

"THE MASKED DEATH!" —A THOUSAND THRILLS
STORY—STARTS INSIDE!

The Magnet 2^D

No. 1,114. Vol. XXXV.

Week Ending June 22nd, 1929.

LIBRARY

EVERY SATURDAY.



BILLY BUNTER'S TREAT!

Thousands of times has Billy Bunter, the fat and impecunious "Owl of the Remove," invited his Form-fellows to a "spread," only to disappoint them at the last moment. But this time, the "spread" does materialize! In what manner, Frank Richards tells in the delightful school story inside.



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to
c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

THIS coming Friday is an outstanding date in the history of the British Navy, chums, for ten years ago, on this particular day, the German Fleet surrendered to us. The German Navy did not get a chance to do much during the War, for only the submarines were active, the High Seas Fleet remaining in the Kiel Canal. The Germans, you will remember, tried to save their faces by scuttling their ships in Scapa Flow, but it was an ignominious end to a Fleet which, for many years prior to the War, had drunk to the toast of "The Day!" I don't think the German Navy had anything to be pleased about when "The Day" actually came!

Friday is also

THE LONGEST DAY,

although the 22nd of June is very often the longest day in England. The reason the 21st is the longest this year is because the Solstice happens about two hours before midnight. In case one or two of you don't know what the Solstice is, I had better explain that it is the point at which the Sun is farthest away from the Equator. After the 21st of June this year, the sun will begin to slip away from us and go south again. In Eastern countries the 22nd of June will be the longest day this year, because of the difference of time between us and them. And this little reminder about the longest day brings back to my memory

THE MIDNIGHT SUN.

Wouldn't you give something to be in Norway just now enjoying the Midnight Sun to the full? Just imagine seeing the sun shine as brilliantly as day all through the night! I was up in the North of Norway once during the season of the Midnight Sun, and I took some jolly fine photographs by its light. Where they are now goodness only knows. I have a habit of losing my snapshots. That's the worst of being too lazy to paste them into an album properly!

Can you spare a moment for this week's winning limerick:

*A shady Removite named Stott
Was known to have smoked quite
a lot.*

*When asked if he knew it
Was wrongful to do it.*

*He said: "No, I don't, 'cause it's
not!"*

For the above winning effort, R. W. Lever, of 195, Willesden Lane, Brondesbury, N.W.6, has been awarded a useful leather pocket wallet. Have you had a shot at winning one of these topping prizes yet? There are still more waiting to be won!

CAN ANIMALS FORETELL THE WEATHER?

is the first question which greets me from the pile of letters on my desk this morning.
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They can, much more often than town-dwellers are inclined to believe. But any readers who live in the country will bear out my words that donkeys, cats, sheep, and even birds and insects can foretell the coming of rain. The cat does so by washing right over its ears, the donkey brays, and sheep change their feeding-grounds to the lee side of hills before gales and rain come. If ducks are noticed going out to grass fields in search of snails, rain can be expected. The shrill cry of the peacock denotes a change of weather. In fact, there are innumerable signs which can be noticed by observant persons.

Now we'll have a laugh with J. Haselhurst, of the Oxstalls, Evesham, who has sent in the following amusing joke and earned for himself a useful pocket-knife.

*Farmer: "Catching my fish,
eh?"*

*Angler: "Yes, I've caught one
of your big eels."*

*Farmer: "Well, now you are
going to catch one of my big
toes!"*

Don't let the grass grow under your feet, chums. Have a shot at winning one of our penknives to-day.

By the way, chums, don't lose sight of the fact, that next week's issue of our splendid companion paper, the "Gem Library" contains another dandy picture-card in the novel series of FREE GIFTS depicting

MARVELS OF THE FUTURE.

This, undoubtedly, is the best o' the bunch up to now, and shows in full colours a gigantic rocket "shooting the moon." Make a point of getting your newsagent to reserve you a copy to-day. You don't want to spoil your set, do you?

WHAT IS A DEATH-WATCH?

H. Gardiner, of Taunton, wants to know. It sounds fearsome, but it's nothing else but the noise caused by the furniture-beetle, which, when all is quiet and still during the night, causes a ticking sound, something like a watch. This sound is more frequent in the summer months, but when rooms are warm it can be heard at any time. You can imagine how "shivery" it would make a person who happened, say, to be locked in a strange room by chance! I wonder how poor old William George Bunter would get on if he heard it?

Where did the name "Lynch Law" come from?—is another question I am asked this week. From Charles Lynch, a Virginian planter, who used to take the law into his own hands. Lynching is still carried out in the United States, despite the many attempts to end the practice.

A CARAVAN HOLIDAY!

George Wakefield, of Walthamstow, and four of his pals have written to me asking

for ideas on the subject of spending the summer holidays. These Five—they call themselves the "Famous Five"—say that they have saved up a fair amount of that necessary article cash, and they want to make the most of this summer vacation. They're fed-up with going to the seaside; they want to do something out of the common. Well, then, why not hire a horse and caravan for a fortnight? George, you see, has admitted that he can drive a horse. He's just the chap to take charge. The hire cost of a horse and caravan is not excessive, and the use of them tend to make an ideal holiday. Camp can be pitched almost where the

holiday-makers like. If they are charged by landowners, etc., for permission to camp at a spot overnight, the amount is quite ordinary. Again, think of the wonderful change of scenery that can be yours for the asking, or the jogging. Quite a lot of ground can be covered in this way, and the caravan holiday is certainly restful and full of novelty. I've done it myself and the recollections still linger pleasantly in my mind. So "Famous Five" think this over and put it to the vote, and if you decide to adopt the notion see that you possess a camera in the party. It's a topping wheeze to take snaps of the beauty spots that catch your eye and to file them in your album for future reference. Let me know what your decision is.

Now a word or two about next week's bumper programme. The first ingredient in this bumper feast of fun and fiction is the grand yarn of schoolboy fun and adventure, featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the world-famous chums of Greyfriars. Here's the title:

"A LESSON FOR LODER!"

Frank Richards has put his best into this yarn, believe me, chums, and you can rest assured, even before reading it, that you are on a winner! All your old favourites appear prominently in this topping story.

Of course, there will be another screamingly funny story of St. Sam's in which our cheery young laughter-merchant, Dicky Nugent, of the second Form at Greyfriars, will raise a record laugh. Tuck in your "tummies" for this bean-feast, chums, which is entitled:

"PLAYING FOR THE FORTH!"

Dr. Birchmell is not the one to exert himself at the best of times, but, by Jingo, when he starts to wield the merry willow, the fun is fast and furious. Don't miss this long laugh, chums.

Next comes a gripping full-o'-thrills instalment of our grand new detective serial:

"THE MASKED DEATH!"

By John Sylvester.

dealing with Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant, Jack Drake, in one of the most baffling mysteries the world has ever known.

Naturally enough, another cheery "Come into the Office, Boys," will complete the programme.

Another attractive feature I have in store for you is a series of interesting cricket articles dealing with "Giants of Cricket," the first of which will appear in the MAGNET in a fortnight's time. These articles are written by a man who knows every inch of the great summer game and will be read with the keenest interest.

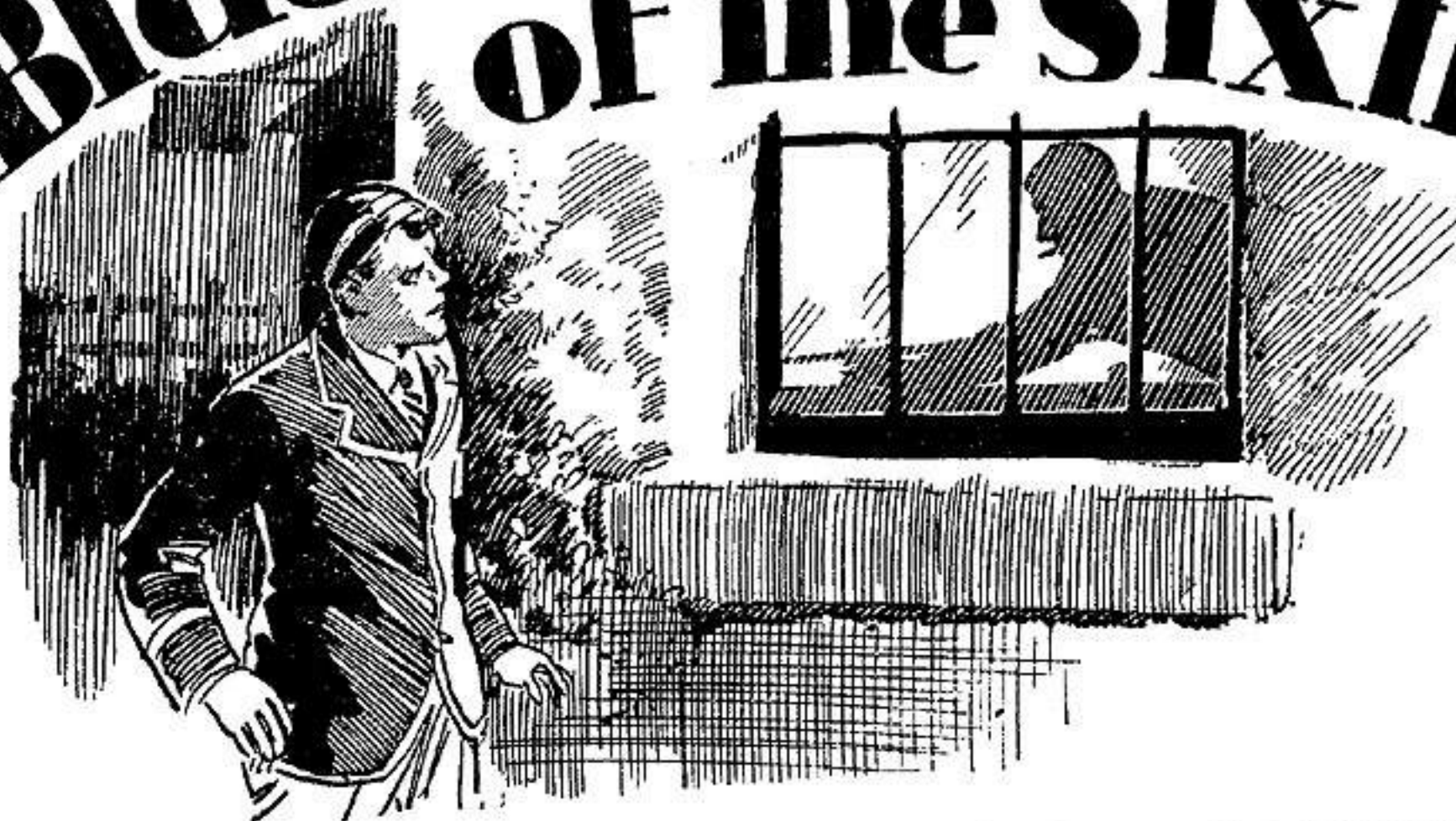
More about these next week, chums,

Cheerio,

YOUR EDITOR.

GET BUSY ON THIS RATTLING FINE STORY OF SCHOOL LIFE AND ADVENTURE—

The Black Sheep of the Sixth!



—featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the Cheery Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Unexpected Happens!

NOT Bunter!"

"Yes!"

"My hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific!"

"Gammon!" said Bob Cherry.

"Official!" said Peter Todd, with a grin. "I've seen the stuff!"

"Well, my only Aunt Sempronia!"

"Five o'clock!" said Toddy, and he passed on, leaving the Famous Five in a state of great astonishment.

Astonishment really was not the word.

It was amazing!

Toddy, who had the honour—or otherwise—of being Billy Bunter's studymate in No. 7 in the Remove, was spreading the glad tidings. A feast was toward in Study No. 7.

Bunter was standing the feast!

A spread in a study was not an uncommon occurrence in the Greyfriars Remove. It was not uncommon for Billy Bunter to attend it when it happened, invited or uninvited. But it was remarkably uncommon—unprecedented, in fact—for William George Bunter to stand the spread himself. That was unheard-of.

Not that Bunter was an inhospitable fellow. He liked a spread himself, and he liked to see other faces round the festive board. Had Bunter received all the postal-orders that he was constantly expecting, there was no doubt that Bunter's fat life would have passed in a succession of bounteous spreads, to which he would have asked all the Lower Fourth.

But those postal-orders never did come! Remittances from his titled relations were always coming; but they never actually came. On this subject, as Skinner had remarked, the peerage were remarkably absent-minded. The

earls, viscounts, and marquises to whom Bunter was related, never seemed to remember him while he was at school.

So Billy Bunter was always in the same state as the seed in the parable, which fell in a stony place.

Often and often Bunter announced that he was going to stand a spread to the fellows who had stood him so many. But it never happened. When Bunter had any money, which was not often, it found its way in the shortest possible time to the till of the school tuckshop. It never went far enough to satisfy the inner Bunter. So, naturally, there was nothing left for anybody else.

So if Bunter asked a fellow to tea, that fellow merely took the invitation

"After all, Bunter isn't a bad sort," said Bob. "He scoffs the lion's share at any other fellow's feed. But now he's in funds, he's handing it out. That's rather decent of him."

"Jolly decent!" said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We're in luck," he remarked. "It couldn't have happened better. We're all hard up to-day, and it would have been tea in Hall."

"It's corn in Egypt, and no mistake!" agreed Bob.

"Only—" murmured Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"Only what, Inky?"

"If the esteemed Toddy has been pulling our preposterous legs—"

"Oh!"

The Famous Five regarded one another rather doubtfully. Peter Todd was rather given to leg-pulling; and undoubtedly the news that Bunter was standing a gargantuan spread was surprising.

"Hem!" said Wharton.

"If it's one of Toddy's fatheaded larks, we don't want to miss tea in Hall."

"We jolly well don't!" said Johnny Bull.

"What about giving Bunter a look-in?" suggested Nugent. "After all, we ought to tell him that we accept his kind invitation with many thanks. And we can keep an eye open—"

"Let's!"

And the Famous Five walked across the quad to the House, and proceeded to the Remove passage.

Considering that Bunter was the founder of the feast, it was only judicious to make sure. They did not want, of course, to appear suspicious or ungrateful. But it was just as well to be quite, quite sure that the spread really was coming off.

Hazeldene of the Remove looked out

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There are black sheep in every fold, and no case is more apparent than that of Gerald Loder, prefect of the Sixth Form at Greyfriars. But even a prefect can be taught a lesson, as Loder learns to his chagrin!

as a preliminary to borrowing half-a-crown, and his usual reply was "Rats!"

And now the unexpected had happened! The spread which Bunter had been going to stand for whole terms was booked for five o'clock in Study No. 7; and as Peter Todd had seen the stuff, there could be no doubt about it. Toddy had over described the stuff, and the description might have made any fellow's mouth water. There was, Toddy had said, an enormous cake. There was a bag of jam tarts. There were muffins and scones, cream puffs, and Swiss roll, chocolate eclairs, and all sorts of toothsome things. Lots of them, Toddy had said—tons.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "if Bunter's going it at last, we'll back him up!"

"Hear, hear!" said Frank Nugent cordially.

"The back-upfulness will be terrific," concurred Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

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of Study No. 2 as they passed, with a grin.

"You fellows on the giddy list?" he asked. "I hear that Bunter's asking about half the Remove."

"Then there's real? a spread?" asked Bob.

"I suppose so. Toddy says so."

"The seefulness is the believiness, my esteemed chums, as the English proverb remarkably observes," murmured the nabob.

And the Famous Five went on to No. 7. Russell and Ogilvy, also among the "invited," joined them on the way. The door of Study No. 7 was half-open, and they pushed it wide open, and looked in.

Billy Bunter was there.

He was busy, and a jammy, sticky smear on his face indicated that he, at least, was not waiting till five o'clock before he started.

He gave the chums of the Remove a cheery blink through his big spectacles.

"I say you fellows, did Toddy tell you—"

"He did!"

"Good! I've asked Toddy to go round telling the fellows," explained Bunter. "I'm rather busy. I'm getting ready for a rather large party. You'll have to bring chairs along from your own study."

"Right-ho, old bean!"

The Famous Five, and Russell and Ogilvy had their eyes on the study table. It was fairly packed. Pounds, it seemed, must have been expended on the piles of gooey things that were stacked there. It was such a spread as Lord Mauleverer o. Smithy sometimes stood—those two youths being happy in the possession of great funds. But, as a rule, in the Remove pocket-money did not run to this extensive sort of thing. Such a spread was unusual in any Lower Fourth study—most unusual of all in Bunter's. But there it was—and seeing was believing!

"You fellows are coming, what?" asked Bunter.

"Certainly, old fat man. Much obliged."

"It's going to be rather a good spread," said Bunter complacently. "A bit above the sort of spread you have in your studies, you know."

"Hem!"

"You see, a really wealthy fellow can afford this sort of thing," explained Bunter, blinking at them.

"Hem!"

"I think I mentioned to you fellows that I was expecting a postal-order—"

"I think you did!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I seem to remember something of the sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter warmly. "You fellows make out that I don't get big remittances from my titled relations. Well, look!" Bunter waved a fat hand at the stacked table. "Does this look like it, or doesn't it?"

"It does—it do!" said Bob Cherry.

"You fellows have stood me a few rather measly feeds this term," said Bunter. "Well, I'm asking you to something really decent."

"Hem!"

"Look at that cake!" said Bunter loftily. "Specially made by our cook at home, you know. It arrived direct from Bunter Court."

The juniors grinned.

The cake was a large one and a handsome one, and they knew that it cost twelve-and-six at Mrs. Mimble's shop. But if Bunter liked to make out that it

had arrived specially from Bunter Court they were willing to give him his head.

"Look at those grapes!" said Bunter. "Grown at home, you know. The vinery at Bunter Court is famous all over Surrey."

It was an enormous bunch of grapes, and a little label still adhering to it hinted that it had come from Chunkley's Stores, at Courtfield. How that label had got on to a bunch of grapes from the vinery at Bunter Court the juniors did not inquire.

"I'm rather busy," added Bunter. "Five o'clock, you know."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors took the hint and retired. Bunter's fat hand went into a bag of tarts, and a large and juicy tart was transferred to Bunter's capacious mouth.

Undoubtedly he was busy—and likely to be busy in the same way until the tea-party arrived at five o'clock.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Senior Form Match!

"WELL hit!"

"Good man, Blundell!"

"Bravo!"

The shouting from the cricket field drew Harry Wharton & Co. in that direction. It was a holiday that day, and on Big Side a match between the Fifth and the Sixth was going on. The chums of the Remove had already given it a look-in while Wingate was batting for the Sixth—Wingate was always worth watching. Also they had remained to watch Loder at the wickets—not with admiration. Loder's innings had ended quite suddenly; and five voices had impertinently inquired the price of duck's eggs—an inquiry which had drawn Loder's eyes on the chums with a furious glare in them. After which the chums of the Remove had gone about their own business, not being particularly interested in senior matches. School matches, of course, drew their interest; but a Form match didn't amount to much in their estimation, unless their own Form was concerned.

However, as they had time to kill till tea, the cheery five walked down to Big Side and gave the seniors a look-in.

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, was batting now, and he was going strong. The Sixth Form bowlers, mighty men as they were, seemed unable to touch Blundell. Fifth Form men round the field yelled themselves hoarse as Blundell knocked the ball away again and again.

At Greyfriars the first eleven was picked from Sixth and Fifth, but the majority of its members were Sixth Form men. There was a strong opinion in the Fifth that a few more Fifth Form men would make up a better side. So it was sheer joy to the Fifth Form men to see their team getting the upper hand of the Sixth in a Form match.

Blundell of the Fifth was a great man in the first eleven, not to be spared from school matches. Personally he was on the best of terms with Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars. When he played in Wingate's team he was the most loyal of supporters. But when it came to a question of cricket between the two Forms, then Blundell was Wingate's deadly rival, yearning to knock him and his Sixth Form men into a cocked hat. And now he was doing it.

Wingate of the Sixth had a good-humoured grin on his rugged face. He was glad to see Blundell going strong like this, looking on him chiefly as a first eleven man. But some of the Sixth were not so pleased. Loder especially had a scowl on his face.

Loder had lately lost his place in the first eleven. Wingate was giving him a chance in the Form match. But Loder was not making much of that chance. He had been dismissed for nil at the wicket, and in the field he was not distinguishing himself. He had been given the ball for a few overs; but his bowling had been too erratic, and it had rather helped the Fifth to put on their score. Now he loafed in the field with a scowling brow, not taking the trouble to hide his ill-humour.

"Look at Loder!" murmured Bob Cherry, as the juniors arrived on the scene. "Looks a jolly old sportsman, doesn't he? What a face for a cricket field!"

"The scowlfulness of the esteemed Loder is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"There they go again!"

"Bravo, Blundell!"

"Look out, Loder!" called two or three voices.

Blundell had swiped the ball again, and swiped it this time fairly into the hands of Loder of the Sixth. Perhaps Blundell was getting a little reckless with success, or perhaps he was specially favouring Loder because he relied on him to prove a "dud." Blundell and Potter were running, and every Fifth Form face round the field was anxious as the ball sailed fairly down to Loder of the Sixth.

It dropped!

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Great pip!"

"Butter-fingers!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Wingate involuntarily. Wingate was not a skipper to rag a man while a game was on, but the dropping of that easy catch was too much for him. He glared at Loder.

Loder set his lips.

The ball had missed his hands somehow and dropped at his feet. The batsmen, running hard, made good, and were safe home before the leather went in.

There was a cackle of derisive laughter round the field. Blundell smiled. He knew that he had had a narrow escape—but a miss was as good as a mile.

Loder's brow was black as midnight as he sent in the ball. He had hoped to show up well in the Form match and win back the place he had lost in the first eleven. This did not look like doing it. The fact was that Loder was hopelessly off colour. Cigarettes in his study, surreptitious visits to the Cross Keys after lights-out, did not conduce to form at cricket. Loder wanted to shine at cricket, but he was not willing to give up being a black sheep for that object. And it was said of old that a man cannot serve two masters.

"Dear old Loder! Doesn't he look pleased!" said Bob Cherry.

"They call that cricket in the Sixth!" said Coker of the Fifth, with a grunt of contempt.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Why ain't you playing for your Form, Coker?" asked Bob Cherry, with a cheery grin.

Coker was not playing for the Fifth. His chums, Potter and Greene, were in Blundell's team, so Horace Coker had come down to watch. He was not there to admire, however. After the match he was going to explain to Potter and Greene all the faults they had committed—and their name was legion, in Coker's opinion. Coker glanced round at the juniors.

"Fancy leaving Coker out, you men!" said Bob, with a wink at his comrades. "Why, I wonder?"

"The whyfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

You fellows make out that I don't get big remittances from my titled relations," said Bunter. "Well, look here!" The Owl of the Remove waved a fat hand at the stacked table. "Does this look like it, or doesn't it?" "It does—it do!" said Bob Cherry. "Look at that cake!" said Bunter. "Specially made by our cook at Bunter Court!" (See Chapter 1.)



"Oh, I know!" exclaimed Bob, as if struck by a sudden idea. "I know why Blundell's left him out! He wants to win the match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky fags!" roared Coker. "I'll—"

The Famous Five moved away from the spot, just in time to obviate a serious case of assault and battery. It was not safe to chip Coker about cricket and remain near him.

"Bravo! Well hit!" rolled over the field.

Then there was another roar.

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

"Good old Wingate!"

Wingate of the Sixth held up the ball. Blundell was out at last, after a remarkably good innings. He looked red and a little breathless, and quite pleased with himself as he carried out his bat. Greene of the Fifth went in to join Potter.

Fifth-Form men crowded round Blundell, with congratulations and admiration. Bland of the Fifth thumped him on the back.

"It's our game, old bean!" said Bland.

Blundell nodded.

"What-ho!" he agreed. "And this means that a Fifth Form man will keep Loder's place in the first eleven, which is all to the good. Too many of the Sixth in the first eleven, if you ask me."

That was an opinion to which all the Fifth gave a cordial assent.

"Look at the score!" said Blundell. "They'll never pull up. Wingate's got a lot of duds—Loder, Walker, Carne. They're no good. The fact is, you men, I counted on winning this match before a ball was bowled."

The Famous Five, who heard that remark, smiled to one another. It struck them that Blundell of the Fifth had counted his chickens very early. But

the Fifth Form captain did not heed smiles from Removites. He did not heed Removites at all. Their existence was too infinitesimal to be noticed by a tremendous "blood" like George Blundell.

"I've arranged a bit of a celebration in my study after this game," Blundell went on. "I want all you men to come. Every man in the team."

That remark increased, if possible, the admiration with which Blundell's friends regarded the great man. When the captain of the Fifth stood a study brew, it was worth any fellow's while. Blundell had plenty of money, and, on such occasions, he spent it royally. A study spread with ten guests was rather a function.

"I say, Blundell!" called out Bob Cherry.

The captain of the Fifth glanced round, thus made aware of the unimportant existence of a Removite.

"Eh—what?" he said.

"Are you asking any of the Remove?" asked Bob cheerily.

"You young ass!"

"If you are, old bean, we'll cancel another pressing invitation we've received," said Bob. "What about it?"

Blundell did not answer that question. He made a lunge at Bob with his bat; and Bob Cherry retired rather hastily. Apparently Blundell was not asking any of the Remove to that celebration in his study.

"Come on, you men!" said Bob. "It's nearly time for tea, and we don't want to see the tail-end of the game. I'm not frightfully gone on watching Loder drop catches."

"The dropfulness of the esteemed catches is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let's awayfully get and partake of our teafulness."

And the Famous Five walked off Big Side, leaving Sixth and Fifth to get on with it without their distinguished presence.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Founder of the Feast!

"I SAY, you fellows, come in!" Billy Bunter's fat face beamed with hospitality.

There were already several fellows in the study when the Famous Five arrived at No. 7. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, who shared that study with Bunter, were there, and Vernon-Smith and Redwing, and Wibley and Russell and Ogilvy. No. 7 was rather crowded when the Famous Five added themselves to the company.

But the juniors were used to crowding on such festive occasions. Most of the fellows brought their own chairs, and some of them their own crockery. There was generally a shortage of such articles at a study spread. But there was no shortage of tuck—and that was the important item. So lavish was the supply that all the guests could not help wondering how Bunter had done it. Indeed, had there been tuck missing in any of the Remove studies, the fat junior would have been suspected at once of grub-raiding. That was one of Bunter's little ways, for which he had often been kicked. But nobody in the Remove had missed anything. And, indeed, there were few studies in the Remove in which such a spread was ever seen.

Hazeldene came in, and Tom Brown—or, rather, they wedged in. There was no room for Skinner and Snoop and Stott when they came along. But Bunter did not want Skinner & Co. They never stood Bunter anything in the lean years, so they were not wanted now that the fat years had arrived. And when Fisher T. Fish put a hooked nose and a sharp eye in at the doorway, he was greeted with a cushion, and retired disconsolate.

It was, as Bob Cherry declared, "some" spread.

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Billy Bunter's fat face beamed over the festive board.

Bunter had been helping himself to "snacks" for some time; but Bunter's stowage capacity was practically unlimited, and the lion's share fell to him as usual.

But numerous as the party were, there was ample for everybody.

And the welcome was hearty. Bunter was chiefly known as a butter-in at other fellows' spreads—a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. But it had to be acknowledged that now Bunter was in funds he was doing the right thing. Fisher T. Fish, though his cute eye glanced into the study for a moment, calculated that that spread had not cost a cent under three pounds. Fishy rather wished that he had lent Bunter the sixpence he had requested only that morning. But he hadn't, and now he was excluded from the feast.

"I say, you fellows, help yourselves!" beamed Bunter, with his mouth full. "There's lots and lots! I say, Wharton, this rather beats the minging spread in your study—what?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Chance for you to tuck in, Bob," said Bunter. "You don't get anything like this in Study No. 13, I fancy."

And Bob chuckled.

Bunter had his company manners on; but his company manners were not, perhaps, such as are prescribed in the best circles. Fortunately, feelings were not easily hurt in the Lower Fourth. Nobody minded Bunter wagging his fat chin. And if he wanted to boast, as undoubtedly he did, everybody was willing to give him his head.

"Try the grapes, Wharton. Nothing like them at Wharton Lodge—what?"

"Nothing," agreed Harry cheerfully.

"Tuck in, Peter!" encouraged Bunter. "Go it, old bean! You want a bit of feeding up. I've always thought you don't get enough to eat at home."

"Ain't he a prize packet?" said Peter Todd admiringly. "If there's anything needed to make a spread like this absolutely perfect, it's the graceful manners of the host."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But sarcasm was wasted on William George Bunter.

He blinked round the festive board complacently.

"Well, you see, I'm used to society," he explained. "In the holidays we generally have a crowd at Bunter Court. My pater likes to have members of the nobility round him, and, of course, there's my titled relations dropping in. Generally one of the princes, too. We rather keep it up at Bunter Court."

"If any," murmured the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a pleasure to me," pursued Bunter expansively—"a real pleasure to stand a spread like this to fellows who don't, as a rule, get anything so good. There isn't a man present, except Smithy, who could afford it. Smithy could do it; but then he would swank about it. You don't mind me mentioning it, Smithy?"

"Not at all," said the Bounder blandly. "On the other hand, I like to hear you talk. It's a greater entertainment than the spread."

"The fact is, I'm rather a good conversationalist," admitted Bunter. "Extensive knowledge and good manners, and an apt way of expressing oneself, you know—that's what does it. Now, Toddy here, is a frightful bore—ain't you, Toddy?"

"You fat—"

"What?"

"I—I mean go on, old chap!" said Toddy, remembering that Bunter was the founder of the feast.

"Help yourself, Redwing," said Bunter, blinking at the sailorman's son. "Don't be bashful, because you're in good company for once."

Tom Redwing smiled.

"Try the tarts, Bull, old chap. They're specially made by our cook at home—French chef, you know, imported from Paris."

"Are they?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"And they were sent from Bunter Court in Mrs. Mumble's paper bags!" remarked the Bounder.

There was a chuckle. But it was not the thing to chip the founder of the feast, and Bob Cherry hastily changed the subject.

"There's another jolly old spread coming off to-day in the Fifth," he remarked. "Blundell's standing a study brew to all the Fifth-Form team."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? What's the joke?" asked Bob, as Bunter exploded into a sudden cackinnation.

"Oh! Nothing!"

Bob stared at Bunter.

"Nothing funny in Blundell standing a spread in his study, is there?" he asked. "He often does."

"He, he, he! I mean no, of course not!" said Bunter. "I fancy this spread is quite as good as Blundell's, though. He, he, he!"

"The quietness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Gentlemen, chaps, and ridiculous fellows, I suggestively propose a vote of thanks to the absurd founder of this ludicrous feast."

"Hear, hear!"

Ample as the supplies were, they vanished under the attacks of so large a party—Bunter doing his bit heroically. Empty plates and dishes and paper bags adorned the table now.

The vote of thanks to the founder of the feast was passed nem. con. A cheer was given for Billy Bunter. In reply to which, the Owl of the Remove spoke a few well-chosen words.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I've stood you a jolly good spread, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've all enjoyed yourselves, and so have I," said Bunter. "After this I hope there won't be any nasty remarks—remarks in rotten bad taste—about my palatial home at Bunter Court—"

"Go it!"

"I hope," continued Bunter, "that next time I'm expecting a postal-order I—"

"Oh!"

"That my friends will rally round me," said Bunter. "Sometimes—not often, as you know—I've been short of cash—"

"Not really?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Yes, really. It might happen to the wealthiest fellow. Well, on such occasions a fellow expects his pals to oblige him with a little loan. He doesn't expect a lot of nasty remarks. See?"

"The sceffulness is terrific."

"To come to the point," continued Bunter, "I've blowed my last remittance on this spread—"

"On the grapes from the vinery at Bunter Court?" asked the Bounder. "On the tarts specially made by your French chef at home? You don't mean to say that your pater sends you a bill with them?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Smithy!"

"I decline to take any notice of your nasty remarks, Smithy. If that's what you call gratitude, after a splendid feed, we differ," said Bunter, with dignity. "To come to the point—"

Several of the guests moved out of the study at this juncture. Perhaps they guessed the point that Billy Bunter was coming to.

"To come to the point," resumed Bunter, amid a shifting of chairs and a shuffling of feet, "I'm expecting another postal-order to-morrow, you fellows—"

More shuffling of feet. The company in Study No. 7 was thinning fast.

"And a little loan to see me over until it comes would be welcome," said the founder of the feast. "Don't all speak at once!"

The party in Study No. 7 did not all speak at once. They did not speak at

CAN A SKELETON SWIM?



OF course not! But this one did. When you see the cover of this week's "Union Jack," you'll want to know how and why. It's a fine yarn, too—Sexton Blake in as swift-moving, exciting and mysterious a yarn as you ever came across. Tinker, his young assistant, has a big part in the exciting events, too. The scene of the story is Northern Queensland and perilous adventure in the wilds is interwoven into the mystery of the swimming skeleton of Ruralong Bay. When you see this cover, remember the fine yarn waiting for you.

UNION JACK

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all. Like the guests in Macbeth, they stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

"I say, you fellows—"

But the fellows were gone. William George Bunter was left to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

"Beasts!" ejaculated Bunter.

The feast in Stud? No. 7 was over.

After the feast, according to the proverb, comes the reckoning.

Bunter gazed at the remnants of the feast with a thoughtful, fat brow. He was thinking what a glorious spread it had been, and how the recollection of it ought to stand him in good stead next time he wanted to raise a little loan in the Remove. But he was also thinking of Blundell of the Fifth, coming in for his study celebration after the cricket match and finding, like Mrs. Hubbard, that the cupboard was bare. So far, nobody but Bunter knew that Blundell of the Fifth, in actual fact, was the founder of the feast in No. 7. But when Blundell went to his study—

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Disappearance!

GREAT and glorious, almost touching the stars with his sublime head, like the classical gentleman of old, Blundell walked to the House.

On one side of him walked Bland, on the other, Fitzgerald. Behind came Potter and Greene. These were the places of honour. Other Fifth-Form men got as near as they could. Only members of the eleven were in the group. Smaller fry respectfully kept at a distance from the Olympians.

One—Horace Coker—snorted contemptuously at a distance. In Coker's opinion, Blundell was a swanking ass. That opinion was, perhaps, shared to some extent by Sixth-Form men and by juniors. But in the Fifth Blundell was god-like. A word from Blundell was distinction. Indeed, there were Fifth Form men who considered that he cut a more impressive figure than Wingate himself, the captain of the school. Fellows in other Forms said that he put on more side, at all events.

Not that Blundell was "sidey." He really was a good-natured, unaffected fellow. But he could not help knowing that he was captain of the Fifth, an indispensable man in the First Eleven, a "blood" of the purest strain, an idol of his Form, one of the finest cricketers at Greyfriars, and generally a lofty, important, and impressive person. If he had a good opinion of himself, that opinion was fully justified. And no doubt he had.

On the present occasion deathless glory surrounded Blundell. He had beaten the Sixth in a cricket match.

The Fifth were not merely pleased. They were not merely cock-a-hoop. They were jumping with glee.

The Greyfriars First Eleven was divided between the two teams in that Form match, but the Sixth had more of it than the Fifth. That made the victory all the more glorious. It proved—or seemed to prove—that more Fifth-Form blood was wanted in the first eleven.

True, the match had been won by a single run. But it was won, and a thousand runs couldn't have done more than win it.

Equally true, Blundell had put on a couple of dozen after Loder had dropped an easy catch. One dud in the Sixth Form team, one blunder of one dud, had made all the difference. Had Loder taken that catch, Blundell,

instead of winning by a single run, would have lost by twenty-three runs. According to the Sixth, Loder had made Blundell a present of the match, and what there was to glory about they professed themselves unable to see.

That was not the view of the Fifth. Loder had dropped the catch—that was indubitable. If he hadn't, the Sixth might have won. And if the skies fell there might be catching of larks! Potter remarked that if "ifs and ans" were pots and pans, the tinkers would have to join the unemployed—a remark that the Fifth considered apposite and witty. For the incontrovertible fact was that the Fifth had won by a run, and all the "ifs" in the wide universe could not make any difference to the accomplished fact.

But that was not all. Blundell had said, before the match started, that the Fifth were going to win. Fellows often made such remarks, and forgot them as soon as possible if defeat supervened. But in this case results had proved Blundell right. Blundell, therefore, was

BRAVO, CORK!

A "Magnet" pocket-knife goes to Gerald Ryan, of 15, Parkowen, Cork, Ireland, for sending in the following amusing joke:

OBSERVANT:

A motorist was being charged with exceeding the speed limit along a country lane. "Is it a fact," asked the magistrate of the policeman in the witness-box, "that the defendant's car went round the corner at thirty miles an hour?" "Yes, sir," answered the policeman, nodding his head, "it must have been quite that." "And what gear was he in?" was the magistrate's next question. At this the policeman scratched his head and looked puzzled. "He was travelling too fast for me to see properly," he said at last, "but I do remember that he had a bowler hat and a green scarf on!"

Who's next? There are plenty more useful pen-knives waiting to be won! Send in your efforts to-day, chums!

among the prophets. His judgment was amazing. Fifth-Form fellows said to one another:

"Old Blundell said we were going to win, before the giddy stumps were pitched. And we've won! Old Blundell knew!"

Had the Fifth been beaten nobody would have referred to Blundell's prophetic remark. But the Fifth had won, and Blundell's remark was quoted up and down the Form as a striking proof of old Blundell's remarkable, clear-headed judgment.

That Blundell had laid in extensive supplies for a feast to the whole eleven, in celebration of that glorious win, was another striking proof that old Blundell knew what he was about. Had the Fifth been beaten, no doubt it would have made Blundell look rather an ass. Not to the Fifth, of course, for they would have known that it was only a fluke. But to other fellows.

But the Fifth hadn't been beaten. They had won by a rather narrow margin, it was true. But that only showed that the match had been hotly contested; and there was additional glory in having beaten foemen who were worthy of their steel. The

narrowness of the margin was an extra feather in their cap, looked at properly.

Mr. Prout met the cricketers as they came to the House. Prout was beaming. The Fifth-Form master knew as much about cricket as about the man in the moon. When he got chatty on the subject, Fifth-Form men found it hard to preserve their gravity. But Prout took a deep and enthusiastic interest in games, all the same, so far as his Form were concerned. He stopped to speak to Blundell—to congratulate and beam. Blundell kindly gave him his head. Fellows, looking on, felt what a distinction this was for Prout for Blundell to stop and talk to him in open quad. Prout trotted on to the House, with Blundell, Fitzgerald unwillingly giving place to him. Some of the Fifth rather dreaded that Prout, in his enthusiasm, would invite himself to the spread in Blundell's study. Fortunately, Mr. Prout stopped short of that.

Great and glorious Blundell walked into the House. Admiring friends escorted him to his study.

Blundell's bag was not there. The Fifth did not, as a rule, have bags; but all "Bloods" had fags, and Blundell was a Blood. Blundell's fag this term was Gatty, of the Second. Gatty, oblivious to the glory of fagging for such an Olympian, was not there. Five or six Fifth-Form men shouted "Fag" in stentorian voices, and a reluctant Gatty appeared.

Blundell gave him brief orders to get all ready, and walked away to the games study with his friends. In the games study Blundell said:

"Where's Hilton?"

Nobody knew or cared where Hilton of the Fifth was—until Blundell spoke. Instantly, Hilton of the Fifth leaped into importance.

"Gone out, I think!" said Tomlinson.

"He wasn't in the cricket, you know," said Bland, rather surprised that Blundell should remember the existence of a man who wasn't in the cricket.

"I know! But I want to see him in the cricket," said Blundell. "Hilton is a good man when he likes." He glanced round. "Where is he? Wasn't he on the field?"

"I fancy he went out with Price," said Potter.

Blundell frowned.

"That means that he's playing the giddy goat!" he grunted.

"Well, we all know Price!" remarked Greene.

"I wish he'd chuck Price!" said Blundell. "Hilton's a good man wasted, the way he goes on. I'd have asked him to the spread if he'd been here."

But Cedric Hilton, of the Fifth, was not there, and so could not be asked to the spread. The subject dropped, as Gatty of the Second put a shock head in at the doorway of the games study.

Blundell glanced at him.

"Not ready yet, kid?" he asked good-humouredly.

"No fear!" said Gatty.

"Well, what do you want?"

"If I'm going to get tea in your study, I want to know what I'm to get it with," explained Gatty.

"Stuff's in the cupboard," said Blundell curtly. "I had it sent in from the tuck-shop early."

"Nothing in the cupboard," said Gatty, shaking his head.

"Don't be a young ass!"

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"But there isn't, really," persisted the fag. "I've looked."

"Rubbish!"

"I've looked—"

"Don't be cheeky, kid!" said Blundell kindly. "I don't want to have to kick you. I hate kicking fags. Go and get tea ready in my study!"

"But there isn't—"

At this point, Potter of the Fifth kicked Gatty. Right or wrong, it was cheeky of a fag to argue with Blundell. Gatty yelled.

"Now cut!" said Potter, frowning.

"I tell you there ain't anything in the study!" wailed Gatty. "How'm I to get tea when there ain't anything in the study?"

"That's enough," said Blundell, with calm dignity. "Cut!"

Gatty cut. It was useless to stay in the games study to be kicked. He went back to Blundell's study, still at a loss how to get tea when there was nothing there.

"I suppose that young ass was trying to be funny!" said Greene, staring after the departing fag.

Blundell dismissed the topic with a gesture. The ways of the Second Form, their weird manners and customs, were hardly to be discussed in the Fifth-Form games study.

Blundell and his friends talked cricket while they were waiting for the announcement that the feast was prepared. Coker of the Fifth looked in, and beckoned to Potter and Greene. Unwillingly, they left the admiring circle round Blundell, and joined Coker at the door. They were Coker's chums, of course; but they really wished that Coker would have tact enough not to butt in just now.

"Tea in my study!" said Coker.

His manner was one of lofty but dignified reproach. That day Coker of the Fifth had been a mere nobody. Blundell had left him out of the team because—as Bob Cherry put it—he wanted to win the match. Coker could only have helped the Sixth to win it. Potter and Greene, his bosom chums, had forgotten his existence, as they had forgotten the existence of everybody who was not in the eleven. Now they were hanging round Blundell, sucking up to that swanking ass, as Coker regarded it; still forgetful of Coker, though that fatheaded match was over. Still, Coker was a forgiving fellow. His manner was that of the elder Hamlet, more of sorrow than of anger.

But if Coker of the Fifth was ready to extend the olive-branch, Potter and Greene, for once, were unwilling to accept it. They shook their heads simultaneously.

"Thanks, old bean, we're teeing with Blundell!" said Potter.

"Thanks all the same!" added Greene, mindful of the fact that tea with Coker was often the only alternative to tea in Hall.

Coker looked at them. He was not eligible even for the admiring circle surrounding Blundell in the games study. Nobody wanted to hear Coker on cricket. When Coker talked cricket he produced only hilarity, though his views on that subject were, at least, original. Coker looked at his faithless friends, long and hard.

"Very well!" said Coker, with great dignity, in the tone of a stage hero, who says "Be it so!"

He turned away, with dignity.

Potter and Greene, when Coker's back was turned, exchanged a wink, and rejoined the admiring circle. That day, anybody who could get near Blundell, and perchance win a word or a nod from him, was a distinguished man. Coker was a useful sort of ass in his way; but Potter and Greene were not giving up real distinction for Coker. If he was offended it couldn't be helped. Besides, he would come round. A fellow had only to ask him about cricket, and listen with a serious face, to put him in a good temper.

Coker went to his study for a solitary tea—with supplies much too ample for one. His face was overcast. He had been turned down for a swanking ass. His chums gave him the go-by, just to get a word from that fathead, Blundell. And who was Blundell? Compared with Coker, nobody! Coker reflected bitterly on the hollowness of friendship.

In the games study, no announcement came that tea was ready. Cricket jaw was deeply enthralling, but it was late—and all the fellows were hungry after the match. When Blundell proposed a move to his study, his remark was heard with more cordial endorsement than ever. Blundell arrived at his study at the head of quite an army.

Gatty of the Second was there. But there was no sign of a spread. The table was laid; and that was all. "Look here, what does this mean?" demanded Blundell, looking round for a cricket stump.

"There ain't anything in the cupboard!" wailed Gatty of the Second.

WHAT NAME?

The following letters have been jumbled together purposely. Put in their proper order, they spell the name of a well-known junior at Greyfriars.

ERHRBORTYREC

Who is it? The answer will appear in next week's MAGNET.

Last week's solution was—
Harry Wharton.

"How'm I to get tea when there ain't anything in the cupboard?"

Blundell gave him a look, and crossed to the study cupboard. He stared into it.

"My—my hat!" he ejaculated.

"What—" began Potter.

"What—" said Greene.

"What—" said five or six Fifth Form men.

Blundell, astonished, stared in at the cupboard. The supplies had been there. He knew they had been there. Had he not, early that day, expended the stupendous sum of three pounds ten shillings at the school shop, and seen Mrs. Mumble's boy carry home the goods with his own eyes? For some moments Blundell thought that he must be seeing visions. The tuck was there—it must be there! Only it wasn't there!

"My hat!" repeated Blundell of the Fifth.

"I told you it wasn't there!" wailed Gatty of the Second.

Fitzgerald of the Fifth promptly kicked Gatty of the Second. No cheek was wanted just then from a fag. Gatty roared.

"My hat!" said Blundell, for the third time.

Then he said, in a deep voice:

"It's gone!"

"Gone!" repeated Potter.

"Every atom."

"Great Scott!"

Blundell turned from the cupboard. Good-tempered fellow as he was, his face was full of wrath. It was almost

unbelievable that the most daring grub-raider would have ventured to raid the study of the captain of the Fifth Form. Yet that, obviously, was what must have happened. The tuck was gone, and it could not have walked away. Therefore it had been walked off with.

"Somebody's bagged that tuck!" said Blundell, with a vibration in his voice. "It's gone. Some junior, of course—"

"Of course," said Tomlinson. There was no doubt about that. It was inconceivable that a senior could have raided tuck. It was almost inconceivable that a junior would have dared to do it. Only the fact that it was gone made that conceivable.

There was a pause, a painful pause. A swarm of hungry guests looked rather anxiously at Blundell. The situation was awkward.

"This sort of thing can't be stood," said the captain of the Fifth. "If you fellows will excuse me I'll see about this."

"Certainly, old chap," said Greene, rather faintly.

Blundell left the study. Even at that crisis he preserved his dignity; his manner was calm. But his look indicated that stormy times were ahead of the grub-raider.

Left in the study, the guests looked at one another. They sympathised with Blundell. Still more they sympathised with themselves. It was all very well for Blundell to look into the matter and see about it. But was that likely to produce grub? It was not! Whoever had bagged that magnificent spread could have had only one object in view—to eat it! Obviously, the spread had been scooped! Finding the offender and making a terrible example of him was all very well; meanwhile, the Fifth Form men were hungry. After an eloquent exchange of glances Blundell's guests melted away from the study.

Coker of the Fifth, consuming food-stuffs on his lonely own, was rather surprised when his study door opened and Potter and Greene came in. He was still more surprised by their friendly smiles.

Coker did not smile. His reflections on the subject of the hollowness of friendship had not put him in a smiling mood.

"Teasing all alone, old chap?" said Potter heartily.

"Yes!" said Coker grimly.

"Well, here are your old pals," said Greene jovially.

"I thought my old pals were hanging round Blundell, and sucking up to that swanking chump!" said Coker sarcastically.

"Hem!"

"The fact is—"

"Had your spread already?" asked Coker.

"Well, no! It's not coming off, after all," confessed Greene. "Some scoundrel of a fag has bagged the stuff from Blundell's study."

Coker grinned.

"I've always said that Blundell goes too easy with the fags," he said. "I've a short way with fags myself. They wouldn't scoff anything from this study."

"Right!" agreed Potter. "I've noticed that you generally are right, Coker."

"You mean always," said Greene.

"Well, yes, in point of fact, always!" agreed Potter heartily.

Coker did not thaw.

"So Blundell's spread isn't coming off, after all, and you've come to tea with me, what?" he said sardonically.

"Well, you can save yourself the trouble. I'm not standing anybody tea."

Potter closed one eye at Greene.



"Are you asking any of the Remove to your celebration, after the game, Blundell?" asked Bob Cherry, cheerily. "If you are, old bean, we'll cancel another pressing invitation we've received. What about it?" Blundell did not answer that question, but made a lunge at Bob with his bat. The cheery Removite retired rather hastily. (See Chapter 2.)

"Not exactly that, old chap," he said. "I was going to ask you what you really thought of the cricket match to-day. You saw my innings—"

"I saw what you call an innings!" "That's what I mean. As a pal, I think you might tell me what you thought of it," explained Potter. "I know I've a good deal to learn about the game. I don't deny it. Criticism—candid criticism from a friend—is what a cricketer needs. Of course, it would have to come from a man who thoroughly understands the game."

"That's it," concurred Greene. "I'm a bit doubtful about that late cut of mine. I thought I'd ask you about it after the match, Coker. Be pally, and tell a chap frankly what you think."

"A word of advice from a fellow that knows goes a long way," said Potter, giving Greene another wink. "As I've always said, Coker, what you don't know about cricket isn't worth knowing. I know you'll help us, old chap."

Coker's stern brow relaxed. All Coker's ways were not agreeable, but there was one nice thing about Coker; it was always easy to pull his leg.

"Well, if you put it like that, of course I'm willing to help you, from my knowledge of the game," he said. "I shouldn't be much of a pal if I wasn't."

"That's like you, Coker," said Potter admiringly. "That's you all over. A man can always rely on you."

Coker smiled genially. "Sit down," he said. "You'll find those ham patties good, and the poached eggs—"

Potter and Greene sat down. Coker talked cricket laying down the law as usual in his emphatic way—growing so earnest that he even neglected his tea. Potter and Greene did not neglect theirs, however. Coker used his powerful jaw in one way—Potter and Greene used theirs in another way—and all was calm and bright!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!" The familiar words "Buzz off, Bunter!" leaped to the lips of Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. But they did not utter them.

Prep was beginning in the Remove, and Wharton and Nugent were sorting out their books in Study No. 1. It was not a propitious moment for a fellow to butt in and "jaw." But Bunter was accustomed to butting in and jawing at all moments, propitious or unpropitious. And as the chums of the Remove had recently tea'd with Bunter, they could not very well tell him to buzz off as usual.

There was a rather anxious expression on Bunter's face as he rolled into No. 1. His fat face was, as it were, sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. He seemed worried.

"Anything up, old bean?" asked Frank Nugent cautiously.

"Prep, you know!" hinted Wharton. Having tea'd with Bunter, he wanted to be polite. But prep had to be done.

"Never mind prep," said Bunter, shaking his head.

"Well, if you can persuade Quelch not to mind it, all right!" said the captain of the Remove. "But—"

"That cricket match on Big Side is over," Bunter remarked in a casual sort of way.

"We've heard the giddy glorious news," said Wharton, with a smile. "Blundell's beaten the Sixth, and he's going down to town to order a larger size in hats, I hear."

"He was standing his friends a tea or supper in his study," Bunter went on uneasily.

"Is, you mean," said Harry. "I expect they're going it now."

"As a matter of fact, they're not," said Bunter.

"Not yet? They're leaving it late,

then." Wharton looked curiously at the Owl of the Remove. "What about it, anyhow? Blundell's stunts in the Fifth don't matter a straw to us that I know of."

"Well, they do, really," said Bunter. "How's that?"

"Well, Blundell's sure to make a fuss!" said Bunter.

"Make a fuss?" repeated Nugent.

"Well, wouldn't he, in the circumstances?" argued Bunter. "Wouldn't any fellow?"

Wharton and Nugent stared.

"What on earth are you driving at, if you're driving at anything?" asked Harry, in perplexity. "What is there for Blundell to make a fuss about? He's not likely to make a fuss in the Remove, like that meddling ass Coker. What do you mean?"

"Well, isn't he sure to be waxy?" asked Bunter.

"Waxy?"

"Yes, jolly waxy, I should think."

The chums of the Remove were more and more astonished. Something, evidently, was worrying Billy Bunter; in connection with George Blundell, of the Fifth Form. What it was they could not imagine.

"Old fat bean," said Nugent, "it's time for prep. If you're wandering in your mind, would you mind wandering in the passage as well?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Yes, cut off, old porpoise!" said Wharton. "Tell us all about it in the Rag after prep, if there's anything on your mind."

"Blundell's pretty certain to kick up a row before then," said Bunter. "May happen any minute now. We've got to be ready."

"Ready for what?" howled Wharton.

"For Blundell, of course."

"You fat chump, we never row with Blundell! He's got nothing to do with

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the Remove. He's not a butting chump like Coker. What the merry thump are you burbling about?"

"Of course, he mayn't come along to the Remove," admitted Bunter. "He may think it was a Fifth-Form man. Still, that ain't likely."

"What? Which? How?"

"He might think it was some kid in the Second or Third, of course," said Bunter hopefully. "Gatty's his fag, you know. Gatty must have known the stuff was there. He might have bagged it. Blundell may think so. Still, Gatty would deny it."

"The stuff?" said Wharton blankly.

"The fact is, you fellows," said Bunter sorrowfully. "that when tuck's missing fellows think of me. It's rotten unjust; but there you are. I shouldn't wonder if Blundell jumps on me immediately."

Nugent gave a gasp and Wharton a shout. They grasped it at last. With a sudden illumination, they saw whence that gorgeous spread in Bunter's study had been obtained.

"If Blundell doesn't think of it," continued Bunter, "some fellow is bound to suggest it to him. There's always some fellow about ready to make mischief. We've got to be prepared."

"You—you—you—" gasped Wharton. "You—you fat burglar! You podgy pirate! Have you been raiding grub in the Fifth?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You fat lunatic!" roared Nugent. "If you've been pinching in the Fifth, you'll be up before the Head. Do you think the seniors will stand that kind of thing, you born idiot?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You—you—you bagged Blundell's tuck while he was at the cricket!" said Wharton almost dazedly. "And you asked us to tea—to share what you'd bagged! Why, you rascal—"

"If that's what you call gratitude, Wharton—"

"You fat rotter!" roared the captain of the Remove, deeply incensed. "You—you fat rascal! I suppose we ought to have known! It did cross my mind that you might have pinched the stuff in the Remove, but nobody missed anything. But I never thought that even you were idiot enough to go raiding in the Upper School. You'll get a flogging!"

"And serve you jolly well right!" exclaimed Nugent wrathfully. "Blundell's bound to take it to the prefects. Most likely you'll get a Head's flogging. I hope he'll lay it on hard!"

Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove. He could see that they were wrathful, though he could not see why.

"It's no good yelling at a fellow, you know," he said. "We've had the feed. It was a good feed. Now we've got to stand shoulder to shoulder—see?"

"You fat villain!" shouted Wharton. "You've been pinching, and making us parties to it!"

"I keep on telling you that it's no good yelling," said Bunter peevishly. "Of course I shouldn't have—have borrowed any tuck from the Fifth, except Blundell's. As for the value of the stuff to consider it from that sordid point of view, I shall be prepared to pay for it when I get a postal-order I've been expecting for some time—"

"You—you—you—"

"It's no good stuttering at a chap, Wharton. What we've got to do is to be ready. As I said, I shouldn't have touched the stuff if it hadn't been Blundell's—"

"You picked out the captain of the Fifth—"

"I picked out Blundell," Bunter favoured the chums with a fat wink.

"You see, we've got Blundell."

"Got Blundell?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, we've got him. You haven't forgotten that we caught him getting in at the lobby window at midnight, after breaking bounds and going round the town—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"We're keeping that secret," said Bunter. "Of course, I'm not the fellow to give a man away. But one good turn deserves another. You can't deny that!"

"You—you—you!" gasped Wharton.

"That's how it stands," said Bunter. "We know Blundell's shady secret. We're keeping it dark. I want you to see Blundell when he comes up here after me, Wharton—"

"You—you—"

"You'll put it to him," explained Bunter. "If he saw me first, he might pitch into me, without giving me time to explain. He's rather hasty. And I think most likely he's feeling rather waxy just now. You will see him, and explain that if he makes a fuss about that spread we shall feel it our duty to tell his Form master about his breaking bounds after lights out."

Wharton and Nugent gazed speechlessly at the Owl of the Remove.

Since the peculiar midnight incident to which Bunter referred, the Famous Five had kept Blundell's secret. The fact that Bunter knew it also had rather worried them. But they had never dreamed that the fat and fatuous Owl would think of making such a use of it as this.

Bunter had raided Blundell's spread—relying on that shady secret to see him through!

Apparently the fat junior was satisfied with that line of conduct. His conscience did not trouble him. Certainly, Bunter had a very accommodating conscience.

Bunter, in fact, would have been quite surprised to learn that anyone regarded his action as unscrupulous.

He was doing Blundell of the Fifth a good turn in keeping his shady secret; and one good turn deserved another! That was how the Owl of the Remove looked at it.

His knowledge of Blundell's secret would prevent Blundell from kicking up a shindy about what had happened. That, to Bunter, was the really important point.

As for the morality of the transaction, Bunter was satisfied. Bunter's powerful intellect performed its functions in mysterious ways.

For some moments there was silence in Study No. 1, while Wharton and Nugent glared at the fatuous Owl.

Bunter broke the silence.

"You see how it stands?" he said. "We've really got Blundell on toast—see? He would be sacked if the Head knew about his breaking bounds at night. He gets off cheap. I consider—especially as I shall pay for the stuff, if he makes a point of it, when my postal-order comes. See? But the thing is to make it clear to him before he pitches into me. That's important!"

"That's important, is it?" gasped Wharton, finding his voice at last.

"Yes, rather—very important!"

"You—you—you podgy worm! Do you know that what you're doing is what the police call blackmail?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Do you know you're acting like a scoundrel?" hooted Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You fat villain—"

"It's no good calling a fellow names," argued Bunter. "I won't say anything about ingratitude, though really you make me rather sick, you know. Talk about a serpent's thankless tooth! I take all this trouble to stand my friends a really handsome spread—I feed them on the fat of the land—and all they can do in return is to call me names! It's a bit sickening!"

"You—you—" gasped Wharton.

Bunter waved a fat hand at him.

"You've said enough, Wharton! You're ungrateful. So's Nugent! I must say I despise the pair of you. I often think," added Bunter, sorrowfully, "that I'm the only really decent fellow at Greyfriars. I've wondered sometimes whether I may not lose my high-mindedness, by associating with you fellows. I don't expect you, of course, to come up to my level, in matters of personal honour. But really—"

Bunter was interrupted at that point.

It seemed to the chums of Study No. 1 that it was a time for action, not for words.

So they proceeded to action.

Two juniors jumped at Bunter, and two pairs of hands grasped him.

Bunter descended to the floor, suddenly.

"Yarooogh!"

"Give me that cricket stump, Franky."

"Here you are!"

"Yaroooh! Help! Yooop! Fire!" roared Bunter.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Whooooooooop!"

Whack whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Beast! Yarooogh!"

Leggo! Lemme gerrup! Yarooop!

Help! Fire! Murder! Help!

Yarooooooooooop!

Whack, whack, whack!

"There!" gasped Wharton. "That's for pinching Blundell's tuck—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"That's for thinking of trading on keeping the secret—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow-woooooooooop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"And that's for luck! Now if you ever say a single word about Blundell, you'll get it all over again, and more!"

"Whooooooooop! Beast! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Now get out!"

"Yooooooooooooooooop!"

Bunter rolled headlong out of the study. Two boots, powerfully applied, helped him out. He rolled into the passage roaring. The door slammed on him. Bunter rolled and roared. And it was borne in upon his fat mind that, in the peculiar use he had planned to make of Blundell's secret, he was not going to receive any support from Harry Wharton & Co.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Not Pally!

PETER TODD smiled.

He ought, of course, from Bunter's point of view at least, to have expressed deep concern and sympathy, when the fat junior rolled gasping into Study No. 7, and collapsed into the armchair, groaning. But he only smiled.

For long minutes, Bunter lay in the armchair, and gasped, and groaned, and puffed and blew. He was feeling hurt, both in body and mind. He had been roughly handled, and he had been called names, like some unscrupulous fellow such as Skinner. That hurt! Bunter was quite satisfied with himself, and it was a perpetual surprise to him

that other fellows weren't equally satisfied. Bunter put it down to their inferiority of intellect and high-mindedness. Still, it was disagreeable to be misjudged in this way.

"I say, Peter old chap," said Bunter, when he had recovered his breath a little. "I've had a row with those rotters in Study No. 1."

"I guessed you'd had a row with somebody," assented Toddy. "You looked like it. What have you been pinching from their study?"

"Oh, really, Peter! I went there for a friendly chat, and they turned on me like—like tigers! I'd have given the pair of them a jolly good licking, only—only—"

"Only you didn't!" smiled Peter. "I can guess why you didn't, old fat bean, so the speech can be taken as read. Shut up now, while I get on with my prep."

"Look here, Toddy—"

"I said shut up! Prep, old ass."

"This is more important than prep. I want your advice, Toddy, as those cads have let me down. There's going to be a row over that spread, old chap."

"That spread?" repeated Toddy. He stared at Bunter. "My only hat! I wondered a lot—mean to say you pinched it?"

"I hope I'm not the fellow to pinch a spread, Toddy," said Bunter, with dignity. "Don't talk ungrateful rot like those chaps. I can tell you I'm fed up with it."

"Well, if you didn't pinch it, why should there be a row about it?"

"I—I—I borrowed it—"

"From whom?"

"Blundell of the Fifth."

"You bagged Blundell's spread? You born idiot! That spread he was standing to his team! Great pip! Why, you fat idiot, Blundell will go to the prefects! He may go to the Head! You born idiot, don't you know that you can't play these tricks on the Upper School!"

"That's what I'm coming to, old chap," said Bunter. "Now, suppose you knew a secret about a fellow—"

"What?"

"I'm only putting a case, of course," said Bunter, hastily. "I'm not saying that I know anything about Blundell of the Fifth."

Peter gazed at him.

"What I mean is, suppose you knew a secret—a shady secret—about a man in a senior Form," pursued Bunter, argumentatively. "Suppose, for instance, you'd spotted him getting in at a window at midnight. Suppose it was too dark to see who it was, and you saw his name in his hat—I mean, suppose Inky had hooked off his hat, and we saw his name in it after he'd got away—mind, I'm only putting a case, of course."

"Of course!" said Peter, sardonically.

"Suppose," resumed Bunter. "Suppose the fellow, just for the sake of argument, was Blundell of the Fifth—"

"I shouldn't be likely to suppose that, fathead. Blundell's not a blackguard like Loder of the Sixth."

"That's all you know!" grinned Bunter. "Still, I'm not going to tell you. I agreed with those fellows to keep it secret, and I'm a man of my word, I hope. Well, just to put a case, suppose you knew something that a Fifth-Form man would be sacked for—and suppose that man had a lot of tuck in his study and was playing cricket. See?"

"I see!" said Toddy, grimly.

"Naturally, you'd borrow it," said Bunter.

"Not quite!" said Peter. "I had the advantage of being brought up honest, old fat bean."

"Oh, that's all rot," said Bunter. "You've told me yourself that your father's a lawyer."

"Why, you—you—"

"Don't get waxy, old chap. It's not your fault if you weren't brought up so carefully as I was, and I'm not the fellow to throw it up against you. What I want you to do now is, to try to put yourself in my place—the place of a really honourable and high-minded fellow."

Peter Todd seemed to find some difficulty in breathing.

"To put the case clearly," said Bunter. "Suppose you borrowed that spread—owing to a generous nature you know, and a desire to do your friends well. Personally, I don't care much for tuck, as you know. Well, suppose five other fellows knew that secret about Blundell. Suppose you went to some of them—it might be Wharton and Nugent, and it might not—and suppose instead of backing you up, they pitched into you."

"I should rather expect them to," grinned Peter Todd. "If I proposed to Wharton and Nugent to go in for blackmail, I should rather expect them to lynch me."

"Oh, really, Toddy, you're a worse beast than those other beasts. Wharton used that word, too. Low, I call it."

"You benighted chump! You fancy you know some fatheaded secret about Blundell, and you're trading on it to bag his grub. Is that it?"

"Not much fancy about it," said Bunter. "We caught him in the lobby, and jammed him in the window—we were after Loder, you know, and got Blundell instead—"

"Rubbish!" said Toddy decisively.

"Blundell's not that sort. You made an idiotic mistake!"

"Wharton made the same mistake, then," grinned Bunter. "So did Nugent and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Inky. We were all there."

Peter Todd whistled.

"Was that what happened the other night, when all those fellows were out of the dormitory?" he asked, remembering suddenly.

"That's it, old chap. Now, if we all stood together, we've got Blundell on toast," said Bunter. "We've six witnesses that he was out of bounds at midnight. But if those chaps refuse to back me up, Toddy, I'm in a difficulty. If Blundell picks on me—and you know the rotten way fellows pick on me when there's grub missing—my idea is to shut him up, you know, by mentioning what we know about him. When he understands that we can get him sacked he will shut up about that spread. That stands to reason. But if those fellows don't back me up, Toddy, what about it? The Head might refuse to take my word, unsupported."

"He might!" grinned Toddy. "In fact, I think you'd get a record flogging if you spun him a yarn like that about a man like Blundell. It's all rot, on the face of it."

"It's true, you ass!" howled Bunter, forgetting for the moment that he was only "putting a case."

"Well, if it's true, keep it to yourself," said Peter. "That's my advice. Don't try to trade on it. If Blundell finds out that you've bagged his grub, take your licking like a man, and keep your mouth shut."

"You silly ass," hooted Bunter, "I'm not going to be licked! That's the important point—the only really important point in the whole thing."

Peter Todd rose from the table. He

(Continued on next page.)



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looked about the study as if in search of something.

"Give me your attention, old chap," said Bunter peevishly. "That beast Blundell may come along kicking up a row any minute. I've got to be ready for him. Those cads have let me down! Look here, Peter, I think you ought to stand by me. It was dark in the lobby that night, and Blundell never saw who was there. You might have been there, for all he knows. Well, suppose you were there, you'd be a witness. Now, if Blundell comes here after me, Peter, you tell him you were there—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"See? You can mention, too, that I wasn't there," added Bunter astutely. "That will leave me right out of it. You can put it to him that keeping his shady secret is worth that spread. See? Put it to him that if you tell what you know he will get sacked. I think you're bound to stand by a pal to that extent, Peter, after all I've done for you."

"Blundell may not spot you," said Peter thoughtfully.

"Of course, in that case, it's all right. I'd rather have no fuss about the matter at all. After all, it's a bit sordid," said Bunter. "So long as I don't get a licking, that's all I want."

"What you want, old bean, and what you're going to get, are two very different matters. You're going to get a licking for pinching tuck and disgracing this study. As Blundell may not find you out, I'm going to give you the licking to make sure."

"What?" gasped Bunter.

Peter had found what he was looking for now. It was a fives bat.

Bunter made a bound from the armchair.

Evidently Peter was not going to be a pal. He was going to be a beast. Bunter's experience had taught him that it was a beastly world, populated mainly by beasts. But never had he struck such a collection of beasts as seemed to be gathered together in the Greyfriars Remove.

Bunter leaped for the door.

At the same moment Peter Todd's left hand grasped his collar. With his right he wielded the fives bat.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

The fives bat in Study No. 7 smote where the cricket stump in Study No. 1 had smitten. It smote as hard, or harder. Wild yells floated from Study No. 7, and woke the echoes of the Remove passage.

By the time Bunter escaped—which was not till Peter was tired—Bunter was feeling very sore. He had come to Peter, as to a pal, for advice and help. And this was what he got! His last state was worse than his first. Evidently it was an ungrateful world; and Bunter realised dismally that misjudging and misunderstanding were fated to be the lot of the only really decent fellow at Greyfriars.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Change of Tune—and Another Change!

WINGATE of the Sixth, when he saw lights out for the Remove that night, looked very hard at Billy Bunter.

But he did not address him, much to Bunter's relief.

The other fellows noted the look and grinned.

By that time, all the school knew of the raid in Blundell's study. Blundell, naturally, had not taken such a happening quietly.

Fellows who had attended Bunter's

spread in Study No. 7, were no longer at a loss to account for that spread.

They were quite able to put two and two together. A spread was missing from a Fifth Form study, and at the same time Billy Bunter had stood a spread in the Remove. The conclusion was obvious.

Bunter's nerve took the Remove by surprise. Grub-raiding in the Lower Fourth studies was one thing, but in senior studies it was quite another. In the Remove, Bunter might get off with a kicking or a batting. But in the Upper School, such a matter was taken more seriously. If it came before the Head, there would be a flogging. If the prefects dealt with it there would be a prefects' beating. If Blundell dealt with it personally the pilferer was likely to receive something worse than a Head's flogging and a prefects' beating added together. So the fellows wondered at Bunter's nerve.

Except, of course, the fellows who knew the shady secret, and knew that Bunter knew it. They were aware of the reed upon which the Owl of the Remove was leaning.

So far, suspicion did not seem to have turned on Bunter. But the look Wingate gave him in the dormitory showed that the head prefect had thought of him, at least. Bunter's reputation as a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles had spread beyond his own Form.

Still, Wingate said nothing, and the lights were turned out and the Remove left to repose. Voices came from various beds, addressing questions to Bunter on the subject of the mysterious disappearance in Blundell's study. Bunter replied with a deep snore. Generally, Bunter was ready to talk—too ready. On this subject, however, he realised that the least said the soonest mended.

The next morning Bunter eyed his Form master very uneasily at the breakfast table.

But Mr. Quelch's aspect was as usual. His gimlet eyes did not fix on Bunter, and he did not seem in any way ruffled. Bunter concluded that he, at least, hadn't heard of Blundell's missing spread, and he was relieved.

By the time morning school was over Bunter was quite easy in his fat mind.

Blundell of the Fifth had not sought him out. He had not been called before the prefects. He had heard from a Shell fellow, who had heard from a Fourth Form man, who had heard from somebody else, that Loder of the Sixth had offered Blundell to take up the matter officially, and that Blundell had said, "Never mind."

That, indeed, was like Blundell, and Bunter hoped it was correct. Blundell was good-natured to a fault, and it was like him to keep the matter from coming officially before the prefects, which would make a serious affair of it for the culprit concerned.

Still, it might mean that Blundell intended to deal with the matter personally, and Bunter was uneasy till the morning was over. By that time he made up his fat mind that the Fifth Form man was letting the matter drop altogether.

After third school, therefore, Billy Bunter rolled in the quad, a cheery and contented Bunter. Catching sight of the Famous Five, the Owl rolled up to those cheery youths, and fixed his spectacles, with a look of scorn, on Harry Wharton.

"I've a bone to pick with you, Wharton," he said, with dignity.

"Go and eat coke!" was Wharton's reply.

"I'm not going to lick you—"
"Eh?"

"You're rather beneath that sort of thing," said Bunter. "I refuse to soil my hands on you."

"You seem to have soiled them on something," remarked Wharton, glancing at them.

"Beast! I expect an apology!" said Bunter. "Last evening, in your study, you insulted me, making out that I was going to trade on that shady secret of Blundell's."

Wharton stared at him.

"And weren't you?" he demanded.

"I decline to answer an insulting question," said Bunter loftily. "Fellows who know me know that I'm incapable of anything of the sort. If I get a licking, I get a licking. I can stand it. I'm not soft, like some fellows. But as for trading on that secret, and getting off on the strength of it, I'd scorn it."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

Wharton was puzzled.

"Well, I hope that's true," he said. "But that isn't the way you were talking in the study yesterday, when I stumped you."

"You misunderstood me," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "So did Nugent. So did Toddy. What I really meant was that I'd never, in any circumstances, make any use of that shady secret."

"Then you got that stumping for nothing?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"Yes, you beast!"

"All right—you consider it taken back," said Wharton, laughing. "Consider yourself unstumped."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose the fact is, that you think you're not going to be found out, after all," said Harry. "Is that it?"

"Exactly! I mean, nothing of the sort, of course. Found out or not, I'd scorn to do a mean action, as you know very well."

"Ye gods!" said Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed Bunter—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You fellows might think of such a mean trick," said Bunter.

"What?" roared Bob Cherry.

"That sort of thing may be in your line—"

"My absurd Bunter—"

"But it's not in mine," said Bunter. "Nothing mean about me. If I have a row with Blundell—well, I'll have a row with Blundell. But as for taking advantage of knowing a thing about a fellow, I'm incapable of it. It's rather rotten of you fellows to judge me by yourselves!"

"My excellent and-idiotic Bunter—"

"Oh, dry up, Inky—"

"I was going to remark observe-fully—"

"Cheese it!"

"That the esteemed Blundell—"

"Eh?"

"Is coming this way—"

"What?"

"And the expression on his ludicrous face is terrifically infuriated."

"Ow!"

Bunter cast one startled blink round. Blundell of the Fifth was not only in the offing, but bearing down fast. And the look on his face, if not precisely infuriated, made Bunter jump.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you back me up! That beast is going to make a row, after all. Keep him off! Tell him you'll get him sacked if he pitches into me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"So you've altered your tune again, old fat bean!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Better cut," said Harry Wharton. "If you say a word about that secret,



"Look here," said Gatty, "how'm I to get tea when there ain't anything in the cupboard?" Blundell gave the fag a look, and then crossed to the cupboard, and stared into it. For some moments he thought that he must be seeing visions. "My—my hat!" he ejaculated. "Three pounds ten shillingworth of tuck, and it's all gone!" (See Chapter 4.)

you fat villain, we'll scrag you after Blundell's done with you."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Cut, you ass!" said Nugent.

That advice was too good not to be taken. Bunter cut.

"Bunter," shouted the captain of the Fifth, "I want you!"

Bunter did not heed. If Blundell wanted him, the want was all on Blundell's side. Bunter certainly didn't want Blundell. He fled as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

"Bunter!" roared Blundell.

Faster flew Bunter.

"Stop!"

Bunter did not stop. He accelerated. The captain of the Fifth broke into a run in pursuit. But after a few strides he stopped. It was too undignified for the great man to pursue a fleeing fag across the quad.

Bunter vanished—and Blundell frowned and walked away. The Famous Five grinned at one another.

Evidently the captain of the Fifth was aware, at last, of the identity of the culprit. Evidently there were stormy times ahead of William George Bunter!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Painful for Price!

"SMOKE, old bean?"

Cedric Hilton of the Fifth shook his head.

Price shrugged his shoulders, selected a cigarette, and lighted it.

The two Fifth-Formers were in their study, after tea. Generally, in that study, smokes followed tea. But Hilton seemed to be in a restive mood now, and not so thoroughly under the influence of the black sheep of the Fifth as he was accustomed to be.

"Penny for 'em, old man," said

Price, watching Hilton's handsome, clouded face covertly through a little haze of smoke.

"Blundell's been talking to me about the cricket," said Hilton, rather abruptly.

Stephen Price yawned.

"Rather a bore, old Blundell," he remarked.

"He's comin' here for another jaw."

"Oh!" Price sat up. "Now?"

"After tea, he said," Hilton glanced at the cigarette. "Just as well not to let him see you smokin', Steve."

Price made a motion to throw away his cigarette. Then, with a sullen scowl, he replaced it in his mouth.

"Blundell ain't a prefect," he said. "Blundell's not goin' to dictate to me. You can let him dictate to you, if you like."

Hilton coloured uncomfortably. His character was not strong; and, like most weak characters, he was easily irritated by a suggestion that he was being dictated to.

Tap! came at the door at that moment, and Blundell of the Fifth came in. He glanced at Price and his cigarette rather grimly, and received a defiant look in reply. Then he devoted his attention to Hilton.

He sat on the corner of the study table, his eyes on the handsome face of the dandy of the Fifth.

"You cut the match yesterday, Hilton," he remarked, as a beginning.

"I wasn't asked to play," answered Hilton sullenly. Price's suggestion that Blundell was dictating to him still rankled. "I'm not gone on standin' round watchin' other men play cricket."

"You're wanted to play for the Form if you'll stick to the game," said Blundell. "You've got a good chance of getting into the first eleven, too. Look here, Hilton, I've been thinking about this a lot, and I'm going to

speak plainly. You're wasting your time, and spoiling your chances, by rotting about with a fellow like Price."

"Thanks," said Price sarcastically.

Blundell spoke exactly as if Price was not there. Neither did he heed his sarcastic interjection.

"You're wanted in the cricket, went on Blundell, "and you're running a lot of risk, as well as wasting your time. One day last week you went down to that low hole, the Cross Keys."

Hilton started.

"How do you know?" he demanded.

"Because I saw you. I was going down Friardale Lane when I saw you turn in at the gate. A master might have seen you. It would have been the sack then. Price is cute enough to take care of himself in this shady sort of business. It's in his line. It's not in yours."

"Thanks," said Price again.

Still Blundell did not heed him.

"You seem to take a lot of interest in my doin's, Blundell," said Hilton at last. "We're not friends, if you come to that."

"I think I acted like a friend," said Blundell quietly. "I followed you into the place, to ask you to come away before you'd made a fool of yourself. It was close on call-over—you'd missed call-over that night. It might have led to the beaks getting to know."

"You followed me in!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. Not into the pub itself," said Blundell, with a curl of the lip. "I hoped to catch you before you went in. I hung about the path that runs through the grounds for some time, hoping to see you."

"You ass! You might have been seen there."

"As a matter of fact, I was seen there," said Blundell. "Some Remove (Continued on page 16)."

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(Continued from page 13.)

kids, taking a short cut through, ran right into me."

"Oh," said Hilton, "I heard of that! Wharton and his mob were accused of pub-haunting. Loder got them there. I hear that a senior spoke up for them and got them off. It was you."

"Yes; and doocid awkward it was for me," growled Blundell. "I had to tell their Form-master I was there, to get the young fools off. And Quelch made me promise to tell Prout."

Hilton jumped.

"You never told Prout?" he ejaculated.

"I had to. I'd told Quelch I would."

"And he couldn't tell a lie," murmured Price. "He did it with his little hatchet."

Price still passed unheeded. Blundell seemed unaware that he was in the study at all.

"You didn't mention my name to Prout?" asked Hilton, his face pale. "Prout's got his doubts about me already."

"I followed you that time to get you out of mischief!" snapped Blundell. "I didn't succeed. I never saw you after you'd gone in. If I'd mentioned you to Prout, it would have got you into trouble fast enough. Of course, I never mentioned you."

Hilton breathed more freely.

"I put off speaking to Prout; but I had to do it, and I did it. Of course, he asked questions. It was frightfully uncomfortable. All I could tell him was that I went into the place to look for a fellow I thought was there, without mentioning names. Luckily, Prout trusts me, so it was all right."

"Well, you must be an ass," said Price. "Some fellows hunt for trouble."

"You say we're not friends," went on Blundell, still ignoring Price. "Well, I think what I did was jolly friendly. But never mind that. You know Loder caught those kids there. He must have been jolly near the place when you went in. He might have spotted you."

Hilton smiled faintly, and Price chuckled. It did not occur to Blundell's simple mind that both of them knew enough of the secrets of the blackguard of the Sixth to be sure that Loder would never "come the prefect" with them, whatever he might discover.

"As the matter stands, those Remove kids saw me there, and you can imagine that that's not nice for me," said the captain of the Fifth. "Luckily, they're not the sort to chatter. And I think they're too decent themselves to think badly of another fellow. Still, it's rotten."

"Nobody asked you to butt in," remarked Price.

"To come down to brass tacks, Hilton," said Blundell, "it's not good enough. I expected to see you on Big Side yesterday, but I heard you'd gone out with Price. I can guess where you went. The Cross Keys again, or the Three Fishers, or some den like that. I want you to make an effort to drop that sort of thing. It's all very well for

Price. He's a low bounder to the finger-tips. But you're really not that sort."

Hilton grinned at the expression on Price's face.

"Get into the cricket, play for the Fifth, and try for a place in the first eleven," said Blundell. "Rely on me to back you up. Give that cad Price a miss."

Price jumped to his feet.

"You seem to have forgotten that this is my study as well as Hilton's!" he bawled. "Get out of it!"

Still Blundell did not heed him, or even look at him. He ignored the black sheep of the Fifth, with a hearty contempt that stung Price to the very quick.

"Do you hear me?" roared Price.

"Well, what about it, Hilton, old fellow?" asked Blundell.

Price grasped him by the arm, to jerk him off the study table.

Then Blundell, for the first time, seemed to become aware of his existence.

Price's tug at his arm did not shift Blundell. He remained immovable. But as Price tugged at his left arm, Blundell raised his right.

Thump!

"Whoop!" gasped Price.

He went headlong.

One thump from the hefty Blundell was enough for him. Price fairly flew across the study, crashed on the wall, and dropped at the foot of it, gasping.

Blundell glanced at him.

"That's enough for you," he said. "Lay your dirty fingers on me again, Price, and I'll really hit you next time. Now, Hilton, old bean, come along to the games study. I want you to talk to some fellows."

Hilton rose from his chair, hesitating. Blundell slipped an arm through his, and walked him out of the study.

Price staggered to his feet.

"Hilton!" he called out.

The footsteps of Blundell and Hilton died away down the Fifth Form passage.

Price's subsequent remarks lasted some minutes, and were of an emphatic character—not to be reported. Certainly they would have earned him the "sack" from Greyfriars had his headmaster overheard them. When he went down the Fifth Form passage at last he looked into the games study, and saw Hilton deep in cricket "jaw," with a group of Fifth Form men. The black sheep of the Fifth scowled and went on his way alone.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Trump Trumped!

SKINNER of the Remove looked into Study No. 7 with a cheery grin on his face.

"Anybody here know anythin' about a missin' spread in the Fifth?" asked Skinner.

Bunter jumped.

"No!" he gasped. "Nothing—nothing at all!"

"Less than nothing, in fact," said Peter Todd, with cheery sarcasm. "Bunter never knows anything about these things."

"Well, that's lucky, ain't it?" said Skinner, "because Blundell's coming up the passage."

Yelp from Bunter.

"And he's got a stick under his arm, just like a prefect."

"Ow! I—I say, is there time to get clear?" gasped Bunter. "Will he see me if I dodge out of the study, Skinner?"

"I fancy so. You're wide enough to be seen, old fat fish," answered Skinner, with a grin. "Blundell's just coming along."

"Oh dear!"

Skinner walked away, grinning. He found the situation amusing. Billy Bunter did not find it amusing at all. He blinked wildly round the study for a hiding-place.

"I say, Toddy, hide me!" he gasped. "I say, you'll swear that I'm not here when that beast comes in, won't you?"

"I'll stand in front of you," said Toddy humorously. "Keep close behind me—see?"

As Bunter was at least twice as wide as Toddy, he did not avail himself of that offer. It would have been rather like a porpoise hiding behind a lamp-post.

There was a heavy tread in the Remove passage, and Bunter jumped behind the door. It was the only refuge. The door was half open. It was pushed wide, and it hid Bunter as it swung back to the wall. Blundell of the Fifth walked into the study. He had, as Skinner had said, a stick under his arm, which was not customary for a man who was not a prefect. Evidently Blundell had a special use for a stick on this occasion.

He glanced round the study.

"Where's Bunter?" he asked, looking at Peter Todd.

"O where, and O where can he be?" sang Toddy cheerily.

Blundell frowned.

"He dodged me in the quad to-day. I can't be chasing that young scoundrel all over Greyfriars. I've come here for him. I'm going to give him the thrashing of his life."

"Ow!" came in a terrified gasp from some hidden spot.

Blundell looked round again.

"Was that Bunter? Is he hiding in the study? Look here, where's that young sweep? I've no time to waste on him."

"I don't suppose he's keen on your wasting any time at all on him," suggested Toddy blandly.

Blundell did not heed Toddy. He looked round the study again and threw the door shut. Bunter was revealed.

"Oh, there you are!" said the captain of the Fifth grimly.

"No!" gasped Bunter. "I'm not here! I mean I—I'm jolly glad to see you in this study, Blundell! It—it—it's quite an honour!"

"You bagged a lot of stuff from my study yesterday."

"Oh, no! Not at all! Never! I—I hardly know my way to your study, Blundell. I've never been there, that I remember."

"A Fifth Form man saw you going down the passage—"

"Oh dear!"

"He's told me—"

"The beast! I never saw him—"

"So you were there?"

"Oh, no! I wasn't there! I—I mean I never saw the fellow you mention, because I wasn't there, you know. I couldn't see him when I wasn't there, could I?"

Blundell stared at the fat junior. Then he slid his stick into his hand.

"I think it's pretty clear," he said. "Now, Bunter—"

"Of course, I'm going to pay for the feed, Blundell," said Bunter hastily. "I never had it, you know; but I'll pay for it. Money's nothing to me."

"You've got three-pounds-ten about you?" snapped Blundell.

"Not exactly about me," admitted Bunter cautiously. "But I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"That stuff will have to be paid for!" said Blundell quietly. "I'm not a mean man, I hope, but I can't afford to have three-pound-tens' worth of stuff pinched from my study. I'll give you time to pay it."

"That's all right. My postal-order will—"

"And thrash you for your check," said Blundell. "I suppose you know that if I took you to the Head, what you've done would be called pilfering, and you might be sacked for it—flogged at least."

"I—I'd rather not see the Head," said Bunter dolorously. "The Head mightn't understand, old chap."

"Well, bend over that chair and take your licking," said Blundell. "I hope it will be a warning to you."

Bunter did not bend over the chair. He was not, if he could help it, going to take that licking.

In Blundell's presence, under the eyes of the great man, Bunter's courage oozed away, and he could hardly nerve himself to play his trump card. But it had to be played if he was to escape a licking. And that, as Bunter had said, was the important point.

The Owl of the Remove took his courage in both hands, as it were, and made the plunge.

"I—I say, Blundell—"

"That's enough! Bend over!" interrupted Blundell.

"I—I say, you're not a prefect, you know. You've got no right to tell a fellow to bend over."

"Quiet!" admitted Blundell. "If you prefer it, I'll take you to a prefect, or to the Head. Take your choice, Bunter!"

"Look here—"

"Sharp's the word!" rapped the captain of the Fifth. "I've no time to waste on a pilfering fag!"

Bunter breathed hard. The crisis had come now, and he had to plunge.

"Look here, Blundell, one good turn deserves another!" he gasped. "You shut up about that spread, see? Or—"

"Or what?" asked Blundell, staring at him.

"Or I'll jolly well tell the Head about you!" gasped Bunter desperately.

"About licking you, do you mean? Tell him if you like—tell all the school! Now bend over, before I take you by the neck!"

"I mean about your breaking bounds at night!" yelled Bunter, as the captain of the Fifth made a stride towards him. "I mean about your playing the giddy ox, and pub-haunting after lights-out! Now you shut up and lemme alone, you beast, or I'll get you the sack!"

Blundell of the Fifth stood quite still, as if rooted to the floor. His eyes seemed to bulge as he gazed at Bunter. Peter Todd, regarding him curiously, did not see any sign of guilt or alarm in the countenance of the Fifth Form captain. Only blank amazement was written there.

"You—you—you—you'll what?" stammered Blundell at last. "You'll tell the Head I break bounds at night, by Jove! You'll tell him I go pub-haunting after lights-out, by gad! Are you mad?"

"You mind your p's and q's!" retorted Bunter, with a defiant blink. "You jolly well know we caught you the other night—"

"Caught me?" said Blundell dazedly.

"Yes, in the lobby window—"

"The lobby window?"

"Coming back from a pub!" said Bunter. "I've got a lot of witnesses, and you can't crawl out of it!"

Blundell stared at him harder. His expression seemed to indicate that he doubted whether Bunter was quite right in his head.

"Is this a joke?" he asked at last.

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"You'll find it isn't," he said. "There were six of us there, and we've all kept the secret so far—"

"What secret?" roared Blundell.

"About you breaking bounds at night. Mind, I don't want to give you away," said Bunter. "I've told Wharton to be careful not to let it out. I've warned him not to chatter, because it's a serious matter. I've told Bob Cherry I'll jolly well lick him if he gives you away. Same with the other fellows. I've kept them from tattling. You'd have been given away, and sacked before this, if I hadn't. Dash it all, you might be grateful!"

"Grateful?" gasped Blundell.

"Well, rather!" said Bunter warmly. "You'd have been sacked if we'd given you away. You know that. One good turn deserves another. You shut up about that feed, and I'll shut up about your goings-on. See?"

"Is this kid wrong in his head?" asked Blundell, glancing at Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Fatty degeneration of the brain, I think," answered Toddy.

"Beast!"

"Well," said Blundell, "you've rather taken my breath away, Bunter! I thought you were a dishonest young rascal, but it seems you're worse than that even. You propose to spin yarns about me if I lick you for pinching my tuck. I was going to give you six. Now I'll give you sixteen!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"Bend over that chair!"

"I—I say, I'll get you sacked, you know! I'll make all the fellows bear witness! I—I— Yaroooooh!"

A grip of iron on Bunter's collar jerked him to the chair and bent him over it.

Then Blundell's stick came into play.

It rose and fell with terrific vim. Blundell had come to the study to lick the fat junior for raiding the tuck, as he fully deserved; but the licking would probably have been a light one had Bunter not played his trump card. Now Blundell was seriously angry—and the weight of his anger fell on the hapless Owl.

He laid on the whacks as Loder of the Sixth might have done; and Bunter roared and yelled and wriggled.

Sixteen whacks were laid on Billy Bunter, and every one of them was hard and hefty.

"There!" said Blundell. "That'll teach you a lesson about pinching tuck and cheeking a Fifth Form man!"

"Yarooooh! Ow! Yooop! Whooop!"

Blundell tucked the stick under his arm and left the study. He left Bunter roaring. Bunter had played his trump card; but Blundell had, so to speak, trumped higher—and trumped his trump. For a long, long time Study No. 7 was echoing to the sounds of woe and lamentation. And when Bunter recovered a little he looked at Peter Todd, with a gleam in his little round eyes behind his spectacles.

"I've been licked!" he gasped.

"You have!"

agreed Toddy.

"Some licking!"

"I'll make him sit up!"

"Fathead!"

"I'll get him sacked!"

"Ass!"

"Do you think I'm going to take this lying down?" bawled Bunter.

"No; bending."

"Beast! I'll make him squirm! I'll make him cringe! I'll make him squeal! You wait a bit! I'll get him sacked! Ow, ow! Wow!"

Peter Todd strolled out of the study. Bunter was left to woe and lamentation and plans of dire vengeance.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Price of Silence!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Is that a new con-tortionist act?"

"The wriggleness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had been at cricket practice; and they were coming up the Remove staircase in a cheery crowd when they met Billy Bunter on his way down.

Bunter's aspect was rather remarkable.

He wriggled and twisted in a most extraordinary manner. Like the young man of Hythe, who was shaved with a scythe, he did nothing but wriggle and writhe.

"Bagged a licking, fatty?" asked Wharton, with a smile.

"Owl! That beast Blundell—"

"He found you out?" asked Nugent.

"Serve you jolly well right!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The rightfulness is terrific, my esteemed, dishonest Bunter. You should keep your absurd hands from the pickfulness and the stealfulness."

"I'm going to make him sit up!" hissed Bunter. "I'm going to make him cringe. He makes out that I had his tuck—"

"Well, you had it, you fat idiot."

"I don't want any of your nasty remarks, Wharton. He came to my study and pitched into me—"

"Good!"

"Yah! I fancy he'll sing to a different tune when I've been to the Head!" jeered Bunter.

"You're not going to the Head?"

Bunter snorted.

"I'm going now."

"Don't be an ass," said Harry. "You'd have got a flogging, if Blundell had reported you instead of licking you. It's no good howling about the licking when you asked for it."

"I've got something else to tell the Head!" sneered Bunter. "Something that will make Blundell wish he hadn't licked me, the beast!"

Wharton's face became very grave.

"You mean—the secret?"

(Continued on next page.)



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"Yes."

"You're not going to the Head with that."

"I jolly well am!" said Bunter, with emphasis. "Do you think I'm going to be licked by a pub-haunting rotter?"

"You're not going to the Head!" repeated Wharton.

"You'll see!"

And Bunter rolled on his way.

But he did not roll far. Five pairs of hands were laid on him, and he was propelled up the staircase instead of down.

He yelled protest. But his protests were not heeded. He was propelled back into the Remove passage, and hurled into Study No. 1. The Famous Five followed him in, and closed the door.

Bunter sat on the floor and gasped.

"I say, you fellows—"

"We'd better have this out," said Harry Wharton quietly. "You'd never have known anything about Blundell if you hadn't butted in when we were laying for Loder of the Sixth. You've got to keep it dark, Bunter."

Bunter scrambled up, his fat face red with fury.

"Do you think I'm going to be licked?" he roared.

"Yes—and jolly hard, if you don't keep your mouth shut," said the captain of the Remove.

"I'm going to make him oringe—"

"You're going to do nothing of the sort. You're going to keep your mouth shut, you fat rotter!"

"Well, I refuse to do anything of the kind," snorted Bunter. "You jolly well can't keep me in this study. Soon as I get out, I'm going to the Head. All very well for you fellows to keep shady secrets about a pub-haunting rotter! I dare say it's in your line. I'm a bit more particular."

"You fat rotter!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I decline to be mixed up in disgraceful affairs like this. You fellows may like it. I don't! I feel it my duty to let the Head know the sort of fellow Blundell is. The sooner he's sacked from the school, the better!"

"Slaughter him!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The slaughterfulness is the proper caper," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us deal with him batfully or stumpfully."

Billy Bunter backed round the study table.

Five wrathful faces were between him and the door. Once outside the study, the matter was in Bunter's hands. But for the present he was inside the study, and he had a distinct disinclination for either a bat or a stump.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You've got what you deserved for bagging Blundell's tuck," said the captain of the Remove. "And if you say a word to Blundell about what we found out the other night—"

"I've told him."

"You've told Blundell!" yelled Wharton.

"Certainly. And the beast only licked me all the harder! Making out that he wasn't afraid."

"Well, I'm glad he licked you all the harder," said Harry. "Whatever Blundell may have done, he's not the man to be kept under your thumb, as you'd know if you weren't a fat dummy!"

"And I told him I'd got witnesses!" jeered Bunter. "I mentioned your names, too. You can't get out of it. When it comes before the Head, you'll

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be called on to tell what you know. You can't deny that we caught Blundell that night in the Sixth Form lobby. Yah! You've jolly well got to back me up, whether you like it or not! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, you beasts!"

"My hat!" said Bob.

The Famous Five glared at Bunter. The position was decidedly awkward for the chums of the Remove. There was no doubt that, if the matter came to the headmaster's knowledge, they would be called on to state what they knew. Whether the Head, on that evidence, would expel Blundell from the school was uncertain; but it was very probable. Blundell, indeed, was not the fellow to lie himself out of a scrape. So far as the juniors could see, he had fallen into bad ways; but nothing could ever have turned him into a cunning, wary, lying fellow, like Price, for instance. Once he was before the Head he was fairly certain to blurt out the truth, whatever it was.

It was the "sack" for him. His influential position in the school made it impossible for the headmaster to pardon. The higher he stood, the greater would be his fall. He was booked for the sack!

And the chums of the Remove did not want that. Their own opinion was that if Blundell had fallen into shady ways, he had been led into them. Many fellows had noticed that Blundell had been rather friendly with Hilton of the Fifth of late. And Hilton was the pal of Price, who was a thorough black sheep. The Co. surmised that the explanation lay in that direction. Anyhow, they were sure that Blundell, at heart, was a decent fellow; and there was no doubt that he had done the Famous Five a good turn. Neither did they believe that he was in the habit of playing the blackguard, like their old enemy, Loder of the Sixth. It was probably just one foolish outbreak, one thoughtless escapade; and it was hard that a fellow should be sacked for one error, however blameworthy. Over and above all, was the unwritten law, more binding than any written laws, that no man should ever give another man away. "Sneaking" was barred.

But if Bunter went to the Head it was certain that Dr. Locke would call on the Famous Five for their statement; and it was difficult to see how they could refuse to answer their headmaster.

So one thing was certain—Bunter was not to go to the Head!

How he could be prevented was another matter. The chums could not, as he had pointed out, keep him in that study for ever.

There was a long pause, during which the juniors glared at Bunter as if they could eat him.

The Owl of the Remove, recovering his fat confidence, grinned at them across the table.

"You'd better make up your minds to it," he remarked. "It's all coming out, now. I was willing to let the fellow off—but I'm jolly well not going to be licked. I warned him! Now he's asked for it, and he's going to get it. You fellows had better come to the Head with me."

"You fat villain!"

"You'll have to come, anyhow. The Beak will send for you. You've got to give your evidence," said Bunter coolly.

"You'd better come with me, and we'll all pitch the yarn together."

"Is there a cricket stump about?" asked Bob Cherry, in a deep voice.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Make up your

minds to do the right thing!" said Bunter.

"The right thing, you worm? Is sneaking the right thing?"

"I don't expect you fellows to take my view of the matter," said Bunter. "You're not high-minded. As far as I'm concerned, it's impossible for me to keep a shady secret. I feel contaminated."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"It weighs on my conscience!" explained Bunter. "I don't suppose you fellows feel the same—your consciences are pretty tough, I dare say. But I can't be unscrupulous. It's no good asking me—I can't."

The juniors gazed at him.

Every hand in the Famous Five's ten was itching to be on Bunter, to add to the good work that Blundell had begun.

But they restrained their just wrath.

Thrashing Bunter would have been a satisfaction. But it would not have kept him silent. It would only have caused his large mouth to open wider when he was once out of the toils.

Bunter grinned at them triumphantly.

"My esteemed chums—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I'm going to kick him," said Johnny Bull, almost wildly. "Whatever happens, I'm going to kick that little beast round the study."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"My esteemed and absurd chums, what about tea?"

"Tea!" repeated Bob. "Blow tea! We've got to get this matter settled."

The nabob smiled a dusky smile.

"That is the absurd way to settle it, my worthy Bob. I am surefully certain that the esteemed and rascally Bunter would rather stay to tea than go to the Head."

"Oh!" said Bob.

Bunter's grin grew more expansive. He was recovering from Blundell's licking now; and he was, of course, ready for tea. There were few moments in Bunter's fat existence when he was not ready for a meal.

Vengeance was pleasant and desirable; but tea was more so—much more so. Bunter would have extended the right hand of fellowship to the deadliest foe, if that foe had asked him to tea.

"I say, you fellows, if you're keen on my staying to tea I won't say no!" he remarked. "Something decent, I hope. I don't expect you to stand a really splendid spread like I did yesterday—you can't afford it. But if I'm staying to tea, make it a decent one."

Harry Wharton & Co. breathed hard.

The nabob's suggestion was not palatable. But it seemed to be the only way. Bunter had to be kept silent somehow. And that was the only "how."

"I'm willing to leave the matter over," pursued Bunter. "I can't say that I'm prepared to take the rather unscrupulous view you fellows do—that would be saying too much. But I'll think it over before I speak to the Head. Now, what about tea?"

Bunter did not go to the Head.

He stayed to tea in No. 1 Study.

Fortunately, Wharton had had a remittance that day, and the funds ran to a good spread.

Bunter did it justice.

By the time he rolled away from No. 1 Study, happy and sticky, he was in quite a friendly humour.

"Don't you fellows worry," he said, in the doorway. "You're rather a shady and unscrupulous lot, keeping shady secrets for a rotten blackguard in the Upper School. I can't help rather despising you. But I'll think



"To come down to brass tacks, Hilton," said Blundell, "I heard you'd gone out with Price to the Cross Keys or the Three Fishers, or some den like that! I want you to make an effort to stop that sort of thing. It's all very well for Price, but you're not his sort." Hilton grinned at the expression on Price's face. See Chapter 8.)

this matter over; and if I find that I can keep it dark, I'll keep it dark. Only," added Bunter firmly, "if I feel that I can do it without descending to your level. That's got to be understood."

Harry Wharton & Co. breathed hard. They would have lynched the Owl of the Remove there and then if only they could have done.

"So long, then, you fellows. I'll do my best," said Bunter.

And, with that, he rolled away.

He rolled away, only in time; for his last remarks had quite exhausted what was left of the patience of the Famous Five.

"Well!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "Well! There will be a dead fat pig lying about the Remove passage one of these days. What is that fat scoundrel doing out of chokey?"

"That's the place for him!" agreed Nugent.

To which all the Co. assented. Unfortunately, William George Bunter was not in "chokey," but at Greyfriars, and now they were going to deal with him was a puzzle to the famous Five. Had there been only five in the secret, all would have been serene. But there were six in the secret and that made all the difference. Keeping Billy Bunter from tattling was a task that would have made a thirteenth job for Hercules, equal to any of the other twelve. And the Famous Five could not help feeling that that task would prove rather beyond their powers.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Blundell Forces the Pace!

"GLORY for little us!"

"What?"

"The Great Big Panjandrum is coming to see us do our little tricks!"

Bob Cherry spoke with a grin. Wharton glancing round, saw Blundell of the Fifth come swinging down to Little Side with his long stride.

The Remove men were at cricket practice. Sometimes first-eleven men gave the juniors some coaching; and as he saw Blundell arriving the captain of the Remove supposed that that was his intention. He did not feel unduly grateful. He liked Blundell, and knew that he was a good man at games; but he did not share the opinion of the Fifth that George Blundell was an Olympian of the Olympians.

But Blundell, seeing that the Famous Five were busy, did not chip in. Apparently he had not after all come to make himself useful in the practice. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on; and the expression on his broad, ruddy face, was not particularly friendly.

After waiting about ten minutes, however, Blundell seemed to lose patience. Ten minutes of his time was worth about ten years of a Remove man's time, of course. He came nearer, and called out to the captain of the Remove.

"Going to be much longer, Wharton?"

Harry looked round again.

"We're keeping it up till tea," he answered. "Want anything?"

"Yes, I want to speak to you."

"I'll come."

"And your friends," said Blundell.

"Our jolly old caps will be too small for us after this," said Bob. "The Great Panjandrum wants us, you men. This is where we sit up and feel proud of ourselves."

"Look here, I don't see chucking cricket to jaw with a Fifth-Form man!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, come on!" said Harry. "Only a few minutes, I expect. Can't imagine what he wants."

"Unless——" murmured Nugent.

"Oh!"

Wharton's expression changed.

The Famous Five left the cricket, the other fellows going on. Harry was frowning now. Since the previous afternoon, when Bunter had been fed and silenced, nothing had been said of the "shady secret." Wharton wondered uneasily whether Bunter had been "at it" again, and whether that was why Blundell had come down to Little Side.

The Fifth Form man gave them a rather grim look, and moved off a little way, out of hearing of the other cricketers. They followed him in silence.

Blundell came to a ha't under a spreading elm-tree, and faced the juniors, looking grimmer than ever.

"I've got something to say to you

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kids," he said gruffly. "There's something I've got to get to the bottom of. Yesterday I thrashed that fat rascal Bunter for bagging my tack. He said something that surprised me, and that I didn't take much notice of at the time. I've been thinking it over since."

The juniors were silent and uncomfortable. They knew what was coming now.

"Bunter had some idea in his fat, silly head," resumed Blundell, "that I had been breaking bounds at night."

The juniors could only stare. "From what he said I gathered that you kids had the same silly rot in your heads," continued Blundell.

"Silly rot?" repeated Johnny Bull.

"I know," said Blundell, frowning, "that a week or two ago, when you kids took a short cut across the Cross Keys ground, you saw me there, on the path. I don't choose to explain matters to fags, but I took it for granted that sensible kids would know that I had a good reason for being there, unconnected with any blackguardly foolery. Hadn't you sense enough to know that?"

"That's what we thought at the time," said Harry, "and we didn't think much about it, either. It wasn't our bizney."

"Well, that's right," said Blundell. "Now to come to the other matter—Bunter's silly talk. If it's only his nonsense, never mind. But he really seemed to believe it, and he mentioned your names—some of them. What does it mean? If there's any rotten yarn going around about me I'll jolly well put my foot on it, sharp. Bunter's a fool, but you are not fools, and if you've been saying anything of the kind you're a set of young rascals."

"Well, I like that!" said Bob. "We've been saying nothing," said Wharton curtly. "You did us a good turn with Quelch, and we shouldn't think of saying anything about you. We've tried our hardest to keep Bunter quiet, too."

Blundell breathed deep. "You speak as if you knew something, Wharton, something you are keeping dark, about me?"

"Of course I do! You know what we know," said Harry, nettled. "You needn't be afraid we shall tattle. But I suppose we're not to blame for knowing what we can't help knowing."

"The knowfulness is not our esteemed fault, my worthy Blundell," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gently, "and we have carefully and absurdly preserved the golden silence which saves the cracked pitcher from going longest to the well."

"You young scoundrels!" roared Blundell.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Johnny Bull warmly. "We weren't going to mention it, but now you've brought up the subject I think you might be decently grateful to us for keeping your rotten secrets."

"What secret?" hooted the captain of the Fifth.

"You know as well as we do."

"This sort of thing is no good, Blundell," said Harry Wharton, quietly and contemptuously. "You know we know. What's the good of denying a thing known to every man here?"

Blundell's ruddy face was more than ruddy now. It was crimson with anger. He made a movement, as if to collar the captain of the Remove.

Wharton looked at him steadily. He did not understand in the least the attitude Blundell was taking up. But assuredly he was not to be bullied.

"Keep cool, old bean," said Bob.

"You can't bully a man into forgetting what he knows. Touch one, and you touch the lot. And I think the five of us could handle you all right."

"We'll try, anyhow," grunted Johnny Bull.

Blundell controlled his wrath with an effort.

"Let's have this clear," he said. "If you kids really believe some disgraceful story about me you're bound to tell me where you got it, so that I can knock it on the head. I'll give you the credit for being sincere. Now, let's have it!"

"You can't have forgotten what happened in the Sixth Form passage lobby last week," said Harry.

"I know of nothing that happened there. What do you mean? I hardly ever enter the Sixth Form lobby. Sometimes, when I come in with a Sixth Form man—Wingate or Gwynne. What do you mean?"

Wharton began to lose patience. "I mean your sneaking in at the lobby window after midnight, when we caught you there," he snapped.

"Are you mad?"

"I think you must be to deny what you know we all know for a fact," said Harry. "I can't understand you, Blundell. I shouldn't have thought you'd even tell lies to the Head if he

A useful leather pocket-wallet goes to: John E. Edwards, 123, Eccles New Road, Salford, Lancs., who sent in the following clever Greyfriars limerick:

When Bunter starts telling a story,
His adventures are epic and gory.
His feats here and there,
Make his listeners' hair
Stand up on their heads and turn hoary!

Have a shot at winning one yourself, chum. It's well worth your while!

asked you about it. What's the good of telling lies to us?"

"Lies?" roared Blundell.

"Well, unless you've lost your senses you can't have forgotten what happened that night."

"Every night last week I went to bed at the usual time, and never turned out again till rising-bell in the morning."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Johnny Bull. "Making out that you were walking in your sleep, or what?"

Blundell clenched his big fists. He looked as if he could barely restrain himself from hurling himself at the juniors and smiting them hip and thigh. The Famous Five stood on their guard. They were getting angry, too, and quite ready for ructions if Blundell forced the pace.

But the captain of the Fifth controlled himself. His eyes gleamed at the chums of the Remove.

"You young rascals!" he said. "From what I'd seen of you I took you for decent kids. Now I find you're making up a rotten yarn about me—and making out it's true! What have I done to you, you little rotters?"

"You know it's true," said Bob angrily. "We've kept it dark because you did us a good turn with Quelch, and because we wouldn't give a man away, anyhow. You know it's true!"

Blundell set his lips.

"Very well," he said. "You stick to that?"

"The stickfulness is terrific."

"Follow me, then," said Blundell.

"This isn't a matter to be settled by thrashing you; it's too serious for that. I'm placing it before the head prefect and leaving it for him to deal with. I'm going to take you to Wingate. Follow me!"

"You're potty!" said Bob. "Wingate is bound to report you to the Head. It's the sack for you—"

"I've told you to follow me," said Blundell. "If I've done anything to be sacked for the sooner I'm sacked the better. Follow me, and tell your yarn to the captain of the school."

Blundell strode away towards the House.

The juniors looked at one another. They were utterly taken aback and disconcerted. Blundell's conduct was that of a perfectly innocent fellow, who had nothing to fear. If it was bluff it was hard to see how he hoped to gain by it. The matter once reported to a prefect, it could not be kept dark any longer.

"I—I—I say," stammered Bob, "there—there can't be any mistake about it, can there, you fellows?"

"There's no mistake," said Wharton. "We know what we know. If Blundell insists on having it out before the head prefect we've got no choice. Come on!"

They followed Blundell to the House.

If he was bluffing he was keeping up the bluff. For he went directly to the Sixth Form passage and tapped at Wingate's door. In a state of wonder and uneasiness the Famous Five followed him. The deep voice of the captain of Greyfriars called out: "Come in!"

Blundell opened the door and strode into the study. After him went the chums of the Remove. The die was cast now.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Wingate Clears Up the Mystery!

WINGATE of the Sixth gave Blundell a cordial nod and the Removites a curious stare. "Hallo!" he said. "Something up?"

"Yes," said Blundell. "What have those young sweeps been up to?" asked Wingate.

He smiled. But the smile died off his face as he noted Blundell's expression. He saw that the matter was serious.

"What the thump—" he asked.

"I thought I'd better put this before you, Wingate, as head prefect," said Blundell. "It may have to go to the Head, but if you can deal with it, all the better. These juniors accuse me of pub-haunting and breaking bounds after lights out at night."

"We don't!" said Bob Cherry promptly.

"That's what you said," snapped Blundell.

"Nothing of the kind," said Bob. "We've never accused you. We've kept it dark. We never wanted to come to Wingate about it. You've dragged us here."

"That's what I've been getting from the young rascals, Wingate," said the Fifth Form man, breathing hard. "Either they've made up or they fancy some idiotic yarn about me, and they're pleased to tell me that they're kind enough to keep it dark to save me from the sack. The sack, by Jove! I want you to deal with it."

Wingate's brow was grim now.

"I'll deal with it fast enough," he said. "I may as well say first of all that I know it's all rot. Blundell. I know you too well to believe anything of the sort. But we'll see what these kids have got in their silly heads. They're not the fellows to make up a slander—somebody has been pulling

their leg, I suppose. A licking will teach them to have a little more sense, perhaps. You speak, Wharton. Tell me what you've got against Blundell."

"Nothing," said Harry.

"I mean, what you accuse him of, you young ass?"

"We don't accuse him."

Wingate's eyes glinted.

"Don't bandy words," he said. "You make out that you're keeping dark some shady secret about Blundell. You can see that Blundell doesn't mind it coming out, whatever it is. Now cough it up."

"Very well," said Wharton. "We've kept it dark, to keep Blundell out of trouble. But if he insists on it coming out—"

"He does—and I do. Cut it short!"

"Very well. Blundell came back to the school after midnight one night last week, and we caught him."

Blundell made a movement; but restrained himself. Wingate stared at the juniors.

"Are you saying that seriously, Wharton?"

"Quite!"

"The quietness is terrific!"

"There's some fatheaded mistake here," said the prefect. "We'd better root it out. Where is this supposed to have happened, Wharton?"

"In the lobby at the end of this passage."

"After midnight?"

"Yes."

"Then, to begin with, you'll explain what you were doing in the lobby, when you ought to have been asleep in your dormitory."

"We were out of dormitory bounds, of course," said Harry. "That's got to come out now. We were after somebody else, and we got Blundell. We hadn't thought about him—never dreamed he was out of bounds. But he came in at the lobby window. Instead of—of the fellow we were expecting."

Wingate's face grew grimmer.

"You knew that a Greyfriars man was out of bounds that night?"

"We believed so."

"I won't ask you his name. But I suppose it was a senior, as you laid for him in the Sixth Form lobby? Only a Sixth Form man would be likely to use that window."

"So we thought," said Harry. "But it turned out that a Fifth Form man used it."

"You fancied that a Sixth Form man was out of bounds, and you turned up in the lobby at midnight to wait for him to come in?"

"That's it."

"With what intention?"

"To rag him," answered Wharton coolly. "He had been accusing us of pub-haunting and blagging generally, and making himself an unpleasant beast, so we thought we'd make things hot for him."

The juniors did not intend to mention Loder's name. But it was scarcely possible for Wingate to avoid guessing it. It was Loder of the Sixth who had accused the Famous Five of bad conduct. Obviously, it was only on account of their old enemy that the juniors would have taken the risk of that reckless midnight rag.

"And someone came in at the window?" said Wingate.

"Yes. Blundell."

"You mean to say that you recognised Blundell, and that you give your word that it was Blundell?" exclaimed Wingate.

"We're not cats, to see in the dark," answered Harry. "Of course, we didn't

recognise him, as we couldn't see anything of him but a shadow."

"Then what makes you think it was Blundell, you young ass and not the Sixth Form man you were laying for?"

"I'll explain. We iammed him in the lobby window as he was getting in, and made him a prisoner there," said Harry.

"Inky jerked his hat off and I poured a bottle of ink over his head—"

Wingate grinned for a moment, and even Blundell's savage face relaxed.

"You young sweep!" said the captain of Greyfriars. "But never mind that. You say it was dark in the lobby—"

"Black as pitch," said Bob Cherry.

"In the jolly old circumstances, we didn't turn on the light."

"I imagine not. Then how—"

"We wanted to make sure it was Loder—"

I mean, the Sixth Form man we were after, said Harry. "Bob was going to strike a match. He got desperate, broke loose, and bolted."

"And you never saw him to recognise him?"

"No."

"You mean that you recognised his voice, or what?"

"No. He never spoke a word; he was too jolly cautious for that."

"Then how—"

"After he had gone, Inky still had his hat," said Harry. "You know all Greyfriars men have their names written in their hats. Well, we struck the match and looked in the hat, expecting to find—to find the name of the man we were after. We wanted to make sure. And—it was Blundell's name in the hat."

"Then it was Blundell's hat?"

"Yes."

"No doubt about that, I suppose?" said Wingate slowly.

"We all saw it, and another fellow

who was with us—Bunter. It was that fat idiot's tattling that caused it all to come out. We never intended to say a word about Blundell."

"I think it's just as well, then, that Bunter tattled, in this case," said the Greyfriars captain dryly. "Otherwise, you'd have gone on believing that rubbish about Blundell."

Wharton stared.

"It's true, Wingate. You can't suppose that we're telling you lies?"

"If you do, we'll go to the Head!" snorted Johnny Bull. "We never wanted this to come out. But now Blundell's dragged it out, we're jolly well not going to be made out liars."

"No fear!" said Nugent emphatically.

"I don't think you're lying," said Wingate. "I think you're a set of young asses. You got Blundell's hat—I believe that much. But the man who dodged away from the window in the dark—and whom you never recognised—how do you know that was Blundell?"

"Of course it was Blundell!" said Bob warmly. "Another fellow wouldn't have Blundell's name in his hat, I suppose?"

"Another fellow might have borrowed Blundell's hat."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"One day last week," said Wingate, "Blundell came in with me, by way of that lobby, and hung his hat on a peg there."

"Oh!"

"He went to his study after leaving me, and didn't remember that his hat was there, I suppose, for I saw it later, hanging on the peg, and meant to tell him when I saw him again."

"Oh!"

(Continued on next page.)

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another dream of the future. Don't fail to add it to your set, chum. It's unquestionably one of the best pictures in the series.

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"That was Thursday," said Wingate. "And what night was it last week that you were playing tricks there?"

"Thursday," said Wharton, rather faintly.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The night that Blundell's hat was hanging on a peg in that lobby," said Wingate grimly, "if a certain Sixth Form man—whose name we won't mention—went out that night—and I happen to know he did—by way of the lobby window he may have borrowed a hat from a peg there—and it was Blundell's hat."

"Oh dear!" said Bob, who had a shrewd idea who the Sixth Form man was.

"So that was it?" said Blundell of the Fifth, staring at the juniors. "I wondered how my hat came to be in my study the next day. I picked it up there, and supposed that some Sixth Form man had brought it there for me. These young asses—"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

Their expressions were quite sickly.

They understood the mistake now.

The man they had caught in the lobby window had been, after all, their old enemy, Loder of the Sixth. The hat had been Blundell's; but the head that wore it had been Loder's. The hands were the hands of Esau, as it were, but the voice was the voice of Jacob.

The dismay in the faces of the juniors made Blundell smile. Now that the matter was cleared up his wrath had dissipated. He realised, too, that the juniors, believing him to be the night-prowler, had done their best for him, with friendly intentions. They believed that one good turn deserved another, though not on the same lines as Billy Bunter.

Wingate's expression was grim.

But the grimness was caused more by the discovery of Loder's delinquency than by the proceedings of the Famous Five. There was silence in the study for some minutes. The captain of Greyfriars broke it.

"Are you satisfied now that you made a mistake?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Harry slowly. "I can't see that we were to blame for such a mistake, though. We never dreamed that—"

"You were to blame for being out of your dormitory at midnight, which was the cause of it."

"Well, yes, if you put it like that," admitted Wharton. "Anyhow, I'm jolly glad that it's come out; I hated to think of a fellow like Blundell going to the dog's like—like—like the man we were after that night. I could hardly believe it of him, anyhow."

"Thanks," said Blundell, rather sarcastically. "So I'm reinstated in your good opinion—until somebody borrows my hat again, I suppose."

Wharton coloured.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"I don't see that we were to blame," said Johnny Bull. "But—sorry all the same."

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, my esteemed and preposterous Blundell," murmured the nabob.

Blundell grinned.

"Well, I'm satisfied now that the matter's cleared up," he said. "You'd better tell that fat idiot Bunter the facts. I'll leave these young duffers to you, Wingate, but so far as I'm concerned, the whole thing can drop."

And Blundell left the study.

The Famous Five looked at Wingate. The "shady secret" was explained now, and they were glad of it. But their midnight rag had come to light, and

that was a serious matter from the point of view of a prefect.

Wingate regarded them thoughtfully. His hand strayed towards his ashplant. But he withdrew it.

"Cut!" he said briefly.

The Famous Five did not stay to be bidden twice.

They cut!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Alas for Bunter!

"NOW, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter spoke in a determined tone, an aggressive tone, not to say a bullying tone. There was a frown—quite a threatening frown—on his fat brow as he rolled into Study No. 1. Bunter, it was clear, was in a truculent mood—not in a mood to stand any nonsense.

And the Famous Five smiled. So far, the Owl of the Remove was unaware that the mystery had been cleared up; that Blundell of the Fifth had emerged from the affair without, as Bob expressed it, a stain on his character. He was unaware that the shady secret was a thing of the past, that there was no longer any secret to keep. The juniors were going to tell him, but they had not told him yet. And it was rather entertaining to see Bunter in an aggressive and overbearing mood, putting on a bullying air, on the strength

ANOTHER "MAGNETITE" WINS POCKET KNIFE FOR THE FOLLOWING JOKE!

A TRUE PROVERB.

"Hi!" shouted the angry man. "What do you mean by throwing stones at my dog?"

"Well," said the youth, "he bit me!"

"How many times?" asked the owner.

"Once," came the answer.

"But you shied at him twice!"

"Of course!" said the youth.

"Once bit, twice 'shy'!"

Sent in by W. HUGHES,
21, Cross Street, Kerry Road,
Newton, Mont.

of a power that had passed from his fat hands.

Tea was on the table in Study No. 1—tea for five. Apparently it had not occurred to the chums that Bunter was coming. Bunter was going to undeceive them on that point.

The more Billy Bunter had reflected on the peculiar situation, the more he had realised what a good thing it was for him, William George Bunter. If those beasts were so jolly keen to keep the shady secret they were in Bunter's fat hands. Instead of making Blundell "sit up" for the licking he had handed out, Bunter was going to make the Famous Five treat him decently for keeping the secret. Treating him decently was likely to come expensive; and it was no doubt fortunate for the Co. that the matter was at an end, though as yet Bunter knew it not!

The fat junior glanced at the tea-table and sniffed.

"Call that a spread?" he sneered.

"We call it tea!" said Harry Wharton mildly, while his comrades gazed with interest at Bunter. It was rather amusing to let him run on and see how far he would go.

"Now, you fellows," said Bunter emphatically, "I don't want to be unpleasant. I don't want to say anything nasty. But if you think that measly tea will do for me, you're mistaken."

"But it's not for you, old fat bean," said Nugent politely. "Nobody's asked you to tea that I know of."

Bunter's aggressive look became more pronounced. He thrust out a fat jaw in a very threatening way.

"Say that again, Nugent!" he snapped.

Nugent said it again.

"You cheeky rotter!" said Bunter.

"What?"

"Cheeky rotter! Same to you, Wharton! A set of rotters!" said Bunter. "Keeping shady secrets, and trying to drag a decent chap into your syrupstitionous ways! Now, listen to me! You'd better! I'm rather fed up with you lot! I've told you that I despise you, and I repeat it. Still, I'm willing to be kind."

"The kindness of the idiotic Bunter is terrific."

"Shut up, Inky! I don't want any jaw from a nigger."

"My esteemed hat!"

"Shut up, I tell you! You can all shut up! Now, let's have it clear. Owing to a disappointment about a postal-order, I'm rather short of cash this week. Toddy's frightfully mean—I never get anything decent in my own study. Well, I'm coming here to tea—every day, and I expect something decent! Not a measly feed like that! Something good! See? And if you don't like it—"

"We don't!" said Bob.

"The likefulness is not terrific."

"Very well!" said Bunter grimly. "Treat me decently, as a pal, and I'm willing to be pally. Otherwise, I refuse to have anything to do with your shady, syrupstitionous proceedings. I'm not going to be mixed up in your black-guardly secrets. I'm going to the Head to ask his advice about it. A fellow has a right to consult his headmaster. That's what I'm going to do. I've got to consider my conscience."

"His conscience!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Oh, my only summer hat!"

Bunter sneered.

"You fellows mayn't have any conscience," he said. "I'm a bit more particular than you lot. Now, what about it?"

There was no reply.

The Famous Five simply gazed at Bunter as if they were watching some curious animal at the Zoo.

"I think I've made it clear," said Bunter. "Treat me as a pal and it's all right! I'm willing to be friendly, even with a set like you—a set of shady blighters! I was always too generous, and it's been taken advantage of. Still, there it is." Bunter drew a chair to the table. "Now, I'll begin on this—but there's nothing here for you chaps. If you want anything, fetch it. Bring some more jam while you're about it. And a cake! And—"

"Dear man!" said Bob.

Bunter evidently was spreading himself. He was swelling like the frog in the fable.

Harry Wharton & Co. rose to their feet. Bunter had run on long enough. Now was the time for him to stop.

"There's only a pound of jam there," said Harry. "Isn't that enough for you, Bunter?"

"Certainly not!" snapped Bunter.

"I think you'll find it enough when you've had it."

"I feel sure of that!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Give him the jam, and let's see!" said Harry.

Bob Cherry seized the fat junior, jerked him out of the chair, and bumped him on the floor. Johnny Bull took the jam-pot and ladled the jam out on Bunter's upturned astonished face.



Blundell did not heed Peter Todd, but looked round the study and then threw the door shut. Billy Bunter was revealed. "Oh, there you are!" said the captain of the Fifth grimly. "No!" gasped Bunter. "I'm not here! I mean, I—I'm jolly glad to see you in this study, Blundell! It—it—it's quite an honour!" (See Chapter 9.)

"Whoop!" roared Bunter. "Yaroooh! Stoppit! Ow! Oh, crikey! Gurrgr!"

He spluttered wildly, as some of the jam went into his mouth and went down the wrong way. Some went into his fat little nose, some into his extensive ears, more into his hair, and more down his neck. Bunter had often been jammy, but never so jammy as now. Wharton's prediction was correct—Bunter found a pound of jam quite enough. He was glad it was not two pounds.

"Now give him the marmalade!" grinned Nugent.

"Yaroooh! Grooogh! I don't want any marmalade!" shrieked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Had enough jam?" asked Wharton.

"Oooch! Wooooh! Yes! Beast!

Ow! Yes!"

"I'll borrow some along the passage if you want some more."

"Beast! Grooogh! Oooch! Gug-gug!"

Bunter struggled to his feet. He glared through stickiness at the hilarious five.

"Groogh! Now I'm going to the Head!" he roared. "You've done it now! Oooch! Grooogh! I'm sticky! Now I'm going—"

"You're going," agreed Wharton.

"But before you go, I may as well tell you that it's all right about Blundell. There's no secret after all. It wasn't Blundell the other night."

"Eh?"

"It's all come out, fathead! It wasn't Blundell—Wingate found that out. It's all serene. You can go to the Head, or go to Jericho, or go and eat coke! See?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter gave the chums of the Remove a jammy glare.

"You beasts! You've turned on me like this because—"

"Exactly!"

"And—and there ain't any secret?" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha! None at all. It was all a mistake. Another fellow had Blundell's hat that night, and now it's come out."

"Oh, dear!"

Bunter blinked in jammy dismay. The chums of the Remove regarded him with grinning faces.

"I say, you fellows! I—I say, of—of course I was only j-j-joking!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I was simply jesting, you chaps—he, he, he! You've made me all sticky! Well, I can take a j-j-joke! I shall have to go and get a wash. I'll come back for tea. See? After all, we're pals!"

"My only hat!" said Bob.

"Line up, you men, to help Bunter out!" said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Now start, you fat fraud!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Start!" roared Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five lined up by the doorway, each with a foot half-lifted to help Bunter out. Bunter blinked at them.

"I—I say, old chaps—dear old chaps—" he gasped.

A shove from Bob started the fat junior. Then his boot landed on a pair of tight trousers. Bunter roared, and ran. Four other boots landed on him as he fled. He reached the passage, rolling.

Bump!

"Yow-ow-wow!"

The door of Study No. 1 closed. A sticky, jammy Bunter limped away groaning. Once more William George Bunter had made the painful discovery that the way of the transgressor was hard.

There was another transgressor at

Greyfriars who was finding his path rather a thorny one. While Billy Bunter was departing thus painfully from No. 1 in the Remove, Wingate was in Loder's study, in the Sixth, talking to Loder. His language, like that of Truthful James' partner, was "frequent and painful and free." The sportsman of the Sixth fairly perspired as he listened. Loder pointed out, feebly, that there was no proof that he was the fellow who had sneaked in at the lobby window on that eventful night, and whom the ragers had mistaken for Blundell of the Fifth. Wingate brushed that aside contemptuously. He told Loder, at considerable length and with much emphasis, what he thought of him, and warned him that he was now getting a last chance, and that if he did not make the most of it he could look out for the sack.

Wingate departed, slamming the door, leaving Loder perspiring.

It was borne in upon the mind of the black sheep of Greyfriars that, for a time at least, he would have to walk warily. For the rest of that term, at the very least, he would have to change his manners and customs. There was only one solace for Loder—the prospect of visiting vengeance on the heads of the Remove fellows who were the cause of this trouble. That, at least, he could do—at all events, he thought that he could. And to that object the bully of the Sixth devoted his attention—with results that proved to be both interesting and exciting.

THE END.

(Look out for another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "A LESSON FOR LODER!" You'll enjoy every line of it.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,114.

OPENING CHAPTERS OF A GRAND NEW 'TEC SERIAL!

THE MASKED DEATH



By
JOHN SYLVESTER

The Warning!

"THERE'S someone to see you, sir. He says he has an appointment."

Ferrers Locke, the world-famous detective, drew back from the microscope over which he had been bending. There was a satisfied expression on his lean face; an eager glint in his eyes, like a hunter picking up the scent.

He barely glanced at the card Jack Drake had handed him.

"He can wait. Meanwhile, what do you make of this?"

He held out a grimy, tattered object for his boy assistant to examine. A smile touched his thin lips.

"Take a good look," he added. "There's no hurry. Tell me exactly what it suggests."

"Well, sir," said Jack, with a puzzled frown. "It might once have been a handkerchief. But somebody's been cutting chunks out of it. Looks as though they've been using it for cleaning their boots."

"Not so bad," said the detective encouragingly. "I did the cutting, so that's hardly fair. But can you tell me anything about the personal habits of the owner?"

"An extravagant blighter to use a silk handkerchief for wiping his boots. But I'm afraid"—Jack shook his head dubiously—"that's all I can see."

"Then run your eyes over this report I've prepared for Inspector Webster. He sent me the thing yesterday, without comment. It was meant to be a poser—a kind of retort to the little lecture I gave him on the principles of scientific deduction. He has the ordinary policeman's contempt for anything outside the machinery of the Yard. He has intelligence, of course, but he's afraid to use it."

Jack took the paper, and he no sooner began to read than he gave a gasp of astonishment. He had seen many examples of the detective's almost uncanny powers of deduction.

"You must look," he read, "for a heavily-built man, with black hair, fair complexion, and eyes probably light blue. He is a professional criminal who has served a sentence. He has a scar on his left hand, plays billiards

well, and is a heavy cigar-smoker. When he dropped this handkerchief he was running from a house into which he had broken. The house is situated on the south-westerly edge of Dartmoor, and is at least a hundred years old. I am sorry I cannot help you any further, but perhaps you have other clues besides this handkerchief."

Jack looked up in bewilderment.

"Are you pulling his leg, guv'nor?"

"No, I assure you I am perfectly serious. I might have added that the man was wearing a suit of black hopsack; but I don't see how that's going to help."

"But how on earth," stammered the boy, "could you discover all that from a handkerchief? Surely you have some other clue? Or had you seen a report of a burglary in the newspapers?"

"There has been nothing in the papers, to my knowledge. I extracted all my information from the handkerchief you see. There is nothing mar-

... For a few seconds the face of the moon was obscured. Like a tidal wave rushing to engulf him, racing across the moon was a silvery wall of mist . . . The moon shone again to reveal a weird, white shape, a head without a body, with a pointed, ghostly cowl!

vellous about it. I followed the ordinary method of scientific investigation."

"But you've said exactly where the crime was committed, guv'nor. You've assumed there was a crime, and that old Webster hasn't been playing a practical joke."

"It wasn't a joke," replied Ferrers Locke, a trifle grimly. "It was no ordinary crime, either. We are dealing in this case with a master-criminal."

Jack noticed the tensing of that iron jaw. Ferrers Locke was interested. After two months of enforced idleness, he was at last in sight of a case worthy of his powerful intellect.

"For your benefit," he continued, refolding the note to the inspector, "I will explain how I arrived at those conclusions. In the first place, as you know, I pay the closest attention to trifles. Under a microscope, the tiniest detail may be of overwhelming importance. Now what did the microscope yield?"

He leaned back, folding his arms. "You have seen me extract dust by means of a small scale vacuum-cleaner. Every particle can be accounted for. No object is so frequently and intimately in contact with its owner as a handkerchief. In this particular case, an adhesive substance, which had been used for no lawful purpose, helped to retain many of the particles of dust and fibres of wool that might otherwise have been lost. But that wasn't our only piece of luck. There were also very clear bloodstains and fragments of soil."

"You mean," put in Jack, recalling a previous case, "the soil was distinctive to some part of the country?"

"Precisely. And, to the best of my belief, that peculiar combination of china clay and red earth is only found in Devonshire."

"But why should the house be at least a hundred years old, guv'nor?"

"Because, in breaking in, the criminal dislodged some mortar from the walls—the old horsehair mortar that has been obsolete for so long. Also, he cut his hand. He probably did this after using gummed paper on one of the window-panes, removing it with a glass-cutter."

He bound his hand, and the relative positions of the bloodstained knuckles and creases proves it was the left hand. It was a wide, powerful hand, so powerful that the silk burst in one place. From the type of hand you can usually infer a man's general build."

"Still, you can't tell the colour of his hair."

"If you look in that microscope, you will see two horizontal bars," smiled Locke. "Probably our burglar mopped the sweat from his neck. At any rate, a few of his hairs—which had been recently cropped, by the way—came off. Now, it is unusual for dark hair to be found with light eyes. The statistics on this subject are very interesting. But it is equally unusual for people with fair hair to have dark eyes. I grant there may be exceptions—"

"But you told the inspector to look for a man with black hair."

"It was dyed black. A bismuth dye was used. And I think I'm entitled to say that a man who dyes his hair black, and paints his fingers with collodion lest the prints should be recognised, and, finally, who breaks into a house with adhesive paper and a glass-cutter, such a man is very likely to be a professional crook."

"You certainly are," agreed Jack fervently. "It sounds simple, now

you've explained, although how did you know he was a good billiards player?"

"My dear boy," exclaimed Locke, in ironic reproach, "a man must be very keen on the game if he's got nerve enough to play just before setting out to commit a burglary. Do you want me to explain that he wiped the chalk from his fingers on his handkerchief, or that the smell of cigars is one of the most clinging of smells?"

"You're a wizard, sir," declared Jack, looking wonderingly at the detective. "When the inspector gets your letter he'll be around here like greased lightning. Which reminds me"—he glanced quickly at the door—"that chap has been waiting all this time in the next room to see you."

"I suppose I'd better satisfy his curiosity," said Locke, with a suppressed yawn. "He's probably lost a favourite cat. Or he may even be one of those fanatics with an autograph album. Where's that card? I've even forgotten his name."

Then suddenly he stiffened. He was looking at the card he had thrown so carelessly aside.

"Yes," he murmured softly, "I shall be very glad to make the acquaintance of Mr. Silas Morecombe, of Bridgeworthy, South Devon."

Before leaving the laboratory, however, the detective carefully locked away the silk handkerchief with which he had been demonstrating, and then, taking out a glass slide from the microscope, he picked up two tiny threads with a pair of tweezers and placed them in a small envelope, which he also locked in a steel cabinet. Not a trace of his awakened excitement was betrayed by his face. His movements were unhurried and precise, and his outward calm presented a marked contrast to the client who greeted him when he opened the door of the adjoining room.

An enormously fat man, with reddish hair and a face the colour of port wine, halted in the midst of his restless pacing up and down the floor, and suddenly swung round, his eyes bulging with rage. He wore a loud, check suit, and an old-fashioned, white stock, contriving to look something between a race-horse trainer and a country squire.

"Confound it!" he cried, catching sight of Locke. "I was given an appointment at three o'clock, and I've been waiting over half an hour. If you're as haphazard in conducting your business as this, I'd better say good-afternoon!"

"Good-afternoon, then!" replied the detective pleasantly.

The other man stared at him non-plussed. Then, quite surprisingly, he drew the back of his hand across his perspiring forehead and collapsed into a chair.

"You must forgive me," he muttered. "I don't know what I'm saying half the time. My nerves have all gone to pieces. And you won't wonder, after hearing my story."

"Try a cigar," invited Lock, proffering his case.

"Thanks—I will! These are darned good ones!"

"A gift," replied Locke blandly, "from a grateful client—the Maharajah of Jalipore."

Silas Morecombe nodded, smelt the cigar, and then bit off the end violently, spitting it from his mouth. His combination of opulence and vulgarity provided food for speculation. Without appearing to take more than a casual interest, not the smallest action escaped the keen, watchful eyes of Ferrers Locke.

One thing seemed obvious. His visitor's display of ill temper had been due quite genuinely to nerves. The shaking of his hand as he struck a match, the involuntary muscular twitching of his face was ample proof.

"Now, Mr. Locke"—he inhaled slightly, and seemed about to settle when he caught sight of Jack Drake. "Who is this?" he snapped. "I wish to speak to you privately."

"You may speak safely before my assistant," Locke assured him. "He shares my confidences."

Morecombe scowled, but, after drawing several times on the cigar he had just lit, he began:

"In the first place, let me describe my position. I am a man of independent means, and for the last six years I have lived at Bridgeworthy, in Devonshire. It's a quiet enough place—at least, it was quiet before these infernal things began to happen!"

"Isn't there a china clay works near your house?" ventured Locke.

"So you know it?" came the surprised reply. "Well, of course, a fair sprinkling of tourists pass that way in the summer months. The clay works are actually on my property. They bring in very little profit, but they are something to occupy my mind. My house itself stands on the hill above, and behind that there's nothing but moor. A desolate, lonely waste of moor stretching for miles—" He broke off

and leaned forward. "Would you say I looked a coward?" he demanded fiercely.

"I shouldn't have said so."

"Nor would I a month ago. Yet, this thing has got me beat. I'll begin with what happened a month ago. It was a pitch black night. I woke up about two o'clock and heard a faint sound. It was like someone creeping stealthily along the passage outside. I thought it was an ordinary burglar, and at that time my nerve hadn't gone. I slipped out of bed, seized a revolver, and flung open the door. Something made a rush at me. Without the slightest hesitation I fired. There was a cry of pain. Thinking I'd hit him, I switched on the torch I was carrying. And what I saw—" He paused tensely, clenching his hands. "There wasn't any face. Only a mask. It was like one of those pointed things inquisitors used to wear, and white—dead white. And the next minute it had gone."

The detective was listening attentively. "Just a moment," he protested. "Aren't you letting your imagination run away with you? You say you heard a cry of pain. Well, a ghost can't be hit with a bullet, and an ordinary human being doesn't disappear into thin air."

"I'm telling you how it appeared to me. I don't believe in ghosts." Morecombe gave a contemptuous snort. "This was a man right enough. And I think I know why he was wearing that hideous mask."

"We'll come to that presently. When you saw your assailant had vanished, what did you do?"

"I might have lost thirty seconds, but not more. I was after him, my torch blazing. But how he got out of the house beats me. I searched every room. I went into the grounds afterwards.



"You refuse to help me?" Morecombe almost screamed. "Do you know what I am offering you?"

"I refuse!" snapped Ferrers Locke. For a moment Morecombe seemed to lose all control of himself. He raised his fists convulsively as though to strike the detective, and an imprecation burst from his lips. But the steady gleaming eyes watching him did not flicker. (See page 26.)



Ferrers Locke, the greatest sleuth the world has ever known.

What's more, when the police went over the garden the next day we couldn't find as much as a footprint."

"How did he enter?"

"We discovered that easily enough. He cut away a pane of glass and opened the window. In fact, if it weren't for certain features of the case it would seem an ordinary affair of housebreaking. But there was the mask—and a sequel."

"Let's hear about the sequel."

"I didn't discover it until the next day." Unconsciously he lowered his voice. "When I went into my study there was a piece of paper lying on my desk. I have it here. You shall see for yourself."

With trembling hands he produced a piece of quarto notepaper. Jack Drake leaned over the detective's shoulder and read the words:

"You have one month longer to live."

And underneath, instead of a signature, was a crude drawing of a white mask.

"Have you shown this to the police?" asked Locke sharply.

"No. I dismissed it as a joke at first. You see, there's a local superstition about a masked spectre, who is supposed to haunt a certain pool. I thought, hearing of the burglary, someone was trying to scare me."

"And when did you receive your second warning?"

"How did you know that?" cried Morecombe almost shrilly, starting back in amazement.

"Why else should you be here? I assume you would have gone on treating the first as a joke, if something hadn't happened afterwards to make you change your mind."

The man's face was ghastly, and, without a word, he produced a second sheet of paper identical with the first. Its wording was equally terse.

"You have one day longer."

There was a similar drawing of a white mask.

For several minutes Ferrers Locke compared the two notes. His brows were drawn sharply together.

"How did you receive this?" he asked.

"By post this morning."

"Have you kept the envelope?"

"I—I'm not sure. I don't think I have."

"Then you've been incredibly foolish. But why did you come to me? Why not the police?"

"The fact is"—Morecombe looked desperate—"I'd heard of your wonderful successes. You've solved mysteries

that have baffled the police. This seemed so different from the ordinary crime that I was afraid the police might bungle it. Also," he added, hesitating, "I can't have the house guarded indefinitely. But I thought if you could come down and stay with me, we might lay a trap into which this fiend might walk unsuspectingly."

"And you've no suspicion who can be threatening you, why anyone should want to take your life?"

"I haven't an idea," he groaned.

"Think again. You are in a very serious position."

"You believe that?" he cried hoarsely.

"But I haven't an enemy in the world."

"Not even," said Ferrers Locke quietly, "among your former prison companions?"

"What do you mean?"

With a choking cry the man sprang to his feet. But the detective also rose.

"I am sorry," he said coldly. "But since you refuse to be frank with me, I can't help you."

"You refuse?" Morecombe almost screamed. "Do you know what I am offering you?"

"I refuse," snapped Locke.

For a moment Morecombe seemed to lose all control of himself. He raised his fists convulsively as though to strike the detective. An imprecation burst from his lips—and then died away.

The steady, gleaming eyes watching him did not flicker. Morecombe let his hands fall limply, and his massive shoulders sagged. Without another word he picked up his hat and walked slowly out of the room.

Jack Drake stared after him in astonishment, and as soon as the door closed he turned to his chief.

"What made you think he'd been in gaol, sir?" he asked.

Locke, however, shook his head.

"There's a concert at the Queen's Hall to-night. I particularly want to hear that new Hungarian violinist. But the next item, I think, should be an early dinner in the soothing atmosphere of Marietti's."

Jack bit his lips impatiently. He knew this mood well enough. Whenever he had some knotty problem to untangle, Ferrers Locke took refuge in music and gastronomy.

"I suppose it's no use asking why you declined this case?"

"Not a bit," came the smiling answer.

"At the moment my mind is glowing with the pleasant anticipation of an evening under the ministrations of Beethoven and Marietti. Man can't live by bread alone—hence the discovery of French cooking."

His sudden recovery of spirits made the boy look up in quick suspicion.

"And by the way," he added, "you might do some packing meanwhile. After the concert we are leaving by the midnight train to Plymouth."

The Cry in the Night!

JACK DRAKE could hardly contain his excitement. But throughout the whole evening Locke politely refused to be drawn. At the concert he leaned back, his eyes half closed and the tips of his fingers pressed together, apparently absorbed in dreamy contemplation of the music.

There was no opportunity whatever for conversation in the train, since Locke had taken a couple of sleeping berths and wished his assistant good-night before the train even started.

They arrived at Plymouth at eight o'clock and breakfasted at a hotel overlooking the famous Hoe.

"This is an admirable sole," Locke observed, tasting his fish with the thoughtfulness of an epicure. "You know, Jack, you haven't yet grasped that the human brain is so constituted that it cannot function efficiently in bodily discomfort."

"I haven't grasped," said the boy, feelingly, "why you flatly refused to take on this case, and then two minutes after the man had gone changed your mind."

"But my dear boy, I haven't changed my mind. I am not acting for our red-haired friend, because although I think he is in a very unfortunate position, yet I prefer to serve the interests of justice."

"Then you think he's a crook?" asked Jack eagerly.

"I should have thought that was obvious."

"But how? I tried to use my eyes, as you've taught me, but I couldn't see the least thing to suggest he had been in prison."

"You should have used your ears as well."

"You mean he said something that gave it away?"

"On the contrary I knew he had been in prison before I entered the room."

Jack could only stare blankly.

"Had you listened you would have heard him pacing restlessly, five steps up, and three across. The room is big and would have permitted more than twice as many steps in each direction. But in my experience it takes many years for an ex-convict to lose the habit of that peculiar pacing. He has done it every day for so long that it becomes automatic. Under stress of strong emotion, when he ceases to be conscious of what he is doing, the habit re-asserts itself."

"I hadn't even noticed," groaned Jack. "Of course, I see it now. But its confoundedly hard not to miss a single point of detail."

"It's a matter of training. I do it instinctively. I suppose you couldn't say how many stairs lead up to this restaurant."

"I'm hanged if I could."

"There are eleven. It's unimportant, but it's good practice to notice these things. Returning to our client, I should have hesitated to have condemned him on that evidence alone, although it's



Jack Drake, Ferrers Locke's clever boy assistant, practising the hoot of an owl, the agreed-upon signal.

stronger than most people would think. But when he came to the really interesting part of his story, he lowered his voice. His lips barely moved, and he spoke out of the corners of his mouth. That is an infallible test. All old lags do it at times. They learn the trick in talking when speech is forbidden in the workshops. And now do you mind passing the coffee?"

Jack obeyed. There was one other point that troubled him, however.

"I don't understand about those warnings Morecombe received. He said he came to you because of the last warning. But he must have fixed up an inter-

sengers to alight. But instead of making for the village, a mile and a half away, they set out for the open.

It was a wintry day, with dark clouds scudding low over the jagged road. On one side stretched a bleak, grey expanse of turf, broken only by the swelling of hills and savage piles of granite. But on the other the landscape was relieved by a steep drop into a valley, divided like a patchwork quilt by the high Devon hedges into plough and pasture.

Smoke drifted up from the slate-roofed cottages nestling under the frowning cliff. There was only one house outside the village, and it stood in sombre isolation on the brink of the down, its oriel windows and timbered front testifying to its age. The surrounding grounds, enclosed by black fir-trees, bore signs of neglect. Beyond the trees, enclosed by a barbed fence to keep out wandering sheep and cattle, was a large dewpond.

hand into his pocket and passed a small black object to his puzzled assistant.

"Don't use it unless you are obliged to," he remarked.

It was an automatic pistol.

"But what—"

"Never mind yet! Lock the door and follow me!"

Hurrying across to the window he raised the sash gently and drew a light but strong rope ladder from his suitcase.

"I'll go first. But don't make a sound."

Jack obeyed enthusiastically. Locke's manner and the revolver promised well for an adventurous night. Moreover, it was obvious now what was going to happen. Locke expected an attempt to be made to-night on the life of Silas Morecombe, and although he was not officially acting for the man he was determined to prevent murder from being committed.

Once out of the inn they darted under cover of a hedge. In a very short time they were approaching the inky plantation of trees at the top of the hill.

"We must part here," said Locke.

"You go to the right and don't move your eyes from the front of the house. I'm going to cover the back. If you see anyone, give chase, but meanwhile tread like an Indian. And don't use your gun unless you are forced to."

Jack nodded.

"You can always call to me in the old way. You remember?"

"The hoot of an owl," chuckled the boy. "It's a long time since I practised it, but I reckon I haven't forgotten."



"I've got you covered," said Ferrers Locke, and he shone an electric torch full on the face of the prostrate figure. But for once the Baker Street detective had made a mistake. "By the powers," he cried in amazement, "it's Inspector Webster!" (See page 28.)

view at least a day before, since he had to come from Devonshire."

"He'd been staying in London. He phoned me this morning—there's no mystery about that. But I've come to a very curious opinion about those warnings. I can't tell you at present, however."

From long experience Jack knew better than to ask.

"What is the next move?" he inquired.

"I think a hundred up," responded Locke lightly. "They have some excellent billiard tables in this hotel. And looking out on the Hoe, don't you feel in the mood of Drake, that we can finish our game and beat the Spaniards, too?"

Before emerging from the billiard-room Locke sent Jack to fetch a timetable while he entered into a conversation he found extremely interesting with the marker. He was in high spirits when the boy returned.

"Now," he declared, "to sample the bracing air of Dartmoor."

A slow, branch line train took them from North Road Station to Bridgewater Halt. They were the only pas-

Ferrers Locke had brought with him all the necessary apparatus for an elaborate survey. He explored every detail of the scene he had chosen with characteristic thoroughness, even jotting down notes on the character of the flora, rocks and soil.

Half a mile beyond the dewpond he came to the china clay quarries, where streams of whitish water filtered down into wide troughs. The factory itself consisted of little more than a furnace and some dilapidated drying sheds. About half a dozen men were working, and, tipping the foreman, Locke was permitted to see over the place, the process being explained to him.

It was dark before he had completed his survey. In the parlour of the village inn he sat down and made a careful map.

"I think this is going to come in useful," he muttered. "The next thing is to announce our intention of going to bed."

Bidding good-night to the landlady, he was shown upstairs, motioning Jack to follow him into his room. The door had no sooner closed than he slipped his

They parted, and once the darkness had swallowed them up not the faintest crunch of leaves or cracking of a twig betrayed the fact that they were moving.

The moon rose as the detective took up his position under a twisted yew-tree between the pond and the back of the house. In the distance the sepulchral shape of a kiln was faintly visible.

Locke settled down to wait.

At ten minutes to eleven a light in one of the lower rooms of the house was extinguished. Silas Morecombe was going to bed.

It was puzzling, in the circumstances, why a man in such a nervous state, believing that an attempt would be made to kill him, should return from the comparative safety of a London hotel to this dangerous loneliness. But there were other aspects equally baffling.

Why should Morecombe have lied—as he undoubtedly had—about the manner in which his assailant of a month ago had left the house? Was it true that the man had been grotesquely masked?

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And if so with what object? Why should this man be interested in stirring up local superstition? And what had he come to steal?

The problem bristled with difficulties. Why hadn't Morecombe been killed outright the first night, when there had clearly been an opportunity? Why should a warning be given him, since a warning meant a chance of escape?

And then, as Locke glanced up, the face of the moon was obscured. Like a tidal wave rushing to engulf him, racing across the moor was a silvery wall of mist. He clenched his teeth in chagrin. It was pouring around the tree where he stood like luminous vapour. Already it was breast high, and then suddenly, from the other side of the house, came the mournful hoot of an owl.

Jack Drake was calling!

Without a second's hesitation Ferrers Locke ran into the open. But as he did so the moon shone for a moment on the surface of the rising mist. It revealed in a flash a white shape, ten yards away—a head without a body! It was half-turned towards him, so that he could see the pointed, ghostly cowl, the dark slits from which a pair of eyes were glittering balefully.

The effect was eerie. It lasted for an instant only. The mist swirled up. The mask was obscured. Ferrers Locke was tearing towards the spot, his revolver pointing.

"Stop, or I'll fire!"

He aimed blindly, but before he could press the trigger something descended on him like a ton weight. The gun was knocked spinning from his hand. A pair of hands found his throat. He fell back with a heavy thud on the ground.

The first shock of the impact dazed him. But, recovering, he found his opponent's arms, rolled over, and with a judo-jitsu trick struggled on top.

"I've got you covered. Now—"

Locke rose to his feet and shone an electric torch full on the face of the

prostrate figure. But for once the detective had made a mistake.

"By the powers!" he cried in amazement. "It's Inspector Webster!"

"But who—?" spluttered the unfortunate inspector.

"Ferrers Locke!" came the quick reply. "I'm on this case—there's no time to explain. If we make for the road we may be in time."

"Time for what? I—"

He was interrupted by a muffled report. Then the frantic blowing of police whistles.

"That's from the house! Heavens, we must hurry!"

Ferrers Locke reached the house first, the Yard man panting behind him. The door was open, and a constable stood on duty.

"Quick, sir—they're breaking into the bed-room!"

"But Morecombe must be all right!" cried Webster incredulously. "He was in a room locked and bolted from the inside. The window had steel shutters, and we've had a cordon around the house itself."

Ferrers Locke made no comment, but his expression was grim as he bounded up the narrow stairs. He gained the landing just as the police had succeeded in breaking down the door. Three of them almost fell into the room and then came to a sudden halt.

"I'm afraid," muttered Ferrers Locke, as Inspector Webster brushed impatiently past him, "we are too late."

On the bed, his fleshy face almost purple, lay the motionless, mountainous form of Silas Morecombe.

He was quite dead.

(Murder and baffling mystery! There's no mistake about it, chums. Ferrers Locke and his young assistant are right in the thick of one of the most startling cases of their careers. Look out for further tense situations in next week's gripping instalment!)

"ST. SAM'S ON THE SCREEN!"

(Continued from page 15.)

Dr. Birchmell quietened down considerably as he heard those words. If suitable payment was forthcoming he was quite prepared to forgive and forget, after all.

"Well, all right, then," he grunted. "Of course, if you've come to shell out the—"

"I have," said Flicker Y. Reeler, then, turning to the audience, he cried: "Ladies and gentlemen, after seeing the Doc. featured on the movie to-night, I guess you'll all agree he ought to get his reward. I propose giving him what he has earned, right hyer and now!"

Dr. Birchmell began to beam again. Flicker Y. Reeler turned round and fumbled in his pockets for a minnit, then he withdrew a hand and gave Dr. Birchmell a biskit!

That did it.

A deffening roar of historical larfter went up all over the Hall, while the Head, after a moment's speechless paws, flung himself wildly at the humorous Flicker Y. Reeler.

But Mr. Reeler didn't stop to argew the matter out. He just fled, and before the Head could follow him through the crowd, the film magnet's magnificent limousine was carrying him far away from St. Sam's.

It only remains to add that that finished the career of Dr. Birchmell as a film star. And from that day onwards the surest way of working the Head up into a frenzy of rage was to mention the word "Moving-pictures."

THE END.

(There will be another amusing yarn of St. Sam's in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "PLAYING FOR THE FORTH!" Prepare yourself for one long roars of laughter, chums!)



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ST. SAM'S on the SCREEEN!

by DICKY NUGENT

That he is the greatest dramatic genius the silent films have ever known is the modest opinion of Dr. Birchmell . . .

WE'LL LEAVE THE VERDICT TO YOU!

That he is the funniest unconscious comedian on and off the films the world has ever known is the unanimous opinion of the boys and governors of St. Sam's.



FLICKER Y. REELER, the grate American film-producer, stopped outside Jack Jolly's study in the Fourth Form passage at St. Sam's, and wrapped on the door. From within the study came the chery clatter of crockery, and the sizzling of sossidges, for Jack Jolly & Co. were eggspecting their visitor, and had laid in a record spread for tea.

Jack Jolly opened the door and made him welcome. "Just in time, sir," remarked the kaptin of the Fourth, grinning all over his dille. "Tea's ready, and the sosses are done to a turn."

"Good! I guess I'm famished—just a few!" said the film king, leaning back in the best chair, and planting his feet on the table so as to put himself on an easy footing with his hosts.

"Well, we've finished producing the film, sir," Jack Jolly remarked, as he disshed up the sossidges with the air of a conisseur. "Do you think it'll be a success?"

"Success? I guess it will be a regu-lar wow!" grinned Mr. Reeler. "I guess this little old fillum of ours is going to make history. It sure will be the funniest thing ever—thanks to your brane-wave, Jack Jolly!"

Jack Jolly blushed beneath his outer covering of grime and sossidge-fat.

"It was nothing," he said modestly. "As soon as I saw what a hash Dr. Birchmell was making of the drama, I thought the best thing to do was to turn it into a screaming farce without telling him anything about it."

"Waal, and so we did. And I calcu-late I'll see that you'll get with the cats first."

"They all waded in with plezure, and a most enjoyable meal it proved to be. The grate producer, like all his country-men, bloo his own trumpet rather a lot; but Jack Jolly & Co. freely forgave him. THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 1,114.

for that, in view of the lart they had had since he came to St. Sam's. After tea, Flicker Y. Reeler insulted his watch.

"Waal, boys, I'll guess you'll have to eggsuse me now. I've got to see the old doc in a few minutes, so I can't stay. Before I go, though, I'll give you your reward. What did I promise you?"

"H'm! I think you promised me more greenbar than I'd ever seen in my life," he said, after a paw.

"So I did. I guess you know what greenbar are—hey?"

Jack Jolly & Co. shook their heads. "Wail, I swow! Greenbar, my boys, are American dollars. Like this. Ever seen one?"

"Never!" answered Jack Jolly, in-specting the note with interest.

"Right! In that case, I guess you're holding more than you've ever seen be-fore, so you can keep it. That's your reward. So long, boys!"

And Flicker Y. Reeler, grinning all over his dille, quitted the study, leav-ing Jack Jolly & Co. staring speech-lessly at their eggspectingly disappoint-ing "reward."

Leaving the Fourth Form passage, Mr. Reeler made a B-line for the Head's study, where he found Dr. Birchmell feeding his face after his eggspectingly eggspecting work as a film actor.

"Howdy, doc!" he cried, giving his host a harty slap on the back.

"Yaroooo! Leave my back alone!" gasped the Head. "And pray refrain from unduly familiar remarks, Mr. Reeler. No English jentleman would dream of greeting me with 'Howdy, doc!' He would say, 'What-ho, old nut!' or something equally respectful. Sit down, sir!"

"Thank you, doc! Have a slick of pepsin gum?"

"Certainly not! I detest the stuff!" replied Dr. Birchmell, quite horrified. "Perhaps you'll pass me that tin of

plig tobacco, though. Now that I'm finished tea, I feel like chewing a quid."

"Waal, we've finished the fillum," re-marked Mr. Reeler, as the Head helped himself generously from the tin.

Dr. Birchmell's frown disappeared at the mention of his movie masterpiece, and a grin of satisfaction lit up his skollery dille.

"Ha! And I venture to sujest that never in the history of moving pictures has such a film been produced," he cried, puffing out his chest with pride.

"Waal, you're quite right thar!" agreed the producer.

"All over the world it will be greeted with positive amazement."

"I guess it will, thar. In fact, doc, you'll even be amazed yourself when you see it."

"Quite possibly!" beamed the Head unsuspectingly. "And that brings me to the point. When will this amazing masterpiece be ready to eggschibit to the eager and impatient public?"

"Oh, not till Paracake Day, at the earliest," answered Flicker Y. Reeler. "These fillums take some time to get on the market, you know, doc. But I can let you have a copy before that. In fact, I guess you can have a copy by the end of the week, if you want it."

"Oh, good egg! As a matter of fact, Mr. Reeler, I am seriously con-sidering showing the film to a privit audiance of parents and boys in the Hall, as soon as possible. Not that I want to swank, but simply because I want everybody to see what a brilliant and inspired dramatick actor I am."

"Ha, ha—I mean, all right, doc! I'll fix you up this week, then."

And so it was arranged.

After Flicker Y. Reeler had buzzed off, the Head, in a state of grate eg-gstement, sent for Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, and eggsplained his wheeze for holding a grate picture show in the Hall at the end of the week.

Mr. Lickham was enthusiastic—espec-ially when he heard that the boys' parents and friends were to be invited, too, for

he was keenly looking forward to seeing how the Head would behave when at last he found out that the "drama" was a screaming farce.

"I should certainly invite as many as the Hall will hold, if I were you, sir," he said. "What about asking the gov-ernors to come along, too? I'm sure they'll be delighted to see how bizzzy we've been this term."

"Good egg!" cried the Head. "The more, the merrier! Let's draw up an official invitation, Licky, and we'll get Binding, the page, to run us off some copies on that Young Printer's Outfit he had prezented to him at Christmas."

They put their learned heads together, and soon knocked up a suitable invita-tion. This is how it ran:

"Dr. Alfred Birchmell, M.A., D.D., rekests the pleasure of your company next Friday evening to witness a privit performance of the dramatick film, 'The Hero Head,' in which Dr. Bir-chemell makes his debou as a film actor. Whatever you do, don't miss this soo-prem eggssample of the actor's art, in which Dr. Birchmell's slightest jesture will tug at your hart-strings. Thrilling, hart-throbbing, and dramatick, with a sob in every scene. R.S.V.P. Silver collection. (Not eggscluding banknotes or gold). Tea and cakes provided at currant rates."

"There, thar! I'll fetch 'em!" said the Head, with satisfaction. "What a nite it will be, Licky! I can just imagine their amazement when they witness my sooporb performance on the screen. Come! Let us away to interview Bind-ing, and his Young Printer's Outfit!"

THE grate Hall at St. Sam's was packed to suffocation on the fol-lowing Friday nite.

Parents and relations and friends had faredly flocked to St. Sam's for the uneek performance.

There was a loud cheer as Sir Frederick Funguss and the other gov-erners, looking resplendant in evening

dress, hobbled to their reserved seats, and a louder one still as Dr. Birch-mell, grinning all over his dille, scampered into the Hall and mounted the platform.

Before the show began Dr. Birchmell made a little speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" he yelled. "It is my pleasure and privilege this evening to introduce to you a most re-markable moving picture:—viz, namely, and to wit, 'The Hero Head!'"

"Hoorary!"

"The star actor in this amazing film is one already distinguished in the realm of skollership and Bell's letters—I refer, of course, to myself."

Roars of applaus.

"But grate as I am in academick circles, ladies and gentlemen," smirked the Head, "I think you'll all be forced to admit, when you see this film, that I am grate still as a dramatick actor on the screen. From beginning to end my uneek jestures and hip-nottick, compelling eggspressions will hold you absolutely spellbound. And when the last scene has been played, every one of you will declare, I am sure, that I am the gratest jentus that ever acted for the Silent Drama. Modesty forbids me to say more, so I will now stand down, and allow you to feast your eyes on 'The Hero Head!'"

Then the film commenced, and Dr. Birchmell, beaming with satisfaction, sat down and watched, waiting for the roars of cheering he fully eggspected to hear, as the audiance perceived his dramatick ability.

But the roars of cheering never came. Roars thero certainly were—but they wore roars of lartter, growing louder and louder as time went on, until the grate crowd in the hysterical old Hall was yelling histotically.

Dr. Birchmell rubbed his eyes. What he saw made him faredly blink. Instead of moving about the screen like the grate, tragick figger he imagined he would be, he was something also

gether different—a meer figger of fun, a clown and buffoon, a tooth-grate knock-about comedian!

Almost parried with rage and astonishment, the Head watched the film.

Certainly the scenes began dramat-tickly enuf. But half-way through each, the drama turned into screaming farce. Dr. Manly, the Hero Head, would be denouncing the villainous Mr. Beasley, for instance, and then Jack Jolly, as Luker, the millionaire skoll-boy, would appear at the back of the Head and make funny faces that sent the crowd into histoties.

"M-m-my giddy aunt!" stutered Dr. Birchmell, his eyes almost boiling out of his head.

He began to understand now why there had been so many unforchunnit accidents while they were taking the film and his face turned the culter of a beetroot.

"The film came to an end at last, and the lights went up on an audiance abso-lutely helpless with lartter.

Dr. Birchmell sprang to his feet, his skollery dille faredly livid with rage. "Stop!" he roared. "I implore you, I beseech you—stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You grinning idiots—"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"I thought I was acting in a drama, but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But owing to the trechery of that awful rotter, Reeler, the whole thing has been turned into a—"

"Hullo! I guess I heard my name called!" interrupted a familiar voice, and Flicker Y. Reeler himself walked on the platform.

He dodged hastily as the Head made a rush at him.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets! Keep calm!" he yelled. "Listen, Doc! I guess I ain't come here to fight you. I've come to give you your reward!"

(Continued on page 28.)

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