

"THE RIVAL TUCKSHOPS!"

This week's special school story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

No. 904. Vol. XXVII.

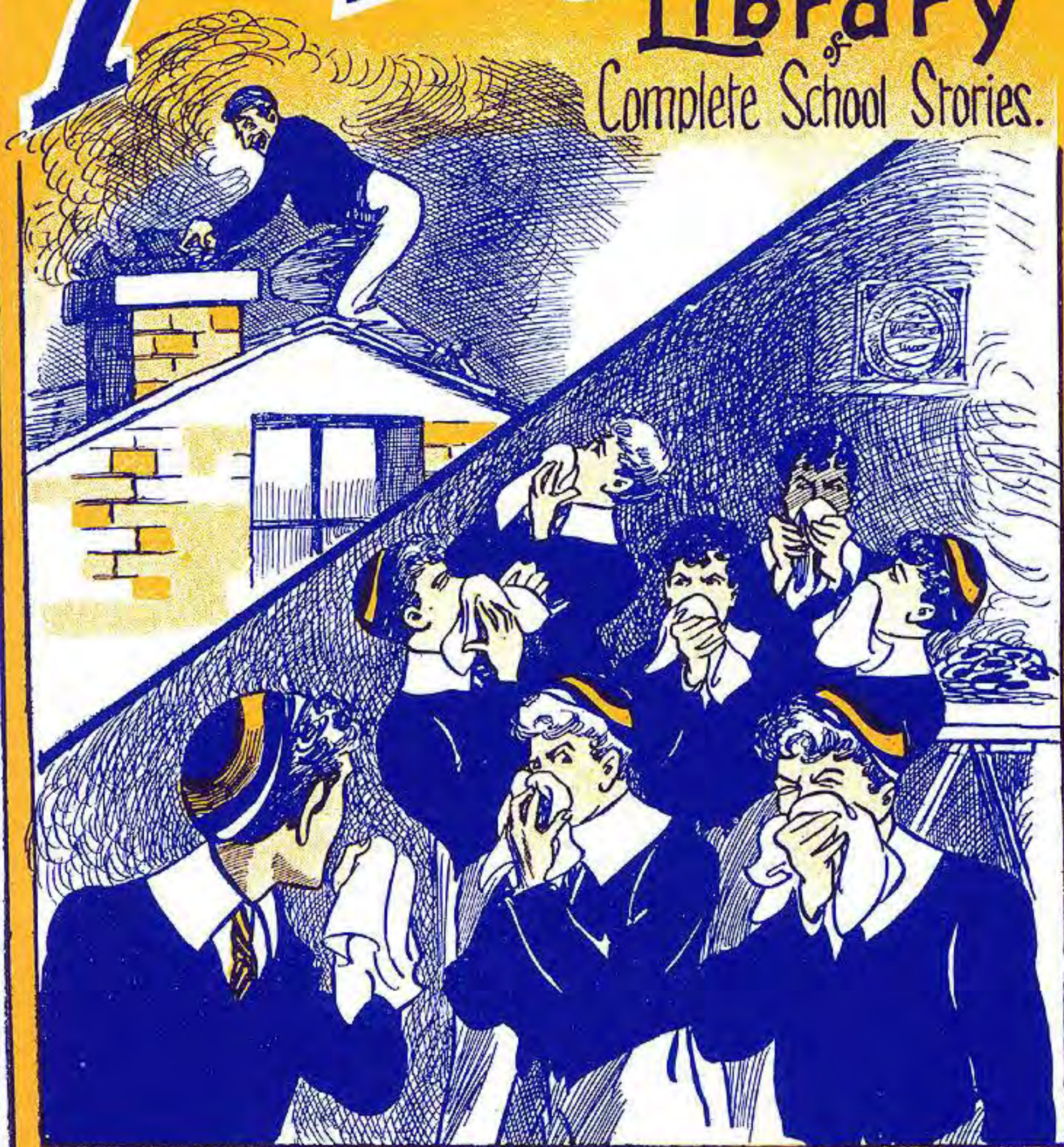
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The Magnet²

EVERY MONDAY

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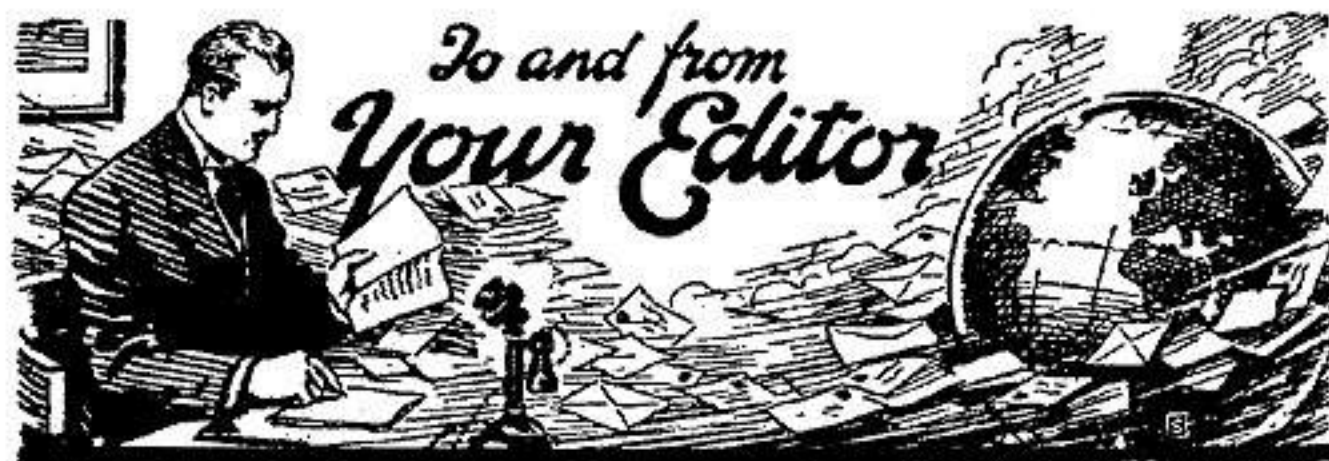
Complete School Stories.



HAROLD SKINNER SMOKES HIS RIVALS OUT!

HOW THE "FIRE" STARTED!

(A diverting incident from the long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, inside.)



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

STARTING NEXT WEEK!

MAGNETITES must not miss the wonderful opportunity given them in our next issue of bagging something from a really tip-top prize list. There is nothing frightfully difficult to be done. Anyone can solve the eight pictures that will be presented for solution. The first set of pictures in our

"WHAT IS IT?" COMPETITION,

of which I made mention in last week's Chat, shows eight objects seen at the seaside. Now, as most of you have at some time or another been to the seaside you will find no real difficulty in telling a pier from a bathing-machine, or a ship from a motor-car. That sounds ridiculous, you might say, but honestly the pictures are as easy to solve as falling off a log. Now we'll proceed to the prize list, which, I guarantee, interests you more at the moment than all my chin-wag about pictures.

To the three readers whose efforts are adjudicated the best I will award

THREE TOPPING CAMERAS,

made by the well-known firm of Kodak, Limited. How's that for a start? These cameras, let me stress the point, are the real goods—handy for the holiday, the picnic party, etc. As I am using one myself, and have been for some time past, you will perhaps appreciate their usefulness. You'll feel like hugging yourself when you've received one of these cameras. I'm not joking! Just wait and see. Here's another little surprise. For the six next best entries the unique prize award takes the form of

SIX MODEL SAILING YACHTS,

guaranteed by the makers to be sailable. That offer will appeal to you all, I have not the slightest doubt. I have taken great pains to test the statement of the makers of these model yachts that they are sailable, and that they won't topple over in mid-stream at the slightest sign of a gust of wind, and have found that

these yachts will do all that is claimed of them. Remember, then, chums, the backbone, as it were, of this offer—

GUARANTEED SAILABLE!

For the twelve next best efforts I am awarding prizes that always appeal to the average boy. Going back over my boyhood days I remember how I longed to have a decent pocket-knife—a knife that would sharpen a pencil decently, that would perform all manner of services for me in the daily round. Magnetites will be pleased to see that the prize list includes

TWELVE USEFUL POCKET-KNIVES!

Now you know all there is to know about this grand offer—an offer, by the way, that will be repeated each week. If it has interested you make certain that you secure a copy of next week's MAGNET. There's bound to be a rush to get it. 'Nuff said!

"ALONZO THE SLOGGER!"

That's the title of the next long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. It's much longer than usual, a fact that will please you all, I have no doubt, for by every post comes the demand for "longer Greyfriars stories."

The supplement has had to go by the board to make room for this extra long "Richards" yarn, but I know Magnetites will not grouse on that account. We can't have butter on both sides of our bread, can we? The title of this coming treat indicates that Alonzo Todd, the meek and mild cousin of Peter of that ilk, blossoms out as a "hefty" merchant. Anyone less capable of "slogging" than the guileless and scraggy Duffer of the Remove it would be hard to find. And yet the story justifies the title. Alonzo is a slogger—very much a slogger. Now, how does that come about? How comes it that a boy, who knows not the meaning of "pep" and "mus," and who hasn't the strength of a small child, develops "slogging" pro-

pensities? I'll tell you. Alonzo takes exception to a word—a word of four letters. No, no; it's not a Cross Word puzzle as we know Cross Words of today. It's merely a form of address symbolical of scorn and derision. Alonzo begins to sit up on his hind legs, as it were. Why should he be held in derision by his "dear Form-fellows"? Why can't he be like Bolsover major, the burly junior who is quick to take offence, and who is quicker still to land out with a devastating punch? Why can't Alonzo be able to hold his own?

WHY!

Alonzo really wastes a lot of grey matter in thinking this deep problem out, but he cannot arrive at a solution that is of any use to him. And while, in a depressed moment, he bewails his lot that "he is not as other men are," something is brought before his notice that looks, on first sight, to be the very thing to put him on his feet. I'm going to ring off now, chums. I've told you enough to prove that next week's yarn is a corker, a top-notch, a winner, and all the other adjectives you care to think of. Mind you read it!

"THE SPORTING DETECTIVE!"

In the next long instalment of this powerful story we see Monty Manners going great guns in the "detection and deduction" line. He is evidently the possessor of a pair of lynx eyes, for nothing seems to miss them.

While Inspector Pyecroft flounders in the dark, Monty steadily reconstructs a crime, and proves that he has hit the right theory, for he finds— But that's letting the cat out of the bag. You find this "something" yourselves, boys. Go hand-in-hand with Monty through next week's stirring instalment and make your own discoveries. You'll appreciate them better than learning them from me. I'll say this much. Through the "webbing" of the story there is being built up a baffling mystery, an inkling of which, perhaps, you have already gathered. When the time comes for that mystery to be laid bare you will appreciate the depth of the author's cleverness in keeping that mystery a real mystery until the end. When that time comes, as I have said before, several points in the story that might have puzzled you will be cleared up. Knowing this, it behoves you to be certain of reading every instalment of this fine story, and to prevent any disappointment, it's advisable to place a regular order with your newsagent for your favourite paper.

Your Editor.

TWO STUNNING BOOKS FOR YOU!

"THE SCHOOLBOY CARAVANNERS!"

A topping story of the world-famous school-boys, Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, describing their amazing adventures on holiday.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

"CAPTAIN OF THE FOURTH!"

A powerful story of school life, with a strong sporting interest, featuring Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

ASK FOR THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY!
OUT ON FRIDAY.

"CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER ORDERS!" That is the surprising notice the Greyfriars juniors find pinned to the door of the school tuckshop. But it doesn't dismay them for long; it's astonishing how businesslike the Remove can be when anything affects their "tommy"!



A Topping Long Complete Story
of Harry Wharton & Co. of
Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hungry Bunter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

As he made that observation Bob Cherry of the Remove at Greyfriars came into Study No. 1 and laid a couple of large paper bags on the table. Bob's tone was cheery, and to judge from his bright, grinning face he was feeling cheery.

It was tea-time in the end study. A clean white tablecloth graced the board, as did gleaming crockery and shining cutlery, while a bowl of fresh flowers added lustre and finish to the table.

And the occupants of the famous end study were busy—very busy. Harry Wharton was cutting piles of bread-and-butter, Hurree Singh was busy making toast, Frank Nugent was putting tea in the teapot, Johnny Bull was just placing a dish of newly-boiled eggs on the table.

Altogether, Study No. 1 on the Remove passage presented quite a festive appearance.

As Bob entered the room Harry Wharton looked up with some satisfaction.

"Just in time, Bob!" he said. "Kettle's boiling, eggs are done, so's the toast. What stuff have you got?"

"Jam-tarts, custard-tarts, cream-horns, chocolate eclairs, and macaroons," said Bob. "Mrs. Mimble's out of pies. I say, Franky, shut the door."

"Right-ho!"

"And lock it!"

Frank Nugent, who happened to be nearest to the door, was about to kick it to, when he paused.

"Why lock it?" he demanded.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I met a certain young gentleman in the passage without—a young gentleman wearing big round glasses and a hungry look."

"Oh, you mean Bunter?"

"You've said it. He spotted these bags of tuck, and his eyes fairly glistened. I'm not a betting man," added Bob Cherry, grinning, "but I'll lay ten to one that Billy Bunter will be here within a minute."

"And you'll win, Bob!" laughed Harry Wharton, as a shuffling footstep

sounded just then from the passage.

"Here he comes!"

Frank Nugent hastily locked the door, and he was only just in time. The next instant the door-knob rattled, and the rattle was followed by a grunt—the grunt being followed by a fat voice.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shove off, Bunter!"

"Run away and play, old lard-tub!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Nothing doing, Billy!" called Bob Cherry. "We're not feeding the hungry and needy to-day!"

"Beasts!"

"Thanks! Good-bye!"

"I say, you fellows," called Bunter in a pathetic voice, "you might have told me you had a feed on!"

"That's why we didn't tell you—because we had a feed on!"

"Beasts! Mean beasts!" booted Bunter wrathfully. "Who wants your rotten grub?"

"Why, don't you, fatty?"

"Of course I don't! I only came to tell you that Quelch wants you. All of you—Wharton, Cherry, Bull, Inky, and Nugent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try another one, Billy."

"Well, my hat!" grinned Harry Wharton, starting to crack an egg. "Fancy expecting us to believe that! I suppose he thinks we'll clear out and leave him to—Hullo!"

A heavy tread sounded in the passage outside, and then a deep voice—a well-known voice.

"Bunter! Why are you lounging about the passage in that lazy manner?"

"Quelch!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The juniors, grinning, listened for Bunter's answer to the Remove master. "Oh, sir, I wasn't lounging at all!" replied Bunter. "I was just going to give Wharton your message, sir."

"Then do so without further delay, Bunter!" came the tart reply. "I have already waited long enough, and was about to visit them myself. Tell Wharton and his friends to come to my study immediately."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

The heavy tread passed on.

"So the fat rotter wasn't spoofing, after all," said Harry, getting to his feet with a grimace. "Wonder what the Quelch bird wants us for?"

"Blow him!" grunted Johnny Bull. "The eggs will be hard, and the toast and tea cold!"

The juniors got to their feet, growling. As they did so Bunter's voice once again came through the keyhole.

"I say, you fellows, you'd better buck up! Quelch's just been asking after you again!"

"Oh, rats!"

Harry Wharton unlocked the door, and the juniors crowded outside. Bunter was there, and he blinked at them rather nervously.

"Half a mo'!" said Bob Cherry, as Harry was closing the door. "When burglars are about it's just as well to take precautions, Harry!"

"Phew! Yes, rather!" said Harry.

He opened the door again, and, taking the key from the inside of the lock, he placed it in the outside and locked the door, placing the key in his pocket.

Billy Bunter's face was a picture of changing emotions as he watched that cautious proceeding. The Famous Five grinned at him and passed on towards Mr. Quelch's study. Billy Bunter watched them go with eyes that glittered with wrathful dismay and disappointment.

"Yah! Beasts!" he grunted. "The awful suspicious beasts! They thought I would go after their grub when they'd gone, I suppose!"

The fat junior glowered for a moment at the locked door, and then quite suddenly a change came over his fat face and he grinned.

"My hat!" he murmured, his eyes gleaming behind his big spectacles. "Blessed if I don't do the mean beasts yet!"

He hesitated another second, and then he rolled away hurriedly towards his own study. He was back in a couple of seconds almost, and in his hand was a key. He fitted it into the lock of the door before him, and the next moment

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the door was open and the contents of the room at his mercy.

"Oh, good!" chuckled the fat junior. "Thought they'd done me, did they? He, he, he! They'd forgotten some of these looks are alike. Here goes!"

Bunter pocketed the key again and entered the study. His eyes glistened greedily at the well-filled table.

"Wish I dared stop and finish off the lot!" he murmured regretfully. "Any-way, I oughtn't to be mean like those awful beasts!"

With that kindly reflection Billy Bunter grabbed a handful of boiled eggs and slipped them into his pockets. Then he grabbed the two bags of pastry and departed hastily.

By this time Harry Wharton & Co. had reached Mr. Quelch's study. There was no reply to their knock, and as he looked into the room and saw no one, Harry frowned rather uneasily.

"Quelch's out!" he muttered, looking quickly at his chums. "That's queer!"

"Better wait inside," said Bull.

The juniors entered the study and waited inside. They were still waiting, when Bob Cherry gave a start as a sudden recollection came to him.

"Great pip!" he ejaculated. "I've just remembered, you chaps! I saw Quelch going out of gates when I was leaving the tuckshop."

"You did?"

"Yes. There's something rummy about this, you chaps!"

It was Harry Wharton's turn to start.

"My hat! You're right, Bob!" he exclaimed, in alarm. "I heard Quelch telling Prouty he was going to the village, now you remind me. Phew! And yet—"

"We heard his voice—"

"And his number nine boots—"

"Yes, that's right enough!" said Harry, with sudden excitement. "But what about Bunter's dashed ventriloquism?"

"Phew! I never thought of that!"

"Nor did I until now!" hissed Harry. "Blessed if I don't believe it was the fat worm. You know what a clever mimic the fat rotter is. He imitated Quelch's voice—was answering himself all the time."

"But the footsteps—"

"Can't you see?" snorted Harry, his eyes gleaming with wrath. "The fat burglar tip-toed away, and came back, imitating Quelch's tread. Then he did the same going away, and crept back."

"Great Scott!"

"We've been had!"

"Done brown!"

"The—the fat burglar! Come on!"

"Half a mo!" grinned Bob Cherry as the rest were about to rush away. "You've forgotten we locked the door. It's all right."

"Is it all right?" snapped Harry. "I've also just remembered something else I had forgotten—that more than one key in the passage will fit our door."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

The juniors waited to hear no more; they fled back to their study full of anxious apprehension. They knew that when he was hungry Billy Bunter showed a daring and reckless disregard for danger or retribution that was really amazing.

They soon discovered that Harry's pessimism was only too well justified when they reached their study. The open door told its own story, and they were scarcely surprised to find the bags of pastry and eggs gone.

But they were furious, if they were not surprised. They almost gibbered

with wrath at the thought of how easily and simply they had been tricked by Billy Bunter.

"The—the fat, crafty barrel of grease!" breathed Bob Cherry in sulphurous accents. "I'll burst him when I get my hands on him!"

"We'll thundering well soon do that!" snorted Harry Wharton. "Bunter's gone beyond the limit this time. The fat poacher needs a lasting lesson."

"And he's going to get one!" growled Johnny Bull. "Buck up! Let's be after him. No good going to his study, I suppose?"

"Wouldn't dare to take the stuff there," said Bob, shaking his head. "Toddy would only make him return it. I expect—Great pip! That's just where he will be, though. Dutton and the two Todds are gone on a cycling picnic. I saw 'em start out. He'll have the blessed study to himself."

"Come on!"

The Famous Five did not delay longer. They rushed out of the end study at a great rate, in search of Billy Bunter and vengeance.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tuck for Sir Hilton!

"THIS is prime!"

Billy Bunter was in his element. As Bob Cherry had opined, the Owl had sought sanctuary in Study No. 7, and behind the locked door he was now enjoying himself. One of the bags of tarts was on his knees, and his fat jaws were working overtime to dispose of the contents.

"This is prime!" he repeated, through a mouthful of custard tart. "Fancy those fellows haying all this stuff to themselves! Why, it's enough to make 'em ill! Lucky for them I saved 'em that."

And Billy Bunter chuckled a fat chuckle—possibly at the thought of having pinched the Famous Five's grub, and thus saved them from possible illness, or possibly at the thought of the simple way in which he had "dished" them.

There came a rush of feet in the passage, and then a hefty thumping at the door. But Bunter did not turn a hair. He had expected a visit from Harry Wharton & Co. sooner or later, and, behind the locked door of No. 7 he felt quite safe.

He went on devouring the tarts and cakes at express speed. He had already whetted his appetite and laid a solid foundation by disposing of the half-dozen boiled eggs he had purloined, and when the Famous Five arrived he was just finishing the last bit of pastry in the first bag.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

The thumping was followed by a voice—Harry Wharton's voice—in sulphurous accents.

"Bunter, you fat burglar!" he hissed through the keyhole. "Open this door!"

Billy Bunter wouldn't. From within the study came a steady munch, munch, munch!

"D'you hear, you fat clam?" howled Bob Cherry. "Open this door, you fat poacher!"

Bunter spoke then; his fat voice floated out of the room.

"Oh, really, you fellows, what's the matter?" he called out in a throaty voice. "What do you fellows want? I'm busy."

"You know thumping well what we want!" howled Johnny Bull. "What about our grub?"

"Oh, really, Bull, fancy asking me that! As if I've seen your measly grub! I'll tell you who to ask, though. Ask Bob Cherry about it. You know what a greedy beast he is. I expect he's scoffed the lot when you didn't happen to be looking."

"You—you—"

Bob Cherry fairly danced with wrath. He was about to start a violent assault upon the door, when Harry Wharton had a brainwave and gave an excited exclamation.

"It's all right, Bob," he cried grimly. "We'll have the fat clam all serene. Run and fetch the key out of our door."

"But—"

"Don't you see?" snapped Harry, his eyes gleaming triumphantly. "If his dashed key fits our door, then why shouldn't ours fit his?"

"My hat! I never thought of that!"

Neither had Billy Bunter, apparently. From within the study sounded a sudden exclamation of dismay. Such a possibility as that of the key of Study No. 1 fitting the lock of Study No. 7 had certainly not occurred to the fat junior.

But he realised the danger now, as he heard Bob Cherry dash away to fetch the key, and he scrambled from his seat and looked about him desperately.

His first thought was to barricade the door, but realising there was no time for that, he glanced wildly about him for a place wherein to conceal the second bag of stolen tarts.

"Oh dear!" he groaned. "The awful beasts! Can't they let a fellow have a bit of peace? Yah! Rotters!"

Bunter rushed to the cupboard, but found it locked—Peter Todd always saw to the cupboard being locked. Such a proceeding was necessary with a fellow like Bunter in the study. Bunter groaned again, and then his eyes suddenly fell upon the open window.

The sight gave him an idea, and, slipping across, he thrust the bag of tarts out through the window, intending to hide it among the ivy outside.

It was a splendid idea, for the ivy grew thick on the wall. But Bunter's luck was out that afternoon.

In his frantic haste Bunter caught his sleeve on a projecting nail sticking up from the window frame, and the sudden jerk sent the bag flying from his hand.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter in dismay.

The bag dropped down into the quad below, and as it did so a wild, gasping bellow floated up to the fat junior.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter again. "What the—"

The voice seemed strangely familiar to the junior, and he poked his head through the window and blinked down in alarm. What he saw made him fairly quake with fear.

On the gravel path exactly below the window were two elderly gentlemen. One Bunter recognised as Sir Hilton Popper, a local landowner, and the other was Dr. Locke, the venerable Head of Greyfriars.

Dr. Locke was standing with one hand holding his pince-nez on his nose as he stared as if petrified at his titled companion.

And no wonder! For Sir Hilton Popper was a sight. He was dancing wildly about the gravel, bellowing with wrath and clawing at a sticky mass of jam, and cream, and pastry that was plastered over his bald head, and his shoulders.

What had happened was only too obvious to Billy Bunter. Sir Hilton had been standing bareheaded, chatting with the Head on the path, when the bag

had dropped full upon his august head. Dropping from such a height, it had burst, and the contents had "spread" themselves, as it were, over Sir Hilton's head and shoulders.

It was a most unfortunate accident, and Billy Bunter had no doubt that it would prove an exceedingly unfortunate accident for him—if he were seen.

He withdrew his head like greased lightning.

"Oh, dear!" he groaned.

From below floated up Dr. Locke's voice in accents of horror.

"G-g-good gracious! What has happened, Sir Hilton? Bless my soul! How—what—who—"

"Can't you see what's happened, Locke?" was the bellowing reply. "Some miscreant—one of your confounded young imps—has assaulted me—has thrown a bag of disgusting comestibles at me, sir. By gad! Never in my life—"

"Impossible, Sir Hilton!"

"Impossible, fiddlesticks!" raved the baronet. "Man alive, can't you see? Look at me, sir! By gad! This—this is too much! I demand an instant search for the dastardly villain—"

"Pray calm yourself, Sir Hilton!" came from Dr. Locke, in tones of tart dignity. "Rest assured that the miscreant will be discovered and suitably punished. Wingate—"

The Head was evidently calling to Wingate across the quad, and Billy Bunter waited to hear no more.

He stood for a moment in terrified indecision, and then he dashed for the door. He was fairly between the devil and the deep sea. On the other side of the door were the Famous Five, thirsting for his blood, so to speak. But the Famous Five were infinitely to be preferred as a Hobson's choice to the infuriated Sir Hilton.

Bunter realised he had fairly "done it" this time. Besides being a baronet and a "big gun" locally, Sir Hilton was chairman of the Board of Governors of Greyfriars. And at the best of times he was far from being a good-tempered old gentleman.

Bunter was shaking from head to foot with sheer fright as he tore frantically at the door, forgetting in his terror that he himself had locked it. He knew that at any moment Wingate—with possibly the Head and Sir Hilton—would be coming up to interview the occupant of Study No. 7—the room from which the bag of tarts had been flung.

Remembering the key suddenly, however, he grabbed it, and tried to turn it. At the same moment Bob Cherry, who by this time had obtained Study No. 1 key, shoved that key in and tried to turn it.

The two keys jammed with the result that neither could be operated.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

He rattled his key frantically in a vain effort to turn it, and Bob Cherry did likewise with his key on the other side of the door.

"Gerraway!" howled Bunter desperately. "Gerraway, and let me open the door, you awful asses! Oh dear!"

The desperate note of appeal in Bunter's wild yell quite startled Harry Wharton & Co.

"What the thump's the matter with the fat worm?" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "The ass knows we're after him! He can't want to get out!"

"Sounds like it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Perhaps he's ill or something. Take your key away, Bob!"

"Not much!" snorted Bob Cherry. "Can't you see it's his blessed craftiness. He wants me to take my key



The bag of pastries dropped down into the quad below, and as it did so, a wild, gasping bellow floated up to Billy Bunter. "Oh, crumbs!" gasped the fat junior. "What—" He blinked out of the window, and then fairly shivered with alarm. On the gravel path below the window were two elderly gentlemen. One was Dr. Locke, the other was Sir Hilton Popper. And Sir Hilton was a sticky mass of jam and cream and pastry! (See Chapter 2.)

away, so that he can plug the blessed keyhole. I expect. There's nothing doing, though."

And Bob chuckled, and continued shoving and rattling in a vain attempt to shove the other key out. He was doing so when hurried footsteps sounded, and Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, came hastening up. Behind Wingate showed Dr. Locke and the infuriated Sir Hilton Popper.

"Oh, my hat! Look out, Bob!" gasped Harry Wharton warningly. "Great pip! What's up, I wonder?"

The sight of the Head in the Remove passage was unusual enough. But as the juniors caught a glimpse of the baronet they fairly jumped.

Sir Hilton was still mopping away at his person with a handkerchief, but there were still traces of cream and jam and scraps of pastry in his scanty hair and on his clothes. His face was a sight. Trickle of jam and cream ran down it, and it was almost black with rage.

The startled juniors stood and stared at him.

"Is anyone in that room, Wharton?" asked Wingate.

Without waiting for an answer the skipper of Greyfriars tried to open the door. Finding it locked, he grasped the key. As he pressed it into place there

was no resistance, and the ring of a falling key was heard from within the room.

The next moment the key was turned, and Wingate flung the door open and strode into the study.

It was empty—or apparently empty. Dr. Locke and Sir Hilton followed Wingate into the study.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, in surprise. "There is no one in the room, Wingate! I am convinced that it was from this window the bag of—ahem!—tarts was flung, however. Wharton!"

"Y-yes, sir?"

"Have any of you boys been inside this room within the last few minutes?" demanded the Head sternly.

"Oh, no, sir!" stammered Harry. "We—we were just trying to get in!"

"Do you know if anyone has been in the room within the last few minutes?"

"Ahem!"

Harry coughed and hesitated. From the Head's words he had already guessed what had happened to Sir Hilton, and he did not want to give the luckless Bunter away. As a matter of fact, he realised that, unless a miracle happened, Billy Bunter would not need to be "given away."

Neither did he. For even as Harry coughed, Wingate saw what the juniors THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 904.

had already seen—one of Bunter's fat legs protruding from beneath the hanging tablecloth.

With a sudden exclamation Wingate sprang forward and grasped the fat leg, and as he did so there arose a gasp from beneath the table.

"Ow! Oh, dear! It wasn't me! Ow! Leggo!"

But Wingate did not "leggo." He yanked Bunter out, and stood him on his feet.

"Bunter!" thundered Dr. Locke.

"Ow! It wasn't me, sir! I know nothing about any tarts! Ow! Oh dear!"

Sir Hilton's moustache bristled. He jammed his monocle into place, and glowered through it at Bunter. That junior's fat cheeks, which were smeared with jam and cream and chocolate, fairly quivered with fear.

"By gad!" hooted the enraged baronet. "This is the miscreant, without a doubt, Dr. Locke! The very fact that the young rascal was hiding beneath the table is proof of that. Bunter—Grunter, or whatever your name is, what d'you mean by it—hey?"

"Ow!"

"Pray allow me to deal with the matter, Sir Hilton!" said Dr. Locke, fixing a stern look on Bunter. "Bunter, wretched youth, am I to understand that you are the miscreant who assaulted Sir Hilton Popper, who flung a paper bag, containing confectionery, at Sir Hilton Popper?"

"Ow! Certainly not, sir!" groaned Bunter, his fat knees knocking together visibly. "Ow! I know nothing at all about it, sir! It wasn't me! I haven't seen any tarts, sir. Besides, it was a pure accident, sir!"

"What? Then you did——"

"Ow! Certainly not, sir. I know nothing—absolutely nothing about it! Oh, dear! It wasn't my fault, sir. How was I to know there was anyone below on the path, and how was I to know my sleeve would catch against a nail, and—oh dear! I mean to say I know nothing—absolutely nothing—about it!"

"Good gad!" gasped Sir Hilton. "Is—is the fellow an idiot? The young villain has already admitted——"

"Ow! Not at all, sir! I know absolutely noth——"

"Bunter!"

Bunter jumped.

"Bunter!" said the Head sternly. "Cease these ridiculous falsehoods at once! It is perfectly obvious to me that you were responsible for this disgraceful outrage."

"Ow! Nunno, sir! I—I say, sir," groaned Bunter, his fat face twisting into a horrible grimace. "C-can I g-go now, sir? I—I do feel ill! Ow!"

"No, you may not go, Bunter!" thundered the Head. "I demand an instant explanation of this disgraceful occurrence, otherwise I shall deem it no accident, and shall deal with you accordingly."

"Oh, dear!"

Bunter gave vent to a hollow groan—a groan of mingled physical and mental anguish. As a matter of fact, the fat youth was just beginning to feel the ill-effects of his bolted gorge. The eggs had been hard-boiled, and had been swallowed at express speed, and the tarts and other pastries had been likewise bolted. And the shock of discovering what he had done to Sir Hilton was enough in itself to upset Billy Bunter's internal arrangements.

He blinked up at the angry Head with a jaundiced eye. His fat face was already turning a sickly yellow. At the moment he cared less for what the Head "deemed" than of the necessity

for getting the interview over. Billy Bunter had a dreadful feeling that he was going to be sick.

"I—I say, sir," he groaned faintly, "it was an accident, of course. The bag flew out of my hand. Grooooo! Oh dear! Ow! I do feel bad! C-can I g-go now, sir? I—I think I'm g-going to be ill! Ow!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" snorted Sir Hilton, glowering at Bunter fiercely. "The young villain is shamming—in order to escape the consequences of his rascality, begad! Huh! I insist that—— By gad!"

The angry baronet broke off with a gasp, as at that moment Billy Bunter doubled himself up, emitting a strangled yelp as he did so.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Dr. Locke, staring at Bunter's features, which were an art shade in yellow. "The boy is undoubtedly ill! Bunter, wretched boy, what have you been eating?"

"Ow! Grough! Hardly anything, sir!" groaned the hapless Bunter. "Only—grough—half a dozen eggs——"

"Good gad!"

"And a few jam-tarts," went on Bunter, almost in a wail. "And some chocolate eclairs, and some custard-tarts. Ow! And some cream-horns, and some cream-buns, and—— Ow, wów!"

Bunter doubled up again, giving vent to a yelp of anguish as he did so.

"Disgusting!" snorted Sir Hilton. "You are right, doctor! The wretched young rascal has been gorging indigestible comestibles. He has made himself ill. I cannot understand why boys are permitted to gorge—good gad!"

Again the baronet broke off, as Bunter doubled up with an almost fiendish yelp. Then, without further warning, the fat junior bolted for the door, with his hand to his mouth.

"Bunter!" thundered the Head.

But Bunter was beyond hearing or caring. What he had dreaded had become imminent.

He vanished from sight, and the Head turned grimly to Wingate.

"Wingate, you had better go after the wretched boy," he said. "Take him to the matron, and if he really is ill he must be taken to the sanatorium. Wharton!"

The Head turned to Harry Wharton & Co. as Wingate hurried away after the Owl of the Remove.

"Wharton," he snapped, "can you throw light on this outrage? Do you know why Bunter threw the bag of pastry through the window?"

"I—I think it was an accident, sir!" stammered Wharton. "He—he knew we were after him, and I suppose he tried to hide the bag on the window-ledge, or among the ivy. He says his sleeve caught on a nail, and the bag flew from his hands."

And Harry explained what had happened—shielding Bunter as much as he could. He saw that a frank explanation would be better for Bunter than to lead the Head to suspect it was no accident.

The Head nodded when he finished; the explanation seemed reasonable enough to him.

"Very well, Wharton," he snapped. "The wretched junior deserves to be punished severely——"

"Punished!" interrupted Sir Hilton Popper, with a fiery snort. "I do not blame the boy so much as I blame the system—the disgraceful system that permits boys to gorge and make themselves ill with such abominable and unhealthy comestibles, Locke. Did you say you purchased the indigestible rubbish from the school tuckshop, boy?" he added, turning upon Harry Wharton.

"Yes, sir. We—we got it in for tea."

"Good gad!" hooted the baronet. "Why, there must have been enough to poison a regiment! No wonder a sanatorium is required at Greyfriars! The tuckshop ought to be closed, Dr. Locke."

"I do not see any reason for that," said Dr. Locke, a trifle tartly. "That boy, Bunter, is an exception; he has an extremely unhealthy appetite. Yet, even he is rarely ill. The rest of the juniors are healthy, and an occasional meal in which such articles of food are included does them no harm, in my opinion."

"Nonsense!" snapped the baronet rudely. "Such disgusting orgies should be severely dealt with. Pastry and other indigestible compounds should be rigidly excluded from the diet of school-boys. This matter must be looked into, Dr. Locke, without delay. If you can spare the time, sir, I should like you to accompany me on an inspection of the school tuckshop."

"Very good, Sir Hilton," said the Head.

He nodded a dismissal to the juniors, and the two august gentlemen went out, Sir Hilton still mopping his features with his handkerchief.

The juniors looked at each other when they had gone. Bob Cherry was grinning, as were all but Harry Wharton.

"Well, my hat!" chuckled Bob. "The old hunk has got hold of something to kick up a fuss about now. I suppose he'll try to ration us our tarts now. Remember when he tried to shove his blessed hygienic grub on us?"

Harry Wharton grunted.

"He may try to do more than that," he said, frowning. "You know what he is—always trying to start some blessed new stunt of his own here. And he's chairman of the Board of Governors, remember. I don't like it!"

"Blow him!"

"Yes, blow him!" said Harry, grinning. "But I'm afraid we'll hear more of this. Anyway, let's go and get tea now—or what Bunter's left us for tea?"

With that Harry Wharton led his chums out of Study No. 7, and along to the end study. Harry Wharton felt the matter was not going to end there. And he was right.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

All Through Bunter!

"HALLO! Why, what the thump's this mean? Oh, great pip!"

Harry Wharton was astonished—as were his chums. They had just come along from the cricket field, and had stopped outside the school tuckshop, intending to call in for a ginger-pop on their way indoors.

Quite a number of other fellows had intended to do likewise apparently. They were grouped round the tuckshop door, and the Famous Five had wondered, as they viewed them from a distance, what was "on."

But as they came up, Harry Wharton & Co. saw and understood. The school tuckshop was closed—the door closed and locked, and the windows shuttered.

"What's this mean, Toddy?" demanded Harry, turning to Peter Todd, who was standing near. "What's the blessed show doing closed at this hour?"

"Nice, isn't it?" said Toddy. "Look at the notice!"

The Famous Five followed Todd's pointing finger. On the door was a slip

of paper, bearing Dr. Locke's handwriting and signature. Harry Wharton read it aloud:

"NOTICE!"

"By order of the Governing Board, the Greyfriars School tuckshop will be closed until further orders.

"(Signed) HERBERT H. LOCKE, M.A.,
"Headmaster."

"Beautifully short and beautifully sweet," grinned Peter Todd. "What d'you think of it, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton whistled. It was three days since the affair of Sir Hilton Popper's accident with Bunter's purloined tarts, and Harry had almost forgotten it. But the sight of that notice brought sudden recollection to him. He had not the slightest doubt that this was the direct result of Sir Hilton's "accident."

"Well, I'm hanged!" he breathed. "If that isn't the limit! I feared something like this, you fellows."

"But what on earth—"

"Don't you see," growled Harry. "This is old Popper's doing, of course. You heard how that fat idiot Bunter dropped some giddy tarts and things on his napper a few days ago?"

"Who didn't?" grinned Peter Todd.

"Well, this is the result. The old ass went off at the deep end when he saw Bunter had made himself ill. He said the chaps shouldn't be allowed to get hold of such indigestible rubbish, as he called it. I believe he went and played steam here at the tuckshop, too!"

"Phew! So he did!" gasped Bolsover. "I remember now. He always was a beastly old crank! Well, if this isn't the giddy limit!"

The juniors stared with growing indignation at the closed door of the tuckshop. They were still staring when Billy Bunter rolled up to the group. Bunter's fat face was lugubrious.

"I say you fellows," he groaned. "Isn't it awful? Fancy closing the blessed tuckshop! What are you going to do about it, Wharton? I think we ought to mutiny, you know—have a barring-out."

"Ass!"

"Why not?" demanded Bunter warmly. "What are we going to do without a blessed tuckshop? Answer me that? Why, life won't be worth living!"

"You fat ass!" snorted Harry Wharton. "What on earth can I do?"

"Well, we can do something, Wharton," said Cherry thoughtfully. "We can make it thundering hot for the merchant responsible for this state of affairs!"

Harry Wharton looked at his chum and returned the wink.

"Well, that's so," he said. "And I vote we do. You fellows agree?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Do you agree, Bunter?"

"Eh? Why yes; of course I do!" snorted Bunter, his little eyes gleaming behind his spectacles. "I vote we make the old hunks sit up—"

"Well, we will," said Harry. "And as Bunter happens to be the merchant responsible in the first place, we'll make a start by giving him the bumping of his life. Collar him!"

"Oh, really— Yarrooh! Ow! Leg-gol! You silly asses, it was old Popper who— Yooop!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Many hands grasped the fat junior, and he was bumped again and again on the gravel. He fairly howled in astonished pain. He had naturally supposed

that Bob Cherry had been referring to Sir Hilton Popper as the individual responsible, but he knew different now.

"There," said Harry Wharton, as the juniors released the yelling fat youth at last. "It was you who caused the trouble in the first place, Bunter, and we hold you responsible. You agreed yourself that the responsible chap should get it hot."

"Ow! Groooh! Beasts! Ow! You've broken my spine, and split my collar! Ow-ow! Bone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leaving the fat junior sprawling on the gravel and roaring with anguish, the juniors trooped indoors, eager to learn full details of the decidedly unpleasant and unwelcome new order.

They found a large and indignant crowd gathered round the notice-board in Big Hall.

"You fellows seen this?" asked Vernon-Smith, as the Famous Five came up.

Harry Wharton nodded. A glance at the slip of paper pinned to the green baize showed him it was the same notice word for word.

"We've seen one like it on the tuckshop door," he grunted. "It's closed, and—"

"Closed already?"

"Oh, great pip!"

There was a general groan of dismay.

"It's Sir Hilton Popper's doing, of course," said Harry. "We might have guessed he'd do something like this after that shindy the other day. Anyway, it's a howling shame!"

"Rotten!"

"Dash and blow the old idiot!"

"No ginger-pop and tarts after cricket!"

"Or lessons!"

"And if we want grub for tea we'll have to fetch the thumping stuff from the village!"

"Oh dear!"

As the full extent of the calamity began to dawn on the fellows they were full of dismay and wrath. Seeing Wingate passing just then, Harry Wharton called to him.

"What's this mean, Wingate?" he asked. "Hang it all, it's too thick altogether!"

"It means just what it says," said Wingate grimly. "The governors have decided to close the tuckshop."

"For good?"

"I suppose so."

"I suppose that old ass Popper is at the bottom of this, Wingate?"

"I believe so. He brought the rest of the governors round to his views. Anyway, it's no good grouching. Wharton. We'll all have to make the best of it."

With that George Wingate walked on. But his words left cold comfort behind him. The only fellow who seemed at all pleased with the announcement was Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, and the business man of the Remove.

Fish became wildly excited as he read through the notice.



The school tuckshop was closed—the door closed and locked and the windows shuttered. "What's this mean?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Nice, isn't it?" said Peter Todd. "Look at the notice!" The Famous Five followed Peter's pointing finger. On the door was a notice in the Head's writing stating that the tuckshop was closed until further orders. "Well, I'm hanged!" exclaimed Harry. (See Chapter 3.)

"Great jumping crickets!" he ejaculated, looking round at the juniors. "Is this the straight goods, you galoots?"

"I kinder guess and kal-kalulate it is," said Bob Cherry, imitating the Transatlantic junior's own remarkable manner of speech. "I reckon right hyer's a real gilt-edged chance to rake in the dollars for you, Fishy. Why not start a goldarned store for the eats in the woodshed? It'll be the stunt of a lifetime for you to swindle—I mean to make honest durocks out of us galoots. Jest a few!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Fisher T. Fish did not laugh; he scarcely heard the humorous Cherry. He rubbed his long nose and stared into vacancy with glittering eyes.

"Gee!" he murmured. "I guess this hyer's the real gilt-edged berries this time. I reckon this hyer school wants waking up. I'll give 'em pep—every time! I kinder calculate that right hyer's where this guy from the Yew-nighted States gets busy—jest a few!"

For another few seconds he remained staring reflectively into vacancy, and then turned and rushed away, ignoring the many chuckles that followed him.

"Well, my hat!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I really believe the silly ass took me seriously. Look well if he does start a blessed tuckshop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got some stunt on, anyway," grinned Harry Wharton. "It would be just like him to start something of the sort. Well, let's get along to tea, you chaps. No good standing here grousing!"

The Famous Five walked away from the wrathful crowd round the notice-board and went along to Study No. 1 for tea. As Harry had said, no good could be done by standing grousing before the notice-board.

Despite Bob Cherry's humorous suggestion to the Transatlantic junior, and despite the strange manner of the business man of the Remove, the Famous Five had not treated the suggestion seriously, and over tea they soon forgot the matter. But when tea had ended they were reminded of Fisher T. Fish as that cute youth marched into the study.

"I guess I want to talk to you galoots," he began crisply. "I reckon I've called in to interest you guys in a little business proposition that will make you sit up some—yep, sirree!"

Harry Wharton pointed calmly to the door.

"Take it outside, then, Fishy," he said briefly. "We don't want to hear any of your giddy propositions, old top. We've been swindled by you before. Outside!"

"Yes, sheer off!" advised Bob Cherry, reaching for a loaf.

"Look hyer," said Fish, keeping a wary eye on the loaf. "I guess you simps can cut out the rough stuff. I'm hyer as a philanthropist this time, laddies. Jest a few! I reckon when you galoots have listened to me spilling the speech you'll say I'm a public benefactor. Yep!"

"Oh, buzz off, you silly ass!"

Fisher T. Fish gave a weary sigh.

"Oh, you jays!" he groaned. "I guess you simps are like the rest of the guys in this all-fired little island. You make me tired. You grouse about your goldarned eat-store being closed, and when a keen business man comes along with a real gilt-edged proposition to supply the eats again you won't sit up and take notice. Gee! Oh, you all-fired mugwumps!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 904.

The juniors stared at Fishy with sudden interest.

"Oh!" said Harry Wharton. "It's about the tuckshop, is it?"

Fishy's hatchet features broke into a grin as he saw he had interested the Co. at last.

"I guess it is," he grinned. "I reckon I've hit on a top-notch scheme to supply the eats to this hyer school now the official tuckshop's closed. Get me? It's a real businesslike scheme that every guy in the Remove can have a financial interest in if he wants it. I guess I'll ask you galoots to look at this hyer."

And, taking a paper from his pocket, Fisher T. Fish planked it on the table.

Harry Wharton picked it up and looked at it with interest.

It was a notice in Fishy's crabbed handwriting, and hectographed. Evidently, since seeing that notice in Hall, the Transatlantic junior had been busy—very busy. Harry read the notice through and gasped.

It read as follows:

"NOTICE!"

Removites, attention!

This Concerns You!

THE GREYFRIARS TUCKSHOP FEDERATION (Inc.).

The above real, live organisation has been formed to fill the blank caused by the closing of the School Tuckshop.

IT'S THE GOODS!!!

Shares in the above Federation are now being offered at a bob a nob, and weekly dividends of twopence per share will be guaranteed by the Directors.

All applications for shares in the above must be made to Fisher T. Fish, Esq., Treasurer, at Study No. 14, Remove Passage, Greyfriars.

FISHER TARLETON FISH,
President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

THE GREYFRIARS TUCKSHOP FEDERATION (Inc.).

Harry Wharton blinked again at the extraordinary document, and then he passed it on to his chums. They read it and looked expressively at Fisher T. Fish.

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "So—so that's your wheeze, Fishy! You're going to open a giddy tuckshop—eh? A pirate tuckshop!"

Fishy nodded and grinned. He seemed very proud of his great scheme, and to take it for granted that the Famous Five would approve and support it.

"I guess you skates hev hit it," he said genially. "I reckon I can rely on you guys for a few shares. What about five bobs' worth each? Waal, hand over the durocks!"

But the Famous Five did not hand over the durocks.

"If you reckon you can rely on us, Fishy," grinned Harry Wharton, "you're a bit wrong in your reckoning, old money-grubber. There's nothing doing."

"Not much!"

"No fear!"

"We've had some, Fishy!" said Frank Nugent.

"The somefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Singh.

"Waal, I swow!" ejaculated Fishy, in disgust. "You galoots not taking any shares! Well, you all-fired mugwumps! I guess I reckoned on you, as skipper of the Remove, Wharton, to set the rest of the guys a good example in business matters!"

"If we did," said Wharton grimly, "we should be a party to the swindle, instead, Fishy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You brace of wops!" howled Fishy wrathfully. "I ain't going to swindle you. I guess this hyer's a real philanthropic stunt; it's to supply a public want. All the guys who become shareholders share in the profits, don't they? Yah! There's no catch in this—nope, sirree!"

Harry Wharton pointed to the door.

"We've had some, Fishy!" he said grimly. "And we're not having any more—or being had any more. The only chap likely to profit by your blessed stunt is yourself. Now, buzz off!"

"I tell you—"

"Tell it outside, then! This ain't Wall Street, old tulip! Now, you chaps!"

"Why, you slabsided jays! I tell you — Hyer, wharrer you at?"

The Famous Five showed the business genius what they were at very quickly. They grasped him with a will and whirled him to the door.

"Yooop! I guess I'll make potato shavings of— Ow-wow! Lerrup! Let up, you galoots! Hyer! Yarroooooh!"

Bump!

The lanky, bony form of Fisher Tarleton Fish whizzed through the doorway of Study No. 1, and fell in the passage outside with a bump. Harry Wharton ran to him and crammed his notice down the back of his neck. Then he returned into the study with his grinning chums and closed the door hard. It was very plain that Harry Wharton & Co. were not interested in the Greyfriars Tuckshop Federation (Inc.)—not whilst it remained under the presidency of Fisher T. Fish, at all events.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fishy Goes Ahead!

FISHER TARLETON FISH spent a very busy time in the Remove that evening. From study to study in the Remove, and in the Upper Fourth, Fishy wended his way, canvassing for purchasers of shares in the Greyfriars Tuckshop Federation.

But, on the whole, he had a very disappointing time, did Fisher T. Fish. The Removites knew him and his schemes for raising "dollars" only too well. Most of the juniors laughed at his project, and when he became persistent with his entreaties they pitched him neck-and-crop out of their studies like the Famous Five had done.

Wild as were the juniors about the new state of things, and much as they would have welcomed such an institution as a pirate tuckshop, under the control of someone other than Fishy, they would not listen to the blandishments of the get-rich-quick junior.

Only in two cases did Fishy have any luck that evening. But it was a case that, to Fishy, made up for the plentiful lack of interest shown by the rest of the juniors. And that case, or, rather, victim, was Lord Mauleverer.

Fishy found his lordship reclining at ease, and sleeping peacefully on his sumptuous couch in his luxuriously appointed study. But the enthusiastic

company promoter soon awakened him, and started to propound his philanthropic scheme.

His youthful and born-tired lordship did not listen long—in fact, he scarcely listened at all. He flung his purse wearily at the Transatlantic junior, and, telling him to help himself, promptly fell asleep again.

Fisher T. Fish helped himself. There were three pound notes in the purse in addition to some loose silver, a fact Fishy must have guessed had escaped the memory of his lordship, and Fishy took the lot; and after cramming the little bundle of hectographed "shares" into Mauly's pocket in exchange, Fishy left the study, almost dancing with glee. Sixty odd shares at one fell swoop was quite a good stroke of "business."

It was not until later on that evening that Lord Mauleverer discovered how very literally Fish had taken his request to "help himself." And then the schoolboy earl merely grinned ruefully. Such a sum was nothing to him, and he knew it was like trying to draw blood out of a stone to try to get money back from the junior from New York. Mauly didn't feel equal to the task, neither did he mention the matter to anyone else. He did not want to be laughed at—in fact, he simply did not want to be bothered about it at all.

So Fisher T. Fish placed the money into the funds of the Federation—otherwise his own pocket—and went on his way rejoicing. And the only other fellows he had any luck with were, strangely enough, Skinner, Stott, and Snoop.

Skinner was an exceedingly sharp youth, like Fishy, and at first he had declined rudely to take part in the scheme. But later on in the evening he and his chums visited Fisher T. Fish and had a long confab with him. Skinner had come to the conclusion that there was, after all, money to be got out of Fishy's scheme, providing that a very close eye was kept on its promoter. And when Skinner & Co. left Fish's study that evening they were not only shareholders in the new project, but directors as well.

Fisher T. Fish had already realised that he would need physical aid in addition to financial aid, and he was only too delighted to have the help of Skinner & Co., especially as Skinner & Co. were fellows with rather accommodating consciences.

At bedtime that evening Fish had a great deal of chipping to put up with on account of his new stunt; but he bore it cheerfully, and he did not do any further touting for subscribers to his company, either that evening or the next day. He had realised it was hopeless yet, and, moreover, he was too busy.

But the American junior had got all his plans cut and dried. He had decided that the vaults beneath the old school were a safe and suitable place for his "pirate" tuckshop, and there was much to be done to get the place ready.

All that day Fishy and Skinner & Co. worked like niggers in their spare time, and that evening, leaving his fellow-directors to carry on with the good work, Fisher T. Fish cycled over to Friardale to see about the main thing of all—the provisions.

This proved to be no easy matter, both with purchasing the stuff and afterwards getting it unseen into the school. But by paying a deposit the American junior managed to persuade a rather shady Friardale confectioner to supply him, and the second difficulty was eventually swept away by having it delivered after dusk, and hidden behind



Bolsover leaped up—or, rather, he tried to. But to his amazement, he found that the form moved with him. "Great pip!" howled Bob Cherry. "They're glued to the form!" It was true! Two or three of the juniors, who were also sitting on the form, roared and gasped furiously as the sudden jerk sent streams of liquid refreshment over their faces and clothes. (See Chapter 4.)

the pavilion on Little Side. And after lights out that night Skinner & Co. and Fishy bore it safely to the vaults, breaking bounds, of course, to do so.

The next day, when the Remove came out of morning lessons they got a startling surprise. On either side of the Form-room doorway in the passage were Skinner, Stott, Snoop, and Fisher T. Fish, and they were busy handing leaflets to the Removites as they left the room.

"What the thump's this, Fishy?" demanded Harry Wharton, looking curiously at his slip of paper. "Oh, great pip!"

From dozens of other juniors came simultaneous exclamations of astonishment as they scanned the leaflets.

On each leaflet was a hectographed notice, signed by Fisher T. Fish, and it ran as follows:

"LOOK RIGHT HERE!!!

What Is It?

**Why, the Grand Opening of the
GREYFRIARS CO-OPERATIVE
TUCKSHOP**

In the School Vaults

TO-DAY! TO-DAY! TO-DAY!

Gee! But It's the Goods, Pards!

Immediately after dinner to-day the new, full-of-pop TUCKSHOP, as per above, will be open to the public. Prices

moderate, goods top-notch, service gilt-edged and slick!

Roll up! Roll up! Roll up!

**NO TICK, BUT GOOD VALUE FOR
MONEY!**

**DESTROY THIS NOTICE AND KEEP
THE INFORMATION MUM!**

(Signed) FISHER TARLETON FISH.

**President, THE GREYFRIARS TUCK-
SHOP FEDERATION (Inc.)."**

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Harry Wharton, as he read the extraordinary document. "So—so Fishy hasn't given up his precious wheeze, after all. What a—what a scream!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared as they scanned the notice and understood its meaning. The activities of Skinner & Co. and Fisher T. Fish had been carried on secretly, and the rest of the Removites were astounded at the notice. As Fishy had ceased to tout over the matter of shares in his new venture they had supposed he had given it up as a bad job.

They knew differently now.

"Blest if I can see anything to cackle about, you jays!" snorted Fishy. "I guess this is the goods. I kinder reckon it's a serious business venture."

"No need to kick up a fuss about it, either!" snapped Skinner uneasily. "Keep it mum, you chaps, for goodness' sake!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 904.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, staring hard at Skinner. "You're not in this surely, Skinney?"

"I guess he is!" grinned Fish. "I guess old Skinner's got his eye teeth cut—some. I guess he's not like the rest of you slab-headed galoots! I reckon Skinner and his pards are booked to rake in the durocks—jest a few, sirree!"

"It will be a few, too, Fishy," agreed Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Great pip! But—but is it really a fact that you're opening a giddy pirate tuckshop in the vaults, Fishy, to-day?"

Fishy handed the last of his leaflets to Temple of the Upper Fourth and nodded briskly.

"Yep," he said. "I guess I ain't the guy to get them hyer notices out for nix! Nope, sirree. It's the goods, sonny, right from the word go! I reckon you sleepy mugwumps will get real astonished when you roll along to the vaults. Yep. Jest a few!"

And with that Fisher T. Fish rushed away, and Skinner, Stott, and Snoop, having also exhausted their supply of leaflets, followed him just as briskly. There was work for the directors of the Greyfriars Tuckshop Federation to do apparently.

They left behind them a grinning crowd of juniors. But though treating the whole matter humorously, the juniors were none the less curious for all that. Fishy certainly wasn't the fellow to take the trouble to get the leaflets out unless there was something behind it, nor were Skinner & Co. And immediately dinner was over there was a rush of eager juniors—Removites and Fourth—for the vaults.

Harry Wharton & Co. were rather late in visiting the vaults, though they were just as curious as were the rest of the Remove.

"I suppose Fishy's pinched the key or bribed old Gosling," said Harry Wharton, as they strolled round by the Cloisters. "He's got a nerve to risk it, anyway."

"Wonder what the giddy tuckshop will be like?" grinned Bob Cherry. "A few old packing-cases, I suppose. Here we are."

The juniors reached the top of the steps leading down into the gloomy vaults just then, and a merry hum of cheery voices and laughter greeted them from the depths.

"Phew! Sounds as if it's going strong!" gasped Harry Wharton, hurrying down the well-worn steps. "Why—oh, great pip!"

As he reached the bottom of the moss-grown steps and got a glimpse into the vaults, Harry Wharton almost fell down with astonishment.

For, instead of seeing a few packing-cases piled up, and lit up by gutter-candles, as he expected to see, his eyes beheld something quite different—very much different.

The Greyfriars Co-operative Tuckshop was quite an elaborate affair, considering the circumstances and surroundings.

Instead of being lit up by flickering candles, the vaults were gay and bright under the many-coloured lights of some half a dozen Chinese lanterns swinging from the massive pillars.

Beneath this had been ranged several tables on trestles, with forms alongside, the latter obviously newly varnished, and looking quite attractive.

Behind a barricade of boxes—boxes piled with dishes of tarts and buns and cakes and chocolate and bottles of ginger-pop—was Fisher T. Fish, with a nice, clean white apron tied round his waist.

The American company promoter was busy—very busy. He was attending to the wants of a score or more laughing juniors, who were crowded in front of the "counter." Skinner, Stott, and Snoop were likewise wearing aprons, and likewise very busy attending to the needs and wants of juniors seated at the trestle tables.

From each pillar, forming a complete circle round the "tuckshop," were tied coloured paper streamers and paper chains, giving the whole place a decidedly gay and festive air.

"Well, my only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Who'd have expected this? Phew! Old Fishy's fairly made a neat job of it."

"Yes, rather!"

The Famous Five stared transfixed.

"Well, this takes the bun and biscuit, you chaps!" said Harry Wharton. "It certainly looks A1, any old how. If Fishy's charges are reasonable I see no reason why we shouldn't patronise this establishment."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

The five juniors crowded into the new "tuckshop" with grinning faces. As it happened, dinner that day had been rather a sparing meal, and Harry Wharton & Co. were quite ready to supplement it by a ginger-pop and a few tarts. It was only too evident that those were the sentiments of the rest of the juniors also.

The Greyfriars Co-operative Tuckshop was going great guns.

Behind the counter Fisher T. Fish was dancing about like a cat on hot bricks. His thin face was wreathed in a gleeful grin. Up to this time applicants for shares in the Greyfriars Tuckshop Federation had been painfully few. But now he felt they would go like hot cakes.

He greeted Harry Wharton & Co. with a genial grin.

"Don't be shy, gents," he grinned. "Plenty of eats hyer for all, I guess. What's that? Ginger-pop for five and jam-tarts? Yep. I kinder reckon yew've come to the right store for the goods yew require. Take a sit-down, gents."

"We can stand, Fishy, thanks!" grinned Wharton. "My hat! Those are rather measly tarts, Fishy. How much apiece, old sport?"

"I guess those tarts are top-notch, sirree," said Fishy, ignoring Harry's request for prices. "I guess yew can't beat those tarts in any sheebang round these parts. What's that, Smithy? Your bill? Lemme sec. Two tarts and a ginger-pop, I guess?"

Vernon-Smith, who had just finished a couple of tarts and a ginger-pop, grinned and nodded.

"I guess that's a bob, Smithy," said Fishy, holding out a grasping fist.

"Wha-a-at!"

Smithy stared at him.

"A bob for two measly tarts and a bottle of stuff like ditch-water!" he exclaimed warmly. "Great pip! What a swizz!"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled. They had anticipated high prices and rubbishy grub from Fisher T. Fish. The ginger-beer was certainly of the poorest quality possible, and the cakes and tarts as tiny and "measly" as possible, too.

By this time the Famous Five became aware that other customers were raising their voices angrily. The ancient vaults fairly echoed with their loud-voiced complaints.

"Skinner, you rotter, you charged me two bob for four rotten tarts and a couple of pops!"

"There's no blessed jam at all in this tart, Stotty."

"There's only coloured sawdust in mine."

"Call this stuff ginger-pop, Snoopy! Yah!"

"Great pip! There's not a single currant in this rock-cake, and it's only as big as a dashed walnut! Why, it's a blessed swindle!"

"Hear, hear! Where's that rotter, Fishy—"

"Look hyer, you galoots—"

Fisher T. Fish's protesting voice was drowned in a deep bellow from Percy Bolsover, who was seated at one of the long tables.

"Skinner, you swizzler!" he roared. "What about my change? I only had one pop, a currant-bun, and a custard-tart, and I gave you a bob."

"Well," said Skinner, a trifle uneasily, "that comes to a bob, doesn't it? All tarts and cakes are fourpence each, so are the drinks."

The burly Bolsover looked as if he was about to indulge in a fit.

"Why, you—you rotters!" he gasped. "That's double what Mrs. Nimble charges, and the grub's not half as good as hers, either."

"Hear, hear!"

"Look hyer, you simps—"

But Fishy's voice was drowned in a bellow of wrath and disgust from his customers. Bolsover shook a hefty fist at Skinner.

"I want a tanner change, Skinner!" he bellowed. "And if I don't get it I'm going to smash you and your blessed tuckshop up!"

"I guess Skinner won't, Bolsy!" snorted Fisher T. Fish. "I guess our prices are low as—"

"You—you won't?" roared Bolsover, looking ugly.

"Nix! Nope, sirree."

"Right!" said Bolsover. "Now, von chaps, we'll teach the beastly swindlers to try to rob the Remove. Go for 'em! Smash their thumping show up!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!"

Bolsover leaped up—at least, he tried to leap up. As it happened he only succeeded in raising himself a few inches. To his amazement, the form on which he was sitting rose, too. Two or three of the juniors who were also sitting on the form, drinking lemonade or ginger-pop at the time, roared and gasped furiously as the sudden jerk sent streams of liquid refreshment over their faces and clothes.

"Grough! Oh crumbs! Yoop!"

"G-a-u-grr! What the— Grough!"

A scene of sudden and wild confusion ensued, for as Bolsover tried to leap up other angry customers had done likewise, and a hurried, scrambling melee resulted amidst yells and the crashing of falling glasses.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five and the rest of the customers who were standing stared in astonishment at the struggling juniors, and then they understood.

"Great pip!" howled Bob Cherry, almost hysterically. "Ha, ha! They're stuck to the forms."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Bad Start!

"HA, ha, ha!" The juniors who had been fortunate enough not to have sat down on the newly-varnished forms, roared with hysterical laughter at the hapless plight of their fellow-customers.



"Sock 'em with their own rotten goods!" "Smash the cads!" The trestle tables went over with a crash, and before long the juniors who had been glued—or varnished—to their seats, had succeeded in wrenching themselves free. Fisher T. Fish and Skinner & Co. soon vanished from sight beneath the heaving forms, their voices raised aloft in anguish. (See Chapter 5.)

Madly and desperately, and yelling furiously, the juniors at the tables strove to tear themselves away from the seats of the forms; but they tore and struggled in vain.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Wharton & Co.

Of those standing in the pirate tuckshop, only Skinner & Co. and Fisher T. Fish did not laugh. They stood and stared transfixed at the struggling juniors round the tables.

"Waal, I swow!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish at last. "Great jumping Jerusalem crickets! Waal, I'll tell the world! Hyer, what's the game, you ginks?"

"Game?" bellowed Bolsover, tugging furiously. "I'll thundering well teach you what this game is when I get my hands on you, Fishy!"

"Same here! It's a practical joke of that cad Skinner's. We'll smash the lot of 'em!"

"Yes, rather!"

Fisher T. Fish & Co. stared in great alarm at their raging customers.

"Look hyer, you galoots—" began Fish uneasily.

"Don't stand there gassing!" howled Bulstrode, who was also one of the hapless victims. "Help us to get free! Great pip! We'll smash you and your dashed tuckshop to a jelly for this!"

There was an angry roar of acclamation from the rest of the struggling juniors mixed up in wild confusion on the jumping, bucking forms that jerked about as the victims jerked about.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the juniors howled with hysterical laughter. Fisher T. Fish and his fellow directors of the Greyfriars Tuckshop Federation (Inc.), stared helplessly. After the threats of vengeance expressed by the victims, they did not at all like the idea of helping them to get free.

"Oh, great snakes!" wailed Fish, dancing about in dismay. "Look at 'em—look at our glasses smashed, too! Three-pence a-piece they cost. Oh, Jehoshaphat! This is your fault, Skinner, I

guess! I reckon I told you those goldarned forms weren't dry yet!"

"My fault, be hanged, you fool!" gasped Skinner, looking very much inclined to bolt. "I found the dashed varnish in the woodshed. It was called hard-and-fast drying varnish. Oh crikey! There must have been glue in it, or something."

There must have been some truth in Skinner's suspicion, for try as they would the hapless victims could not free themselves, and the blood-curdling threats they yelled at Harold Skinner almost turned him green with fear. Skinner was well-known as an inveterate practical joker, and they naturally supposed this was a little joke of his. Finding they could not get free yet, Bolsover & Co. grabbed tarts and buns, and even bottles from the table, and the air became full of flying missiles.

And then, quite suddenly, there sounded a swift tearing noise, and Bolsover gave a roar on finding himself free.

Without a glance at his nether garments, which had suffered loss, he made a blind rush at the directors of the new concern.

Skinner, Stott, and Snoop made a wild leap for the door, but Harry Wharton & Co. were there before them. They were almost helpless with laughter, but they were not too helpless to stop the escape of Skinner & Co.

The Famous Five, helped by Smithy, and other laughing juniors, yanked Skinner & Co. back. By this time there had been a perfect epidemic of tearing garments, and several other unfortunates managed to wrench themselves free—with sad results to their nether garments.

Heedless of their state of attire, they tore the hapless directors from the hands of Wharton & Co. and the other helpers.

"Smash the cads!"

"Give 'em beans!"

"Sock 'em with their own rotten goods!"

"Go it!"

And they went it! Amid roars of rage from the avengers, and howls and yelps

of pain and fear from the directors of the pirate tuckshop, a wild and whirling scene ensued on the cold stone floor of the ancient vaults.

The trestle tables went crashing over, and before long all the juniors who had been glued—or varnished—to their seats had succeeded in wrenching themselves free, and had flung themselves into the melee.

Fisher T. Fish and Skinner & Co. vanished from sight beneath the heaving forms. But their voices, raised aloft in anguish, reached the ears of all.

"Yarrouh! Ow-wow! I guess you jays'll all be sorry. Oh, jumping crackers! Yooooop! I guess I'll make potato-shavings of—Grooooh! Help! Lettup! Yarrooooooh!"

"Yarrouh! Oh crikey! Help! Murder! Leggo! Ow-wow! Yar-rooooooh!" wailed Skinner & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on at the strange and exciting scene, roaring with mirth. It was beginning to look as if the Grand Opening of the Greyfriars Co-operative Tuckshop was not going to be such a success, either financially or otherwise, as its cute promoters had anticipated.

Nor was it. Bolsover, Bulstrode, Trevor, Temple, Dabney & Co., and the rest of the victims of Skinner's stolen varnish—if it was only varnish—did not stop at pommelling their captives.

A rush was made for the stock of comestibles behind the counter of boxes, and then the avengers got to work in real earnest.

Jam-tarts, custard-tarts, cream-buns, and rock-cakes were showered generously upon the directors of the pirate tuckshop. They were crammed down their throats, and the back of their necks, into their eyes and noses, and plastered all over their faces. Then there followed the cheery popping of corks, and lemonade and ginger-beer was poured over the hapless heads of Skinner & Co. and Fisher T. Fish.

When the avengers had done with them, they looked shocking sights indeed. They grovelled on the stone flags with jam and pastry and paste thick on their faces and in their hair, and they gasped and gurgled and groaned dismally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Satisfied at last, Bolsover and his fellow avengers left them grovelling there, and joined Harry Wharton & Co.

"There!" breathed Bolsover major grimly. "That will teach the swindling cads a lesson, I fancy. They deserved more than that if only for trying to rob their blessed schoolfellows."

"Hear, hear!"

All were in agreement on that score. Skinner & Co. and Fisher T. Fish had certainly got it "hot," but in the general view they had more than deserved it. There was no fairness or decency in charging such excessively high prices for their goods—especially as they were far from being of either satisfactory bulk or quality.

In a laughing crowd the juniors trooped up the steps of the vaults, and out into the open air. Bolsover and the fellows who had "trousers to mend" immediately rushed off indoors, for it was already very close on time for afternoon classes.

Harry Wharton and the rest also went indoors, and as they did so the bell rang, and they went along to their Form-room.

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton. "There's going to be ructions, I fancy. Some of these chaps are bound to be late, and Quelch will rave."

But Harry was wrong. Fortune favoured the juniors who had gone to their dormitories to change. Mr. Quelch was just coming out of the Remove Form-room when the juniors came along, and he motioned to Harry Wharton.

"Dr. Locke has just sent for me, Wharton," he exclaimed. "Will you be good enough to keep order until I return?"

"Very good, sir!" said Harry.

It was fully twenty minutes before the Remove master returned to the Form-room, and by that time even Fish, Skinner, Stott, and Snoop were safe in their places. They had changed, like the others, but fragments of pastry showed in their hair still, and their faces were pale and scowling.

A chuckle greeted them as they took their places—a chuckle that was silenced at once as the door opened again and Mr. Quelch rustled in.

"Thank you, Wharton!" he said briskly. "Now, boys, to work! We are late, and must—Bless my soul! Where is Bunter?"

Nobody knew where Billy Bunter was. In fact, nobody seemed to have noticed that he was not in his usual place until now.

"Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch sharply. "Do you know where Bunter is?"

"No, sir," said Harry. "I—I hadn't noticed he wasn't here, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked grim.

"Very well," he said ominously. "I shall have something to say to Bunter when he does appear."

The lesson proceeded then, most of the juniors wondering where Bunter could be. But some of them had a shrewd suspicion. Harry Wharton remembered suddenly having seen Bunter hovering round the steps leading to the vaults, and he wondered if he could be there. It wasn't often Bunter put grub before

classes, but he had been known to do so more than once.

The same suspicion had also flashed upon Skinner & Co. and Fisher T. Fish. How else to account for Bunter's absence?

Fishy, in an agony of apprehension at the thought, whispered to Skinner, who was seated before him at the next desk.

"Skinner," he muttered. "Did you lock the door of the vaults?"

Skinner shook his head and gritted his teeth. He had the key of the vaults in his pocket, and in his hurry to get in and change before the bell rang he had completely forgotten to lock the door.

He communicated the alarming fact to Fisher T. Fish, who groaned deeply and dismally. He hadn't the slightest doubt that Bunter was in the vaults, helping himself to their sadly depleted stock. The thought almost made him leap up from his seat and rush out of the room.

For some minutes he sat, inwardly writhing with helpless chagrin and apprehension, and then a brilliant idea struck him. The next moment a dismal groan echoed through the quiet Form-room.

Mr. Quelch heard it, and he wheeled round from the blackboard as if he had been shot.

"Who—what—Fish!" he thundered. "How—how dare you make that abominable noise?"

Fisher T. Fish, who was grovelling over his desk, gave vent to another heartrending groan.

"Ow! Ow-wow!" he groaned, looking up and showing a pale, agonised face. "I guess I'm ill, sir; I guess I've got a real—ow-wow!—headache! I guess I also feel right down faint, sir. Yarrah!"

Mr. Quelch looked hard at the face of Fishy—which was certainly pale, and certainly agonised. Had it been Skinner or Billy Bunter, he would have been suspicious at once. But Fisher T. Fish had never been known to mangle in order to escape lessons.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, in some concern. "You certainly do not appear to be well, Fish. You may go and lie down for half an hour, my boy. If you do not feel better then you must visit the matron."

"Ow! I guess I will, sir! Thank you—ow!—sir!"

Amid the curious, and, in many cases, suspicious, glances of his Form-fellows, Fisher T. Fish tottered from the Form-room. Many of the juniors—including Skinner & Co.—guessed at once what his game was.

"Gee!" he murmured, his eyes gleaming. "I guess that was a real, gilt-edged stunt. I kinder reckon I'm going on the trail of that critter, Bunter, now."

And Fishy hurried out along the silent corridors, and a moment later was running full-speed round by the cloisters. He soon reached the vaults, and as he descended the moss-grown steps he grunted and his eyes glittered.

From the partly-closed door came a dim glimmer of light. Someone undoubtedly was in the vaults. Fishy remembered having stopped a moment to watch Skinner blow the lanterns out, though he had not, unfortunately, stopped to see that Skinner also locked the door.

Fishy fairly flung the door wide and dashed into the vaults. As he did so a startled gasp sounded within, and in

the faint glimmer of the single Chinese lantern, a fat form became visible to Fishy.

It was Billy Bunter right enough. He was seated on a packing-case, with a heap of tarts and cakes on another packing-case before him. On Fishy's headlong entrance he leaped up, however, with a bottle of ginger-beer in his fat fist.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, staring in alarm at Fishy. "Oh dear! I—I say, Fishy, it's all right, you know! I'm only just—Yarrough!"

Bunter fairly yelled in alarm as Fisher T. Fish made a rush at him, with a roar of fury. A single glance had showed the American junior that Bunter had made a serious gap in the already sadly depleted stock.

The ginger-beer bottle smashed to the stone floor, and Bunter flew for his life. He dodged round one of the stone pillars and dived for the door. Fish grabbed an old broom that had been used to clean the place out with, and went in pursuit, his thin features blazing with rage.

The sight of Billy Bunter making inroads on his precious stock was the last straw for the business man of the Remove.

"Come back, you slab-sided galoot—you fat rustler!" he howled. "I guess I'll make shavings of your fat carcass, Bunter! Come hyer!"

But Bunter had no intention of either coming back or coming "hyer." He read assault and battery in Fishy's wildly glaring eyes. Despite the fact that he had gorged himself almost to bursting-point on Fishy's stock, he flew up the steps of the vault like a startled rabbit.

Once again Fish did not stop to fasten the door. He leaped up the steps and went after Billy Bunter like a crack runner on the cinder path, waving his long broom above his head as he did so.

Right round the old chapel and round by the cloisters went Billy Bunter, his face red and congested, his eyes starting almost through his spectacles with terror.

Several times Fishy came within reach of him, and each time he made wild swipes at Bunter with the broom. This, though decidedly unpleasant for Billy Bunter, rather delayed Fishy each time.

The School House steps came in sight at last, and Bunter made for them, and then quite suddenly he branched off again, apparently having changed his mind. But the momentary hesitation cost Bunter much, for Fishy cut across at a tangent, catching the fat youth up just round the corner of the school buildings.

The next instant Fishy's broom came into play with right good will.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

On the hapless Bunter's head and shoulders Fishy brought the business end of the broom again and again, and Bunter's fiendish yells awakened the echoes.

"Yarrouh! Oh, crumbs! Oh, help! Murder! Yooooop!"

Both Bunter and Fishy seemed to have quite lost their heads. Fishy in his blind rage, and Bunter in his blind terror, completely forgot that they were now within sound of civilisation, so to speak. They did not seem to be aware that they had stopped just outside the open windows of the Remove class-room.

But they had. And the hearty thumps of the broom and Bunter's yells of pain floated in clearly on the warm afternoon air.

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Mr. Quelch heard the row first, and he stepped to the window quickly and looked out. Then he stared transfixed at what he saw.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "What—what— Good gracious!"

Mr. Quelch's voice ended on a note of dumfounded amazement. He blinked out with almost gaping mouth.

"Great pip!" murmured Harry Wharton. "What's up?"

As if moved by the same spring the rest of the Remove followed Harry's example and clambered to their forms to see what was "up." They soon saw, and the sight of Fishy belabouring Bunter with the broom made them gasp.

"Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Fish! What—how dare you? Fish! Cease striking that boy this instant!"

"Oh, great jumping crackers!"

Fisher T. Fish realised where he was then, and he dropped the broom as if it had become suddenly red-hot. Mr. Quelch's voice was alone enough for Fishy.

"This—this is amazing! Monstrous!" gasped the Remove master. "Fish, Bunter, come indoors this instant! Do you hear me?"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh, yep, sir!"

The two Removites, now thoroughly terrified, crawled away towards the School House steps.

"Oh dear!" almost wept Billy Bunter, rubbing his head dismally. "It's all your fault, Fishy, you beast! Ow-wow! We shall both be licked now. And I was going to tell Quelch I felt ill and went to lie down. Oh dear!"

"I guess we're both for it!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I ain't going to— Oh, great snakes! Look hyer, Bunter, you fat jay, we've gotter spin a slick yarn about this. If it all comes out about this hyer scheme of mine there'll be the deuce to pay. You've gotter say nix about this hyer tuckshop in the vaults, mind!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "I—I won't!"

"If you do," said Fishy craftily, "I guess the fellows will be wild; I guess they'll make chips of you for putting the kybosh on their tuckshop. Get me?"

Bunter nodded; and they wended their weary way to the Remove Form-room.

By this time Mr. Quelch had brought order to his excited Form, and when the miserable Bunter and Fish entered one could have heard a pin drop in the room.

"Now, Bunter and Fish," snapped Mr. Quelch, fixing a glittering eye on the hapless couple, "what, may I ask, does this disgraceful scene—this abominable exhibition of buffoonery mean?"

Bunter and Fish groaned, but made no audible answer.

"Do you hear me?" thundered Mr. Quelch. "I demand to know at once; otherwise, I shall take you before Dr. Locke."

"Oh dear!"

"I guess I'll explain, sir," groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I was after Bunter, sir. I guess the guy had helped himself to my grub—I mean tuck, sir, and I guess I went after him."

Mr. Quelch set his lips.

"Knowing Bunter as I do," he snapped ominously, "I have no doubt that such is the case. But does this mean that when you stated just now that you were ill you were deceiving me, Fish?"

"Oh crumbs! Nunno, sir! I—I guess I just happened to see Bunter in the quad and I went after him. Yep, sir."



"Drop that blessed hose, I tell you! There isn't a fire!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Coker, you idiot— Yaroooooh!" Bob's excited remarks ended in a howl, as a stream of water caught him in the chest and bowled him over. Then the stream, whirled round in Coker's mighty hands, swept the crowd of angry juniors in the doorway. (See Chapter 7.)

"That is nonsense, Fish!" thundered the angry master. "It is perfectly obvious to me that you were malingering in order to go in search of Bunter. You apparently were fully aware of Bunter's whereabouts. Had you been at all indisposed you could never have chased and chastised Bunter as you did."

"Ow! I guess—"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Your very face and attitude prove to me that such is the case, Fish. I have never met with such deception and brazen effrontery in my life. I propose to cane you severely, Fish!"

And Mr. Quelch proceeded to carry out his proposal with a will. He brought his cane down four times on each of Fishy's shaking hands, and Fishy's wild yelps awakened the echoes.

Almost doubled in two, and groaning with anguish, the Transatlantic junior tottered to his seat. Mr. Quelch turned to Bunter.

"Bunter!" he snorted. "You have dared to absent yourself from the Form-room without permission. You are fully half an hour late for afternoon classes!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "I—I couldn't help it, sir. I felt ill and went to lie down."

"What?"

"I—I mean I—I forgot the time for class, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I think I must have lost my memory, sir! I've been wandering about the quad, sir, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was terrific, and the laughter stopped instantly.

"You—you say you forgot the time for afternoon classes, Bunter?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"Then I will endeavour to improve your memory, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch, reaching for his cane again. "Hold out your hand!"

"Ow! I—I say, sir, I'd rather not! I—I feel awfully—"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

There was a note in the master's voice that Bunter did not like at all, and he held out his hand gingerly. Mr. Quelch lost no time in bringing his cane into play.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Like Fisher T. Fish, Billy Bunter took four on either hand, and he fairly howled. He certainly looked far from well as he tottered to his seat at last after a final lecture from Mr. Quelch.

And after that the lesson proceeded. Mr. Quelch deemed that enough time had been wasted on the pair of unfortunates, and he left them alone for the rest of the lesson.

Fisher T. Fish, at all events, was glad to be left alone—with his aches and pains and his dismal reflections. It had been a bad afternoon for Fisher T. Fish, and certainly a very bad start for the Greyfriars Co-operative Tuckshop.

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

Supplement No. 226.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending June 6th, 1925.



A CRICKETING CALAMITY!

Mr. Quelch

I PLAYED very little cricket in my youth. Being of a studious turn of mind, I was too deeply engrossed in my studies to join "the flannelled fools at the wickets." Whilst others were wielding the willow, I was plunging into ponderous tomes, and developing my intellectual powers, with a view to becoming a schoolmaster.

There have been occasions, however, when I have handled a cricket-bat. I handled one the other day—to my sorrow! Had I known what was going to happen, I should have dropped that bat as if it were a red-hot brick!

Several members of my Form were practising at the nets. It was a half-holiday, and I was in a particularly genial mood. I watched my pupils at play for some time, and presently Cherry asked me, very politely, if I would care to "take a knock." I hesitated, and was lost! Divesting myself of my coat, I took up a bat and stationed myself at the wicket.

I very quickly took a "knock"—a whole number of knocks, in fact—and they were decidedly painful ones.

Hurree Singh was bowling. He is considered to be the Remove's most dangerous bowler. I cordially agree! Certainly I found him dangerous. His very first ball struck me with terrific force upon my unguarded shin. I could not refrain from dancing with anguish—at considerable loss to my dignity.

Hurree Singh came towards me, with grave concern on his dusky face.

"The sorrowfulness, honoured sahib, is terrific!" he said.

"And so was the crackfulness on my esteemed shinfulness!" I almost felt like saying. As it was, I frowned at Hurree Singh, and cautioned him to be more careful next time.

The next ball was straight enough, but it came whizzing down at deadly speed. Now, you could not reasonably expect a middle-aged gentleman to leap forward with the agility of a panther, and chastise the ball severely. I preferred to play back to it, with the direful result that I toppled backwards, and sat down upon my wicket! The concussion shook every bone in my body.

There was a titter from the group of

juniors looking on. I glared at them, and assured them it was no laughing matter; but they seemed to think otherwise! They laughed loud and long at my pitiable plight, and for the next few moments I was kept very busy distributing impositions.

My cheeks were burning as I scrambled to my feet. I felt that I was an object of ridicule, and I resolved to continue my innings, and to prove to my hilarious pupils that I was not such a duffer at cricket as they imagined.

"Bowl to me again, Hurree Singh!" I said grimly.

"The bowfulness, honoured sahib, will be terrific!" he replied, showing his white teeth in what appeared to be a ghoulish grin of glee.

The next ball was of the type which I believe is known as a "snorter." It fairly flashed along the turf. However, I managed to smite it on this occasion. My bat circled round, and the ball was lifted clear of the nets, to alight with a sickening thud upon the head of my worthy colleague, Mr. Prout. It flattened his Panama hat over his forehead, and he stood as if dazed, beating the air feebly with his hands, as if to protect himself against the giant blows of an adversary.

The juniors no longer tittered. They roared! And Mr. Prout roared, too—with anguish!

"My—my dear Prout!" I stuttered, hastening towards him. "I—I am extremely sorry—"

"A fig for your sorrow, sir!" fumed the master of the Fifth. "You have severely injured my cranium. Already I can feel a bump forming—a painful protuberance! I am considerably annoyed, sir—I am, in fact, furiously angry! I regard you as a dangerous person to wield a cricket-bat."

Mr. Prout's tone nettled me rather, and I curtly told him he had no business to be walking across the cricket ground at such a moment. We then walked off together, engaged in a heated altercation, while the juniors gazed after us, almost weeping with merriment.

Never again shall I handle a cricket-bat, unless for purposes of self-defence. Such is my firm and inflexible resolve.

Mind You Enter Our
"WHAT IS IT?" COMPETITION
NEXT WEEK, BOYS!



Gleaned from my History of Greyfriars.
By MR. QUELCH.

(EDITOR'S NOTE.—Skinner of the Remove attempted to play a practical joke on me, for which he has suffered dearly. He intercepted this manuscript on its way to the printers, and altered the title of this column to "POTTY PARS." Fortunately, I discovered the outrage in time. Skinner has also discovered something—that it is not wise to attempt to pull my lower limb! ED.)

GREYFRIARS was originally a monastery. The monks have disappeared long ago; and Gosling, the porter, declares that the old monks have been displaced by young monkeys! Gosling has little love for the modern schoolboy.

THE name of Bunter is not exactly common; yet two boys of this name have passed through Greyfriars. There was Bernard Bunter, a distinguished athlete, who left in 1879; and Cornelius Bunter, a wayward, lawless youth, who was expelled from the school in the seventeenth century. The present Bunter claims to be related to Bernard, but declares he has no connection whatsoever with the erring Cornelius!

GREYFRIARS has had its fill of exciting events. There have been five big rebellions, three serious conflagrations, a raid by German Zeppelins, and a flood. When one looks back upon these historic episodes it is a matter for wonder that the old school is still standing. Yet it has weathered the storms of centuries, and the building experts who have recently examined the old tower declare it is as solid and stable as ever.

DR. LOCKE has held the headmastership of Greyfriars for twenty-one years. This is by no means a record, however, for Dr. Josiah Oldacre held the office from 1799 until 1832—a period of forty-two years. The school prospered greatly under his rule.

THE system of "fagging" was introduced at Greyfriars in 1540. It was abolished in 1855, only to be renewed a few years later. Fagging, in the old days, was a great deal less pleasant and more exciting than it is to-day. There was a period in the history of Greyfriars when bullying was rampant. But since the expulsion of "Bully" Burke in 1894 for severely maltreating a Second Form fag, the pernicious practice of bullying has greatly declined, and is now practically extinct.

IN reply to certain correspondents, I may state that I am not an Old Boy of Greyfriars. I am sorry to disappoint several of my pupils, who love to think that there was a time when "Quelch of the Remove" was hauled up before the Head for a flogging!



If I were Form Master!

Some Startling Scenes would be carried out if certain of Mr. Quelch's Pupils could change places with him!

BILLY BUNTER:

IF I were master of the Remove, with a gown flapping around my portly person, and a mortar-board perched on my napper, I should be in my ellyment. "Latin and Greek six times a week" would be demolished. Is that the right word? (No; Bunter, it is NOT the right word! To demolish a thing is to destroy it. I hope you would not destroy your Latin Primer and Greek Lexicon. Presumably you mean "abolished."—Ed.) I should start kookery classes, and konvert the Remove Form-room into a kind of kkommunal kitchen. How jolly ripping for the fellows, when they flocked into the Form-room, to be greeted by a smell of fried sossidges! And what wonderful feasts we should have, with Form master Bunter filling the biggest role!

(I rather think that the biggest "roll" would fill Form master Bunter! But seriously, Bunter, I consider your suggestion is utterly ridiculous! You do not appear to have a soul which rises above eating and drinking.—Ed.)

BOLSOVER MAJOR:

IF I could change places with Mr. Quelch, I should promptly introduce boxing classes, and coach my pupils in the noble art of punching noses, and administering black eyes and thick ears. The swish of the cane would no longer be heard; the thud of the boxing-glove would take its place. I'd guarantee to make prize pugilists of all my pupils, in time—even frail weaklings like Alonzo Todd, and flabby duffers like Bunter. In the event of any of my pupils being unruly, I should not say, "Hold out your hand!" but "Push forward your face!" Then I should deliver a hefty punch to the nose, or a jolt to the jaw. That would keep them in subjection!

(Really, Bolsover, you are quite a barbarian! I am thankful to know that you will never have an opportunity of changing places with me!—Ed.)

BOB CHERRY:

IF I were the Quelch-bird, I should give my pupils unrestricted freedom, and

let them do as they jolly well liked. Discipline would be thrown to the winds, and everything in the garden—or, rather, in the Form-room—would be lovely!

(How dare you allude to me, Cherry, as the "Quelch-bird"! I am not a feathered biped, in spite of the fact that I have the eye of a hawk, the wisdom of an owl, and the swooping-down propensities of a vulture.—Ed.)

WILLIAM GOSLING:

Wot I says is this 'ere. I wouldn't mind a-swoppin' places with Mr. Quelch. It would jest suit me to rest me pore tired limbs on a Form master's stool. But I don't reckon I should be able to learn my pupils very much. These 'ere dumb langwidges, such as Latin an' Greek, is forrin to me. As for Dick Tation, an' Algy Brae, an' other scholastic fellers, I can't even claim a noddin' acquaintance with them. Still, I dessay I should get to know 'em in time. I should be quite willin' to change places with Mr. Quelch to-morrer; but the question is, would Mr. Quelch be willin' to change places with me? I can't imagine the dignified old gent heavin' portmanters through the Close, or sweepin' up the litter of leaves wot accumulates on my doorstep.

(Neither can I imagine it, Gosling!—Ed.)

EDITORIAL!

By **HORACE HENRY QUELCH**

(Master of the Remove).

LITTLE did I dream that I should ever be called upon to edit a schoolboy publication, even for one week. But we never know what the Fates have in store for us, and here I am, putting aside the vastly more important task of compiling the "History of Greyfriars," in order to dabble in juvenile journalism!

Harry Wharton approached me on the matter a short time ago, and his request that I should edit a special number of the "Greyfriars Herald" was proffered so nicely that I could not refuse.

"Lots of our readers, sir," said Wharton, "have expressed a wish that you should take the editorial chair for one week, and we should feel highly honoured if you would do so."

"I should like to oblige you, Wharton," I replied. "But, as you are aware, I am a very busy person. My duties are multifarious. I am rather afraid—"

"Don't say no, sir!" pleaded Wharton.

So, finally, I yielded to Wharton's persuasions, and agreed to take over the editorial reins. Wharton actually offered me the use of his editorial sanctum, Study No. 1. But I fear it would be rather undignified for a Form master to disport himself in a junior study. In any case, the distractions and disturbances in Study No. 1 would make writing impossible. Brown, in No. 2, has a gramophone, which is in a state of perpetual motion. I believe Brown keeps it going day and night. And gramophones, telephones, dictaphones, megaphones—all things ending in "phone," in fact—are among my chief aversions.

I prefer to carry out this task in my own study, where I can work without let or hindrance. I hope this number will please you. Certainly I am sparing no pains to make it successful. I have had to cast out quite a number of unsuitable contributions. Nugent minor brought me an amazing story of a school called St. Sam's. The spelling was atrocious. It out-Buntered Bunter's! And the characters who figured in the story—well, they left me gasping! The headmaster was about as dignified as a bargee, and the masters were as flippant as First Form fags. Nugent minor nearly wept when I consigned his manuscript to my waste-paper basket; but I told him I could not possibly see my way to publish such ludicrous nonsense in a journal edited by myself.

Other contributions shared a similar fate to Nugent's; but I think I have got together a passable collection. It is for the reader to judge.

OUR FORM MASTER!

By **DICK PENFOLD.**

(With the usual apologies to Billy Shakespeare.)

WHO is Quelch? What is he
That all the lads commend him?
Manly, wise, and just is he;
The Head such power did lend him
That he might respected be.

Is he fair as well as firm?
For firmness goes with fairness.
Does he make his victims squirm?
Yes! You'll find no rareness
Of lickings through the summer term.

Can he wield the cruel cane
With vim and verve and vigour?
Does he make you dance with pain,
And sob instead of snigger?
Yes! I know it to my bane!

Does his voice like thunder boom?
Thunder isn't in it!
Why, it fairly shakes the room,
Plunging you, each minute,
Into deep and deeper gloom.

Does his glinting, glittering eye
Give you apprehension?
Do you quake to hear him cry,
"Take an hour's detention!"
Dare you murmur or defy?

Yet, with all his awesome ways,
Making schoolboys shiver,
He deserves a word of praise,
Which I'll now deliver.
Firm in our esteem he stays.

Then to Quelch let us sing,
For Quelch's all-excelling,
Though his ashplant has a sting
That sets his victims yelling!
To him let us tributes bring.

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(Continued from page 13.)

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Rival!

HARRY WHARTON was looking very thoughtful when he left the Remove Form-room that afternoon at the close of afternoon school. After a brief consultation with his chums they went along to the end study, and within ten minutes a short notice appeared on the door of that famous apartment.

It read as follows:

"NOTICE!"

All members of the Remove are requested to be present at a meeting which will be held in the Rag at 6 p.m. this evening to discuss a matter of interest to the Form.

(Signed) HARRY WHARTON,
Captain of Remove Form."

The notice aroused a great deal of interest and curiosity in the Remove. Quite a number of juniors, impatient to know what was "on," visited Study No. 1 during tea, but they went away again with their curiosity unsatisfied. Harry simply told them they would have to wait until the meeting to discover that.

Many, however, guessed at once that it was to do with Fisher T. Fish's wonderful scheme—and, in a way, they guessed rightly.

As a matter of fact, Harry Wharton had been thinking things over, and he had come to the conclusion that a tuckshop, properly conducted by reliable fellows, would not be a bad scheme at all. The school tuckshop had been closed right enough, but there was no order that no other tuckshop was to be opened in its place. Probably such a possibility as that of one being opened by the boys themselves had never even occurred to the authorities.

At all events, Harry Wharton felt that it was worth the risk. Like the rest of Greyfriars, he felt that the closing of the tuckshop was a rank injustice, and due merely to the crankiness of Sir Hilton Popper, Bart., who was the "big noise" on the board of governors.

Had Fisher T. Fish and his co-directors played the game and charged fair prices for their stuff Harry would never have thought of starting a rival establishment, but would have gone on patronising their Co-operative Tuckshop. And so would the rest of the juniors.

But, as he usually did, Fishy had overdone it again, and, like Wharton & Co., few were likely to pay another visit to the tuckshop in the vaults—unless it was to see more fun!

Hence the notice on the door of Study No. 1 calling a general meeting of the Remove to discuss ways and means of starting a rival establishment.

At six o'clock prompt the Rag was crowded with Removites, and the only fellows who appeared to be absent were Fisher T. Fish, Stott, Skinner, and Snoop. Evidently those businesslike juniors were at work in their tuckshop—

or waiting there for the customers who failed to turn up.

Harry Wharton jumped on a chair and very quickly put his fellow-Removites "wise" to what was "on," as Fishy would have expressed it.

"Gentlemen," he began briskly. "There's not much time for chinwagging, so I'll get down to business right away. You all know that Fishy has started a tuckshop—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton grinned and raised his hand for silence.

"Well," he continued, "you all know what the swizzler's game is. He's out, not to benefit his school-fellows, as he claims, but to line his own pocket at our expense. He's charging excessive prices for rubbishy goods, and we're not having any!"

"No fear!"

"Down with Fishy!" roared Bulstrode.

"I fancy he's already been downed enough," grinned Harry Wharton. "And he'll have to bring his blessed prices down before we've finished with him. Anyway, his giddy tuckshop can go to pot. If he'd played the game we'd have backed him up. As it is, we're having none."

"Not likely!"

"Go ahead, old top!"

Harry Wharton went ahead.

"But his idea of a tuckshop's a jolly good one, you chaps. We're jolly well not going to knuckle under to old Popper. And I've called this meeting to discuss ways and means of raising funds to start another tuckshop, run on straightforward lines by a committee of the Remove."

"Phew!"

"Good wheeze!"

"It ought to be easy enough," went on Harry crisply. "We only need a little cash to make a start. I fancy if a chap like Fishy can get credit, we can. Old Clegg's rather a crusty old stick, but I think I can talk him round. Anyway, hands up all those in favour of starting one."

Every hand in the room went up in a flash.

"That's good enough, then," snapped Harry. "I might add that good old Mauly has promised to back the scheme up financially if necessary."

"Good old Mauly!" came the yell.

"And now we'd better get to work and form a committee," resumed Harry. "I suggest Toddy, Cherry, Nugent, Bulstrode, and Bolsover. Any fellows got anything to say against that?"

Nobody had—excepting Bunter, who wasn't listened to—and those fellows were duly nominated and approved. When this was done, Bulstrode raised his voice in a question.

"There's one thing you haven't mentioned yet, Wharton!" he exclaimed. "What about a blessed place to have the tuckshop? The giddy woodshed, or where?"

"I've already decided upon that," said Harry coolly. "What about that old cottage along the lane, round the back of the school? It's empty and deserted, and it should do fine."

"But it's tumbledown—windows and door broken!" gasped Bulstrode.

"I know that. We can easily put those little matters right," said Harry. "That's just what we want a little initial cash for. All we'll want are hinges for the door, and boarding for the windows. We can set to work and give the show a thorough cleaning up ourselves. Well, what about it?"

The juniors looked rather blankly at Harry Wharton, but they did not hesitate long as the plan began to sink in. They could not help seeing that the old deserted cottage which was situated in a little lane just behind the precincts of Greyfriars, was the ideal place for the scheme. It was out of the way, though quite within easy reach of the school, for a high hedge hid the place from view of anyone in the lane.

"Just the very place, Wharton," said Peter Todd quickly. "Couldn't find a better, in fact."

"Hear, hear!"

There was a roar of acclamation.

Harry Wharton nodded, and waited again for silence.

"That's good enough, then," he said crisply. "And now this is what I propose. I propose that every fellow contributes a bob to the initial expenses to start with. Then the committee and I will set to work to order grub, and get the necessary things in. Meanwhile, volunteers can be making a start at cleaning the cottage out."

With that Harry Wharton jumped down from his chair. He knew that there would be no lack of volunteers for the task of cleaning out the old cottage. Nor was there! Twenty fellows immediately volunteered. They were eager for such a job, and after a little more discussion they rushed off to the servants' quarters to beg, borrow, or "bag" brushes and cleaning utensils until such could be purchased.

After a little more discussion the meeting broke up. Three of the committee hurried away to view the old cottage and study its possibilities, while the other three—Wharton, Bulstrode, and Bob Cherry—got out their bikes and cycled over to Priardale to purchase various necessities, and make arrangement for the foodstuffs to be delivered.

Harry Wharton's scheme had certainly been taken up enthusiastically by his Form-fellows, and it began to look as if it would soon be an accomplished fact.

And meanwhile, in the tuckshop in the vaults beneath Greyfriars, Fisher T. Fish and his fellow-directors were experiencing rather a dismal and disappointing time. They had, of course, seen the notice on the door of Study No. 1, but they had been too eager to get down to their "shop" to open it to bother to find out what the meeting was to be about.

They worked hard getting the place straightened up after the "rough house" at noon, and they waited for the expected customers to arrive.

But none did arrive. Skinner & Co. had rather anticipated a falling off of customers after the events at noon, but they were scarcely prepared for such a complete falling off. They had supposed that sheer hunger would drive the juniors to patronise their establishment rather than tramp all the way to the village for what they wanted.

"It's your thundering fault, Fishy!" snarled Skinner bitterly. "If only you hadn't insisted on charging such high prices, that dashed rumpus at noon wouldn't have happened."

"I guess it wasn't my fault, Skinner," snorted Fishy, his face wrinkled with worry and disappointment. "I kinder reckon it was your goldarned fault for varnishing those goldarned forms. I told you the beastly stuff wouldn't be dry in time. Oh, great snakes! I'll be weeping salt tears if some durned customers don't turn up right slick. Yep!"

"Here's one now, I fancy," said Stott, cocking his ears.

There was the sound of footsteps on the stone steps leading down into the

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES. No. 8.

FISHER T. FISH—the boy from the “Yew-nited States.”



“We’ll have to drop our prices, that’s all,” groaned Fishy, his face showing acute anguish at the thought.

“Drop the prices,” sneered Skinner bitterly. “Think that will make any difference? The cads will patronise Wharton’s dashed show whether we drop our prices or not. I tell you we’ve got to fight the cads in another way.”

He stood thinking for a moment, and then his eyes gleamed nastily.

“Look here, you fellows,” he hissed. “Let’s kick this fat beast out, and then we can talk this matter over. We’re not going to be done like this. We’ll find some way of dishing Wharton and his precious schemes!”

“Yes, rather!”

“Here, I say, you fellows—Yarrouh! Leggo! Wharrer you at?”

But the four juniors did not listen to Bunter’s protests, nor did they stop to explain what they were at. They grasped the fat youth with no kindly hands, and, after giving him a few far from gentle kicks to be going on with, they rushed him to the steps, and sent him scrambling up them, roaring with wrath and pain. Then they returned to their tuckshop and proceeded to talk the matter over in subdued tones as befitted such shady schemers. Harold Skinner had said they would find a way of “dishing” Wharton’s schemes, and he meant what he said. Though

financial disaster and serious trouble loomed before the promoters of the Greyfriars Tuckshop Federation, they were not down and out yet.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Dirty Work!

HARRY WHARTON and his many willing helpers were busy that evening—very busy. And everything went off without a hitch.

As the captain of the Remove had expected, Uncle Clegg agreed, after a great deal of persuasion on the juniors’ part, to supply them with a certain amount of confectionery to make a start with. Crusty old fellow as he undoubtedly was, Uncle Clegg knew Harry Wharton, and he knew he was certain of getting his money. He promised to deliver the goods secretly the next day at noon, and Harry Wharton and his fellow committee-men cycled back to Greyfriars in high glee. They had purchased hinges, locks, crockery, and glasses, and various other necessities in the village, and they took them back with them.

Before lock-up that evening a great deal had been done to get the Remove Economy Tuckshop—as Harry had

vaults, and the next moment a fat, familiar form came rolling into the shaded light of the Chinese lanterns.

It was Billy Bunter, and the four business men greeted him with glowering looks. Bunter stopped just inside and eyed them rather apprehensively.

“Waal, I swow!” gasped Fisher T. Fish. “That durned critter’s dared to come hyer again. Hyer, you fat—”

“It—it’s all right, Fishy,” said Bunter hurriedly. “I—I’ve come for some grub, you know. No larks! I say, you fellows I’m jolly hungry. Can I have a few tarts, and a ginger-pop or two?”

“Get out, you fat thief!” hissed Skinner. “If you aren’t out of here in two ticks—”

“Hyer! Hold on, Skinner!” snapped Fishy. “Bunter’s money’s as good as anyone’s—if he’s got any, I guess! Look hyer, Bunter. Show us the durocks, and the grub’s yours.”

Bunter grinned rather nervously. “I say, you, you fellows,” he said. “It—it’s all right, you know. The fact is, I’m short of tin at the moment—been disappointed about a postal-order. If you chaps don’t mind waiting—Here, don’t chuck that loaf at me, Skinner, you beast! Yarrouh!”

But Skinner did throw the loaf—his own property, as it was. And then all four business men made a rush at Billy Bunter. Now they knew he had no cash they remembered that Bunter had already accounted for a considerable quantity of their stock, and they meant to take it out of his fat hide.

“Yarrouh!” roared Bunter. “Yow-wow! Stoppit! I say, I’ve got some news for you. Yooop! Look here, listen to me, you fellows. I’ve come to tell you what Wharton’s meeting was about.”

The four avengers stopped, and eyed the fat junior with sudden interest. The note of excitement in Bunter’s voice had told them he had exceptionally interesting news to impart.

“Come on, Bunter—cough it up, then!” snapped Skinner. “Out with it. Does it concern us?”

“Rather!” gasped Bunter. “I say, you fellows, what do you think? Wharton and the rest are going to start another tuckshop—in opposition to yours.”

“What?” yelled Skinner.

“It’s a fact. They’re all clubbing together. It’s going to be a Remove affair,” said Bunter, blinking at the alarmed juniors. “They’re going to open it in that rotten old cottage in the lane behind the cricket-field. Fact!”

And Bunter related what had taken place in the Rag that evening.

“Waal, I swow!” groaned Fisher T. Fish in utter dismay. “I guess that bit of news puts us in the cart, you jays! Oh Jerusalem crickets!”

Skinner & Co. also groaned aloud in utter dismay at the news. They had put all their pocket-money in Fishy’s great scheme, and the thought of losing it almost brought tears to their eyes. Besides, they had already lost a great deal of stock over the trouble at dinner-time, and by Bunter’s depredations, and they saw financial disaster facing them. How they were going to pay the confectioner who had supplied them began to assume the appearance of a grave problem. In the absence of the cash, they knew the confectioner would not hesitate to appeal for his money to the Head.

The prospect terrified the directors of the Greyfriars Tuckshop Federation (Inc.).

“Oh, great pip!” groaned Skinner. “We’re fairly dished and done!”

christened it—in ship-shape order. The whole place had been newly swept and garnished, and it did not look so bad considering everything. A few old curtains, and clothes, and small articles of furniture, including chairs and stools, had been smuggled out of the school in safety, and when the tired juniors trooped schoolwards at last, they were well satisfied with their handiwork.

At noon the next day they were hard at work again. The goods duly turned up from Uncle Clegg's in Friardale, and Harry Wharton & Co. unpacked them, and soon the old cottage began to assume quite a festive air.

Harry Wharton had determined that the shop should be open to the "public" after tea that same evening, and for the present it was decided that the six committee-men should take turns at serving "behind the counter" of the tuckshop, two at a time.

Unlike Fisher T. Fish, Harry Wharton & Co. had no need to advertise the opening of their Remove Economy Tuckshop. Everybody in the Remove, the Upper Fourth, and the Third knew about it, and when five o'clock—opening time—came at last, the little garden of the cottage was swarming with eager, excited juniors and fags.

The rickety door of the cottage opened at last amid much chipping and good-natured laughter, and the crowd fairly stormed the counter of boxes. Behind the counter stood Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Bulstrode, whilst in the tiny kitchen of the cottage behind, Nugent, Singh, Bull, and Bolsover were ready, with white aprons on and sleeves stripped up, like the others behind the counter in the front room.

In a very few moments a scene of bustling activity was taking place as the schoolboy shopmen began to rush about attending to the many wants of their customers.

Harry had insisted upon placing the very lowest prices on their goods, and the customers appreciated his wise thoughtfulness.

There was no grumbling as in the tuckshop beneath the school, and money fairly rolled into the tin box Harry had supplied for a till. The whole thing promised to be a huge success—if only the scheme could be kept from the ever-open ears of the authorities!

In next to no time the fellows in the kitchen at the back were as busy as their comrades behind the counter. A huge fire was burning in the grate for there were soon piles of dishes and glasses to be washed, and hot water from the kettle on the fire was a constant necessity.

With the perspiration streaming down their heated faces, Nugent, Singh, Bull, and Bolsover slaved away, washing and wiping plates and glasses and knives sent in by their fellow workers in the shop through the open door.

Though the juniors knew that such a tremendously busy time would not last—that the rush was because the tuckshop was new and novel—they were delighted with the success of the opening.

"Great pip!" gasped Harry Wharton, glancing over the rapidly vanishing stock of confectionery. "We'll be cleaned out to-night at this rate. Look here, you fellows, I'd better run over to Uncle Clegg's and order more for to-morrow."

It was very plain that such a course was necessary, and, doffing his apron, Harry grabbed his cap and pushed his way through the laughing, cheery swarm of customers.

As he reached the door he met Skinner pushing his way in, but Harry scarcely noticed him. He reached the garden, and in a very few minutes he was cycling hard for the village.

But had Harry Wharton only known what was in the mind of Harold Skinner he would have postponed his visit to Friardale—for that evening, at all events.

For the mind of the shady cad of the Remove was full of bitter chagrin and rage as he saw the merry crowd patronising the shop of his rivals. Not a single customer had turned up that day at the vaults, and Skinner & Co., and Fisher T. Fish, had closed their "shop" in disgust, and come along to view the Remove Economy Tuckshop.

For some moments Skinner stood at the back of the cottage parlour, watching the busy scene with a sneer on his face, and then, after a peep into the kitchen at the back, he squeezed his way out again, and joined his pals in the garden outside.

"I've got it, you chaps," he breathed, his eyes glinting. "I've got the very wheeze I want to dish 'em properly. It's good enough for a start, at all events. Come on round to the back."

Wonderingly, Fisher T. Fish and Stott and Snoop obeyed. After a swift search in the rubbish-filled garden at the rear of the tumble-down cottage, Skinner picked up a couple of old, dirty sacks.

Then he explained his plan.

"It's as easy as winking," he grinned. "All I've got to do is to climb on the roof and stuff these sacks into the blessed chimney. That ought to smoke 'em out, I fancy."

"Great pip!"

"Say, Skinner," ejaculated Fishy admiringly. "That's a real gilt-edged, top-notch wheeze, pard! I guess you've hit on the very stunt for this flyer business. Go ahead!"

Skinner chuckled and went ahead quickly enough. The ground at the back of the cottage was high, almost reaching the roof of a low, lean-to shanty built against the back of the cottage.

Skinner, carrying the sacks under his arm, swarmed up on to the roof of the shanty, and from there to the thatched roof of the cottage itself.

It proved to be easier than Skinner had expected. Nobody approaching from the front of the cottage could see him on the roof, and in a very few seconds Skinner had reached the chimney from which smoke was pouring, and he got to work with a will.

Heedless of the smoke and soot, he crammed the first sack, and then the second sack into the yawning mouth of the cottage chimney. Then, when scarcely a whiff of smoke proceeded from the chimney-pot, he scrambled down again and rejoined his chums.

"That's done it to start with," he chuckled. "Hallo, hear them yelling inside? Come on! We haven't finished yet. We'll dish 'em fairly before we've finished."

And Skinner set off across the piece of waste ground behind the cottage. His pals followed him, grinning, but wonderingly.

A moment later Skinner squeezed through the hedge into Friardale Lane.

Three seniors were strolling along the lane towards the gates, and Skinner gave a sudden chuckle as he recognised them as Coker, Potter, and Greene of the Fifth.

Skinner's chums had no idea what Skinner's further plans were, but they guessed he had decided to change the

programme abruptly on sighting Horace Coker.

"Great pip! There's that ass, Coker!" chortled Skinner. "Just the very fat-head to do the job for us! Look wildly excited, you fellows, and back me up."

With that Harold Skinner rushed after Coker. Hearing the running footsteps of Skinner & Co., the great Horace looked round. He blinked in surprise at sight of Skinner's flushed and excited face.

"Hallo! Stop a minute, you kids!" he ordered, in his lofty manner. "What the thump's up?"

"Fire!" gasped Skinner, stopping and grasping Coker by the arm. "You're a member of the school fire brigade, Coker—"

"Great pip! Yes, yes!" gasped Coker excitedly. "But where—"

"In that cottage behind the cricket field!" yelled Skinner. "Go and have a squint, Coker! You're the man for the job—"

"Look here—"

Coker began to speak, and then he stopped on seeing the excited faces of the three juniors.

"Fire in the old cottage!" he ejaculated, his rugged features becoming suddenly red and excited. "Great Scott! Come on, you fellows!"

And Coker went off with a rush. Potter and Greene, who were eyeing Skinner & Co. very suspiciously, yelled after him; but, as usual, Coker did not heed his loyal henchmen.

But Coker did not rush schoolwards, as Skinner & Co. had fondly hoped. Even the great Horace remembered Skinner's reputation for practical jokes, and he meant to make quite sure before acting in earnest.

Instead he rushed away for the cottage. He reached it in a matter of seconds, and then he gasped at what he saw.

Out of the open door of the old cottage a crowd of yelling, coughing juniors were swarming with handkerchiefs to their mouths. Behind them volumes of thick, black smoke were pouring through the open door into the warm summer air.

"Great pip!" gasped Horace Coker. "It's a fact, then—the thumping old place is on fire. My hat!"

His vague suspicion vanished now. Coker fairly flew back without stopping to see more. He rushed past his staring chums in the lane, yelling out madly to them as he did so.

"Fire! It's a blessed fact, you fellows! Come on!"

Skinner & Co. had already rushed off through the school gates, and at that even Potter and Greene became convinced, and they went off after their leader hot-foot.

They went rushing across the quad, and as they did so, Skinner, Stott and Snoop and Fish emerged from behind the porter's lodge, and slipped out through the gates again, with broad and delighted grins on their faces.

"That's done it, you chaps!" chortled Skinner. "Oh, what a scream! Now for some fun."

"Think it will come off?" grinned Snoop.

"Of course it will. I bet you a quid the brigade will be along in two ticks—old Coker will see to that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Laughing uproariously, Skinner & Co. dashed back to the cottage. They found smoke still pouring through the open door, while a crowd of excited fellows, still gasping and choking, hovered round in the garden outside.

Even as Skinner & Co. dashed up, Bob Cherry, followed by the rest of the committee of the Remove Economy

Tuckshop, came rushing out, their faces black. They stopped outside, coughing and gasping and choking.

"It's no good!" panted Bob Cherry, wiping his streaming eyes. "The thundering smoke's beaten us! Oh, great pip! We'll make someone sit up for this. Groogh! Oh dear!"

"Can't you rake the blessed fire out?" shouted Temple of the Fourth.

"We've tried, but the blessed smoke beat us back!" groaned Johnny Bull. "It was too big a fire in that dashed big grate. Oh, great Scott! Our stock will be ruined!"

"What the thump's caused it?" asked Fry. "Something wrong with the chimney?"

"What's caused it?" echoed Bob Cherry, gritting his teeth. "It's a thumping rotten joke of someone's. They've blocked the blessed chimney or something. I'll bet that cad Skinner's at the bottom of this."

"Let's have another try!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Oh, all right!"

Johnny Bull, Bob Cherry, Bulstrode, and Nugent made a rush through the smoke, and vanished into the interior of the cottage. They were only inside a few seconds, and then they came out again with a rush, reeling and coughing and choking worse than before.

"No good!" panted Bob Cherry, in despair. "It's simply impossible to get near the dashed fireplace. We'll have to wait until— Great Scott! What's this?"

They soon saw what "this" was. There sounded the rumble of wheels and the rush of running feet, and along the lane, at the double, came a horde of fellows, trundling the Greyfriars School hand fire-engine. Behind the horde could be seen Mr. Prout, trotting breathlessly along, and behind him trailed a perfect host of juniors and seniors, some bareheaded, some in cricket flannels, and all of them wildly excited.

Skinner & Co., from their hiding-place beyond the garden hedge, saw them coming, and they nearly exploded with suppressed joy. They had already heard the distant clanging of the school fire-bell, and they had known their little "joke" was coming "off." They knew now that it had, indeed, come off.

Amidst a chorus of shouting and great excitement, the engine rushed up to the garden gate, and the "firemen" got to work smartly. The Greyfriars School brigade more than once had been of great use at local fires, and they were justly proud of themselves.

In petrified amazement, Bob Cherry and the rest of the startled juniors in the cottage garden blinked at them and at the engine.

"G-g-good gracious!" stuttered Bob Cherry, his eyes almost starting from his head. "What the—what the— Oh! Great pip!"

It so happened that Wingate and most of the seniors had been on Big Side when the alarm was given, and Coker himself, who held a minor—a very minor—position of an official nature on the brigade, had placed himself in charge of operations.

Before the juniors in the garden had quite grasped the position of affairs, the hose had been run to the little evil-smelling pond at the rear of the cottage. Though the old cottage was of little value as a property, the school brigade did not propose to let it be burned down. They were only too glad for a bit of practice.

Blandell of the Fifth, out in the lane, was cranking round the starting-handle of the small motor engine like fury in a very few seconds, and, grasping the



"Get out of the way!" shouted Sir Hilton Popper, his face white and strained. "It is madness!" The runaway dashed up with a clatter of hoofs. Harry Wharton braced his shoulders and then leapt for the pony's head. His outstretched hands gripped the bridle—and they held! (See Chapter 8.)

brass nozzle of the hose, Coker came rushing into the garden with it, yelling out orders to right and left—orders which nobody thought of obeying.

Bob Cherry got over his utter amazement then, at sight of him.

"Here," he yelled, "what's the game, Coker, you born idiot? There's no fire, you fool! Oh, great Scott! Stop the burbling—"

"Shut up, and get out of the way, you footling kids!" roared Coker. "Now, you fellows there, let's have that water on! Great pip! Of all the slow burblers—"

"Drop that blessed hose, I tell you!" yelled Bob Cherry, turning round to his staring, petrified chums. "Come on, you fellows—quick! Chuck these born idiots out of this. They'll ruin all our— Yarrooooh! Grooooh! Yoooop!"

Bob Cherry's furious remarks ended in a wild, choking yelp as a stream of water, dirty and smelly, spurted from the nozzle in Coker's hands, and took him clean under the chin, lifting him off his feet, and depositing him on his back neatly. Then the stream whirled round in Coker's mighty hands, and swept the crowd of angry juniors fore and aft, as it were.

"Yarrooooh! Oh crumbs!"

"Oh, great pip! Grooooh!"

"Coker, you born— Yarrooooh!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Bowling the juniors over like ninepins, the stream of water swung round, and then the mighty Horace got the hang of

the hose, as it were, and sent the stream hissing through the smoke-filled doorway of the cottage.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The onlookers, with the exception of the Removites, yelled encouragement and laughter at the firemen, especially Horace Coker. That individual loftily ignored the plight of the hapless Bob Cherry & Co., and concentrated on his job.

Throb, throb, throb!

Swish, swish, swish!

The engine throbbed, and the water swished from the hose in great style. But Horace Coker did not concentrate on his job for long.

Drenched through to the skin almost, and infuriated beyond measure, Bob Cherry and his chums jumped up and went for Horace Coker as one man.

"What the thump— Here, leggo, you little idiots! Yarrooooh! What—"

Thump!

Coker went to earth with a crash, and the juniors swarmed over him, punching and pommelling the enthusiastic fireman. At that, several other Fifth-Formers, Potter, Greene, Hilton, Bland, and many more came rushing to Coker's aid. The attack on Coker had amazed them, and for once they backed him up.

In a flash a wild and whirling struggle was taking place in the rambling garden of the cottage, while the untended hose,

“wriggled and jumped and spurted, gallantly doing its ‘job’ as best it could alone.

It was at that dramatic moment that Mr. Prout came toddling into the garden, puffing and breathless. Behind him came Wingate and several prefects, and behind them showed the astonished face of Mr. Quelch.

They stared in dumbfounded amazement at the strange and bewildering scene.

“Coker!” gasped Mr. Prout, hardly able to believe his eyes. “What—what, boys—are you out of your senses? Stop that abominable fighting this instant, and attend to your duties! The cottage will be burned to the ground. Bless my soul!”

Though the playing hosepipe had not acted as a damper on the fiery spirits of the combatants, the voice of the Fifth Form master did, and the struggle ceased at once. Coker and the rest of them scrambled to their feet, panting and wrathful and breathless.

“What—what does this mean?” gasped Mr. Prout. “For goodness’ sake, boys—”

“It’s those young villains!” howled Coker wildly. “They’ve mucked the whole thing up. They must be potty. Grooogh! They went for us—”

“Attacked Coker for no reason at all, sir,” put in Bland warmly.

“Bless my soul!” exclaimed Mr. Quelch, joining the group. “Is that true, Cherry? This—”

“It’s true enough, sir,” said Bob Cherry heatedly, mopping his dripping face. “What did the idiots want to bring that here for? There’s no fire—”

“No—no fire!” ejaculated Mr. Prout, staring at the doorway, through which smoke, in lesser volume now, was still eddying. “But—”

“Of course not, sir!” panted Bob, realising it would all have to come out now. “It was only a fire in the kitchen grate. Some rotten practical joker has stuffed the chimney up, and that’s why the smoke’s coming out.”

“Bless my soul!”

“Great pip!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

As that bit of news sank in there arose a perfect howl of laughter from the swarm of juniors and seniors in the garden and in the lane. The laughter was just dying down when there came another interruption.

From the lane sounded the thud, thud! of a horse’s hoofs, and the next moment a smart little pony-trap pulled up in the lane outside.

In the trap was seated a rather autocratic-looking gentleman, with a brick-red face, fiery moustache, and a glimmering monocle.

It was Sir Hilton Popper. He stood up in the trap and glared over at the scene in wrathful amazement. As a matter of fact, the cottage was the property of Sir Hilton, who owned most of the land and property round about Greyfriars. At sight of the fire-engine, the laughing crowd, and the smoke pouring from the cottage doorway, he gave a snort.

“Good gad!” he ejaculated. “What’s all this, begad? My cottage on fire! Who in thunder has set my cottage on fire?”

He stood up and waved his whip to attract the attention of the masters in the garden, and as he did so, by sheer accident, the whirling lash of the whip flicked the hide of his pony, a smart little cob.

The result was electric. Startled already by the smoke blowing in his face,

and startled also by the crowd and commotion, that flick quite upset the “applecart” of Sir Hilton’s pony.

With a shrill neigh he pranced for a moment with shaking head, and then he wheeled round the trap like greased lightning, and bolted.

The sudden swerve almost sent the standing Sir Hilton lurching from the trap; but he recovered his balance and made a wild grab at the reins.

But his hasty clutch missed them, and the next moment, to the utter alarm of all, the cob and trap went lurching and bounding away along the lane at express speed, with Sir Hilton clinging on to his seat like grim death.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

In petrified alarm the swarm of juniors, seniors, and masters gazed blankly after the fast-disappearing trap with its helpless occupant.

“Good heavens!” gasped Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch almost together.

Wingate and North were the first to regain their wits, and they started off with a rush after the trap. The rest rushed out into the road.

“Oh, my only hat!” groaned Bob Cherry. “That’s about finished it.”

It had, did Bob but know it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton “Does It!”

HARRY WHARTON lost no time in going to the village, and he very soon passed over his order to Uncle Clegg, promising to send along some money that night by post. And Uncle Clegg accepted the order, promising to send the goods along the following day.

In high spirits Harry started back again, eager to reach the cottage and get to work again. The novelty of the whole business appealed to him, and, like the rest of the juniors, he was thoroughly enjoying the experience of being a “business man.”

Whistling cheerily, he cycled hard along Friardale Lane, and turned into the little lane that branched off from it and led to the cottage.

He had not cycled far along it, however, when he heard the sharp sound of galloping hoofs. There was something rather ominous in the mad sounds, and though he could not see far ahead, for the narrow lane twisted just ahead of him, he dismounted from his bike hurriedly, his intuition telling him that something was wrong.

He was glad he had done so the next instant, for round the twist in the lane there suddenly appeared a pony and trap, going at breakneck speed.

The pony had obviously bolted. His head was thrust forward, his eyes glaring, and showing the white, foam streaming from his jaws. The reins tossed and flew loosely, whipping the maddened brute’s head.

“Good heavens!” gasped Harry, in great alarm.

He recognised the pallid face of the driver, who was seated right back, gripping the side of the trap and the top of his seat tensely, as the trap lurched and bounded from side to side of the narrow lane.

Harry saw that a crash very soon was inevitable. The lane, narrow and winding, was bounded on either side by a slightly raised bank, beyond which was a deep ditch. It was a miracle how such a happening had been avoided as yet.

The startled junior flung his bike into the ditch and ran out into the lane.

There was no time for thought, only time for action. And Harry acted like lightning.

“Hold on, sir!” roared Harry Wharton.

He started to run as he spoke, for the maddened pony was almost upon him.

As he sighted the junior, Sir Hilton raised himself hurriedly in the dangerously swaying trap. His face suddenly became fixed and strained.

“Get out of the way, boy!” he shouted frantically. “Run! It is madness! Get out of the way!”

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The runaway dashed madly up. But Harry Wharton did not get out of the way. Far from it. With a swift bracing of his shoulders, he raced alongside, allowing the animal to overtake him, and then he leaped for the pony’s head, body strained sideways, clutching fingers outstretched and tense.

Luckily the off-wheel was deep in the soft turf on the bank now, and luckily Harry Wharton’s clutching fingers did not miss their objective.

His grasp closed firmly on the reins close to the animal’s foam-flecked mouth and held.

Under the weight and force of the impact Harry went down a little, and was flung against the pony’s sweating shoulder; but he hung on like grim death, and was half carried, half dragged on for several yards.

Then the pony’s head went down, and he gave a terrified squeal and stumbled sickeningly.

But he recovered himself in a flash, and, shaking his head madly, tore on again.

But not for long. That desperate clutch held, and, amid a wild plunging and kicking, the maddened brute was brought slowly but surely to a standstill amid a mad clattering of hoofs.

Finding himself firmly on his feet at last, Harry took still firmer grip of the horse, and spoke to him soothingly, though his head was whirling and he ached from head to foot.

“Good gad!”

Sir Hilton tottered upright again, and slowly and shakily dropped from the trap. He hurried to the pony’s steaming head, and very soon the animal was brought to a state of trembling quietness.

“By gad!” ejaculated Sir Hilton, when he was sure all was well. “By gad! You—you young rascal! I never thought you’d manage it, young man.”

Harry smiled and patted the pony’s head.

“It was dashed plucky, begad!” panted the baronet, staring hard at the junior’s flushed and heated face. “It was a dashed fine thing, my boy! You are Wharton, the head boy in the Remove Form, I believe?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You’ve done a dashed fine thing!” repeated the excited baronet. “And, by gad, I’ll see your bravery is suitably rewarded! I’ll see your headmaster hears of this, Wharton. Huh! If there is anything I can do for you, any reward I can give for what you have done, my boy, I shall be glad to give it.”

Harry Wharton flushed and shook his head.

“I don’t want any reward, sir,” he said, rather curtly. “I only did what any other fellow would have done.”

Sir Hilton frowned. He hated opposition of any kind whatsoever.

“Nonsense! I insist upon rewarding you in some manner, Wharton. I shall insist, begad! I am not accustomed to allow myself to remain under an obligation to anyone. If there is anything I can do that is within my power I order you to name it, boy.”

(Continued on page 27.)

SUPER MEN! Detectives of fiction are usually painted as super men, who walk hand in hand with danger every moment of their lives, men who manage to get out of tight corners with the utmost ease. But Ferrers Locke gets into a tight corner, escape from which is well nigh impossible!



K₂ Sporting Detective!

A full-of-thrills detective story introducing Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake, and Montague Manners, the sporting detective.

A Surprise for Pycroft.

WITH a savage ejaculation falling from his lips, Ferrers Locke jammed the receiver on the hooks and as quickly took it off again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hallo!"

Feverishly he pressed on the hooks to attract the operator's attention, the seconds wasted thereby seeming to him, in his agitated state of mind, so many hours.

"Number, please?"

He ground his teeth as the innocent query came from the receiver, and then asked for Scotland Yard. It was a trunk call in the ordinary course of events, but Locke impressed upon the feminine operator the urgency of the message, and he was through to the Yard inside twenty seconds. Greatly to his relief, he found Inspector Pycroft in the building, and to the worthy C.I.D. man the detective gave a cryptic description of Dr. Fourstanton's terrifying phone message.

"Good heavens!" There was a note of horror in Pycroft's tones as the full significance of the time limit Fourstanton had imposed came home to him. "I'll get along right now, Mr. Locke—"

He did not hear Locke's expression of gratitude. In two minutes he was speeding on his way to Baker Street to attempt the impossible—to save Drake from a ghastly fate.

Meantime, Ferrers Locke rushed back to the big marquee wherein the cricketers were partaking of luncheon. The merry laughter and the conversation died down as the anxious face of the great detective showed inside the tent. Without a word, Ferrers Locke beckoned to Lord Thundersleigh and Montague Manners. They left the table and came over to him, their faces full of wonderment.

"What's wrong?" asked his lordship, looking keenly at Locke's drawn face.

"What's the giddy rumpus?" inquired Monty Manners, a little less languidly than was his usual wont.

Briefly Ferrers Locke explained what had happened. The faces of his listeners went pale with horror.

"Poor kid!" said Manners. "I hope to goodness Pycroft gets there in time!"

But Lord Thundersleigh shook his head.

"I don't want to be pessimistic," he said quietly; "but if Fourstanton was speaking the truth, Pycroft could never reach Baker Street in time to be of any assistance to Jack Drake."

Locke shook his head miserably. The whole affair seemed to have stunned him—to have robbed him of his usual clearheadedness.

"I must get up to London without delay," he said, and the mentality of the detective, the man of action, returned. "I must lose no time. If anything happens to young Drake—he gulped back something in his throat—" "I'll never rest until I have hounded down that scoundrel Fourstanton!"

PEOPLE IN THE STORY:

DR. FOURSTANTON, a notorious motor-bandit, who has escaped from prison.

MONTAGUE MANNERS, a Society idol and an amateur cricketer of exceptional merit, who has taken up detective work as a living. Owing to his repeated successes in his new profession, "Monty" is deemed by the newspaper scribes to be fast on his feet.

FERRERS LOCKE, hitherto the most famous criminal investigator in the country, from his pinnacle of popularity.

INSPECTOR PYCROFT, of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard, a close friend of Ferrers Locke, and of

JACK DRAKE, the detective's clever boy assistant.

MOSTYN, the butler-colet of Montague Manners, an elderly gentleman retaining all the agility of his youth.

Soon after Dr. Fourstanton escapes from prison he commits a robbery at Lord Barling's house in Eaton Square. Monty Manners is called in to investigate, likewise Ferrers Locke. The two differ in their reconstruction of the crime, Ferrers Locke clinging to his theory that two burglars, working independently of each other, rifled the house, whilst Monty sticks to his theory that Dr. Fourstanton, and he only, was responsible for the theft.

The two detectives become friends, and Monty takes Locke down to Hampshire to play for Lord Thundersleigh's cricket team against the village eleven. Locke and Monty, as the opening pair in the cricket match, make a sensational stand. At the break for lunch Locke is called to the telephone. There he receives the shock of his life, for he finds that he is speaking to Dr. Fourstanton. The convict, who bears a deep grudge against Jack Drake, calmly informs Locke that his assistant—in London—will be blown sky-high within five minutes, and then rings off.

(Now read on.)

"Take my car," said Monty Manners, coming to the rescue; "it's capable of doing sixty miles an hour, and—"

But Ferrers Locke did not wait for more. He mumbled his thanks, and then tore swiftly to the garage. Inside ten seconds the grey sporting car belonging to Monty Manners was being backed out into the drive. Inside twenty the car was heading for the main gates.

Half a minute elapsed, during which time the car leapt forward, putting a curtain of light brown dust between the detective's back and shoulders and the anxious faces of Lord Thundersleigh and Monty Manners; and then Ferrers Locke, still clad in his flannels and blazer, had gone.

A peculiar expression of sympathy mixed with scorn crossed Manners' good-looking features for the space of a second as he watched the cloud of dust wind its way along the road to London; and then he shrugged his shoulders.

"He's sure some hustler," he remarked to Lord Thundersleigh. "But I'm hanged if I can see what good he's going to do!"

For once in a way Lord Thundersleigh spoke sharply to his favourite.

"Oh, have a heart, Monty, for goodness' sake! That kid Drake means more to Locke than anything else on earth!"

"I'm glad he does," replied Manners.

And the manner of his saying it caused his lordship to glance swiftly at him. But all Lord Thundersleigh saw was a dreamy, good looking face, wherein reposed an expression of thoughtfulness or anxiety—it depended upon what the searcher looked for.

Without another word, Monty Manners and Lord Thundersleigh turned on their heels and sauntered back to the marquee.

Meantime, up in London, Inspector Pycroft, a trifle "white about the gills," was urging the driver of a police-car to get the utmost speed out of the vehicle. Pedestrians stopped and stared in amazement at the tall figure of the C.I.D. man waving a frantic fist at the driver as the car flashed along in what, to them, appeared a highly dangerous manner.

The constables on point duty, recognising the car and its occupant, held up the traffic, and allowed Pycroft a free

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passage, as it were. The journey to Baker Street from Scotland Yard was done in the record time of ten minutes, which meant, as Pycroft hastily glanced at his watch, that he had arrived eight minutes too late to be of any use to Drake if Fourstanton had been speaking the truth.

With a grinding of brakes, the car drew to a standstill outside Locke's chambers. Pycroft noted, with a feeling of relief, that the house itself was intact. Evidently Drake had not yet gone "sky high." Shouting a number of unintelligible instructions to his chauffeur, the C.I.D. man, with reckless bravery, tore up the steps of the house until he came upon the main door of Ferrers Locke's suite of rooms. Fortunately, Pycroft possessed a key of the chambers, and, with a steady hand, he turned the lock and swung open the door.

Without hesitation—which spoke volumes for his pluck, for it must be remembered that he expected the place to go sky-high any minute—the C.I.D. man rushed through the small hall and tugged feverishly at the handle of the sitting-room door. Prepared to see all manner of horrible things, the inspector nearly collapsed as he discovered that everything was in its proper place—no disturbance of any kind.

A muttered imprecation fell from Pycroft's lips as he swung out of the room again and made tracks for the study. The door was pushed open violently. Again the inspector expected to see something out of the ordinary.

But all that came within his vision was a cosy room, a small fire on the hearth, and a large red leather lounge. It was the lounge that attracted his attention most; for, sprawled upon it in an easy attitude of repose, was Jack Drake, fast asleep!

And Drake was snoring!

"Well, I'm—"

Pycroft's vocabulary could find no suitable word to express his feelings. With widely-staring eyes and wrinkled nose drawn up in perplexity, he goggled down at Drake's recumbent figure the while he scratched his head.

Slowly, ever so slowly, a crimson flush surmounted his heavy features, for Pycroft was annoyed—very annoyed. A glance told him that nothing was the matter with Drake, that he was certainly in no danger of going "sky high."

And Pycroft had had his anxiety, that frantic rush—all for nothing.

A number of adjectives tumbled out of his mouth in quick succession as he still stared down at Drake's peaceful form. And then, with a deft movement of his right hand, Pycroft picked up a large cushion. Next moment the cushion whizzed through the air.

Smack!

It caught Drake full upon the face—not sufficient to hurt him, but quite sufficient to awaken him. His snore of one minute was changed to a fiendish howl the next.

"Yaroooooh!"

A smile broke across Pycroft's features as he saw the look of consternation in Drake's youthful face.

"Who"—yawn—"threw that?"

Locke's assistant rubbed his eyes and stared about him. When he caught sight of Pycroft standing there, laughing, a great anger consumed him.

"Did you throw that blessed cushion?" he demanded.

"Sure thing!" chuckled Pycroft.

"Ha, ha! Why—oh—ah—ow!"

Pycroft's chuckling died a sudden death as Drake, with a swift movement

of the arm, sent the cushion hurtling back at the C.I.D. man. It caught Pycroft right under the chin, and, arriving in that region, so to speak, at the very time the inspector was preparing to double himself for another hearty laugh, sent him staggering back against the wall, to bring his bullet head up sharp against the heavy rail of a picture frame.

"Yaroooooh!" howled Pycroft.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Drake's turn to laugh now, and he made the most of it.

Pycroft snorted his indignation, but his good humour soon returned.

"You asked for it, you know," said Drake. "Do you usually burst into a fellow's place and shy cushions at him when he's asleep?"

But his light, bantering tone dropped when Pycroft explained the reason of his visit, for to Drake the story was an amazing one.

He reached out suddenly, and caught the inspector's brawny hand in his own. He wrung it warmly.

"And you rushed round to save me from—" he said; and there was a break in his voice. "I'll not forget it, old man."

"Oh, bosh!" scoffed the C.I.D. man, blushing to the roots of his hair. "But what worries me now is the reason of Locke's message—the motive behind the call that sent me rushing round here—"

"And which perhaps has sent the gov'nor rushing up to town as well," said Drake. "For he's pretty certain to come on here without loss of time."

"Sure!" nodded the inspector. "I'd better get on the phone to Lord Thundersleigh's place right now."

He crossed the room as he spoke, and picked up the telephone instrument. The answer that reached him when he was through and inquired for Ferrers Locke was as Drake had surmised it to be—Locke had left the house for London within a few minutes of telephoning Pycroft.

Pycroft grunted dismally as he rejoined Drake, and imparted the information.

"All we can do now is to wait for the gov'nor to arrive," said Drake. "But, obviously, the reason behind it all is to get him away from Thundersleigh's place. Do you think Fourstanton is contemplating a burglary at his lordship's house?"

"The facts point to it," said Pycroft slowly. "And yet he is so consummate a scoundrel, and so deuced clever that he must have foreseen the possibilities of our discovering the trick and frustrating any attempt at burglary at Thundersleigh's place."

"Which means that you are going to despatch a posse of police to his lordship's house to keep a watch on the place."

"I must do that, although it appears to me to be a futile measure." Pycroft's brow wrinkled in a score of places. "I wonder if—"

He broke off, and Drake caught his train of thought, unspoken as it was.

"If—if the gov'nor's got into any trouble, you mean?" he asked anxiously. "If it's some sort of trap—"

The C.I.D. man looked squarely at Drake.

"I don't know what it means," he said quietly. "But there's some dirty work going on somewhere, and you and I, my lad, must put our thinking caps on. If Locke isn't here within one hour and a half—and he could easily accomplish the journey within that time in a fast car—we must hunt the route he set out to follow."

"Meantime, you're going to send the posse down to Thundersleigh's place?" said Drake.

"Sure! We'll catch Fourstanton napping, if that's his game," said Pycroft. "But my instincts tell me that we're on the wrong track. Still, a detective must leave no possible line of crime uncovered. I'll phone the Yard right now."

Inside a quarter of an hour a special car, containing ten picked men of the famous Flying Squad, was proceeding to Lord Thundersleigh's place. And while that car ate up the miles, Pycroft and Drake were perforce obliged to curb their impatience until the time limit Pycroft had set upon Ferrers Locke's journey had elapsed.

Never had the hands of a clock revolved so slowly.

The Patient.

AS soon as Ferrers Locke got clear of the by-road that skirted Lord Thundersleigh's house, he opened out the engine of Manners' car, and, with grim face watching the road ahead of him, settled down for a swift drive up to town.

Milestones flew past every few minutes, and twenty miles of the journey had been done when, approaching a lonely piece of country between Marsden and Babblebury, a strange thing happened.

The dicky-seat, five or six feet behind Ferrers Locke, began to move.

The detective, with his eyes glued on the road ahead of him, naturally did not observe that strange phenomena. He did not see the "lid" of the dicky-seat move slowly from a horizontal position to an angle of forty-five degrees; did not hear the sharp click the automatic lock made as the seat swung upwards and outwards to its normal position.

The trees seemed to fly past, the white road appeared one unlimited blur—the car was travelling at sixty miles an hour.

Suddenly, from within the spacious aperture which, in ordinary course of circumstances "housed" the dicky-seat, there appeared the head and shoulders of a man.

With infinite caution, the figure rose to an upright position, inch by inch, until a view of the head and shoulders was followed by the waist and hips.

A large slouch hat adorned the head, whilst the features were practically obscured by a large silk handkerchief. But there was no mistaking the deadly menace in the piercing eyes that peered above the edge of the handkerchief.

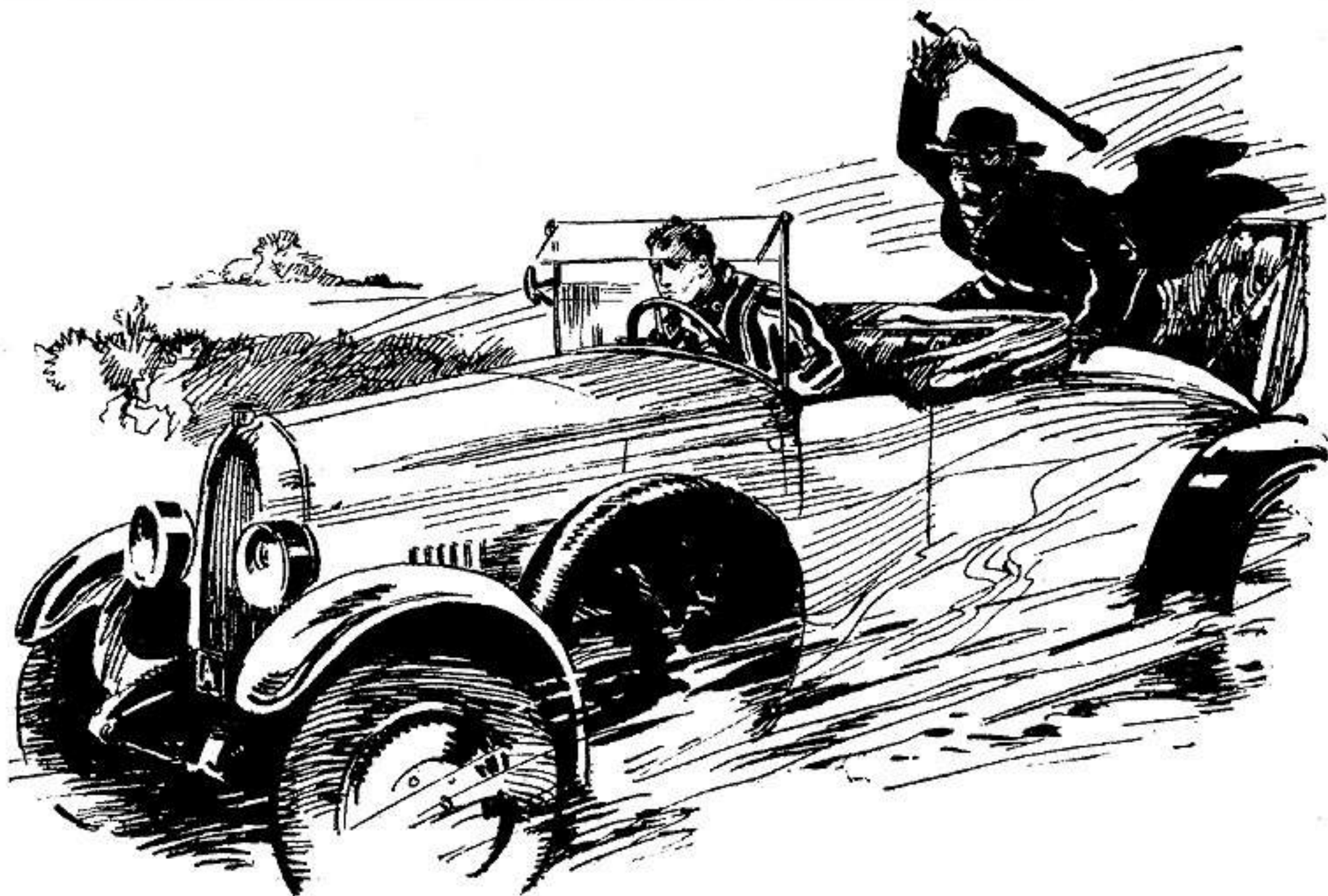
A view of the head and the shoulders and down to the waist gave an indication of the height of the man—as near six feet as made no odds.

Oblivious of the nearness of another being, and an enemy at that, Ferrers Locke, hunched over the steering-wheel, never took his eyes off the road.

The right arm of the figure in the dicky-seat moved upwards. In its clenched hand appeared a stick, much the same as an ordinary walking-stick, except that at one end bulged a knob of ugly-looking proportions.

Cautious as a cat about to spring upon a mouse, the figure in the dicky-seat clambered over the frame of the car, stick poised ready to strike at a moment's notice. A sharp glance at the road ahead, two more—each to left and right—and then the stick, with stunning force, descended on the detective's unprotected head.

Ferrers Locke collapsed in his seat without a cry—without further movement. But the man who had dealt that



Cautious as a cat about to spring upon a mouse, the masked figure in the dicky seat clambered over the frame of the car, stick poised ready to strike at a moment's notice. (See page 22.)

dastard's blow leapt nimbly over the intervening space between the dicky seat and the driving-seat and clutched the steering-wheel just in time to prevent the car from mounting a steep bank at the side of the road.

The car came to a standstill. The man in the slouch hat went about his prearranged task with absolute coolness. Roughly, he slung the inert form of the detective over his shoulders, and carried him to the opposite side of the road. There he dumped him on the bank, having first satisfied himself that Locke showed no immediate signs of returning consciousness.

Then the masked individual clambered into the car, drove it a few yards further along the road and brought it to a standstill, the engine still running. Away to the left was a high embankment. Beyond it was a sheer drop of a hundred feet into a swiftly-moving stream that merged into the weir, whose lashing waters could be heard in the distance.

The masked man listened to the dull roaring of the waters, and then he chuckled as if thoroughly satisfied at what he contemplated doing. Next moment he had set the car full tilt for the bank, at the same time taking a flying leap from the car itself into the roadway.

With a roar and a spluttering of its engine, the car ploughed its way up the bank, reached the summit, and then, finding nothing to meet its fiercely-revolving wheels but empty air, turned turtle and pitched headlong to the river a hundred feet below.

The masked man scrambled to his feet and raced up the bank. Then, as he gazed down upon the wreckage of the car, he chuckled grimly.

"The evidence speaks for itself," he muttered. "It's hard lines on Ferrers

Locke, but there it is. He was a noted speed merchant."

Turning, he made tracks for the bank upon which he had left Locke's huddled figure. The detective, as yet, showed no signs of returning consciousness. With effortless ease the man in the slouch hat picked up the sleuth, and, with his inert figure slung across his shoulders, cut across the fields in the direction of an old tower of Tudor design that reared its crumbling walls against the skyline.

Before he proceeded many paces the man in the slouch hat removed the obscuring handkerchief from his face and looked about him. But there was no sign of any living presence around him. Upon reaching the tower he placed Locke's figure in the long grass and pushed against the rickety door of the old ruin. In the aperture thus created stood a combination motor-cycle. With coolness that would have been admirable in more worthy circumstances the scoundrel wheeled out the combination and then commenced to strip Locke of his flannels. From a locker in the side-car he produced a suit of clothes, and in these the unconscious detective was dressed.

Next, his captor took a small syringe from his pocket and injected the contents of it into Ferrers Locke's arm.

"That'll keep him dazed for twenty-four hours," he muttered.

A glance at his watch and the scoundrel had started the engine of the motor-cycle. Next minute he was speeding in the direction of Babbledbury. Long before he reached his destination Ferrers Locke had returned to consciousness; but, try as he might, his muscles failed to aid him, and his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth. Worse than that, he actually found himself grinning—grinning, as an unsympathetic

observer might have said, like a Cheshire cat.

It was amazing, uncanny.

His captor smiled at him several times, but refrained from speaking. He knew the effects of the drug he had injected into Locke's system. They were for all the world like the symptoms of a derailed mind.

Babbledbury came in sight at last, and straight to the lunatic asylum Locke's captor proceeded. It appeared that he was expected, for the moment he announced his name an obsequious gentleman hurried forward and shook him by the hand.

All this time Ferrers Locke was stationed in the side-car, conscious, in a dazed sort of way, of all that was going on around him, and yet thoroughly incapable of moving a muscle.

He grinned sheepishly a few moments later as two hefty-looking attendants of the asylum ranged themselves on either side of him and escorted him into the building. He was still grinning when these same attendants hurried him into a room of small dimensions, whose walls were padded, and whose single window was barred. He allowed himself to be put to bed like a babe in arms, grinning the while in a stupid fashion that found no chord of astonishment in the hearts of the attendants, for they were used to such afflictions.

They made him comfortable—as comfortable as it is possible to be in a padded cell—and left him.

Meantime, the superintendent of the asylum was engaged in deep conversation with the man who had brought Ferrers Locke to the place.

"Of course, you see him to-day in one of his 'nice moods,'" said this scoundrelly individual. "But, really, doctor, THE MAGNET LIBRARY,—No. 904.

it's quite time that my poor brother received medical attention. His delusions are getting worse. He for ever styles himself a great detective. Calls himself Ferrers Locke, talks of his boy assistant, Dark, or Drake, or something, and always refers to Scotland Yard as though he had a big pull with the Yard people."

"Poor fellow!" said the superintendent sympathetically.

"As I said just now, he's in a nice mood to-day. He has periods of quiet days, and then—Jove—"

"There's no holding him, eh?" put in the kindly medico quietly. "I know. I am glad you have put forward his chief obsession. A detective, eh? Hum! We shall know how to treat him."

"You won't let him get about the grounds just yet, will you, doctor?" said the man with the slouch hat. "He's dangerous at times—very violent. And he's very strong."

The medico smiled indulgently. "Leave him to me," he said. "I'll make a good case of him. In less than a year I'll restore your brother to you in his normal health."

His visitor did not seem too pleased at that generous statement, but he forced a smile and dragged a bundle of official-looking papers from his pockets.

"Ah, everything is in order, I see," said the superintendent, adjusting his pince-nez and scanning the papers set before him. "We cannot be too careful these days, sir. A man can't be put away in an asylum in these modern days unless responsible officials have given their sanction to his detention."

"Indeed they can't!" smiled Locke's captor, enjoying himself. "I've had a deuce of a job to get those papers signed."

He reached for his hat and rose to his feet. Then as he caught the superintendent's glance upon him he laughed as if remembering something, and dragged a bundle of notes from his breast-pocket.

"I'll settle with you for my brother's keep while I am here," he said easily. "No, no; don't bother to give me any receipt. I suppose we can trust each other," he added.

"Why, of course, my dear sir," replied the superintendent, counting the notes. "Your brother's fees are paid for six months. But, of course, you will come and see him occasionally."

"I shall do my best. But, you must remember, my brother does not look upon me as a friend. He'll soon be telling you that he is not my brother, and that I have kidnapped him, or something equally silly. No"—the scoundrel appeared to think deeply for a moment or two—"I don't think I shall visit him very often."

"As you will, Mr. Stanton!"

The man laughed lightly as he heard the name, and then, shaking hands with the superintendent, he turned upon his heel and strode out of the building. He mounted his cycle, turned the machine round in the road, gazed with an enigmatical smile upon his features at the gloomy red-brick building, and then he was off like the wind.

Ferrers Locke's "brother" had gone.

The Oil Trail.

WHILE Ferrers Locke was speeding Londonwards in Manners' car that worthy was going great guns at the wicket, partnered by Sir Ernest Paytree, who had prevailed upon Lord Thundersleigh to let him have a "smack."

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In less than half an hour the total had passed two hundred, and then Manners put an easy catch into "slip's" hands. Of the two hundred and thirty runs one hundred and twenty had been contributed by Monty, and the crowd was not slow to show its appreciation as he strolled off the pitch.

Feeling he had deserved well of his country—or, rather, of his side—Monty stretched himself in a deck chair and watched the play for a quarter of an hour, occasionally chatting to Lord Thundersleigh.

"Deuced funny about the message Locke received," said his lordship. "For one of the servants has just informed me that Inspector Pyecroft, of London, whom Locke instructed to go to Drake's assistance, has just phoned through to say that Drake is alive and well, and that scoundrel Fourstanton has not been near the place."

"You don't say!" ejaculated Monty, suddenly interested. "Then—"

"Just a ruse to get Locke out of the way," said his lordship gravely. "I've got an idea that this rogue, Fourstanton, means to burgle my place—that's why he's lured Locke out of the way."

Manners shot his host an indignant look.

"Apparently, I don't count," he said languidly.

His lordship crimsoned.

"I beg your pardon, Monty, I didn't mean it like that," he apologised. "But that message has got to be accounted for, you know."

"Yaas, I suppose so," drawled Manners, pulling away at a cigarette as though it were a pipe. "I reckon you don't think that this man Fourstanton is laying a trap along the road for old Locke?"

"What, in broad daylight?" There was a note of scorn in Lord Thundersleigh's voice. "This isn't the year dot, Monty."

"No, but—Hullo! What's this little lot arriving?"

He rose to his feet and indicated the stretch of road that skirted the cricket ground. A powerful car had just drawn to a standstill, and ten men—stalwart fellows, with "policeman" written all over them—alighted.

His lordship gazed at them with puzzled brow, and then he stalked towards them. At his heels trooped Monty Manners, equally curious.

They were Pyecroft's posse of the Fying Squad. The sergeant in charge quickly explained his business, and as he concluded, Lord Thundersleigh shot a pleased expression at the young cricketer by his side.

"What did I tell you, Monty? The police are down here to look out for Fourstanton. People up at the Yard seem to expect he'll break into my shanty."

"Really?" drawled Monty, and he smiled irritatingly—at least, so thought his lordship. "Deuced clever folk up at the Yard."

Lord Thundersleigh turned to the sergeant in charge of the posse and told him that his men had the free run of the place.

"I shouldn't hang about in a bunch," he said. "Hide yourselves—or your profession, at least—amongst the crowd."

"And hide those incriminating feet," yawned Monty Manners sarcastically.

Thus it came to pass that amongst the cricketer guests and their friends mingled ten representatives of the law, each one eager to claim the distinction which meant, perhaps, promotion, of spotting Dr. Fourstanton first.

And while every precaution was being taken to safeguard Lord Thundersleigh's place from robbery, a certain individual with "taking ways" was forcing an entrance into Sir Ernest Paytree's old-world mansion not three hundred yards distant.

He was a tall figure, and he moved with all the stealth of a panther towards the rear of the house. At a glance the place appeared to be deserted. As a matter of actual fact the three servants left in charge—for the rest were on holiday—were seated in deckchairs on the roof of the house watching the cricket by the aid of opera-glasses.

The prowler, nearing the windows of the house, saw them without the disadvantage of being spotted by them. He chuckled grimly to himself, and calmly walked up to the french windows and let himself in.

He was busy in that house for exactly twenty minutes, and he came out twenty thousand pounds richer than he went in.

It was not until the evening was well advanced and the cricketers were smoking and chatting in the great lounge of Lord Thundersleigh's place that Sir Ernest Paytree was informed of his loss.

A white-faced servant burst unceremoniously into the lounge and sought his master.

"Phelps!" exclaimed Sir Ernest angrily. "What does this mean?"

"You've been robbed, sir!" gasped the terrified manservant. "The house has been ransacked!"

"Wha-a-at?"

The colour drained from Sir Ernest Paytree's face, for he was a particularly mean specimen of humanity who parted with a shilling with about as much reluctance and pain as an ordinary individual parted with a tooth. "R-robbd?"

"Yes, sir!"

In a moment the lounge was in an uproar; everyone was talking at once, everyone asking questions of the terrified Phelps. It was Monty Manners who calmed them down to reason.

Bit by bit he extracted what information he could from Phelps—and that, in all conscience, was precious little—and then announced his intention of visiting Paytree's place without delay.

"What a day!" said Lord Thundersleigh, with a deploring gesture. "And then there's poor old Locke—something must have happened to him, for that fellow Pyecroft has been on to the phone several times asking if Mr. Locke had returned here."

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"Mr. Locke is able to take care of himself," he said. "He's no fool. Let's concern ourselves now with Sir Ernest's loss."

He detached himself from Lord Thundersleigh and spoke in lowered tones to his butler-valet, Mostyn. In a few moments the man had brought him his coat. With all speed the cricketers and the plain-clothes men surged over to Sir Ernest Paytree's house, leaving one policeman in charge at the Grange.

The servants met them in the hall—the full staff, for the "holiday-makers" had now returned. Monty Manners eyed them shrewdly. He prided himself upon being a good judge of character, and for a few moments his piercing gaze rested upon a tall footman whose features were decidedly shifty in expression.

The man returned a sullen, sulky stare.

It was only a matter of seconds, but the assembly of cricketers marked it

well. Then, without a word, Manners roamed his way about the house and grounds the while Sir Ernest Paytree and his friends plied the servants with questions.

Monty Manners stayed for some considerable time outside the windows of the dining-room, gazing thoughtfully at the stretch of lawn in front of him.

Then he stooped and examined a glistening bead of moisture that seemed to stand out from the short green turf.

"Ah!"

The exclamation escaped him as his gaze drew in a second blob of moisture about four yards away from the first. He strode towards it, a peculiar smile playing about his lips.

"Oil!"

And oil those glistening blobs of moisture were. There was a long trail of them, extending for close on three hundred yards at intervals of eight or ten feet.

Manners followed that trail to the end. And the end proved to be a gardener's tool-shed. There was even a blob of oil on the white wooden step of the shed.

"Ah, what have we here?" muttered Monty.

He was about to push open the door of the shed, when one of the C.I.D. men hastened over to him.

"Come here, my good fellow," drawled Manners. "I've half an idea that we are going to find something rather jolly."

The C.I.D. man joined him as he thrust against the door.

"Locked!" he grunted. "I've just tried that door."

"Indeed?" queried Manners. "And for what purpose?"

"No purpose in particular," admitted the C.I.D. man. "Just instinct—that's why I went and got the duplicate key—"

"The duplicate key," said Manners, raising his eyebrows interrogatively. "Where's the ordinary, everyday, common or garden key?"

"The butler said that Meredith, the footman, had it," came the answer. "And Meredith can't be found—he's messing around somewhere."

A smile playing at the corners of his mouth, Manners took the key from his companion and opened the door of the tool-shed.

To the astonishment of the C.I.D. man, he glanced swiftly at the floor, and walked straight over to where a leather bag of fairly large dimensions reposed.

"Are you a betting man?" he drawled, turning suddenly and facing his astonished companion.

"Nunno!" faltered that worthy, taken aback.

"Well, if you were, I'd wager you a dinner at the Carlton that this bag contains the missing loot!"

As he spoke, Manners whipped back the lid of the bag, to reveal a whole heap of silver and gold plate. On the top rested a fine old silver crucible, from the well of which streamed a yellowy, grey liquid that still percolated through a small hole in the bag on to the floor.

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped the C.I.D. man, in astonishment. "How did you hit on this place, sir?"

Manners smiled superiorly, and touched his forehead.

"This is where you want it," he drawled. And then his casual air left him. "I'm going to lock you in here, officer, while I run back and inform Sir Ernest of my discovery."

And, further to the officer's astonishment, Manners stepped out of the shed and locked the door on him.

IN A PADDED CELL?



"Heavens! Won't anybody come?" Ferrers Locke gazed about him like a wild animal, and then, catching sight of the small table, he picked it up and began to aim sweeping, thunderous blows at the door. This time the noise brought someone on the scene; a grim face peered through the grille in the door. "Now then, my good fellow, you mustn't do that! Take it easy, you know!"

(See page 27.)

Then, breaking out into occasional fits of subdued laughter, Monty Manners strolled back to the house.

He asked one or two questions of the servants in the hall, and noting the time by his watch, passed into the sitting-room.

The conversation died down at his entrance, and all eyes were focused on him. It was obvious to all that Monty had "struck oil," and, literally, he had.

At length Manners seated himself with a curious audience about him. The special posse from Scotland Yard appeared to be absolutely in the dark; there wasn't apparently a single clue to fasten upon.

"Well?" queried Sir Ernest anxiously. "What have you discovered? Don't sit there, Monty, like a grinning gargoyle," he added crossly.

"I have discovered where the stuff is," said Manners, calmly helping himself to a cigarette and lighting it with a deliberate care that was in the circumstances, exasperating.

His words, though, had the effect of bringing the whole party up with a jerk. Sir Ernest grabbed Monty by the arm in his agitation, and almost burnt that worthy's face thereby.

"Y-you know where the stuff is?" he asked, his voice trembling on a high note.

Monty Manners nodded.

"But—but—but—" Sir Ernest stammered and stuttered.

"As Shakespeare is reputed to have said, dear man," smiled Monty, "there are no buts, or but me no buts, or something. It's perfectly simple. You have—or, rather, had—a wonderful antique silver oil crucible, I believe?" he added seriously.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Sir Ernest ex-

citedly. "A silver one—worth a hundred quid."

"And I presume that there was oil in that crucible?" said Monty Manners, taking a long pull at his cigarette.

"That's so," answered the baronet. "I was exhibiting the thing to a dealer yesterday, and to show him how it worked, I filled it with oil. But what is—"

"Lucky for you you did!" smiled Monty. "That oil has dropped on the ground for many yards, for our burglar friend did not know it was filled, or if he did he didn't pay too much attention to how he carried it."

"Yes, but—"

"There you go again," said Monty reprovingly. "That oil trail, which you will shortly be able to spot for yourselves, leads from the stretch of lawn just outside the french window of the dining-room to a gardener's hut three hundred yards away—almost on the outskirts of your property, Lord Thundersleigh," he added, turning to his host.

"Good heavens!"

"And in that hut will be found—in fact, it is found—the whole of the loot," concluded Manners, with a smile. "No, no, don't get agitated, Sir Ernest. One of our C.I.D. men is on guard with a loaded revolver inside the hut. What is more, the door of the hut is locked, and I have the key in my pocket."

With a careless gesture he produced the key; and Sir Ernest grabbed it promptly.

"You are sure?" he queried nervously.

"Absolutely!"

"Then who is responsible for the theft?" demanded Sir Ernest.

Monty Manners shrugged his shoulders.

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"The evidence points to one of your servants," he said.

"I'll sack the lot if I can't find out which one it is!" said Sir Ernest savagely.

"Tut, tut!" admonished Manners. "That's rather childish. If you will excuse my saying so. As a matter of fact, I don't think you will have need to sack the lot. I rather fancy your tall footman fellow has—ahem—sacked himself—"

"What, Meredith?" ejaculated Sir Ernest.

"Meredith, if you like," said Manners. "I know him as Bland—Terror Bland they called him. He's seen the inside of a prison about five times since he was a boy. How the deuce he got into your employ, Sir Ernest, beats me."

"His references were all right," said the baronet.

"All forgeries!" chuckled Manners. "However, perhaps you had better send for him."

Sir Ernest rang the bell, and Phelps appeared on the instant.

"Send Meredith to me at once!"

The manservant turned on his heel and hastened out of the room. He was back again in five minutes, and he carried a note in his hand.

Sir Ernest eyed him sharply.

"Well?"

"Meredith has gone, sir," said Phelps respectfully. "I found this note on the hallstand."

The Legend of the Ring.

SIR ERNEST slit the envelope and read the contents of the single sheet of notepaper inside. The message, in a sprawling, ungainly hand, ran:

"I'm not responsible for your missing

silver; but I know that that cursed detective, Manners, has recognised me as being an old lag, which means that my forged references will be lined up against me. It's no good a crook trying to turn honest. The finger of suspicion always drops on him. I swear I am innocent, and that I'm running straight.

"JULES MEREDITH."

"I'll have him punished!" grated Sir Ernest. "The scoundrel! I took him in and—"

"Then he took you in," said Manners cheerily. "But you're not going to hunt the poor wretch? I ask it as a favour, Sir Ernest, that you let him go. I know that it amounts to compounding a felony; but, in the circs, I think our police friends will show a little human sympathy."

They did.

Meredith, innocent or guilty of the theft, was allowed to go scot-free. In the joy of recovering his valuables Sir Ernest Paytree was ready to promise anything that did not affect his pocket.

But the day's events were not doomed to end there.

Hardly had the whole party proceeded to Lord Thundersleigh's place when the night air was suddenly rendered hideous by three or four sharp, crackling reports punctuated by stabs of flame.

"What the deuce is that?" said Monty Manners, coming to a stop.

Crack!

"Help!"

The cry rang out piercingly, and Lord Thundersleigh and his friends broke into a run. They came upon the C.I.D. man who had been left behind at his lordship's house bent half double. His left hand clutched his shoulder, and a trickle of crimson smeared it. The fellow was about to faint when Monty Manners

caught him in his strong arms and roughly ordered him to "pull himself together."

"Fourstanton!" gasped the injured man. "He's been helping himself here all the time you've been over at Sir Ernest Paytree's house—"

"Good lor'!"

"Fourstanton—"

"Which way did he go?" Monty Manners was the most clear-headed of the party.

The wounded man made an effort and with shaking finger indicated a belt of trees away to the left.

With a few hurried words to one of the party to look after the wounded man, Manners pulled out a revolver from his pocket and hastened in the direction the man had indicated.

In a long line behind him the excited cricketers followed.

Away in front of Manners, about two hundred yards distant, moved a black shadow. Without hesitation the detective jerked up his revolver and compressed the trigger.

Crack!

His shot had gone wide of the mark, for the shadow still plunged on, finally to be lost in the cover of a line of gorse that did duty as a hedge. The chase went on for an hour or more thereafter, but no sign was seen of the burglar; and at length the cricketers, with Monty Manners at their head, gave up the chase in disgust.

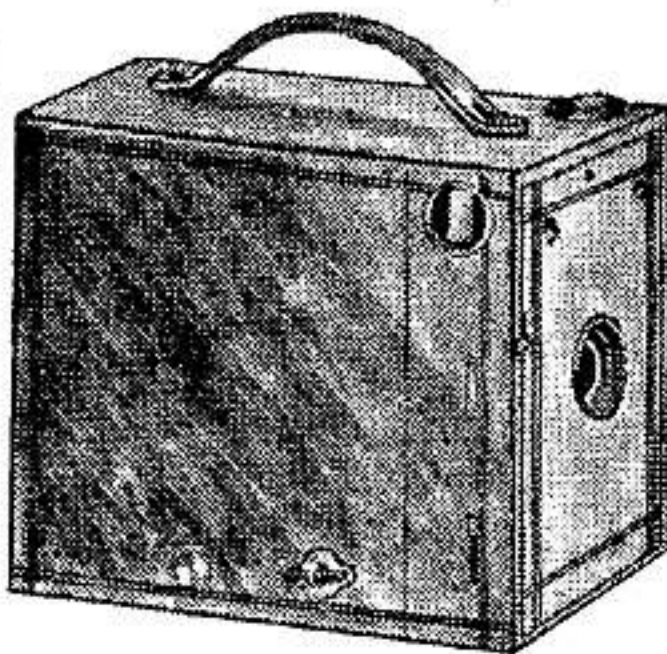
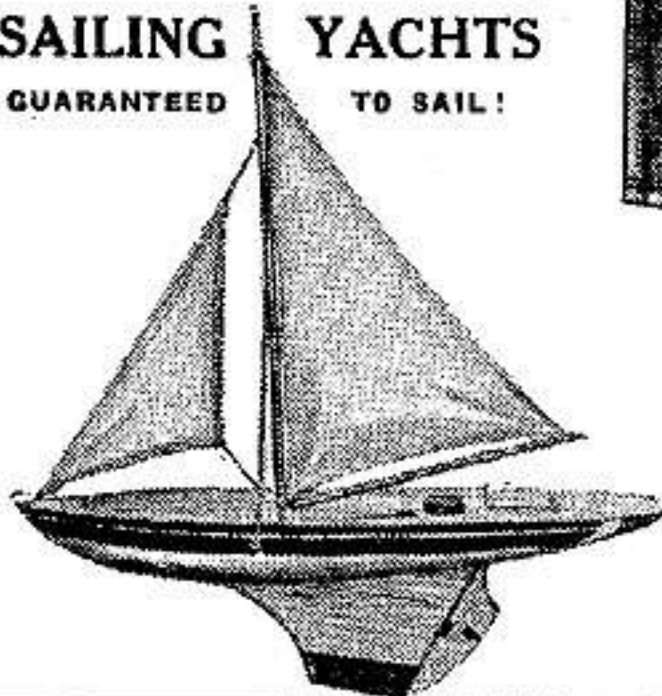
"Got clear away!" muttered Manners. "Gee, what a day of surprises!"

In a dismal body the party moved back to the house, to be met by Lord Thundersleigh himself. His lordship's face was strained and pallid.

"No luck!" said Monty Manners. "The fellow's got clear away. Has he taken much?"

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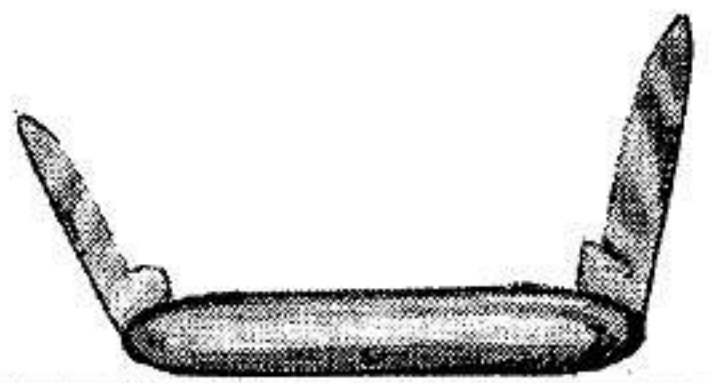
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Lord Thundersleigh threw up his hands with a gesture of weariness.

"Only about a hundred thousand pounds!" he answered bitterly.

"A—a hundred thousand pounds—" began Monty.

"My ring—the ring that's worth a king's ransom," said his lordship. "It's been in the family for five hundred years and—"

"Do you mean the ring you showed me this afternoon?" said Monty Manners, and his usually dreamy eyes were now wide open in horror.

Lord Thundersleigh nodded assent.

"Phew!" Monty Manners was moved beyond measure. "That's nasty!"

He turned and caught sight of the wounded man, who was now stretched out on a settee, the while a white-faced maid bandaged his wound.

"My dear fellow, you've got it bad," said Manners sympathetically. "Tell me—how did you come across the villain—this Fourstanton?"

"I caught him in the act of rifling the safe," said the policeman, with a painful effort. "He was masked—or, rather, he wore a silk handkerchief across his features."

"How do you know it was Fourstanton?"

"Well, he said he was," muttered the C.I.D. man. "He said something about its not being as easy as all that to capture Fourstanton when I gripped him by the throat."

"Well, what happened?"

"He felled me, and I lay half-dazed on the floor," continued the policeman. "The scoundrel still went about his task as calm as you like. He opened the safe, helped himself to something—I don't know what it was—and promptly retreated. Just as he got clear of the room my senses returned, and I tried to give chase. I fired at him several times, but I don't know whether he was hit."

And that was all the story the unfortunate fellow had to tell.

Lord Thundersleigh, who had listened to the foregoing, made a hopeless gesture and then gripped Monty Manners by the arm.

"Monty, if you can recover that diamond ring you'll be worth another fifty thousand pounds the day you hand it over to me."

Manners eyed his lordship firmly.

"Is that a bet?" he asked.

"Sure!"

"Then I'm on," smiled Monty. "I'm deuced sorry, old chap, that it's gone; but I make no bones about it, fifty thousand will put me on my feet again; funds are low, you know," he added.

"Recover it, then, with all speed," said his lordship. "I don't want to shout it about, but there's a legend attached to that ring. So long as it's in the possession of the master of our house all is well; but when that stone leaves our hands the curse upon it states that our house, our name, and fortune will crumble up."

"Oh, tosh!" said Monty Manners. "Surely you don't believe in all that?"

His lordship seemed to swallow something in his throat.

"Unfortunately for my own peace of mind I do. But let it rest there. You will recover it for me?"

"Rely on me," said Monty. "an' be advised by me. Keep the whole thing dark. Don't let it go into the papers, or Fourstanton might get the wind up and do something drastic with the gem."

"You mean he might cut it up?" quavered his lordship.

"How else could he dispose of it?" said Monty. "You go and talk to the

police, tell them that you've left the affair in my hands, and that you don't want any publicity attached to the theft."

And Lord Thundersleigh, more hopeful now than he had been five minutes earlier, drew the sergeant of police upon one side and spoke to him.

And while his lordship tossed feverishly to and fro in his bed that night, Ferrers Locke, his normal senses returning much quicker than his captor had reckoned on, rubbed his eyes and gazed about him in wonderment. For a few seconds his heart almost stood still as the dread significance of those padded walls, of the barred window, of the little metal grille let into the locked door of the room broke in upon his dazed mentality.

Then, with a roar of fury not unmixed with alarm, Ferrers Locke bounded up from the bed he had been sitting on and sprang towards the door. Savagely he clawed at the even surface of the panels, but no handle could he find. The handle of the door was on the outside.

"Good Heaven!"

With staring eyes he scanned the window, saw the iron bars mocking at him, and then, with all the strength of a madman, he tugged furiously at them.

He might have saved himself the trouble. They did not budge the tiniest fraction of an inch. The perspiration pouring out of him in great beads, the sleuth pressed his face close against the bars of his prison and looked downwards. A watery moon revealed the ground below, a matter of forty feet or so away from him.

He was caged like a rat in a trap.

"An asylum!" he muttered dazedly.

Locke gazed about him like a wild animal, and then, catching sight of the small table, he picked it up in his strong hands and began to aim sweeping, thunderous blows at the door.

This time the noise he made brought someone on the scene. A grim face peered through the grille of the door.

"Now, then, my good fellow, you mustn't do that. Take it easy, you know."

Locke thought swiftly.

"There's some mistake," he said, speaking rationally. "I'm not mad. This is an asylum, isn't it? I'm not mad—"

"No, no; of course not," came the soothing tones of the attendant.

"But I'm not!" howled Locke. "I'm Ferrers Locke, the detective. You must have heard of me."

The attendant nodded sympathetically.

"Will you phone through to Scotland Yard for me, then?" said Locke, realising now, with a terrible feeling gnawing at his heart that he was indeed accepted and regarded as a madman.

"I'll do it in the morning, sir," said the attendant, and he made to move away.

Then Locke's usual restraint deserted him. He felt afraid, terribly afraid of the fate in front of him, strong man as he was mentally and physically. His hands beat a frenzied tattoo upon the door, but the noise passed unheeded. The attendant had gone back to his bed.

Thump, thump, thump!

Long he stood there smashing at the panels, until his hands were raw and bleeding, but the door might have been made of hardened steel. And then his nerves broke down. He began to laugh, wildly and shrilly.

"I'm not mad!"

Another strange peal of laughter.

Ferrers Locke was as near to becoming mad as it was possible to be.

(Don't miss the next instalment of this thrilling story, boys. It's a winner all the way!)



(Continued from page 20.)

Harry was about to refuse again, and then quite suddenly an idea occurred to him, and his eyes gleamed with mischief.

"Well, yes, sir," he said quietly. "There is one favour you can do for me and for Greyfriars."

"Name it, my boy—name it!" snapped the pompous baronet.

"I should be grateful to you, sir, and so would all Greyfriars, if you could get the restrictions removed relating to the school tuckshop, sir."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Sir Hilton. "Why, you cheeky young monkey! Never in my life have I heard such impudent audacity. Do you actually mean what you have said, boy?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Sir Hilton Popper snorted like an old war-horse. He glared for a few moments at the rather scared junior, and then without another word he took the reins and climbed into the trap again.

Harry watched him, and stepped aside, wondering how he had dared to make such a request. He felt he had "done it" with a vengeance.

"Ahem! Do you wish the pony turned round, Sir Hilton?" he asked, anxious to change the subject.

"No!" barked the baronet. "I will go round to the school by Friardale Lane."

With that the rather crusty old martinet started his pony, and the trap howled away, the pony obviously subdued enough now. Harry groaned, and, getting his bike, he climbed into the saddle. He was feeling the effects of his strenuous effort now, and he felt sore in more ways than one.

"Oh, my only hat!" he groaned, as he rode on. "I've fairly done it now."

Scarcely had he been in the saddle a few seconds when he met Wingate and several other seniors running along the lane. Wingate hailed him.

"Seen the runaway, Wharton?" he gasped. "Sir Hilton Popper, I mean?"

Harry told him what had happened, briefly and modestly, and Wingate breathed deeply in relief.

"Good for you, Wharton," he said grimly. "Anyway, I'm afraid you'll soon feel you've little to congratulate yourself about. You're for it, my lad."

"Why, what on earth's the matter?" ejaculated Harry in sudden alarm and apprehension.

"You'll soon know that," said Wingate.

And Harry Wharton did soon know. As he came up to the cottage and saw the crowd and the fire-engine which was just being trundled away, his eyes almost stared from his head.

Bob Cherry came rushing up to him then, and Harry saw from his face it was all up with the Remove Economy Tuckshop.

"What on earth's happened, Bob?" demanded Harry.

In dismal tones, and helped by the other juniors, Bob related what had taken place.

"Oh crumbs!"

Harry Wharton groaned in deep dismay, and a few moments later, after

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THE RIVAL TUCKSHOPS!

(Continued from previous page.)

locking up the ill-fated tuckshop, the crowd of Removites, amid laughter and cheers from the Upper Fourth and fags, trooped dismally away schoolwards. The Famous Five went straight to their study and waited there—for the summons they knew would come sooner or later.

It came soon enough. They had scarcely been indoors ten minutes when Wingate looked in and beckoned to Harry.

"Head's study, Wharton," he grunted.

Harry Wharton exchanged a dismal glance with his chums, and went along to the Head's study.

Sir Hilton Popper and Mr. Queck were with Dr. Locke.

The interview was brief.

"Wharton," began the Head, turning a severe glance on the junior. "You are aware of my reason for sending for you?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You have been the leader, apparently, Wharton, in a daring and audacious enterprise—an escapade that has filled me with amazement!" said the Head sternly.

"Yes, sir!"

"You knew perfectly well that the school tuckshop had been closed by order of the Governing Board of this school," said the Head. "And yet you have dared to open an establishment of your own, though you must have realised that such a course would be in defiance of

that order, Wharton. You and the misguided boys connected with you in this venture have merited severe punishment, Wharton."

"I—I suppose so, sir," stammered Harry.

"And, but for the fact that Sir Hilton Popper had been kind enough to intercede on your behalf, that punishment would have been severe, Wharton," went on the Head, smiling slightly. "Sir Hilton has begged me to overlook the matter, and I have agreed to do so. The matter is now ended, Wharton."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Harry. "Thank you, sir."

"You have yourself to thank for that, my boy," went on Dr. Locke genially. "Sir Hilton has told us of your plucky action this evening. Your action was most praiseworthy, Wharton, and I feel proud of you. You undoubtedly saved Sir Hilton Popper from grave injury, at least. In the circumstances, my boy, both Sir Hilton and myself are agreed that you have amply earned pardon, both for yourself and your friends. You may go, Wharton!"

Harry mumbled his thanks, and almost tottered to the door. He had almost reached it when Dr. Locke called him back and handed him a slip of paper.

"Will you kindly find Wingate, and ask him to pin that notice on the notice-board in Big Hall?" he said, smiling. "It should be of great interest to the school."

"Certainly, sir!" gasped Harry.

He left the room, hardly realising he

did so. Out in the passage he almost bumped into Wingate. The captain of Greyfriars glanced at the notice Harry handed him, and then he whistled.

"Great Scott, kid!" he gasped.

He showed the notice to Harry, and Harry gasped as he read it. For the notice stated briefly that the order relating to the closing of the school tuckshop had been cancelled, and that it would be open as usual the next day.

"M-mum-my hat!" breathed Harry, his eyes dancing. "Then the old chap's given me the reward I asked for, after all!"

Sir Hilton had—without a doubt! When the notice appeared on the notice-board there was joy and gladness abroad, and Harry Wharton and his fellow-conspirators were the heroes of the hour.

How Skinner and his fellow-directors managed to dispose of the stock they had left, the Famous Five never found out, nor how they managed to pay their creditor. But for days afterwards the shady quartet went about with black looks and scowling faces, and it was evident that Skinner, Stott, and Snoop had very good reason to regret their dealings with Fisher T. Fish's Greyfriars Tuckshop Federation (Incorporated).

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's rollicking story of the Greyfriars chums, entitled "Alonzo, the Slogger"—and take the precaution of ordering your MAGNET early.)

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