'n't! You've got my chin, and you're fatter than I am, anyway, and you're a bigger sweep than me, too! Don't touch me, or I'll yell till Quelchy hears! That beast Squiff nearly pulled my ear off, and I'm not jolly well standing any more from anybody!"

"Look here, Sammy, there's no meanness about me! I'll tip you something if you'll only have some sense!"

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"Halves! I'm jolly well not going to take a penny less than halves!"

"Oh, really, how can you say that when you don't know how much it was? And there wasn't a postal-order, really. I'm only going to tip you out of—out of generosity, you know. Here, you can have this. And don't ever say again that I never stand you anything!"

Into Sammy's hand was thrust a doubtful-looking threepenny-bit, which awoke in him a chord of familiarity.

Sammy gazed upon it with scorn in his little, pig-like eyes.

Even a threepenny-bit would have been something. But not that special threepenny-bit! He had twice been a witness to unsuccessful attempts on the part of his major to pass that.

"You—you— Oh, you are a beastly fat chiseller!" squealed Sammy.

And he flung the threepenny-bit straight at William George's face—straight into his open mouth.

"Ow-yow! Gurrrrr!" spluttered the Owl.

He hurled himself in wrath upon his minor.

They crashed down together, with a mighty crash. William George was still spluttering. Sammy squealed like a young pig. The echoes of his squealing resounded far down the passage, and reached the ears of Mr. Quelch in his sanctum.

William George was really angry. He had made up his mind to sacrifice that threepenny-bit to quiet Sammy's importunities. And he had expected some decent measure of gratitude.

But Sammy had not been in the least grateful. And parting with the doubtful coin might now prove difficult. For he had swallowed it!

In his wrath he beat Sammy about the head with his fat fists, and for all their fatness, they hurt.

"Yaroooooh! Stop it! Help! Murder! He's killing me!" equalled Sammy.

"What is the meaning of this unseemly disturbance?" snapped Mr. Quelch, appearing upon the scene with a frowning brow and rustling gown.

"Yow! That beast Billy's trying to—yoop!—kill me, sir!" wailed Sammy.

"I—I— Oh, sir, he chucked a threepenny-bit in my mouth, and I've swallowed it!" howled William George.

"You are a greedy and foolish fellow, Bunter; but I should have imagined that even your greed and stupidity would have stopped short at such an action as that! Surely you need not pander to your unnatural appetite with current coin of the realm!"

"I— Oh, really, sir, you don't suppose I swallowed it on purpose, do you?"

"Get up at once, you absurd and disgraceful boy! I am ashamed that you should have treated your brother so badly, whatever the provocation given you!"

"I'm not a bully, sir. I only spanked his head. Some fellows would have—"

"Silence! As for you, Bunter minor, it would be better that you should keep away from the Remove quarters. Your brother will do you no good. He is not at all the exemplar I should choose."

"Oh, really, sir! I'm sure I try—"

"But he's had a postal-order, sir, and he won't—"

"Be silent, both of you! I will not permit argument!"

"And he won't whack out!" finished Sammy in an agonised squeal.

"Go at once, you disobedient urchin, or I shall cane you!" thundered the Remove Form-master.

Sammy had to go. There was nothing else for it.

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He went heavily and dolefully, as though all the woes in the world were piled upon his fat young shoulders.

Even a bad threepenny-bit would have been better than going thus. Someone might have taken it.

His major chuckled. William George thought himself well rid of the persistent Samuel.

Mr. Quelch heard that chuckle, and whipped round.

"What do you mean by that offensive noise, Bunter?" he snapped.

"Nun-nun-nothing, sir! I—I—I—"

"Come with me, Bunter! I will not brook your impertinence!"

Bunter had perforce to follow to the master's study. There he stood, looking like a statue of fat misery, while Mr. Quelch selected a cane.

"I— Oh, really, sir, I don't see what I've done to be caned for!" he bumbled.

"I am the best judge of that, Bunter. Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

"Yoop! Oh, don't, sir!"

Swish, swish!

"Yaroooooh!"

"You may go, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch icily.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Sammy Walks In His Sleep.

"**A**NYTHING the matter, Sammy?" asked Spring.

"Well, I should rather think there is!" growled Sammy.

Bunter.

These two were not exactly friends, for neither was the sort to have a real chum. But the fact that the Second barred them both pretty completely formed a bond between them, and they were often to be seen in company.

The rest of the Form were in their Form-room, prep being over, and bedtime not yet come. Spring, mooching about the passages in disconsolate mood, had run against Sammy, also mooching; and still more disgruntled.

Sammy's normal expression was anything but cheerful, or even resigned. But just now he looked very much at odds with all the world.

"Somebody been walking into you?" inquired Spring.

"Yes; my beastly major!"

"He's left some marks, too."

William George had really been rather rough on his minor. But some excuse may be made for a fellow who has been forced to swallow a threepenny-bit—and a bad threepenny-bit at that.

"I'll pay him for them, the rotter! But I didn't so much mind his lamming me as his sticking to every blessed penny of the remittance he had from home. I'm jolly certain some of it was meant for me!"

Spring had very little sympathy for anyone; but if there was anything that could set the little in him at work it was a money loss. It seemed to him a positively dreadful thing to lose money. Spring bade fair to finish up a millionaire—unless he got into prison first. Once you are a millionaire there is, of course, no danger of that.

"I should have it, by hook or by crook!" said Spring.

"Oh, you're jolly clever, I dare say!" snarled Sammy.

"Clever or not—and I reckon I'm as sharp as most people, come to that—I wouldn't be diddled out of my cash, old scout!"

"What about Bolsover?" sneered Sammy.

Spring flushed, and scowled.

"I'll have it out of him, you bet!" he said sullenly.

"How?"

"That's no concern of yours! I can't trust you, you know, young Bunter. You gave me away before."

"Well, everybody else was down on you!" replied Sammy, with simple candour.

Spring grunted. Perhaps he had some dim idea that the time when everyone else was down on a fellow was just the time when a pal ought to stand by him. But, after all, Sammy was not a pal, and was by nature incapable of being one, much as Spring himself was.

"Can you tell me a dodge to get part of the chink out of Billy?" asked Sammy.

"That might be some use. Not that he'll have much left now, unless it was a biggish remittance. He's been over to Courtfield, I know; and he was after grub, you may be jolly sure. And I saw him come out of the tuckshop, all greasy and hot, and blowing hard. He'd been filling himself up there, the rotter, with my money!"

And Sammy groaned in anguish of spirit. His head ached from that brotherly punching, and his heart with the sense of loss. Like Billy, he preferred, if ache there must be, it should be elsewhere. So, at least, one might judge from the fact that both were always ready to risk that other ache.

"I should take it out of the beast's pockets! You've a right to, you know."

"Can't get at them!" said Sammy dimly. "Tain't as if he slept in our dorm. I'd do it then all serene. But I'm not going to risk myself among that Remove crowd, and very likely get nothing after all."

"Hallo! What are you two bounders plotting about?" asked Gatty, coming out of the Form-room.

"Nothing!" replied Spring.

"We ain't plotting at all. We're only talking," said Sammy.

"Well, if you take my advice, Sammy, you won't talk to Shylock," said Dieky Nugent, appearing behind Gatty. "Shylock's a rotter!"

"And if Shylock takes my advice he won't talk to Sammy. Sammy's another!" added Myers.

The three passed on, leaving two scowling faces behind them.

"I'll get even with that gang before I've done!" said Spring vengefully.

"I shouldn't mind doing that. But I'd rather get even with my beastly major," returned Sammy.

The treatment to which Sammy had been subjected was preying on the mind of that sensitive youth. He might have forgotten the punching and the contemptible meanness of that offer of a bad threepenny-bit, but he could not forget the postal-order.

By this time the order had been changed; there could be no doubt about that. Most of the resultant money had been spent—of that also there could be little doubt to anyone who knew the ways of Billy Bunter.

But a shilling or two might remain, and a shilling or two would be better than nothing.

Sammy went to sleep with Spring's advice in his mind! He only wished that he had the courage to act upon it. But he had not. Sammy had as little of the heroic strain in him as his brother.

His bed was next to Spring's, and Spring was a light sleeper. Some time after midnight he awoke.

At first he did not know what had awakened him. But then he heard a grunt, which, if it did not proceed from

a pig—and that seemed improbable—could only have come from a Bunter.

He turned his head.

Sammy had got out of bed. A blind was up, and moonlight streamed full into the dormitory.

Spring watched eagerly. There was something queer about Sammy. At first the new boy thought that Sammy was taking his advice, and meant to raid the pockets of his major. Then he doubted.

For the fat fag did not proceed to put on anything over his pyjamas. It was a hot night, truly, but Spring thought it unlikely that Sammy would go to the Remove dormitory with only his night attire on.

He was going somewhere, however—that much was certain.

Sitting up in bed, Spring watched him move towards the door.

Then it was that he understood.

He had seen a somnambulist before, and just as the somnambulist had moved so moved Bunter minor. His hands were stretched out before him; but he was not groping his way. He walked as if awake, without stumbling or running into anything. But he was plainly walking in his sleep!

Spring grinned cunningly as he slipped out of bed and followed.

There was no very definite design in his mind in doing that. But it was not mere idle curiosity that moved him. Seldom did the Shylock of the Second do anything that was not intended to serve his turn; and there was but one thing that he really cared about—money!

"He's going to pinch whatever he can find in that fat ass's clothes," he muttered to himself. "He's thought about it till he went to sleep, and then he's dreamed about it, and now he's going to do it without knowing what he's doing."

No one else stirred. Spring followed Sammy into the passage, and closed the door softly after himself.

The fat fag made straight for the Remove dormitory.

He did not run against the door. He opened it as easily as if he had been awake, and passed down between the two rows of beds to the virtuous couch whereupon his major lay, snoring for a dozen.

Billy Bunter's clothes were thrown confusedly on—and off—a chair at the foot of the bed. Sammy walked straight up to that chair, and took up his brother's trousers.

His fat hand was thrust into the pockets, one after another. Spring could see his face. It was quite expressionless, and it remained so even when the fat hand came out with something in it that glistened in the moonlight.

Sammy did not know what he was doing. Even had he known, it would have been stretching the point a bit to call him a thief. For that remittance from home could hardly have been intended solely for William George's benefit, and, in fact, though of this Sammy had no proof, there had been strict injunctions in the letter accompanying it that it should be shared with Sammy.

But the thought which leaped into Spring's mind was the thought of a thief.

"This is my chance to get back what that cad Bolsover owes me!" Spring muttered.

A few beds away from Bunter major someone else was snoring. Bolsover could not rival the Owl at that; but in any ordinary dormitory he would have been regarded as a wretched nuisance.



A shaking for Spring! (See Chapter 8.)

With Bunter present, his trumpeting was hardly noticed.

"Sounds like the cad!" muttered Spring.

He found that he was right.

It was the work of a moment for him to go through Bolsover's trousers-pockets.

The result was disappointing. Bolsover owed Spring a sovereign, with accumulated interest. His pockets produced only half-a-crown and a few odd coppers.

But all was grist that came to Spring's mill. He transferred the coins to his mouth, having no pocket to put them in.

Then he stole softly away in the wake of Sammy, who, having accomplished his mission, was making tracks for the door.

The door closed almost in Spring's face. For a moment a desperate thrill of fear shook him. If anyone awoke now—

But no one awoke. The Remove, one and all, slept on peacefully.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Somebody's Half-crown!

SPRING hurried out, his heart beating fast.

Sammy Bunter's fat feet made a pattering noise on the linoleum of the passage; but Spring followed almost without a sound.

He entered the Second Form dormitory close behind Sammy. As he passed a washstand he snatched from it a sponge and dipped it into a ewer.

Next moment the sponge was planked down upon the face of Dicky Nugent.

Then, dodging past the unconscious Sammy, Spring slipped into his own bed. He took the coins from his mouth and thrust them under the pillow.

Dicky Nugent awoke with a snort of wrath.

"Which of you bounders did that?" he shrieked, sitting up in bed with the water dripping from his face.

Nobody answered. Spring had no notion of confessing to the crime. Sammy did not hear. And if anyone

else in the dormitory heard he answered not.

Then Dicky's eyes fell upon Bunter minor standing by his bed in the moonlight.

"Sammy, you rotter," howled Dicky, "you did that! I'll give you jip for it!"

"Wharrer marrer?" growled Gatty, rubbing his eyes as he sat up.

He also saw Sammy. Sammy was on his feet; but he was no more conscious of what was going on around him than if he had been snoring in bed.

His eyes had the fixed glare of the sleep-walker, but no one noticed that. His podgy right hand clutched some coins; but no one noticed that, either.

Dicky was out of bed now.

What had been done to him would have annoyed him in any case, even if Gatty or Myers had done it.

And Gatty and Myers were his bosom chums. Sammy Bunter, the supposed offender, he loathed as he loathed only one other member of his Form—Spring.

He fairly hurled himself at Sammy.

That luckless fag went down like a ninepin before the impetuous rush.

But there was something queer about his fall. He went down without yelling, which was quite unlike Sammy.

"Get up and take your licking, you fat young beast!" stormed Dicky, standing over him. "Cold-sponge me, will you? I'll teach you to do that!"

"Hold on, Dicky!" said Myers, also awake now. "How d'you know Sammy did it? 'Tain't much like Sammy to get out of bed for that sort of trick."

Hop Hi, Sylvester, Castle, Marsden, and half a dozen others were awake now.

Spring thought it safe for him to show himself awake, too. He sat up, with an elaborate yawn.

The bit of acting was wasted. Nobody was thinking of Spring. But that was exactly what Spring wanted. He had no yearning for attention.

"I heard something chink," said Gatty.

The money had tumbled from Sammy's hand as he went down.

"So did I," said Sylvester. "It sounded like coins."

"Ow! Where am I?" moaned Sammy.

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awakening suddenly to find himself on the floor.

"I'll jolly soon show you where you are, you fat toad!" snapped Dicky. "I'm jolly well not going to have wet sponges put on my face by fat cads, so don't you jolly well think it!"

"I didn't—Yarocoh! I never did—Yooop! I've only just woke up. Have I tumbled out of bed?"

"Rats!! You can't swizzle me!" snorted Dicky.

"I don't know what you're talking about. I must have tumbled out of bed. I—I—"

"It was half-a-crown he dropped," said Gatty, emerging from beneath Sammy's bed with a coin of that denomination in his hand.

"I haven't—I didn't! I don't know anything about it! 'Tain't mine!" bumbled Sammy.

Then he realised that he was blundering. If that half-crown had been found under his bed it was as much his as anybody's—more!

"I mean—Oh, gimme me my half-crown, Gatty! It must have rolled out of my pocket!" he corrected himself.

"But you hadn't got half-a-crown!" objected Castle. "Everyone knows you were stony!"

"And that fat lout of a major of yours is stony-hearted!" added Marsden, who fancied himself a wit.

But no one took any notice of Marsden. His humour was quite wasted in the Second.

"Me tinkee Sammee sleep-walkel—pickeepocket!" said Hop Hi.

"Crums! I shouldn't wonder if that's right!" Gatty said. "He just flopped over when Dicky barged him, and he didn't yell or anything."

"Nugent minor never pushed me over at all. I tumbled out of bed—I must have!" squeaked Sammy. "Just you gimme my half-crown, Gatty!"

"He did push you over; I saw him, just as I woke up!" said Spring. "And I believe you were asleep; you looked like it."

"We know well enough Dicky barged him over!" said Myers. "But I dunno about the sleep-walking. Sammy's artful!"

"I—I s'pose I was walking in my sleep," quavered Sammy. "That rotter Billy has done it before now. P'r'aps it runs in the family."

"Like good looks and slim figures," remarked Marsden.

But no one took any notice of Marsden. His sarcasms fell as flat as his puns.

"Anyway, that's my half-crown!" persisted Sammy.

He did not really believe the coin his, for he had no knowledge of his raid upon the Remove dormitory; but he had no notion of losing a chance like this.

"So you say!" growled Gatty.

"Well, you can't deny it! Gimme my half-crown!"

"Don't you, Gatty!" said Dicky.

"Think I'm such a mug? Not jolly well likely! You didn't get out of bed with half-a-crown in your fat, dirty paw, I'll bet, young Bunter!"

"I—I did! I remember it!" lied Sammy.

"We'd better find out whose cof he's been boning," said Castle.

By this time the whole Form was awake.

"Anybody here had half-a-crown in his clothes when he went to sleep?" inquired Dicky.

"I had two," said Spring.

"I'd one," admitted Sylvester. "That and a sixpence were all the silver I had."

"Me havee thlee!" Hop Hi said. He

dived into the mysterious recesses of his Oriental garments, laid on the chair beside his bed. "Me gottee thlee now. Sammee folget me!"

Neither Spring nor Sylvester claimed to have lost half-a-crown.

"Well, I'll take care of it till the morning," said Gatty. "P'r'aps we shall find an owner for it then."

"There ain't any need to find an owner!" protested Sammy peevishly.

"It's mine—stands to reason it must be! Wasn't it under my bed?"

"It was; and that's where you'll be in half a jiffy if you don't shut up!" growled Gatty.

"Can't be yours; you hadn't one!" said Myers.

"Who said I hadn't?" squeaked Sammy.

"You did yourself!"

"Well, you chaps know what a liar I am—I mean, you always say I'm a liar. I s'pose I could tell a lie about this as easily as about anything else, couldn't I?"

But Sammy's ingenuous argument fell upon deaf ears. Gatty pocketed the coin, and growled dire threats of vengeance against Sammy if he dared to attempt getting at it.

Sammy had no mind for any such attempt. He sniffed for a while, and then he snored.

Spring lay awake long after the rest were asleep. A plan was forming itself in his mind.

Herbert Spring—or Conrad Arthur Spring, for there seemed to be some doubt which was his rightful name—might be a dunce in class, but his brain worked quickly enough where money was concerned.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Next Morning!

RISING-BELL had not yet sounded, but several fellows in the Remove dormitory were awake; and Bob Cherry, usually first out of bed, was thinking of tumbling out and arousing his chums.

The sun streamed in through the windows, giving every promise of a hot, fine day. A bathe before breakfast struck Bob as quite the best possible dodge.

He had turned down the sheet which had formed his only covering during the night, when a voice sounded at the door.

"Anybody here lost any chink?" it asked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's gone wrong now, Dicky?" cried Bob.

He had taken the voice for that of Dicky Nugent, as anyone who heard it without seeing the speaker would have done. That was exactly what Spring had intended. He had not shown himself, and he made no answer to Bob's inquiry.

A moment later what sounded like the rather growling tones of Gatty proceeded from the door of the Upper Fourth dormitory.

"Any of you fellows awake?" it asked.

"A chap in our Form—that fat young beast of a Bunter minor—seems to have been sleep-walking—"

"What's Bunter minor's sleep-walking to do with us?" snapped Fry. "If he's broken his neck we don't mind. There are too many Bunters about Greyfriars."

"He hasn't broken his neck!" growled the voice. "But he seems to have been collaring other fellows' chink, and I thought I'd ask whether any of you bounders have missed any. You might be civil, anyway, Fry!"

The voice ceased, and Spring melted away without having shown himself to anyone. Fry had no doubt that it had been Gatty's voice he had heard. He woke up Temple, skipper of the Form,

and Dabney and Scott. Others also awoke; and as soon as the news was known searches were made in pockets.

"Nothin' done here," said Temple, after examination.

"I'm not worrying!" Dabney said. "If young Bunter's bagged all I've got it's only sixpence-halfpenny. I'm not saying I'd give the little worm even the odd halfpenny, but it ain't worth getting out for. Yaw-aw-aw! I hate being woke up before rising-bell!"

"Lost anything, Angel?" asked Scott.

Angel, by long odds the worst rotter of the Fourth, was making an inspection of his elegant pocket-book.

"Oh, by Jove, I don't know!" replied Angel languidly. "I may be down a quid or two. I'm not sure how many notes I had here."

"Well, it ain't a fat lot of good counting them, then," Scott returned.

Scott did not like Angel.

No one in the Upper Fourth dormitory appeared to have been robbed. As neither Sammy nor Spring had been there, this was not surprising.

Meanwhile, Spring had gone back to his own dormitory.

He cast a hasty glance around. Everyone seemed to be still asleep.

But the almond eyes of Hop Hi were open, though Spring's scrutiny did not reveal the fact to him.

The Shylock of the Second got noiselessly back into bed. No sooner was he there than he sat up, rubbing his eyes and yawning loudly.

"Did I hear the rising-bell?" he asked.

Nobody answered.

"Anybody know the time? My watch has stopped," Spring said next.

But at that moment the rising-bell sent its clangour throughout Greyfriars, and the Second awoke.

Before the bell had ceased to ring a crowd of the Remove poured into the dormitory.

"What's this yarn about Sammy Bunter walking in his sleep and boning chaps' chink, Dicky?" demanded Frank Nugent.

A howl came from the rear of the crowd. For once Billy Bunter had not stayed in bed after the bell had sounded. He had even got out before it rang.

"Lemme get past!" he roared.

"Lemme get at the little beast!"

"Oh, chuck it, and wait your turn!" growled Bolsover major. "You ain't the only chap who's lost money, and nobody cares if you have lost some. You'd say you had whether it was true or not. But mine's been bagged!"

That fact was evidently of real importance in the eyes of Percy Bolsover.

"Oh, really, Bolsover! I can't see why—"

"Dry up, porpoise!" said Peter Todd. "Gentlemen, let my prize pig come to the front, please! He's one of the giddy victims, or says he is."

"I do say it, and I can prove it!" howled William George.

Sammy was sitting up in bed now, looking scared. Dicky rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, and said grumblingly:

"Give a fellow a chance! It's true enough. But if Sammy walks in his sleep I don't talk in mine, and I ain't properly awake yet."

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "You were awake five minutes ago, when you stuck your head in at our door and sang out what had happened!"

"I didn't do anything of the sort," answered Dicky, in wonder. "I tell you I've only just woke up!"

Temple, in a very swell suit of silken pyjamas and a magnificent dressing-gown, lounged in at that moment, followed by Dabney, Fry, and Scott.

"What's this yarn of yours, young

Gatty?" inquired the lordly skipper of the Fourth. "None of us—"

"Yarn of mine? I haven't been telling any yarns!" growled Gatty. "The bell woke me up!"

"But you came to our door, and—"

"Oh, rats! I'll jolly well swear that I didn't do anything of the sort! What's it to do with you Upper Fourth bounders, anyway?"

"Nothin', as it happens," replied Temple. "But I don't see why you should deny—"

"Did you see, Gatty, Temple?" asked Squiff.

"No; but Dab did."

"I never said so," Dabney corrected him. "Matter of fact, I didn't actually see the kid. But I heard him, all serene. It couldn't have been anybody else's voice."

"Well, it was; because it's jolly certain it wasn't mine!" yelled Gatty.

"Come to that, I didn't see young Dicky. But I heard his mellifluous tones," said Bob.

"You jolly well didn't, then!" contradicted Dicky. "I haven't been out of bed yet!"

"Oh, really, what does all that matter?" asked William George Bunter peevishly. "I've been robbed, and Bolsover says he has—"

"Rats! What you mean is that I've been robbed, and you say you have. But you're most likely lying!" grunted Bolsover.

"I'm not! I can prove I'm not! I had half-a-crown, and I should know it again, if I saw it—there!"

"But you'd admit acquaintance with any half-crown, Bunter," said Peter Todd. "We've known you to adopt a fiver before now."

"This half-crown had a little cross scratched on it, just near the back of the King's head!" Bunter said triumphantly. "That ought to prove it's mine. I never saw such disbelieving beasts as you chaps are, and you're the worst of the lot, Peter Todd, though you ought to know me best!"

"That's why," said Peter drily.

Gatty was out of bed now. Dicky also scrambled out. Both had forgotten the question of who had been guilty of speaking in their voices in this new and interesting disclosure.

The half-crown was produced.

"I'm not going to look at it," said Gatty. "Here you are, Wharton, you look. But I expect the fat rotter's lying."

Harry Wharton looked at the coin.

"For once he isn't," he said. "The mark's here, right enough. Did you take this from Sammy, Gatty?"

"Well, I didn't exactly take it from him. But I heard it drop—so did the other chaps—and I found it under his bed."

"It's mine!" bubbled Sammy. "Billy's telling 'em! Everybody knows what a liar Billy is! He saw me put that mark on, I suppose, and—"

"Oh, really, Sammy, you shock me! I saw nothing of the sort. I don't know a bit how the mark got there. I had the half-crown in my change from Mrs. Mimble—that's all I know. Except that you hadn't any half-crown at all—I'm certain of that!"

"I should have had, though—and a jolly sight more—if you'd whacked out fair!" howled Samuel.

"Oh, stop that, you two porpoises!" snapped Johnny Bull. "Look here, Dicky, what evidence is there that Sammy was sleep-walking at all?"

"Even though the stealthfulness of the ludicrous and despised Sammy be proved, the sleep-walkfulness does not follow," remarked Inky, in his weird and wonderful lingo.

"Probably went before," said Squiff.

"If I boned anything—I'm not admitting I did, you know—but if I boned anything it must have been in my sleep," protested Sammy anxiously. "I shouldn't do it while I was awake—'tain't a bit likely!"

"I don't think he would," said Dicky Nugent. "Sammy's a mean young beast, and he can't keep his picking fingers off grub and things; but I don't reckon he'd bone chink."

"And he really was walking in his sleep, the silly young ass," said Myers. "I'm sure of that!"

"It's likely enough," said Harry Wharton. "His major's done the same thing. Well, this half-crown belongs to the porpoise, that seems certain. I suppose there's nothing against him having it back, you fellows?"

"I should think not!" bleated Billy Bunter. "Do you think you can keep it yourself, Wharton? It's mine! You just gimme it!"

"Here, hold on!" snapped Bolsover. "I've lost half-a-crown, too, and some coppers as well. What about them?"

"This can't be your half-crown, Bolsover," Harry said.

"Who says it can't? Why can't it?"

"Because Bunter's proved it belonged to him."

"Bunter's a rotten liar!"

"Yes, so he is, in a general way. But I think everybody must see that he's told the truth here—for once."

"But what about the money I've lost?" howled Bolsover.

"Shell out, porpoise minor!" said Squiff pleasantly.

"I haven't got Bolsover's money—I've never seen it!" wailed Sammy. "That half-crown's mine, really. Billy ought to have whacked out the remittance with me. He would have done if he'd been honest!"

"Better go through the fat child's clothes, and look under his pillow," said Peter Todd. "I don't think you'll find it, though. My notion is that the ruthless greed of my porpoise so played upon the ingenuous mind of the fat child that it made him walk in his sleep and bag what he believed to be rightfully his. But he couldn't think Bolsover's chink was his, so there isn't any reason to suppose he bagged that."

"My opinion is that the young sweep would bag anything," said Cecil Reginald Temple.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

"I don't think that," Scott said. "I fancy Toddy's near enough right."

Whether Toddy was right or not—and, in fact, he was substantially so—it was easily established that Bolsover's lost cash was not in the possession of Sammy. It was now in Spring's pocket, mixed with his own money. But no one even thought of Spring.

Unless Hop Hi had his suspicions. It was rather curious that, as half a dozen of the Second trooped downstairs together, Hop Hi should ask:

"Tellee me timeee, Splingee, please?"

Spring had said that his watch had stopped. But he had forgotten that, or, if he remembered it, supposed that none had heard, since none had answered. He pulled out his watch, and told Hop Hi the time, though he did it ungraciously, as though he resented doing even so slight a service without getting anything for it.

The Oriental face of Hop Hi was quite impassive. But behind that face the keen Oriental brain was thinking hard.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Molly Gray Will Not Tell!

"COMEE with me, Sylvestel?" asked Hop Hi, after morning classes.

"Where to?" inquired the American junior.

These two were fast friends now. Hop Hi, who got along very well with the Form generally, had never really had a chum till the last Christmas holidays, spent at Greyfriars, had brought him and the American millionaire's son into close contact; and very much the same was true of Roderick Sylvestel.

"To Cliffee House," replied the Chinese youngster.

"Oh, I say! What for?"

"Wantee see led-headed galee."

"You mean Molly Gray, don't you?"

"Miss Gray—yes."

"I say, you know, she's a nice kid; but you aren't getting mashed on her, are you, old chap?"

Sylvestel spoke quite anxiously. It was evident that he would not have approved at all of Hop Hi's getting mashed on Miss Gray.

Hop Hi did not grin. He only said solemnly:

"No gettee mashee, Sylvestel. Talkee about Splingee."

"Oh! That's different, of course. It would be awful rot for you to go running after a girl. You ain't old enough, you know."

Hop Hi might have been anything up to fifty then, except for the smoothness of his face and his smallness. There was nothing boyish in his look. But when next moment he grinned one could see the boy in him.

"You can grin; but you aren't, and I'm going to see that you don't make a giddy ass of yourself that way. As for Spring, I shouldn't worry about the rotter," said Sylvestel.

"Splingee thlash Sylvestel. Splingee much stlongel than Sylvestel," said Hop Hi.

"I don't care. That's all over now, and the other chaps said it was no disgrace to me," replied the American junior, flushing.

"Disglace to Splingee," said Hop Hi.

"Well, I don't bear him any grudge for it. After all, it was fair enough in a way. He had his choice among the five, and he chose me," Sylvestel answered.

But Hop Hi shook his head. If his chum bore no grudge against Spring for that business, Hop Hi did. He had been watching the new boy narrowly ever since, and had some pretty definite suspicions about him. With all his cunning, Spring was no match for the little Chinese.

Sylvestel and Hop Hi trotted along together to Cliff House. The only Greyfriars fellow they saw on the way was Sammy Bunter, who was moaning about some two hundred yards or so from the gates, looking extremely disconsolate. Sammy mourned for that lost half-crown like Rachel mourning for her children, and refused to be comforted. Or, rather, would have refused had anyone proffered consolation. But no one cared enough about Sammy Bunter for that.

"Where are you chaps going?" asked Sammy.

"There and back," replied Sylvestel. "We might see you on the way back if you still happen to be loafing round here."

"I'll come with you," volunteered Sammy.

"Me tinkee-not," said Hop Hi blandly.

"Why not, I should like to know?"

"Because we won't have you," returned Sylvestel bluntly.

"Yah! I shall come if I want to—so now, then! I s'pose the road's free to me as well as to you, ain't it?"

"That load," Hop Hi said, pointing towards Greyfriars.

"Yah! If I don't come it's only because I won't be seen with such outsiders as you two! Fishy says you're the only American he knows who would chum up with a rotten Chink, Sylvestel."

Hop Hi's reply to that taunt was immediate and practical. Sammy found him—

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self on his back in the dusty road next moment, with very little idea how he had come there. Like his elder brother, Hop Hi knew more than a little of the art and science of ju-jitsu.

Having put the charming Sammy on his back, Hop Hi planted a foot on his podgy waistcoat.

"Bettel sayee beggee paldon," he said gravely.

"Yah! Catch me at it! I'll split on you for bullying first, you yellow beast!"

"Lais!" retorted Hop Hi. And he and Sylvester walked on. Hop Hi meant "Rats!" But the Chinese find the letter "r" very difficult.

"I wonder whether Spring was mixed up in that sleep-walking bizney?" said Sylvester thoughtfully. "I don't quite see how he could have been, and yet I—"

"Bettel Sylvester not wolly about Splingee. Hop Hi lookkee aftel Splingee."

The yellow face was impassive, and the words were spoken in a level, unimpassioned tone. But if Spring could have heard he might not have felt quite comfortable.

The two reached the Cliff House gates before they encountered any of the girls. But there they found Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn just coming out.

Sylvester raised his straw hat politely, and Hop Hi bowed almost to the ground. Marjorie smiled, and Clara giggled. They knew the two juniors, of course, but not as well as they knew many of the Remove.

"Wantee see Miss Gray, if blight-eyed miss will be so kindee as tellee Miss Gray," said Hop Hi.

"Which of us is 'blight-eyed,' Marjorie?" asked Clara, giggling again. "It must be me, I fancy, for I'm sure you don't look so."

"He means 'bright-eyed,'" explained Sylvester. "That's both of you," he added gallantly, and then blushed at his own boldness.

Marjorie looked with some curiosity at the Chinese junior.

"I will tell Molly," she said. But she spoke a trifle doubtfully.

"He doesn't want to spoon, Miss Hazeldene," said Sylvester.

Both the girls laughed at that, and Sylvester blushed again.

Marjorie tripped lightly off. In a few moments she came back with Molly Gray.

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The red-headed Cliff House junior tossed her mane at the sight of Sylvester and Hop Hi.

"I'm not thure that I want to thpeak to them at all, Marjorie," she said. "I don't know them very well."

"Oh, I would, kiddie, I think. Sylvester's quite a nice little fellow, and so is Hop Hi, though, of course, he isn't at all like an English boy."

Marjorie and Clara passed out of the gates together.

Molly looked at the two Second-Formers in a way that was not specially friendly.

"I underthand you two want to thay thomething to me," she said.

"Hop Hi wants to ask you—" began the American boy.

"Bettel lettee me talkee, Sylvestel."

"Oh, all serene, if you want to, old man."

"Me tinkee you knowee Splingee at homee, Miss Gray?"

"Yeth, tho, I do. But I don't like him a little bit, and I don't want to talk about him."

"We don't like him, either," said Sylvester. "Hop Hi bars him no end."

Molly looked at them with some suspicion.

"You may think you can pump me," she said. "But you're making a great mithtake. You don't thee any green in my eye, do you?"

"Velly nicee blownee eyes," said Hop Hi blandly. "Pletty Miss Gray tellee Hop Hi about Splingee, please! Splingee lottel at Gleyfliars—tellee what Splingee do befole he come to Gleyfliars."

"What did you call me?" snapped Molly. But even though she snapped her cheeks dimpled and her eyes were not angry.

"Pletty Miss Gray," replied Hop Hi demurely.

"Then it'th like your giddy cheek, that'th all!"

"He doesn't mean anything," said Sylvester. "I don't suppose he really thinks you're pretty at all. It's just his way of talking."

"Then he'th not truthful!" flashed Molly.

Sylvester had rather put his foot in it. Hop Hi's outspoken compliment had not really annoyed Miss Gray at all; but it annoyed her to be told that it meant nothing.

"Hop Hi velly tluthful," said the little Chinese earnestly. "Hop Hi tinkee Miss Gray velly pletty, and—"

"Oh, drop it, pleathe! I don't like that thort of thoft talk. And I'm not going to tell taleth about Herbert Thpring. He wath a very nathty boy when I knew him before, but perhapth he'th better now."

Hop Hi shook his head sadly, implying that he did not believe in any reformation on the part of Spring.

Sylvester opened his mouth to speak, but a clutch on his arm commanded silence.

The head-shake seemed to make some impression on Molly Gray.

"If you mean he ithn't—" she began. Again Hop Hi shook his head.

"That'th all very well, but I don't like telling taleth, and I don't know why you come here athking me thingth. Bethides, I muthn't thtay out here talking to you—Mith Prim would be very angry if the knew. But don't you know Algy Merton?"

"At Highcliffe?" asked Sylvester.

"Yeth. Algy knowth all about Thpring, and Algy'th a friend of mine. You go to him and thay that youv'e theen me. Then he can tell you what he liketh. But I don't mean to tell you anything at all, becauth—oh, well, jutht becauth!"

Hop Hi's face was quite impassive, but Sylvester looked very disappointed.

"I'm coming, Alithe!" cried Mollie Gray. And with that she darted away.

The two fags looked at one another. Their errand had not been a success.

But Sylvester had not the least idea that he had spoiled his chum's chance of learning anything. Hop Hi had a very strong idea to that effect, but he said nothing. Master Roderick Sylvester's impetuosity was not suited to diplomatic methods. But Hop Hi had felt that he could not tackle Molly Gray alone.

"Shall we go straight to Highcliffe?" asked Sylvester eagerly.

But Hop Hi shook his head.

He saw no use in going to Highcliffe at all.

Merton, of the Highcliffe Fourth Form, was not at all likely to tell what he knew about Spring to two Greyfriars fags. He would tell nothing without explanations, and Hop Hi had no mind to explain.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Was It Sammy?

"O H, I say! This is too beastly thick for anything! Someone's been at my money!" howled Spring.

Rising-bell had just sounded on the morning after the fruitless errand of Hop Hi and Sylvester. Most of the Second had not been in any hurry to turn out, and as yet only three had left their beds—Spring, Hop Hi, and Pettifer.

There was an expression of acute dismay on Spring's mean, cunning face as he fumbled in the pockets of his trousers.

Nothing else could hit Spring harder than the loss of money. Everyone there knew that. But no one felt any sympathy for him in his loss.

"Rats!" said Dicky Nugent. "You're too giddy careful of your oof to leave your purse in your pocket!"

"Look under your pillow!" growled Gatty. "I'll bet that's where you put it!"

"I don't, then! I always leave it in my trousers-pocket. We're not thieves here, are we?" snarled Spring.

"I'm not. I dunno about everybody!" answered Dicky.



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"If Shylock's lost chink, I s'pose other chaps have, too," said Gatty, with no appearance of concern.

"Have you?" inquired Castle.

"No. Hadn't got any to lose."

"Same with everybody else, I reckon, except Sylvester and Hop Hi," remarked Myers. "And they've got too much. They deserve to lose it if they ain't careful!"

"I am careful, always," said Sylvester, extracting a pocket-book from his pocket. Then his face fell.

"Oh, crumbs! All my notes have gone!" he gasped.

"Jolly careful chap, ain't you?" giped Dicky.

"Well, how could I—"

"It's no odds," struck in Myers. "Sammy's been walking again, that's all. He's got the chink!"

"I ain't—I didn't—I never!" burred Samuel. "I knew some of you rotters would say it was me. But it wasn't!"

"How d'ye know that, fathead!" growled Gatty.

"Of course I know, you chump! Wasn't it me? I mean, it wasn't me, and I jolly well know it wasn't!"

"I s'pose you knew when you boned your major's chink, and bully Bolsy's?"

"Yes, of course I did! I mean, no, of course I didn't! How can a chap know when he's asleep?"

"Well, then, you can't know whether—"

"Don't be such a silly fathead, Gatty!" squealed Sammy. "I'm quite certain I never got out of bed last night!"

"Licks me how you can be certain!" said Castle.

"He can't possibly be!" Myers said.

"But if he did, and doesn't know it, we can't say it was his fault," said Dicky. "We ain't calling you a thief, Sammy, though I must say we might almost as well have a real thief in the dorm as a giddy sleep-walker like you."

"The question is, where's the money?" said Spring sullenly. "I'm not going to lose mine, I can tell you that! If he's hidden it—"

"I didn't—I never took it!" howled Sammy. "You can look anywhere you like—"

"We're going to do that, anyway!" growled Gatty.

And they did look. They searched Sammy's bed and Sammy's clothes. They tried every likely and unlikely hiding-place, but they found no trace of the lost money.

Spring's purse had gone, with everything in it; and a wad of notes had been taken from Sylvester's pocket-book. The American junior was not sure how many; anything from six to ten, for a pound each, he thought. No, he had not the numbers.

He bore his loss with resignation, after the first shock of discovery. But Spring, who also had not the numbers of his notes, was very far indeed from being resigned. He made no end of fuss.

And all the time Hop Hi, saying nothing, watched him closely.

Dicky Nugent turned suddenly upon Hop Hi.

"You lost anything, kid?" he asked.

The little Chinese shook his head.

"How's that?" growled Gatty.

"You've always got some!"

"Me not so careful as Sylvester," replied Hop Hi. "Me keepee oofee in velly unsafe place. But Sammee no findee, allee samee."

"I never looked. I— Oh, don't be such a beast, Hop Hi!"

"Shin out, Sammy, you rotter! Let's have a squint at your feet!" said Gatty commandingly.

Quite a crowd had gathered around



Hop Hi is warlike! (See Chapter 11.)

Sammy's bed, but Sammy showed no inclination to shin out.

"What do you want to look at my feet for?" he squeaked.

"To see if they're dirty," answered Gatty.

"No need to look; they always are. Sammy's a filthy young beast," said the polite Dicky.

"Oh, I know all that; but if he's been paddling about the linoleum barefoot they might show marks."

"Or the linoleum might," said Marsden. "Where the dirt came off Sammy's feet, you know. Let's look at the linoleum."

"Rats!" snapped Gatty. "I'm going to look at his beastly feet!"

"It was that rotter Spring who put you up to that!" wailed Sammy. "I saw him whisper to you. But I don't care. You can see my feet if you like. They're as clean as anybody's here—as clean as any of your ugly faces, come to that!"

He threw back the bedclothes, and exposed to view two podgy feet.

"What's that on his left big toe?" asked Spring, stooping to look.

"Dirt," said Dicky. "Same as on the right, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It looks to me like some of the tooth-powder Sylvester spilled last night," said Spring.

"That you spilled, you mean, you clumsy idiot!" snapped Sylvester. "It was you jogged my elbow while I'd got the tin in my hand. And you'd no business anywhere near my washstand, either, you know that."

"It was quite an accident, and I apologised at the time," said Spring meekly.

"There's some of the powder down by Sylvester's bed now," remarked Myers.

"But I don't think it can be that on Sammy's foot. It wouldn't stick, I fancy."

"Sammy wouldn't use tooth-powder to his feet. He never uses it to his teeth!" said Dicky.

"Perhaps he's got the foot-and-mouth disease!" chipped in Marsden.

But, as usual with Marsden's jokes, this fell flat. He himself might have had some difficulty in explaining it; and no one else bothered about it at all.

"Somebody slopped water over it," said Castle. "Shouldn't wonder if it would stick after that."

"Looks as if it had, anyway," Pettifer said, with a sidelong glance of suspicion at the luckless Samuel.

"Let's have a squint at it," suggested Myers.

"I ain't going to have any more chaps meddling with my feet!" squealed Sammy, covering his pedal extremities up in haste.

"Ass! Fat idiot! I don't mean your ugly foot! I meant the mess by the washstand," replied Myers.

A dozen or more moved across, and examined the damp mass of tooth-powder.

Dicky put a finger into it. Some of the stuff stuck to the finger when he took it away.

"Looks jolly suspish!" he said. "It does stick."

"I haven't been near that washstand!" bleated Sammy. "I never use—"

"We know you never use a washstand," broke in Castle. "That ain't the question. Question is, what were you doing near Sylvester's bed?"

"If Sammy trod in the stuff," said Myers, "how is it the print of his foot doesn't show? Mind you, I ain't sticking up for Sammy. He's a rotter, anyway. But, as a scout, I say there ought to be a footprint."

"He must have trodden in it, else how could it be on his foot?" snarled Spring.

"Perhaps only his toe touched it," suggested Dicky.

Myers was now down on his stomach on the floor, examining the damp mass with critical eyes.

"I can see finger-marks," he said. "I can't see any footmark, nor anything like Sammy's fat toe. As a scout, I should expect—"

"There's the stuff on the fat young cad's foot to prove it, whatever you can see or can't see!" snorted Spring.

"Ain't that good enough?" growled Gatty.

"Yes, in a way. But, as a scout, I should—"

"Got nothing at all to do with it," struck in Dicky. "Taint as if we were trying to make Sammy out a regular

thief. It's not as bad as that by long odds."

"I reckon that a chap who would steal in his sleep wouldn't take much tempting to make him steal when he was awake!" said Gatty.

"Oh, I dunno! You may be right; but still, I shouldn't call Sammy a thief. All the same, he must have bagged the oof and hidden it somewhere. Don't you think so, Hop Hi?"

The Chinese junior gave the slightest possible nod of assent. His almond eyes, narrowed to mere slits between their lids, were fastened upon Spring all the time, as though Spring were the only fellow in the whole crowd who interested him.

"It's jolly well got to be found!" said Spring hotly. "I'm not going to pretend I don't mind, like Sylvester. I do mind, a heap!"

"Nobody's likely to think you don't," said Dicky. "We know what a beastly money-grubber you are, Shylock!"

"Well, it ain't to be expected that I should put up with the loss of five quid, and more, because that fat young cad walks in his sleep!"

"No use talking about your quids now!" growled Gatty. "If we don't hurry up we shall be all late for prayers!"

Sammy scrambled out of bed with tears in his eyes. He felt his position painfully.

It was no use for him to protest that he had not been walking in his sleep again, though he felt sure he had not. The evidence that he had seemed almost conclusive; but it did not convince him.

But if he had walked—if he had taken money from the pockets of Spring and Sylvester, and hidden it, where was the hiding-place?

It was rough luck not to know that. To Sammy's muddled mind it seemed unjust. If he must bear the blame, he ought to be able to lay his hands on the money! Not that he would have used any of it, of course; but—

That was the way Sammy looked at it. For Sammy was a true Bunter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Spring Meets Merton!

"I SHOULDN'T worry, old chap. 'Tain't like you to worry, you know!"

It was Philip Derwent, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, who spoke; and it was to Merton, of the same Form, that his soothing words were addressed. These two and Tunstall—closer chums than ever in these days—were walking at a leisurely pace along the road between Highcliffe and Greyfriars.

"That's all very well, Flip," answered Merton, speaking more earnestly than he usually did. Merton had been one of the nuts of Highcliffe. He no longer ranked among them; but he still retained something of the languid, nutty pose, based on the theory that nothing which did not affect the nuts themselves really mattered a scrap. But all that was put behind him now. He was in dead earnest.

"That's all very well," he repeated, after a pause of a few seconds. "In a general way, I think mindin' one's own bizney ain't half a dashed bad idea. Saves lots of trouble in the long run. An' I'll admit that this isn't exactly my bizney."

"It certainly isn't," said Tunstall. "If the rotter were at Highcliffe it would be a different thing, by Jupiter! But he's at Greyfriars—"

"I know all about that. But, as far as I can make out, he's there under a false name, an' with a false character, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 549.

as you might say. He's down on the roll as Conrad Arthur Spring. His name's really Herbert."

"H'm! Looks suspicious when a chap changes his name, I agree," Flip Derwent said.

"Especially when the name he takes is that of a young brother who hasn't anything in particular against his character, while he himself has earned just about as black a name as he could," replied Merton.

"Tell us all about it, old top," said Tunstall. "It sounds like an interestin' yarn."

"Well, it is, in a way. But I don't know that I can tell it properly. I never heard all the ins an' outs of it. These two Springs were day-boys at a school near my home. My young brother Reggie was there, too, and little Molly Gray's brother Ted. There was no end of a rumpus. Theft an' all that—whole-sale theft—in the school an' out, an' things were made to look as if a whole gang of kids—five or six of 'em—were

CADET NOTES.

Among the most successful of the Cadet organisations are the various brigades which are now officially recognised as Cadet Corps.

These include the Boys' Brigade, which is now more than thirty years old, the Church Lads' Brigade, and some other similar bodies.

The present strength of these brigades is about 120,000. It is estimated that at the present time no fewer than 663,000 members and ex-members of brigades are serving with the Colours. Among them, these old boys of the brigades have gained more than 900 distinctions during the past three years of the war, including no fewer than 22 Victoria Crosses, 122 Military Crosses, 35 D.S.O.'s, also a large number of other distinctions, including various French, Belgian, Russian, Italian, Serbian, etc.

This is a record, of course, showing only one aspect of the brigades' work, but one reflecting very much honour on the organisation and those belonging to it.

Our readers who are not already members of Cadet Corps, and who happen to reside in towns where no ordinary Cadet Corps is yet in existence, will often find that a detachment of one of these brigades is formed in their locality, and they will do well to join it and take part in this work.

They can obtain full particulars and information about the brigades, with addresses of local companies, etc., on application to the C.A.V.R., Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, W.C.2.

in it together. They were goin' to get the sack—young Reggie an' Teddy Gray among them—when somehow it all came out. There weren't half a dozen thieves, there was only one—this dashed rotter Spring!"

"My word, he must be crafty!" remarked Flip Derwent.

"He's as cunnin' as they're made. No one even suspected him at first of bein' in it, though he had a dashed bad name in another way."

"How did he get his bad name?" Tunstall inquired.

"Money-lendin'! He's a perfect young Shylock! Somehow, that told in his favour with the fellows when this thievin' bizney cropped up. They didn't seem to think it possible that a moneylender should be a thief, too."

"It's what I should call most of 'em, from what I've heard of the species," drawled Tunstall.

"Oh, I don't know. I dare say most of them are honest enough, if they are sharks. Anyway, the fellows at Westonby House seemed to have a

notion the two roles couldn't be doubled by one chap. But they could, an' they were. The young rotter has a mania for money. He'd do anythin' to get hold of it."

"But how could he come to Greyfriars under his brother's name?" asked Derwent. "Are you sure the Greyfriars kid is the thieving moneylender, and not the decent chap?"

"Young Molly's sure, an' that kid's cute enough. Besides, they weren't much alike, even in face. The family cleared out after that row at Westonby House. No one knew where they had gone. There were only these two, an' their mater—a queer woman, with a funny kink in her—just the kind of mater you'd expect a rotter like that to have. My notion is that they went somewhere among strangers, an' that young Conrad died. She never cared a lot about him; it was the young rotter she was keen on. Perhaps Conrad was buried as Herbert. Perhaps he isn't dead. I'm only guessing. But, anyway, there's been a change of names, an' it must have been done to get the sweep taken into a decent school. No Head would have given him a chance if he had known all the facts. But Conrad was different. Old Brown, at Westonby House, would have said he was all right. I guess he did say so."

"You haven't seen the young beggar, Algy?"

"Not yet, Tun. Of course, I may run against him any day. They must have thought I'd left Highcliffe, an' they didn't know Molly had come to Cliff House."

"What shall you do if you do meet him?" asked Flip.

Merton's eyes gleamed savagely.

"I'd made up my mind to give him the hidin' of his life!" he said, between clenched teeth. "I sent him word I would; but I've never seen him since. The trouble about Reggie pretty nearly broke the mater's heart, an' young Teddy Gray caught it no end from his pater, an' there was a frightful upset there."

"I think he deserves a licking," said Flip Derwent. "But if he can pass at Greyfriars as a Second Form kid he can hardly be up to your weight, Algy, though he may be nearly your age."

"Oh, he won't show fight, Flippy—he never does! Too big a funk y'know! Got to be dashed certain he can lick anybody before—Hullo!"

The exclamation came from Merton's mouth like a bullet from a gun. For, rounding a bend of the road, they had come full upon Spring.

Neither Derwent nor Tunstall knew him; but it was easy for them to guess who he was. And they had no doubt from the first that this was Herbert Spring, the elder brother, and not Conrad Arthur, the younger, whose name appeared on the Greyfriars roll.

Spring started back in evident alarm. His face went a sickly hue, and his eyes, set too close together, were full of fear.

He did not breathe a word till Merton, springing forward, caught him by the shoulders and shook him until his teeth fairly rattled together.

"Lemme go! Stop him! I haven't done anything to you!" he panted then.

"You young rotter!" hissed Merton. "I've been waitin' for this chance, by Jupiter!"

Only once before had Flip Derwent and Fred Tunstall seen their easy-going chum roused to such fury.

"I—I— Look here, Merton—"

"You slimy young cad! You spoofin' thief!"

"I—I— Ain't you taking me for my brother?"

Merton shook him more furiously than ever.

"Not likely, by Jupiter!" he shouted. "That's what you want people to do, but you can't take me in! I know you too well, you rotter! Where young Conrad may be—"

"I am Conrad!" whined Spring. "You're taking me for Herbert, I s'pose? He's dead!"

"You lying young hound?"

"You're dead sure you are right, Algy?" asked Tunstall.

"He isn't right! He's all wrong! How should he know? I hardly know him by sight! I suppose it's a genuine mistake, but I think he ought to apologise for shaking me like that!" whined Spring.

Merton's hands fell from his shoulders; but there was no relenting, and there was no doubt in Merton's face.

"It's true I didn't really know him," said the Highcliffe junior. "That was luck for me. But you an' your brother weren't enough alike to be mistaken. An' what about Molly Gray? She knew you all serene."

Spring licked his dry lips in fear. He knew the worst now. Molly Gray had seen Merton, and had told him.

"She—she's lying!" he muttered huskily. "She always had a down on both of us—my brother Herbert told me. I knew Herbert was pretty much of a rotter; but he's dead now, and I don't see why I should be blamed for what he did."

"You say that Molly Gray's lying?" flashed Merton.

"If she says—"

"She says you're Herbert Spring, an' you are! I promised you the hidin' of your life a year ago. I might have let you off that now; but I'm not goin' to, after you've called that nice kid a liar! Cut me an ashplant, Flip, will you?"

"Oh, rather!" answered Derwent readily.

There were ash-saplings in the hedge behind them, and an ashplant is hard to beat when one has a really satisfactory thrashing to accomplish.

Spring's face was like the face of a cornered rat. But he had not the rat's instinct to show fierce fight when cornered.

It is true that Merton was above his fighting-weight—taller and heavier, and with a longer reach. But the disparity was not so great as to make Spring's chance hopeless, for he had muscle enough.

"Here you are, Algy," said Flip Derwent. "And there's more in the hedge if they're wanted."

But an ashplant does not easily split or break. That one held out as long as Merton needed it, and far too long for Spring.

Merton's right arm rose and fell quickly. His feet had to move, too, for he found that using his left hand to grip Spring's collar did not give him play enough, and when he let go Spring bolted.

But the Highcliffe fellow followed him up, lashing hard; and Derwent and Tunstall came behind.

At last Spring flung himself upon the grassy edge of the road, howling and kicking.

"I guess that's about enough, Algy," said Derwent.

Merton threw the ashplant over the hedge, dragged Spring to his feet, and gripped him by the shoulders again.

"You'd better go easy at Greyfriars!" he said savagely, shaking Spring as he spoke. "If I hear of your playin' any such dashed dirty games as you played at Westonby House you'll get it in the neck, you young cad!"

"Hallo! There's somebody being

kind to our Shylock!" said Dicky Nugent to Gatty and Myers.

The three had just come within sight of what was happening.

Merton saw them, and let Spring go. The three Highcliffians walked off together. The Second-Formers hurried after Spring, who was making tracks for Greyfriars.

"Hallo, Shylock! What's been happening to you?" asked Dicky, as they caught him up.

"Mind your own business, can't you?" snarled Spring, wriggling with pain.

"That chap was Merton of Highcliffe," said Myers.

"Don't I know that?"

"Friend of yours?" growled Gatty.

"No. I hate the beast!"

"You seem to hate pretty nearly everybody, old top," said Dicky.

"So I do. There's a rotten gang of chaps at Greyfriars!"

"Shylock's waxy about losing his dibs," said Myers.

"Oh, they'll be found all serene! Sammy's hidden them up somewhere. Thing to do is to watch Sammy to-night and see where," replied Dicky comfortably. "That's dead easy."

"If they're not found, it's going to be unhealthy for Bunter minor!" snarled Spring. "S'pose I walked in my sleep and stole? Everybody—"

"We shouldn't believe you were asleep," said George Adalbert Gatty, with entire conviction. "You're too jolly crafty, Shylock; that's what's the matter with you!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hop Hi on the Track!

"**W**E'RE going to keep awake and watch out for Sammy to-night, Hop Hi," said Dicky Nugent.

"Allee lightee. Me keepee awake, too," replied the Chinese junior.

"No need," growled Gatty. "Three of us will be enough."

"Allee lightee. Anybody knowee?" Hop Hi said, with apparent indifference.

"You can tell Sylvester. That will be all right, won't it, you fellows?" said Myers. "But, of course, there's no need for him to keep watch."

"Anybody else knowee?"

The question was put in quite a casual way, and none of the three guessed that Hop Hi attached any particular importance to the answer.

"No—yes. We told Shylock," said Dicky.

Hop Hi's face was quite impassive as he heard that.

"Tinkee Sammee walkee again?" he asked.

"Shouldn't wonder," said Gatty. "There's a chance, anyway."

"I say, Hop Hi, we saw Shylock talking to that Highcliffe chap Merton this afternoon," remarked Dicky.

"No savvy Merton," said Hop Hi. Sylvester came up at this moment.

"Why, that's the chap—" he began.

Then he caught a warning look from his chum, and understood that he was saying too much. It was the merest blink of an eyelid, and the other three noticed nothing. But Sylvester had begun to realise that Hop Hi had something up his sleeve.

"Yes, the chap that nearly went blind after he had a fight with that rotter Ponsonby," said Dicky, who had his own reasons for disliking Ponsonby, the leader of the Highcliffe nuts.

"I know," said Sylvester, nodding, as if that had been what he had meant to say.

"Merton was shaking the sweep."

"Why for shakee Splingee?" inquired Hop Hi.

"Because he loves him so much, I s'pose. Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Gatty.

The three passed on. Sylvester looked at Hop Hi in a puzzled way.

"We might as well have gone and seen Merton, as Miss Gray told us to," he said.

But Hop Hi shook his head. He did not consider that the time was ripe for asking questions of Merton.

He was glad to know that Spring knew Sammy Bunter would be watched that night. It was quite a useful bit of information to Hop Hi, who was playing his own game, kept dark even from his chum.

Sammy was not told, of course. The Second cleared off to bed at the usual time. The moon, now at the full, would not rise till well on into the night, and the sky was not as clear as it had been. By eleven o'clock the Second Form dormitory was dark.

And by that time Dicky Nugent & Co. had had nearly enough of their watch. They had not dared to go to sleep at first, lest they should not wake up; and when a couple of hours had passed and Sammy still snored on, they began to wonder whether there was any profit in staying awake longer.

"Yaw-aw-aw!" yawned Dicky. "Anybody awake?"

"Of course, ass! I am!" growled Gatty.

"Are you, Myers?"

"Eh?" said Myers, sleepily.

"Are you awake?"

"How could I answer you if I wasn't, fathead?"

"Asleep, Shylock?"

No answer to that. Yet Hop Hi, wide awake, felt sure Spring was not asleep.

"Let's chuck it!" said Dicky. "That fat young cad's snoring away like one o'clock!"

"He won't walk to-night," Gatty said, half doubtfully.

"Good-night, you chaps!" said Myers. "I'm going to sleep for one."

Silence fell upon the dormitory after the "Good-nights!" of Gatty and Dicky Nugent had been spoken. Hop Hi lay quite still, but wide awake.

The silence lasted for something like three-quarters of an hour. Then the voice of Spring was heard, with a mocking note in it:

"Nugent minor, Gatty, Myers! Thought you fellows were going to stay awake?"

Nobody replied to that.

"Anybody awake at all?" inquired Spring.

To that also there was no reply.

A quarter of an hour passed. The clock in the tower was just chiming twelve when Spring got out of bed, and crept stealthily towards the door.

He had not reached it when Hop Hi slipped cautiously from between the sheets and followed him.

The door closed noiselessly behind Spring. Next moment it opened as noiselessly, and Hop Hi glided into the passage.

He was just in time to see Spring open the door of the Remove dormitory. The passage was almost completely dark to ordinary eyes, but the little Chinese seemed to have the eyes of a cat.

Hop Hi did not follow his quarry into the Remove quarters. He stooped by the door, and, had anyone else been there to hear, the pattering sound of a number of small objects falling upon the linoleum might have been heard.

Hop Hi stepped back into the shadows. Spring had gone barefooted, or with merely his socks on. Hop Hi was sure of that. For he knew that Spring's slippers creaked.

Several minutes passed. Spring must

be busy in the Remove dormitory. But there was an unpleasant surprise awaiting Spring when he came out.

He had gone there to steal; nothing could be more certain. And the little Chinese wanted him caught red-handed.

He detested Spring. Part of his hatred was due to the Sylvester affair, no doubt, but not all of it.

And not all of his keenness for the business he was engaged upon was due to his hatred. He had a zest in it for its own sake.

Morality had very little to do with it. Hop Hi had not yet absorbed the British public school spirit to such an extent as to feel about Spring's knavery quite as Dicky Nugent & Co. would have felt had they known. He despised Spring's dishonesty, perhaps; but he relished the pitting of his own shrewd brain against the craftiness of young Shylock.

Sammy really had walked in his sleep, and had taken the half-crown from the pocket of his brother. But Hop Hi did not believe that Sammy had taken Bolsover's money; and he was sure that it was Spring who had rifled Sylvester's pocket-book.

The tooth-powder incident showed Spring's resourcefulness. But Hop Hi had seen through the dodge. It was Spring who had jogged Sylvester's elbow, causing him to spill the stuff; and the Chinese youngster had no doubt that it was Spring who had faked the apparent evidence that Sammy had stepped in it. Easy enough to do that! Just to lift the bedclothes from the feet of the snoring Sammy and dab on some of the stuff; that was all!

Spring's statement that his money had been stolen, his seeming indignation and dismay—these were points in the game.

Sammy was being used as a stalking-horse, or a scapegoat. Spring reckoned it safe to pursue his depredations under cover of Sammy's sleep-walking. No one doubted that Sammy had walked in his sleep.

To-night Spring, knowing that Sammy would be watched, had waited until Dicky Nugent & Co. gave up their vigil, and had acted when he thought all safe. Lord Mauleverer and Inky, and one or two more in the Remove, usually had plenty of money. If all of it was collared, it would be assumed that Sammy had made off with it and hidden it, quite unconsciously—at least, it would be so assumed, unless Spring was caught in the act.

And to get him caught in the act Hop Hi had strewn drawing-pins before the door of the Remove dormitory. Some freakish Oriental whim may have dictated the dodge. Sammy's foot, smeared with the tooth-powder, had been counted evidence against him. Spring should be convicted through his feet also!

So, confident in his own craft, Hop Hi waited in the gloom.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Cunning of Shylock!

THE door of the Remove dormitory creaked ever so little as Spring opened it. Hop Hi moved nearer, gliding ghostlike through the gloom.

"Ow-yow! Oh!"

Spring's feet had found the drawing-pins!

"Gottee you, Spring!" hissed Hop Hi, rushing forward.

But he exulted too soon. He had underrated the craft of his adversary.

"Whalton! Chelly! Oh, you lottels! You velly great lottels! You lamee me!"

The voice was as the voice of Hop Hi, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 549.

lifted in wrath and pain. But it was not Hop Hi who spoke. It was Spring.

And Spring dodged past Hop Hi in the gloom. It was easy enough for him to do that. Hop Hi had ventured too far, and had got two of the drawing-pins in his right foot and one in his left. Pain meant less to him than to Spring; the Chinese can bear pain with greater stoicism than, perhaps, any other race on earth. But, between pain and surprise, Hop Hi was flabbergasted for the moment.

And in the next moment he knew that his trick had failed—that Spring had outwitted him in that round.

The clamour of voices arose in the Remove dormitory. The door opened again, in the second after the door of the Second Form dormitory closed behind Spring.

Hop Hi might have bolted, in spite of his damaged foot. But he did not choose to bolt. Perhaps he thought it was useless after that outcry in his voice.

"Yaroooooh!" yelled Bob Cherry, first into the passage, first on to the patch of sharp points. "Yooop! Hop Hi, you young rascal—"

"Handsome Bob Chelly wantee Hop Hi?" spoke the little Chinese out of the gloom.

"Want you? My hat, yes! I want to give you a jolly good hiding! Look out, Harry! Look out, you fellows! Strike a light, somebody. This floor's all over tintacks!"

"Dlawing-pins, Chelly, not tintacks," Hop Hi corrected him.

A match flared up, held between the finger and thumb of the Bounder. Behind Vernon-Smith showed a crowd of faces.

Wharton and Johnny Bull, Inky and Frank Nugent, Delarey and Squiff, and Tom Brown, Peter Todd, Redwing, Hazeldene, Bulstrode, Ogilvy, Vivian, Desmond, Morgan, Bolsover, Wun Lung, Dupont, Rake, Russell, Skinner, Stott, and half a dozen more had been pressing forward when Bob gave that warning.

They halted suddenly, packed close together. Others pressed behind them, and a hum of voices sounded. The Remove had been pretty thoroughly aroused.

But Billy Bunter still snored, and Tom Dutton, who was very deaf, still slept on; and Lord Mauleverer was not out of bed, though he was sitting up and taking some languid interest in the proceedings.

"I've a candle-end, Smithy," said Peter Todd. "Mustn't waste matches these days."

The match flickered out. Peter wriggled his way through the crowd somehow. He could not wriggle back, so dense it was; but the candle-end was passed to Vernon-Smith, who struck another match and lighted it.

"Look at that!" said Bob, pointing to the floor. "The young villain! He must have meant to lame us all!"

"Pick them up!" ordered Harry Wharton.

Hop Hi obeyed without a second's hesitation. His mind was made up. To accuse Spring would be useless. It was not Spring who had strewn those drawing-pins. No one had heard Spring's voice; no one had seen Spring. It was quite possible, though Hop Hi thought it very unlikely, that nothing had been stolen. As for catching young Shylock with the proceeds of his thefts upon him—assuming that he had stolen anything—Hop Hi had now too much respect for the exceeding craftiness and the resource of his adversary to hope for that.

Wun Lung wriggled out of the crowd at the door and reached his brother's side.

"Whatee gamee you playee?" he asked.

"No can talkie," replied Hop Hi. He did not even look up as he spoke. Not until he had picked up the last drawing-pin did he raise his head.

Nearly all the eyes of the Remove were upon him when he did so. He did not meet those inquiring glances. His own eyes were veiled, and his yellow face was quite impassive. So, in spite of his puzzlement, was the face of Wun Lung.

It was plain that Wun Lung meant to stand by his brother. But at present Hop Hi was in no immediate danger. Only Bob Cherry had been hurt; and the good-tempered Bob, having picked the drawing-pins out of his feet, was no longer very angry.

"You'll blessed well have to tell, you yellow imp!" snorted Bulstrode. "It was only the other night we had Sammy Bunter here, sleep-walking!"

"Me no sleep-walkee," said Hop Hi mildly.

"We can all see that," returned Wharton. "But it's easy to be fed up with visits from you fags, and this trick—"

"Perhaps he was after Sammy?" suggested Squiff.

Hop Hi was rather a favourite with the Remove, and there was no disposition to be too rough on him.

"If so, where's Sammy?" said Rake.

"And what did this young yellow sinner meant by singing out as he did, accusing us of laming him?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"You puttee dlawing-pins down?" said Wun Lung to his brother.

"Me puttee dlawing-pins down," answered Hop Hi coolly.

The Removites looked at one another in great perplexity.

They knew of the thefts in the Second Form dormitory the night before. Dicky Nugent had told the Famous Five, and they had agreed with Dicky that to watch for Sammy Bunter's next walking, and thus probably to find the hiding-place, which even Sammy himself did not know, was quite the best plan. In any case, as the thefts were unconscious, so to say, involving no real guilt on the part of the fat young somnambulist, it had not seemed worth while to report them—as yet. If they went on, and watching failed, something more would have to be done.

But there was nothing to show that Sammy was in this affair. There seemed to be no one in it but Hop Hi, and he would not explain.

The sneering voice of Skinner struck in upon the silence.

"I don't know what you fellows think," said the cad of the Remove, "but my notion is that it would be just as well to see if anybody's lost anything."

"Do you think Bunter minor's been in here?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, I'm not saying anything about Bunter minor! There's no evidence against him. For the matter of that, I don't know whether anybody's been in at all. But there seems to be blessed mysterious things going on in the Second, and I don't quite see why our Form should be dragged into it."

The Removites trooped back into the dormitory. Hop Hi went with them. If he had lost his head for a moment, and had done the wrong thing, he was cool enough now. But his only real mistake had been one for which he was hardly to blame—the failure to grab and hold Spring at the critical moment.

The blinds were pulled down and the lights switched on. There was a general examination of pockets, pocket-books, purses. But Billy Bunter still snored, and Tom Dutton still slept on; and

Maully sat up in bed, with his head back, propped against a pillow, too lazy to trouble about making sure whether his money was safe.

"No one's lost anything, it seems," said Harry Wharton.

"Unless Maully has!" growled Johnny Bull. "Tumble the boulder out of bed, somebody! He hasn't looked yet!"

"Oh, begad, it's all right, I'm sure, dear boys! Hop Hi wouldn't touch anyone's cash!"

"But Sammy Bunter might—in his sleep," said Frank Nugent.

"Has Sammy been here? That's the question!" Tom Brown said.

"Can't have been!" said Squiff. "He'd have punctured his fat feet, and howled so that the whole blessed house would have woke up!"

That seemed likely enough. It was difficult to imagine Sammy walking over those drawing-pins and not raising such howls as might almost have awakened the dead.

"Did you see Sammy?" asked Bob Cherry of Hop Hi.

The little Celestial shook his head.

"Or hear him?" put in Rake.

Hop Hi shook his head again.

"See anybody?" inquired Delarey.

This time the Second-Former nodded.

"Who was it? Speak out, kid!" growled Bolsover.

Another shake of the head.

"Too dark to see, I suppose," said Peter Todd. "But the other chap must have got punctured a bit, too. We must look out for a lame duck to-morrow."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Maully's been burgled!" hooted Bob Cherry.

Johnny Bull and Ogilvy, by methods in which force played a larger part than persuasion, had got Maully out of bed and to his pocket-book. Now the school-boy earl stood with dropped jaw and face of consternation.

There was not a single note left in the pocket-book. There had been somewhere between twenty and thirty pounds there overnight!

"How much, Maully?" asked the Bounder.

"I'm not positive, dear boy. Twenty, anyhow—p'raps twenty-five. A clean sweep, begad!"

Maully's voice sounded worried. All three knew that Maully did not much mind losing his money. Plenty more where that came from. But what Maully did mind considerably was the manner in which his chums in the Remove testified their disapproval of his carelessness.

"Oh, you are a silly ass, Maully!" said Sir Jimmy Vivian frankly.

"On principle and in a general way, Vivian, I agree to that verdict," Peter Todd said. "Maully is a silly ass about cash. But in this particular case he only did what the rest of us did, and one must really take it for granted that Greyfriars chaps aren't thieves, old top!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Harold Skinner. "There must be one of them who ain't too honest, anyway. Maully's notes didn't go off on their own."

"Sure you didn't help them, Skinner?" asked the Bounder sardonically.

"Quite sure, Smithy! But I don't think we've far to look."

And Skinner looked straight at Hop Hi, who stood by his brother's side. The two Chinese boys were no friends of Harold Skinner's.

Both yellow countenances remained absolutely impassive. But if Skinner thought Wun Lung and Hop Hi did not resent his innuendo he was greatly in error.

"Rats!" said Wharton. "Hop Hi isn't the fellow to do such a thing. Besides, he's rolling in money as it is. There's no motive for his doing it."

"All the same, it wouldn't be a bad idea to search him," mumbled Snoop.

"I don't see any need for that," Mark Linley said quietly.

"Not much to search," added Squiff, with a grin.

Hop Hi came forward. He had nothing on but his pyjamas, and his feet were bare. There was blood on the right foot. One of the drawing-pins had gone in deeply.

"Searchee!" he said.

As a matter of form, they searched him. Skinner suggested that the passage should also be searched, and this was done. But there was no sign anywhere of the missing notes.

"Must have been Sammy Bunter," said Frank Nugent.

"The ludicrous and venerated Sammy, sleepfully walking, is dangerous to the community," remarked Inky.

"Better clear off, Hop Hi!" said Harry Wharton. "We must look into this in the morning. There's nothing against you, anyway, except a blessed silly trick."

"Speak for yourself, Wharton!" sneered Skinner. "Everybody isn't obliged to think that yellow-faced little rotter as innocent as a new-born baby. I suppose, even if you do? What's stealing to a Chink? They ail do it."

"Yep. I calculate you're right thar, Skinney!" said Fisher T. Fish.

Hop Hi cleared off. Spring seemed to be asleep when he got back to the Second Form dormitory. The little Chinese did not arouse him. Spring had had plenty of time to hide his booty; but what is hidden may be found!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hop Hi's Way!

"FOUND it? Oh, crumbs! You're the cleverest chap I ever knew, Hop Hi!" cried Sylvester.

For once the yellow face was not impassive. Hop Hi allowed himself the luxury of a grin. But it was less joy at his find than pleasure at his chum's compliment that induced him to relax so far.

Hop Hi had pitted his wits against those of the Shylock of the Second, and thus far Shylock had scored. But now there was to be a change.

The little Chinese had felt sure that Spring had a hiding-place for his ill-gotten gains somewhere in the dormitory. That being assumed as certain, he had no doubt at all about finding the hiding-place. It was only a question of patience, and his race had much patience.

Sylvester and Hop Hi had no right to be in the dormitory at that hour. But there are times when rules must be broken.

Hop Hi had thought it all out, and had then confided to Sylvester the result of his cogitations, with much more that greatly surprised the American junior.

He did not guess, perhaps, that he might not have been taken so fully into his yellow-skinned chum's confidence but for the fact that Hop Hi had need for an aide. Someone must keep "cave" at the door while the search was in progress.

Hop Hi's theory was that young Shylock's hiding-place was somewhere in, under, or near either Spring's own bed or Sammy Bunter's.

The two beds stood side by side, with only a narrow space between them. Hop Hi examined Sammy's bed first. On the whole, he thought it most likely the hiding-place was there for several reasons, the chief of which was that Spring was plainly pursuing his criminal course under cover of Sammy's somnambulism.

And he was right. Within five minutes he had found the nefariously obtained hoard.

The hiding-place was a cunning one. So much might have been expected of Spring, though luck had favoured him in supplying just such a cranny as he needed in the very place where he would have chosen to have it.

The skirting of the wall behind Sammy's bed had warped slightly, leaving a narrow space between it and the wall. Into this space, roughly wrapped up in a scrap of brown paper, had been thrust a number of Treasury notes.

There was no actual coin. That, if Spring had taken any besides Bolsover's little all, was safe enough in Spring's pocket. But the notes might be identified by their numbers, and no doubt young Shylock was waiting until he could find out whether the numbers were known to any of the real owners of those notes.

He had told everybody that he knew the numbers of his own, and Hop Hi found four bearing those numbers with the rest. Spring was too crafty to forget that dodge for making good his story.

"I'd better take mine," said Sylvester.

But Hop Hi shook his head.

"Notee takee!" he said. "Puttee back!"

Sylvester stared in astonishment.

"But the rotter may come along and walk off with them!" he protested.

"Me tinkee not. Watchee him close. Splingee comee up hele we comee, too, and bling Dicky and Gatty and Myels."

"Oh, well, have it your own way, old man!" said Sylvester. "You're a heap smarter than I am."

Hop Hi smiled his inscrutable smile as he put the notes back, without the brown-paper covering. If Spring eluded their watch, and came up to collar the notes, the absence of the brown paper would show him that someone else knew of the hiding-place, and might make him afraid to remove them.

So Hop Hi thought. Little more than a child in years, he had the keen, crafty Oriental brain, and would have been fully a match in intrigue for many a Western man.

Sylvester thrilled with excitement all through that day. But if Hop Hi was excited he did not show it. He varied the monotony of keeping an eye on Spring by quite unusual attentions to Sammy Bunter.

Between tea and prep he took Sammy to the tuckshop, and filled him up to the Plimsoll-line and above it with everything indigestible Sammy chose to eat. Also he talked to Sammy, and let Sammy talk to him. In fact, Sammy did most of the talking. It was all about his grievances—Billy's refusal to whack out, and the unjust and unkind things said about the sleep-walking business.

Hop Hi wanted Sammy to walk again that night, and he fancied that indigestion and dwelling upon his wrongs until his somewhat obtuse brain was full of them might cause Sammy to walk. It was not a wild or far-fetched notion, for everyone believed that Sammy's bitter resentment at his major's meanness had been the cause of his first somnambulistic adventure.

Dicky Nugent & Co. were on the watch again that night. But Gatty and Myers had dropped off to sleep, and Dicky was only half awake, when Sammy stuck his fat legs out of bed and lowered his podgy feet to the floor.

Dicky heard nothing, saw nothing. But Hop Hi, in the bed opposite Sammy's, both heard, and, in spite of the gloom, saw.

In an instant he was out of bed..

Sammy stood as if irresolute. His hands were outstretched in front of him.

Hop Hi's yellow paw fell upon his shoulder, and Hop Hi's right foot pressed gently against his leg, behind the knee. Sammy, still unconscious, yielded to the pressure of hand and foot, exercised very steadily, very gently. Sammy subsided on his hands and knees.

Then the foot pressed again, but in a different place, and Sammy's head went under the bed.

"Sammee walkee!" cried Hop Hi, and Dicky Nugent was out of bed in a second, rubbing his eyes. All down the dormitory the fags awoke. Dicky struck a match, and the fat legs of Sammy were seen protruding from under the bed.

Spring sat up, and into his face there came a look of mingled fear and rage. But only Hop Hi noticed it. The eyes of everyone else were upon Sammy.

"That's his—"

Little Sylvester's voice trembled with excitement, and broke. But it did not matter. Dicky finished what Sylvester had been going to say.

"His hiding-place, you bet!"

Sammy awoke in the clutches of a dozen hands, and inquired peevishly where he was, and what they thought they were doing.

"Lun and fetchee Hally Whalton and some more of the Lemove," suggested Hop Hi.

Myers darted off.

"We'll wait till they come," said Dicky. "The notes are hidden somewhere under the bed, that's a dead cert. Lucky for you, fat Sammy!"

"It ain't lucky for me! Why do you say that?" squeaked Sammy. "I haven't done anything! Let me alone, can't you, you beasts!"

"You can get back into bed if you like, you fat clam!" growled Gatty. "We've no more use for you. But you'll jolly well get it in the neck if you start walking in your giddy sleep again!"

Sammy was getting heavily into bed when the Removites came trooping in.

It was not merely Harry Wharton who came—not merely the Famouse Five. The Remove left every bed but one in their dormitory vacant. And Tom Dutton was very angry with Peter Todd next morning when he got a notion of what he had missed.

"We caught fat Sammy scrabbling about under the bed, and we know he's hidden the notes there, so we sent for you fellows!" said Dicky excitedly.

"Didn't you look for the hiding-place?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"No, we didn't. We thought it was fairer to wait for you chaps."

"Quite right, Dicky!" said Frank Nugent approvingly.

"Rats! Who cares what you think?" retorted the polite Richard.

"I'll look!" said Skinner, pushing forward.

"Oh, really! I don't think Skinney had better be allowed to look. I ain't sure he's to be trusted!" protested William George Bunter.

"Are you, porpoise?" inquired Peter Todd.

"Of course I am! Besides, it's much more my affair than Skinney's, as my minor's been dragged into it."

"Dragged into it" isn't half bad," remarked Tom Brown, grinning.

No one else objected to Skinner's searching. They all knew him cute enough.

He crept under with a lighted candle-end. Within twenty seconds he cried:

"I've got 'em!"

Then he emerged, with the notes in

his hand. Hop Hi glanced at Spring. Spring looked worried rather than frightened. It was pretty clear that Sammy Bunter was to be Spring's scapegoat to the end.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Harry Wharton. "They're all here, as far as I can see. This lot must be yours, Mauly; and these are Sylvester's; and the four together are Spring's."

Spring clutched at his. The other two took theirs without excitement. Mauly yawned as he received his wad.

"Beastly fag, gettin' up at an unearthly hour like this, y'know," he said.

"Let this be a lesson to you, Sammy," Peter Todd said solemnly. "Walk henceforth in the ways of the righteous, and walk not at all in your sleep. Shun evil communications, lest haply thou become like unto thy brother!"

"Oh, really, Peter Todd! If Sammy ever gets to be like me, he'll be a blessed sight better chap than he is now, I can tell you!"

"Rats!" said Sammy. "I say, you fellows, I think something ought to be done for me for finding those notes, you know."

"And what ought to be done to you for hiding them?" asked Squiff.

"Oh, well, you know, I couldn't help that. Everybody admits that it wasn't my fault at all. You ought to be sorry for me about that."

"We is—we are!" chortled Bob Cherry. "We're so sorry, Sammy, that if it ever happens again we mean to give you the bumping of your fat young life!"

"Beasts!" muttered Sammy, as the Removites trooped out again, and the Second-Formers scrambled into bed—but not to sleep again yet. For an hour or more the hum of talk sounded in the dormitory. But Hop Hi had little to say. He was thinking hard. Now that it was all over, he was not quite satisfied. There might have been some difficulty in bringing the thefts home to Spring; but, as things were, Spring was not even suspected of them.

Would it be a lasting lesson to him?

Hop Hi thought not. He meant to keep his eye on Spring in the future. If he had known what Molly Gray or Merton could have told him he might have acted differently. But Molly Gray had refused to tell him anything, and it was not likely that Merton would have told.

Just before he fell asleep a new thought came into his mind.

And next morning he acted upon it.

Hop Hi had limped since the incident of the drawing-pins. So had Bob Cherry. So had Spring. But whereas Hop Hi and Bob Cherry had not troubled to conceal the fact that they limped, Spring had taken a great deal of trouble to avoid showing that he did.

His face went a curious shade of green when, in the presence of half a dozen other members of the Form, Hop Hi asked him:

"Why you limpee, Springee?"

"What's that to do with you?" snarled Spring.

"Me tinkee you mockee me! Takee that!"

And Hop Hi smacked Spring's face. Then he threw himself into a fighting attitude.

It was explained to Spring that the public opinion of the Form insisted upon his tackling Hop Hi. Nobody but Sylvester had any real notion why Hop Hi, seldom quarrelsome, had acted thus. But everybody wanted to see the little Chinese tackle young Shylock.

Spring did not care greatly about the public opinion of the Form, but he thought he could lick Hop Hi.

That was where he made a mistake. He had the better of the exchanges at first; but Hop Hi stuck to it, and, fighting like a small tiger, gave Spring his quietus in the sixth round.

Spring wished he had taken it in the first. He would not have been hurt so much then.

Hop Hi was hurt, too, for Spring could punch pretty hard. But Hop Hi did not mind being hurt as Spring did.

Herbert Spring—who called himself Conrad Arthur Spring—was not having exactly a gay time of it at Greyfriars.

But worse was in store for him—unless he amended his ways. Molly Gray at Cliff House, Merton at Highcliffe, Hop Hi and Sylvester nearer at hand, all knew too much about him for his safety.

And amendment on his part, though possible, was scarcely likely. Time would show!

(DON'T MISS "PUT TO THE TEST!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

NOTICES.

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THE BROWN TORRENT.—CONCLUSION.

Ferrers Lord gave orders to have the reeds on their own side burned. They offered fine cover for the brown warriors who might attempt a landing in the darkness. And for the defenders a landing in force could only result in two things—the fiercest and most glorious little fight against overwhelming odds, and annihilation.

The machine-gun had been shifted down to the lagoon. It was impossible to trench such a length of front without enormous labour, or to man the line properly if they had done so. They erected barricades of turf at various distances.

The flies were a constant torment. Barry O'Rooney was the chief victim. Perhaps it was the sweet disposition of the famous poet from Ballybunion that was the attraction. Whatever it was, Barry's life was a weary thing, and there were red bumps all over his face and nose. They did not chaff the Irishman over his appearance so much as they might have done in happier circumstances. Matters had grown too critical. The sense of impending danger and probable disaster was beginning to tell its tale, but they were still determined and fearless, and ready to fight to the last.

On the look-out post Maddock had rigged a powerful telescope, and every half-hour the man on watch scanned the northern sky between dawn and dusk. It was scanned in vain.

By the light of the lamp Thurston's fountain-pen was moving steadily over a page of the book in which every evening he jotted down the events of the happenings of the day. He had just written "No news of Prout and Larput Raj," when a sound made him turn his head, and he saw the shikari. It was only a glimpse, for Larput Raj, after one swift glance round, disappeared like a shadow.

Ten minutes later Thurston closed and blotted the book.

Ferrers Lord entered, and puffed his cigarette into a glow over the glass chimney of the lamp. He sat down on a camp-stool and took out his watch.

"Prout has not succeeded yet; but he has not failed," he said. "Here's his note. The water we sent down has taken a lot of gravel with it and formed a bar. They have had to cut through that for a start. So much water was going over the fall then that it was impossible to work under it until yesterday. He is hopeful."

Thurston read the note the shikari had brought from Prout. Prout had gone to attempt to blow up the waterfall where Gan-Waga had caught the big mahseer at the time when, urged on by Zapra, the priest, the Dahrans had been trying to cut their throats.

The millionaire's object was not to drain the lagoon—for that would take months—but to run away enough water to leave a stretch of mud between the shore and the advancing canoes. Twelve feet from the shore, at the shallowest point, their longest pole could find no bottom in that black and treacherous ooze. If Prout succeeded, walls of concrete covered with armour-plate could not have afforded a better protection, for until the sun baked its surface the mud would not support the weight of a mouse. And months of heat would not have dried a crust on it sufficient to hold a man.

"It's a dangerous remedy, chief," said Thurston. "The vapours will poison us. The stench would kill an alligator."

"Very dangerous, Rupert," said the millionaire. "The sun on that mud will breed fever at lightning speed."

"And if Nacha has failed, chief?"

The millionaire shrugged his shoulders and frowned.

"I have given my promise to Dandu and his Dahrans," he answered. "If we beat the canoes, some of us must hold the pass over the ravine. That must fall on us. I shall send Larput Raj to attempt to get through to the camp, and send all the bearers and the Dahrans back south as fast as they can travel. Gan-Waga must go with them. We whites must hold up the brown torrent and take our chances of catching fever. Our word has been pledged. We cannot break it."

"Of course not, chief," said Thurston. "The prospect is a bit rotten, but we're all ready to face it. It's an ugly journey back for Nacha and the boy, but I'm not without hope yet. We'll see it through."

While Ferrers Lord and Rupert Thurston were discussing affairs, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, felt too hot to discuss anything. He unbuttoned his pyjama-jacket, but there was no breeze. There was a heavy and unpleasant

scent in the air—the smell of burnt reeds. The machine-gun emplacement was insufferably warm. The sky above was a grey bowl thickly splashed with stars. Longing for coolness of some kind, the Eskimo dropped into the water of the lagoon as silently as a hunting otter, and swam out. The knowledge that crocodiles inhabited the lagoon did not alarm the Eskimo.

"Butterfuls and coldness at lasts!" he muttered. "And I so tiredness!"

Watching the stars, and luxuriating in the comfort of it all, Gan smoked a cigar to the bitter end, and then spat it out. He was as unsinkable as a cork, except when he chose to sink himself, and a dabchick could hardly have dived more quickly; and a dabchick will dive at the flash of a gun in time to dodge the shot.

Gan-Waga blinked drowsily at the stars until he fell asleep. When he awoke there were no stars. A mist lay above him and around him. The pearly colour of it told him that dawn was very near. Gan felt in one of those mysterious waterproof pockets of his for a cigar and matches, and performed the juggling trick of striking a perfectly dry match and lighting a perfectly dry cigar that always mystified Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney, though they had seen him do it a hundred times.

"Who thises, hunk?" he asked himself. "Olds Shaldza?"

Gan-Waga let his legs sink and spread his arms wide apart as he shook the water out of his ears. Out of the mist came many faint sounds. The Eskimo dropped one hand and drew his knife. He heard the dip of paddles, and then a faint, gliding swash. He sank, until only his eyes and the top of his head appeared above water. A canoe slid forward. There were five or six men in it, but even in the mist Gan-Waga knew it was not a Dahran canoe. He sank without creating a bubble, rose again, gripping the gun-wale of the canoe with both hands, and threw all his weight upon it. Gan-waga heard shrieks and splashes, the clattering of the machine-gun, and, diving again, made for the shore.

A moment or so later, with the gun still clattering furiously, Gan-Waga found himself swimming through some of the most extraordinary water he had ever met with. It was like glue, tenacious and choking. There were only a dozen yards of it, but Gan-Waga lay down and spat and gasped for breath as he gained the shore. No twenty-mile swim at top speed had ever taken so much out of him. For an instant all was silent.

"Chingy!" he gasped, spluttering. "Chingy!"

"Bedad, ut's the missing Iskimo!" said Barry O'Rooney's voice. "Howld aisy, sor! Where are ye, ye wicked spalpeen?"

Gan-Waga staggered up, black with mud from heel to head, and fell into the emplacement. The mist lifted and vanished, went in an instant, and the morning sun shone like a great globe of crimson fire. A cheer went up. The waters of the lagoon no longer lapped blue to the edge of the bank. A barrier of black, oily ooze lay between the bank and the water, with the fire-charred tops of the reeds showing through where they had been burnt. And as the sun tore the concealing curtain of fog away it revealed a great flotilla of canoes, crowded with bowmen and spearmen, paddling furiously to the attack.

It was the threatened invasion. But Prout had succeeded. The barrier of mud was there, and growing wider, though by almost imperceptible degrees. Prout had blasted a gap in the apron of the waterfall, opening a way for double or treble of the usual quantity of water to pass down the river.

On came the canoes. The blue water was thick with them. Each seemed to contain four or five fighting-men, and two men at the paddles. Machine-gun and rifles greeted them with a death-hail of bullets. But more deadly than machine-gun or rifles was that sloping bank of bottomless ooze that only Gan-Waga, of all human bipeds, could have swam through alive. And they realised it, the brown warriors, and yelled a warning clamour.

"By ould Ballybunion, we've got the spalpeens!" cried Barry O'Rooney. "We've got — Whisht! Phwat's that?"

Tok! Boom! Tok! Though it was broad day, Maddock was sending up star-shells, that burst with dull reports and left dark smudges of smoke high in the clear air.

"It's an attack on the pass!" cried Ching-

Lung. "They're making a double event of it!"

The warriors were attacking the pass in force, and only the millionaire, Thurston, the shikari, and a couple of bearers were there to defend it, till Gadra Singh left his fires and cooking-pots to lend his aid, for Dandu, with only a spear, did not count. Maddock seemed to have gone mad. The stock of star-shells was not large, and he was blazing them away in the morning sunshine, careless of economy and regardless of expense. It seemed an insane sort of business, for he was popping shells over the ravine as fast as he could fire them, and also over the lagoon. Gan-Waga was the first to realise the reason.

"Nairyplances, Ching!" yelled the Eskimo. "I hears nairyplances! Yow! Looks, looks! Nairyplances!"

Ferrers Lord heard them, too. Emptying his smoking rifle at the spear-armed warriors who were pressing down the steep path of the pass, he touched the chief of the Dahrans on the arm and pointed to the southern sky.

"There is the great magic I promised thee, Dandu!" he said. "There is death on wings. It is the end. We are victors!"

They were nine machines from the summer camp, sent by General Raynor. While Dandu stood gazing in amazement, the dark specks against the blue grew larger and more distinct, and the whirring of their propellers sounded louder. The enemy at last saw the strange raiders. They were not eagles, and they were not vultures. No birds their eyes had ever viewed were like these. Maddock fired his last shells and scrambled down, his fingers scorched and his throat hoarse with yelling. And then the terrible birds swooped over the lagoon, with its clustered canoes, and over the green plain beyond the lagoon and the ranks of the brown army. And above the roar of the propellers rang the storm-music of the machine-guns.

"By the rifle the Viceroy gave me, sahib," said the shikari, with a grim smile on his lips, "the truth is on thy lips, and never did I doubt this, even in the darkest hour. We shall see Sharpra, thou and I, and laugh at these brown rabbits."

He flung a smile of contempt at Dandu, who was kneeling at the millionaire's feet, kissing Ferrer Lord's hand.

Twelve days later the troops came up. The brown warriors were a broken army, and had long ago been in full flight. Colonel Raynor made an inspection of the defences, and then sipped a whisky-and-soda in the tent and smoked a cigar while Rupert Thurston gave him an account of it all. The colonel pulled at his moustache, and then held out his hand.

"By thunder, sir," cried the colonel, "if you'd been in the Service every man of you would have deserved the V.C.!"

"Especially poor Duke Payton!" said Thurston, with a sigh. "That was the real fight! He died like a British hero!"

From Ferrers Lord's attitude nothing at all might have happened, except one of the ordinary delays that every expedition must expect to meet with when traversing an unexplored region. He superintended the repacking of the baggage in his usual quiet way. The troops went on, making their way across the ravine. Shaldza brought in thirty abandoned canoes. The lagoon was steadily sinking lower, but Shaldza knew where there was a bluff with deep water around it where they could be loaded and launched.

"I don't care to be so undignified as to go to Sharpra at the heels of our troops, Ching," he said, smiling. "It seems too much like a safe excursion arranged by Cook's, or some other firm who cater for tourists and trippers. If our brown opponents turn and show fight our teeth will be pretty sharp. There is another lagoon higher up, and by pushing through the creeks by canoe we may get ahead of the troops, if not ahead of the aeroplanes. Let us start now."

"You'll have your way, chief," said Ching-Lung, with a laugh. "Nothing will stop you. And the Brown Torrent?"

Ferrers Lord shrugged his shoulders.

"We stemmed that when we blew up the bridge," he answered. "We started out to reach Sharpra, and to Sharpra we are going. Of course, there is nothing to go for except a second-rate volcano that woke up after a long rest, and has most likely gone to sleep again. Foolish, no doubt; but there you are. It is just my way."

In the cool of the evening the canoes set off on their uninterrupted journey. It was not an eventful one.

THE END.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 85.—Miss JUDITH COKER.

COKER'S Aunt Judy might well have been given an earlier place in this series. She is certainly of more importance than some of the people who have been allowed to precede her.

As you see her on this page she is smiling—no doubt upon the magnificent Horace. Horace is the very apple of her eye; she is the only other person upon earth who sees him somewhat as he sees himself—an Admirable Crichton, a fellow of simply immense tact, judgment, and capacity for leadership. Aunt Judy cannot understand, I am sure, why Horace is not captain of Greyfriars. Even Horace himself may have a glimmering of a better notion as to the reason of that than she has.

But Aunt Judy does not always show a smiling face.

The conviction is rooted among the Greyfriars juniors that the Head is afraid of her—considers her a terrible woman.

There is some ground for this conviction, too.

For once upon a time Miss Coker came to Greyfriars seeking justice for her dear Horace.

It was a bit undignified for Horace to be still in the Shell at an age at which many fellows have reached the sublime heights of the Sixth. But Horace, though the biggest and strongest fellow in his Form, was quite one of the most backward. There was hardly a fellow there who could not lick his head off in any class subject. We all know his original views on spelling; it is not even the "nu-spelling," as its advocates call it, that he has adopted it; it is a style all his own.

Aunt Judy was blissfully ignorant of all this. She sought an interview with the Head. She began to talk at once of Horace; and Dr. Locke, who had forgotten, if he had ever known it, that Coker's Christian name was Horace, thought she was talking about the Roman poet, and was quite pleased to find a lady student of Latin literature. But that misapprehension was removed, and Aunt Judy made it clear what she wanted. "Dear Horace would go ahead like a steam-engine," she said, "if he had proper encouragement. He is growing so big a boy that he is chaffed—I think he called it chaffed, or chipped, or something of the sort—about being in the Shell so long. I am sure the dear boy is exceptionally clever. His Uncle James said he was the most brilliant Latinist he had ever spoken to. I remember the incident perfectly, for it was on the day that Uncle James had an execution in the house, and came to us to borrow seventy pounds."

I fear that the opinion of Uncle James was not really worth much. He may have been worrying too much about the bailiff at home to criticise Horace's abilities correctly; or he may not have known any Latin. But I think he knew the length of Aunt Judy's leg—if one may use such an expression in connection with a lady.

Dr. Locke gave way. So much did Aunt Judy's importunity trouble him that he let Coker have his remove into the Fifth. After all, it did not matter much. As far as his scholarship was concerned, Coker might just as well have been in the Fourth—or even the Second. But one could not put a fellow in tail-coats in the Fourth; and when moustaches began to sprout, the fellow on whom they sprouted looked rather absurd, even in the Shell. The Head was almost ready to promote Coker to the Sixth in order to get Aunt Judy to say good-bye. But he was utterly flabbergasted when Miss Coker told him that Horace had actually had to correct his Form-master's Latin. "Through using a false quantity," she said. "I really do not know how much he should have used; but if he used a wrong quantity of Latin, or anything else, I am sure it was very foolish of him." Imagine the austere Mr. Hacker having his Latin corrected by Horace James Coker, the biggest dunce in the Form! Those of my readers who learn Latin will get on to the joke about "quantity"; I really have not space to explain it to those who don't. Aunt Judy was not joking, though.

Aunt Judy went. She held a conversation with Horace at the door of the cab, and when she kissed him good-bye he threw his arms round her neck and gave her a smacking kiss audible some distance away. Wherefrom

those who saw judged that he had heard something which had pleased him.

So he had; but there was more than that in his demonstration of affection. The great Coker had no need to care what anyone thinks. His motto might be that borne by an ancient Scottish house—"They say? What say they? Let them say!" But it was partly because Coker is honestly fond of his aunt—as he should be, for she has been as a mother to him—that he did not mind anyone's seeing him kiss her. It is not to be supposed that he sees her as other people see her. He jumped on Hobson at once for making derisive remarks about her; and quite rightly. Potter and Greene know better than to criticise Aunt Judy unfavourably. They should be grateful to her, for her bounteous tips to Horace have made the study they share with him a land flowing with milk and honey, so to say, on many occasions; and it is not Miss Coker's fault if dearth is ever there.

How truly fond Coker is of Aunt Judy was shown when, through the defalcations of a rascally solicitor, she believed herself to have lost all her money. "The poor old girl! What a rotten shame!" said Horace. "She can't send me that tenner. She hasn't a tenner left in the world out of fifty thousand pounds. Now she's ruined I suppose she'll come to live



with my people. She's been jolly good to me, and I'll be jolly good to her. She shan't ever want for anything while I've got anything; I jolly well know that!"

He got leave, and went off to see her. More than anything else she was worrying about the money she had been going to leave him. He told her that that didn't matter a scrap; and one can be sure that he meant it.

"Reproach you, Aunt Judy? My hat! I should be a pretty sort of a rotter if I did, shouldn't I?" he said.

We saw the magnificent Horace at his best then; and we also saw Aunt Judy at her best. She may seem an old termagant to the Head; but there must be something greatly generous about the woman who, at such a time, was thinking more of another than of herself.

Coker undertook to find the absconding lawyer and bring him to book; and he had no doubt about being able to do it, either. He did not accomplish his task; but the Famous Five, aided by luck, were the instruments by which the rascal was brought to book. Of course, Coker thought he had done it all, though he admitted that some kids in the Remove had helped him. Aunt Judy brushed that aside. Her Horace—the cleverest and finest fellow in the world—had done it.

Aunt Judy was the real donor of the Coker Cup. And on at least one occasion she watched a Form match at Greyfriars. Horace was allowed to play for the Fifth because she was there; and he lost his side the game by his clumsiness, and at the end of it all Miss Coker's inquiry of Reggie, who had sat by her side, was: "Has Horace won?" For her there was no one on the field but Horace that mattered. Dear old Aunt Judy!

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"PUT TO THE TEST!"

By Frank Richards.

Herbert Vernon-Smith is the fellow who is put to the test in this story, and it is his father who tries his loyalty.

All old readers will remember how fond Smithy is of his father, though perhaps it may be difficult for some of them to understand why he should be so. Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith, with all his money, is by no means a particularly agreeable personage; he is uncultured and purse-proud, and he went far to make a complete cad of his only son by his foolish indulgence. His theory was that what the boy wanted he was to have, whether it was good for him or not; and most of the things the Bounder wanted in those days were distinctly not good for him.

The Bounder has changed a good deal since then. He is in every way a decent fellow. Sometimes he says that there is nobody in the world but his father for whom he cares a rap; but he does not really mean that. Tom Redwing and Harry Wharton and Marjorie Hazeldene certainly count for something in his life—all of them, indeed, for better influences than his father is capable of exerting.

But the old man is still first in Smithy's affections—there can be no doubt of that. There should be no doubt, anyway; but Samuel Vernon-Smith comes to doubt it, and puts Herbert to the test. In what way this is done I am not going to tell here; that would spoil the story. You will learn next week, and I am sure you will agree with me that this is a ripping yarn, with pathos in it as well as humour.

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- 445.—"Rake's Rival."
- 446.—"A Split in the Study."
- 447.—"The Sentence of the School."
- 448.—"The Great Bat Mystery."
- 449.—"Billy Bunter's Bolt."
- 450.—"For D'Arcy's Sake."
- 451.—"The Mystery of Manly."
- 452.—"The Stolen Study."
- 453.—"The Bounder's Guest."
- 454.—"Fishy's Latest."
- 455.—"Under Bunter's Thumb."
- 456.—"The Rascal of the Remove."
- 457.—"Mauleverer's Detective."
- 458.—"Coker's Spy."
- 459.—"The Rivals of Greyfriars."
- 460.—"Billy Bunter's Reformation."
- 461.—"The House on the Heath."
- 462.—"The Way of the Transgressor."
- 463.—"Foul Play!"
- 464.—"Victims and Victors."
- 465.—"Getting Rich Quick."
- 466.—"In Hot Water."
- 467.—"The Deserter."
- 468.—"Linley Minor."
- 469.—"Bunter's Big Brother."
- 470.—"The Fellow Who Funked."
- 471.—"Sir Jimmy of Greyfriars."
- 472.—"The Great Fat-Cure."
- 473.—"The Herlock Sholmes of Greyfriars."
- 474.—"Viscount Bunter."
- 475.—"The Prefect's Plot."
- 476.—"The Greyfriars Flying Corps."
- 477.—"Harry Wharton's Rivals."
- 478.—"The Rebel."
- 479.—"Colonial Chums."
- 480.—"The Remove Election Campaign."
- 481.—"Head of the Poll."
- 482.—"National Service at Greyfriars."
- 483.—"Sir Jimmy's Secret."
- 484.—"His Father's Honour."
- 485.—"Two of the Sixth."
- 486.—"Peter Todd's Vengeance."
- 487.—"The Fall of the Bounder."
- 488.—"The Bounder's Match."
- 489.—"The Last Straw."
- 490.—"The Bounder's Way."
- 491.—"Sir Jimmy's Pal."
- 492.—"Sharing the Risk."
- 493.—"Against His Own Side."
- 494.—"A Lesson for Skinner."
- 495.—"On the Wrong Track."
- 496.—"Hupree Singh's Secret."
- 497.—"Parted Pals!"
- 498.—"The Greyfriars Organiser."
- 499.—"On the Make."
- 500.—"The Schoolboy Inventor."