

"THE MYSTERY MASTER!" This week's school, mystery, and adventure story abounds in **THRILLS!**

No. 1,145. Vol. XXXVII. Week Ending January 25th, 1930.

The MAGNET

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EVERY SATURDAY.



AN UNEXPECTED "LESSON" FOR THE REMOVE!

One of the many unusual incidents you will find in this week's super long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., the clowns of Greyfriars.

Got a Moment to Spare? Then



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., Flectway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

A NOTHER Red-letter day this week, you fellows! January 24th is the fifteenth anniversary of the Battle of the Dogger Bank. Gosh, it makes me feel old to realise that it's over fifteen years since the Great War started. Many of my present readers had never heard of the MAGNET then—but I am pleased to say, that we've still got readers who remember the very first number of this little paper of ours, and who still find a delight in it!

However, to return to the Battle of the Dogger Bank. Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty was then in command of the First Battle Cruiser Squadron, and on that particular day his squadron came across a German squadron that had nearly reached the English coast. When the British ships came up, the Germans turned and ran for shelter, but Beatty pursued them, and kept up a running fight for seventy miles, sinking the *Blucher*. His own flagship, the *Lion*, had a narrow escape, but the fight ended in a victory for the British forces.

Have you taken advantage of "Mr. X's" offer yet? He's ready to explain any particular magical mystery which may be puzzling to you, and this week, in response to a request from a reader, he has explained to me how to perform

A REALLY NEAT CARD TRICK!

The presentation of the trick is as follows: The conjurer asks several people from the audience to pick cards, until a dozen have been picked. These twelve cards are put together, and the conjurer, placing the cards on the table, covers them with a cloth. He places his hand underneath the cloth, and says he will now name all the cards that have been picked, and asks the audience to note the order in which he names them. One by one, he names a card, and withdraws it from under the pile, placing it face downwards on the table. When he has withdrawn the whole of the twelve, he holds them up to the audience, who then see that he has correctly named the whole of the cards, and the order in which he withdrew them from under the cloth!

Like many conjuring tricks, this is ridiculously simple—when you know the secret! First of all, it is essential that the conjurer should know one of the chosen cards. This is not a difficult matter, for, as he places the twelve cards under the cloth, he can easily take a peep at the bottom card. Suppose it is the ace of hearts. He will then say: "I will bring out the ace of hearts!"

But he does not bring out the ace! Instead, he takes the top card, which, of course, is different. It may, for instance, be the king of clubs. He places it face-downwards on the table, and then announces that he will withdraw the king of clubs. And so he goes on, through the whole dozen, naming as the next card, the one he has just drawn. When he comes to the last card, which, of course, is the ace of hearts, he announces that it is the card he had previously seen,

Now he picks up the cards from the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,145.

table—and takes care to see that he puts the last card at the bottom of the pile, and not on the top. The result is that the cards are exactly in the order in which he named them!

You can keep your chums guessing for hours with this trick!

Now, I'll have a "breather," while you chuckle over this yarn, which has earned a penknife for William Pereir, of 8, Chandler Avenue, Canning Town, E. 16.



Magistrate: "Prisoner at the bar, before evidence is heard, do you wish to challenge the jury?"

Prisoner: "Well, I ain't in exactly what you'd call 'ard training, me lord; but I don't mind 'aving a round or so with the fat bloke in the corner!"



QUESTIONS, PLEASE?

Here is a selection of queries which have been put to me by readers this week:

From where does the Red Sea get its name? From a floating sea-weed which is found there, and which has a distinct

SEND ALONG YOUR JOKE OR YOUR GREYFRIARS LIMERICK—OR BOTH—AND WIN OUR USEFUL PRIZES OF LEATHER POCKET WALLET AND SHEFFIELD STEEL PENKNIVES. ALL EFFORTS TO BE SENT TO c/o "MAGNET," 5, CARMELITE STREET, LONDON, E.C.4 (COMP.).

reddish tinge. When the sun shines on a patch of this weed, it gives the effect of the sea being red.

Can you tell me a simple way of piercing a hole in a coin? Get a cotton reel, and place the part of the coin to be pierced over the central hole of the reel. Push a stout needle through a bottle cork, and rest this on to the coin. Give a sharp tap with a hammer, and the needle will be forced through the coin, without any trouble.

WILL aeroplanes ever travel faster than the present record? They may—but any faster speed will be extremely risky to the pilot. The taking of sharp curves while travelling at such speeds causes the blood in the pilot's body to rush first one way and then another, and there is a danger that he might become unconscious. So some means of neutralising this danger must be evolved before aeroplanes can increase their speed to any great extent.

Who invented rockets? Sir William Congreve, about the year 1803. They were originally used for war purposes, the idea being to set a town on fire. In 1879, however, the life-saving, rope-carrying rocket was invented, and thus a destructive war implement was changed into a power for good!

WHERE WAS CRUSOE'S ISLAND?

Harry Whittaker, of Barnet, wants to know! It is commonly supposed to be the island of Juan Fernandez, in the Pacific. Defoe based his story on the adventures of a Scotman, Alexander Selkirk, who was marooned on the island, and left there for five years. But the description of the position of the island, given in "Robinson Crusoe," does not fit in with the position of Juan Fernandez.

Here's a "grouse" from a Lancashire reader! He asked me a question some time ago, and had to wait a long time before it was answered on this page. Really, that wasn't my fault! The MAGNET goes to press some weeks before it reaches your hands, which means that you don't read my replies until some weeks after I have written them. But if any reader wants an urgent reply, I shall be only too pleased to send one by post, if a stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed.

A NOTHER Lancashire reader tells me that

HE MISSED HIS COPY

of the MAGNET when he was away from home, on a short holiday. He wants to know if he can obtain a certain back number. For the benefit of others who may be in a similar position, I am happy to inform you that you can obtain back numbers by applying to our Back Number Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Send along the ordinary cost of the issues required, plus postage, and if they are in stock, you will get them by return of post.

Now, as they used to say in the old days, "strike the lyre"—no, not Bunter, this time! I said "lyre," not prevaricator! We'll have a little limerick to finish up.

There's a cheeky young fag by name,

Dicky,
Who writes stories exceedingly tricky.
Jack Jolly's a treat,
Birchemall is a feat,
And we laugh with delight about
"Licky."

N. E. Hannan, of 42, Victoria Avenue, Barrow-in-Furness, Lancs, gets a pocket wallet for the above effort. I've still got some more wallets on hand, chums, so send your limericks along!

Now for next week's issue! The splendid Greyfriars yarn is

"SOME PERSON UNKNOWN . . ."

By Frank Richards.

The title gives you a slight idea of what to expect—but only a slight one. Sufficient be it to say, that all your favourite characters are well up to scratch, and you'll find humour and thrills equally represented in this fine story. Don't miss it!

Then comes another enthralling instalment of our great sporting serial:

"PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"

Watch out for some startling developments here, chums!

Dicky Nugent makes a good third, with

"FAGGING FOR THE FIFTH!"

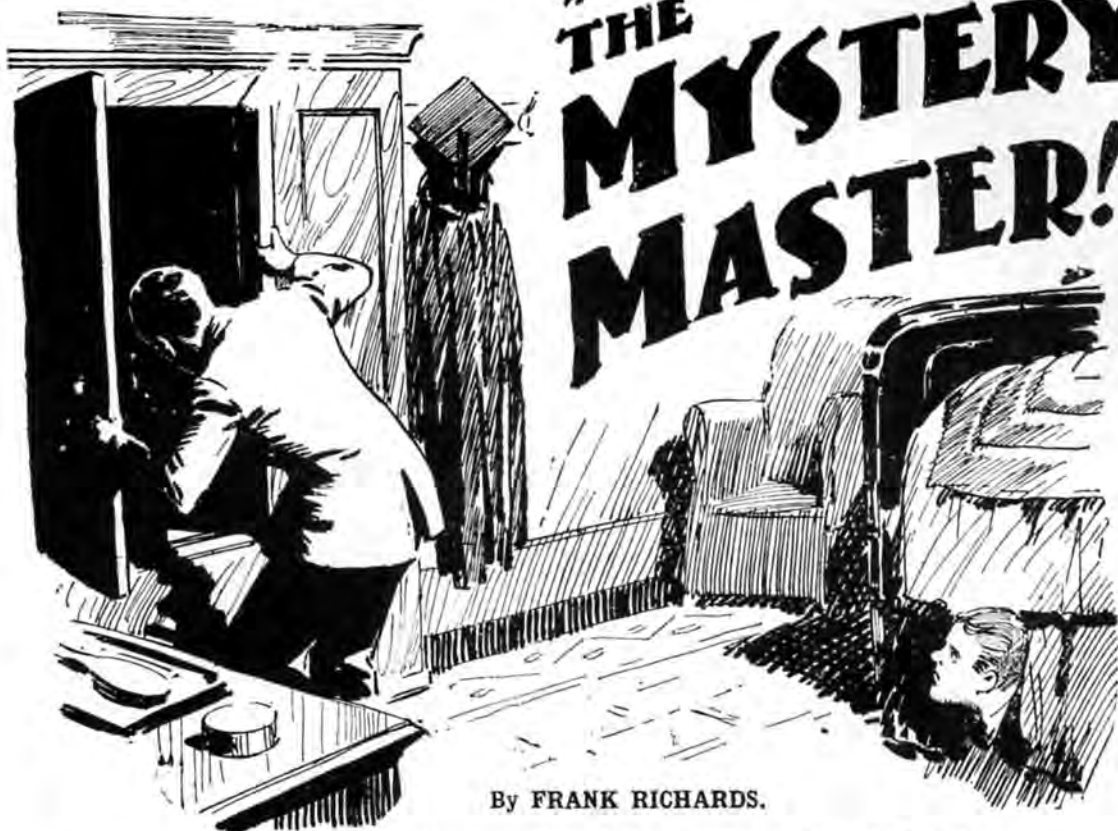
a real ribtickler if ever there was one. And just to round things off nicely, there's another interesting "footer" article, together with a breezy poem by the Greyfriars Rhymester, and my usual Chat.

See you next week, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

A "full-of-meat" yarn you'll thoroughly enjoy!

"THE MYSTERY MASTER!"



By FRANK RICHARDS.

Featuring the world-wide favourites, Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter—and Butterscotch!

"WHARTON! Please collect the papers!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Thank goodness!" murmured Billy Bunter.

Bunter had been waiting.

All through the second lesson in the Remove-room, Bunter had waited—and now his chance had come.

Richard Steele, the new master of the Remove, had had his eye on the Remove all the while they were working at their papers. The beast did not look out of the window or stroll into the corridor, as some masters did, and give a fellow a chance to dismiss such troublesome things as Latin papers from his mind.

The wary eye of the Form master was especially troublesome to Billy Bunter on this occasion. Not only did Bunter want to slack—he always wanted that. But he was hungry—and he had in his pocket a packet of butterscotch, which he had fortunately found in Ogilvy's study. So far, the butterscotch had had to remain in Bunter's pocket, instead of in Bunter.

Knowing that he would be hungry in second lesson, the Owl of the Remove had brought that butterscotch into the Form-room with him, and had been on the lookout ever since for a chance to devour it.

But a fellow had to be careful.

Consuming tuck in the Form-room was, of course, strictly prohibited. Steele, like other Form masters, suffered from the delusion, common to schoolmasters, that a Form-room was

a place where fellows worked. Which it certainly was not, so far as Bunter was concerned, if Bunter could help it.

Bunter did not want those steely grey eyes to fix on him. He did not want lines. Above all, he did not want a licking. So, though he grew hungrier and hungrier, and the thought of the butterscotch in his pocket made his mouth water, he had not ventured, so far, to transfer it to his mouth.

Now his chance had come!

Harry Wharton, the head boy of the Form, was going along taking the papers, finished or unfinished. The Removites relaxed; here and there was a faint murmur of whispering. Steele, sitting at Mr. Quelch's old desk, was reading a letter he had taken from his

Once he felt safe in negotiating the butterscotch, five seconds would have been too long for Bunter to wait.

His large mouth received the large chunk and closed on it.

It was nice! In fact, it was delicious. Hours—which seemed to Bunter like centuries—had elapsed since brekker, and at brekker he had been allowed to eat only enough for three. So that chunk of butterscotch came like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years.

Bunter closed his eyes in ecstasy.

He opened them suddenly as his name was called.

"Bunter!"

The fat junior blinked behind his big spectacles.

It was Steele who spoke.

He was looking at Bunter from his desk, and no longer reading his letter.

Bunter gasped.

The beast seemed to have as many eyes as Argus. Even when the frightful beast was reading a letter a fellow was not safe from his observation.

"Bunter!" repeated Steele's deep voice.

Bunter could not answer.

Not wisely, but too well had he helped himself to butterscotch.

Bunter's mouth was large; but so was the chunk he had crammed into it. It was capacious; but it was filled to capacity.

Bunter could only gasp and blink.

"Bunter!" repeated Mr. Steele.

He left his desk and stepped towards the Form. Fellows looked round in their seats at Bunter. Wharton, with his hands full of papers, stared across

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,145.

Who moves like a shadow at night? Whose skillful fingers plunder valuable cribs? Who is the Courtfield cracksman? "The Greyfriars Mystery Master"—at least, so thinks the "Bounder"—Vernon-Smith, of the Remove.

pocket. At last—at long last!—that steely grey eye was off the class.

Bunter's fat hand dived into his pocket, and Ogilvy's butterscotch came out in his fat fingers. Under cover of his desk he broke off a large, solid chunk. Swiftly he transferred it to his capacious mouth.

Then he sat and smiled.

He was happy.

Bunter would have had to wait only five minutes for the class to be dismissed for morning break. But after having waited so long, it was not to be expected that Bunter would wait another five minutes.

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at him. The Bounder grinned, and Skinner chuckled. Bunter was now the centre of interest.

"Answer me, Bunter!" said Steele.
Bunter would willingly have complied, but he couldn't. He had an impediment in his speech—in the shape of an enormous lump of butterscotch.

He gurgled.
"I think," said Steele, "that you are eating sweets in the Form-room, which you know very well is against the rules."

Gurgles!
"Is that the case, Bunter?"

Gurgles!
"Speak at once!" snapped Steele.

"Groooh!"

"What?"

"Gerrrooooooh!" spluttered Bunter, in a desperate attempt to speak.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, if you do not answer me immediately—"

"Urrrrrrgggg!"

"What is the matter with you, Bunter?"

"Woosoooooh!"

Bunter's face was red, his eyes watering. He would have been glad to get rid of that butterscotch, so welcome only a few moments before.

But the butterscotch was there, and not to be got rid of. It was too large to swallow, and too tough to be bitten through. There it remained, filling his mouth, like a lion in the path of Bunter's utterance.

"You foolish, greedy boy!" exclaimed Mr. Steele. "You seem to be choking. Cherry, pat Bunter on the back."

"Certainly, sir!"

Bob Cherry was ready to oblige. He moved along to Bunter. Bob meant well, but he had a heavy hand.

The pat he gave Bunter on the back sounded across the Form-room like the report of a firearm.

Crack!

"Yaroooooh!"

A fearful yell burst from Billy Bunter, and with it the chunk of butterscotch was ejected, and dropped to the floor.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter. "Beast! Wharrer you hitting me for? Ow! Ow! Wow! Oooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That all right?" asked Bob, with his hand uplifted. "I'll give you another if you like—"

"Beast! Keep off! Beast! Wow!"

"You may go to your place, Cherry," said Mr. Steele. "Bunter, step out before the class."

"Oh lor!"

Billy Bunter, still gasping, rolled out before the Form.

"Have you any other sweetmeats about you, Bunter?" asked Mr. Steele, making no motion towards his cane, much to Bunter's relief.

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Turn out your pockets!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"At once!"

"I—I say, sir, Mr. Quelch used to take a fellow's word," gasped Bunter, "especially mine, sir."

"That will do, Bunter! Turn out your pockets at once!"

"I—I'd rather you took my word, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Quelch always did, sir! Quelch would have thought it rather ungentlemanly to doubt a fellow's word, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Steele.

"Bunter, if you do not turn out your pockets immediately I shall cane you!"

Bunter groaned, and turned out his pockets. The first object that came to

light was Ogilvy's packet, still containing a considerable quantity of butterscotch. Bunter placed it on the Form master's desk, at a sign from Steele.

That was all the tuck that Bunter had about him. Ogilvy's study was the only one he had explored that morning.

"You told me you had no other sweetmeats about you, Bunter," said Mr. Steele severely.

"D-d-did I, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You did! That was an untruthful statement, Bunter."

"I—I meant to say, sir, that—that I mean—it—it was only a figure of speech, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"The truth is, sir, I forgot that I had that packet. And—and I was just going to tell you, sir."

"Take fifty lines, Bunter, and go back to your place," said Mr. Steele. And Bunter rolled away.

A few minutes later the Remove were dismissed for break. On his way to the door Billy Bunter stopped.

"P-pip-please, sir—" he began.

"Well?"

"C-c-can I take the butterscotch, sir?"

"You may not," said Steele. "All such things brought into the Form-room are confiscated. I will, however, return this to you on Saturday, Bunter. You may go."

"But, sir—"

"That will do, Bunter!"

It did not do for Bunter, however. His eyes lingered longingly and lovingly on the packet of butterscotch that lay on the Remove master's desk.

"If you please, sir—" gasped Bunter.

"Leave the Form-room!"

"Yes, sir, but—but—"

Steele stretched out a hand to his cane. Bunter made one jump after the other fellows, and vanished from the Form-room.

— — —

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Goal!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Smithy, what—"

Bob Cherry stared up at the middle window of the

Remove Form room from the quadrangle.

The Famous Five of the Remove were punting about a footer in break, filling in the time with healthy exercise until the bell should go for third school. But they forgot the rolling footer for a moment as they came along under the Remove windows—and sighted Smithy.

The Form-room was deserted in break, unless the Form master happened to linger there. It was not quite deserted now, though evidently the Form master was not there, for Herbert Vernon-Smith was in the act of scrambling out of the window.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Off your rocker, Smithy?" inquired Frank Nugent.

The Bounder did not answer. He scrambled out, shut the window after him, and dropped from the broad stone sill rather breathlessly to the ground.

He glanced round him swiftly as he stood breathing deep, and seemed relieved to find no one but the juniors at hand.

"What's this game, Smithy?" asked Johnny Bull.

"You'd get into a row if you were spotted climbing the Form-room windows."

"I know that!" answered Smithy.

"But, you see, I couldn't leave the Form-room by the door."

"But the esteemed Smithy must have

entered the absurd Form-room door-fully!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"That's so, old black bean; but there were reasons for leaving it window-fully!" chuckled the Bounder, in playful imitation of the nabob's uncommon English.

Harry Wharton's eyes were rather suspiciously on the grinning Bounder. He had no doubt that some jape had taken Smithy to the Form-room during break, and little doubt that the intended victim was Mr. Richard Steele, the new master of the Remove. The Bounder's feud against Steele, instead of dying away with the passing days, had rather intensified, and all the Remove knew that Smithy was up against the new master.

Smithy caught Wharton's eye, and laughed.

"Exactly!" he said, answering the unspoken question of the captain of the Remove. "It's a jape! To wit, a booby-trap!"

Wharton frowned a little.

"For Steele?" he asked.

"Who else?" grinned the Bounder.

"If any man is silly as enough to go into the Form-room for third school before Steele, he will get it. Nobody's likely to do that. Steele is never late for class—or hardly ever—and I've never heard of a man in the Remove who was eager for it."

The juniors laughed.

"What have you done?" asked Bob.

"Fixed a little surprise over the Form-room door," drawled the Bounder.

"So I couldn't go out that way, and had to bunk by the window. All serene, as nobody but you men saw me, and I suppose you're not going to tell Steele?"

"Don't be an ass!" said Johnny Bull gruffly. "You know we're not going to tell Steele. All the same, I think it's a bit thick."

"The thickfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy," said Hurree Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"It's rotten!" said Wharton abruptly. The Bounder's lip curled.

"Think so?" he sneered.

"I think so and say so!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "Steele's a decent man, and treats us decently, and a trick of this sort is rotten on anybody but a rotter like Loder of the Sixth. There'll be a row about it, and the whole Form may get lagged for it. You oughtn't to have done it, Smithy."

"So glad to hear your opinion," said the Bounder urbanely. "Reminds me of my early, innocent days of infancy, when I used to sit under the old apple-tree, holding my nurse by a lily-white hand, and reading 'Eric, or Little by Little.'"

There was a chuckle from the Co., they could not help it. Wharton's brow was dark, and darker as he heard the chuckle.

"Go on, my young friend," continued the Bounder. "I admit being a hard case, but your improvin' talk may bring me back to the strait and narrow path! Firstly is all right—get on to secondly."

"I've said it's rotten—"

"That's firstly, and we've had it," said the Bounder gravely. "I'm waitin' for secondly."

"Why can't you let Steele alone?" exclaimed Wharton. "He's licked you for cheeking him, and serve you jolly well right, if it comes to that. He would be glad enough to let you alone if you'd chuck ragging."

"Fine!" said the Bounder. "Now, what about thirdly?"

Wharton glanced at the grinning faces of the Co., and then his eyes

gleamed at the Bounder, and he clenched his hands. Bob Cherry promptly slipped a hand through his arm.

"Come on, old bean!" he said. "You're forgetting the footer, and break don't last for ever!"

"Hush!" said the Bounder.

"What? Hush for what?"

"For thirdly," explained Vernon-Smith.

"Shut up, you silly ass!" said Bob, laughing. "If you get Wharton's rag out, you will want some new features soon afterwards. Come on Harry. The thing ain't worth ragging about!"

"I fancy I can look after my features, if Wharton has an idea that he could alter their shape for me!" drawled the Bounder.

"I've a jolly good mind—" began Wharton angrily.

"Never mind that gassing ass, Harry—hoof that ball over!"

Wharton had jerked his arm away from Bob, and he was looking very angry indeed. The Bounder's gibes touched him on the raw, all the more because his chums seemed to see something amusing in them. He was powerfully inclined to stride back to the Bounder and bang his head against the Form-room wall, as a hint to keep his mocking tongue a little better under control.

The Bounder read his thought in his frowning face and laughed. His laugh was intended to exasperate, and it did! Wharton clenched his hands and made a stride towards him—the Bounder waiting for him to come up, with a jeering grin.

But at that moment Bob Cherry weighed in. Bob had reached the

The Bounder, unheeding, rushed after Bob. Bob followed the footer at a pace that Vernon-Smith found it difficult to equal. His comrades followed on, laughing. The clang of the bell for third school rang out, and the Bounder, in a savage mood, went in to get a hurried wash before going to the Form-room. And as he went into the House there came from the direction of the Remove-room a fearful yell!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Unfortunate for Fishy!

"SKINNER, old chap!"

"Bow-wow!" said Skinner.

"Old fellow—"

Skinner of the Remove laughed.

"Old fellow" from Bunter meant that Bunter wanted something; and Skinner



A fearful yell, followed by a chunk of butterscotch, burst from Billy Bunter's fat lips as Bob Cherry thumped him on the back.

"My esteemed chum—" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Let him get on with it," said the Bounder coolly. "Wharton's on his favourite stunt of settin' a shinin' example to the Form. Little Harry loves his kind teachers, you know."

"Oh, shut up, you ass!" said Johnny Bull. "Come on, Wharton! It's no bizney of ours, anyhow."

Bob Cherry dragged his chum away almost by main force, and the Bounder stood looking after them, his hands in his pockets, and a mocking grin on his face.

It entertained him to get Wharton's rag out, as Bob expressed it, and he was quite reckless whether it led to a scrap or not; though, as a matter of fact, he was aware that he was scarcely a match for the captain of the Remove.

"You fellows are spoilin' a good sermon!" he called out. "Wharton's in his best vein—why not let him rip?"

"My esteemed Smithy, a still tongue is a stitch in time that saves ninepence!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The idiotic jawfulness is not the proper caper."

"Shut up, Smithy!" snapped Nugent. "Rats!" retorted the Bounder coolly. "You men shut up! Ain't we sittin' at the feet of Gamaliel, havin' our minds improved? Get on to thirdly, Wharton, or you won't have time for fourthly and fifthly before the bell goes for third school."

"On the ball," said Bob Cherry.

footer, and it lay at his feet—wet and muddy from several puddles it had passed through.

He kicked. Perhaps it was an accident—and perhaps it was not! The muddy ball rose from Bob's foot, whizzed as straight as an arrow, and landed on the Bounder's somewhat prominent nose.

Crash!

"Oh!" gasped Smithy.

He sat down suddenly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Goal!" Harry Wharton's angry face broke into a grin. The Bounder sat with his face smothered in mud, and the ball, as it rolled away, left streaks of mud on his clothes. And his face had quite lost its mocking grin, and was convulsed with rage.

With an angry yell, the Bounder leaped to his feet and rushed at Bob.

"You rotter! You did that on purpose!" he yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob dodged the rush, and ran for the ball, laughing.

"You'd better go and get a wash before third school, Smithy," chuckled Johnny Bull. "You need it."

"The washfulness is the proper caper," chortled Hurree Singh.

of the Remove was about the last fellow at Greyfriars to whom to apply when a fellow wanted anything.

"Like some butterscotch, old chap?" asked Bunter.

"What's the matter with it?" asked Skinner.

"Timeo Danaos," evidently, was Skinner's motto. Like that distrustful old gentleman Laocoon, he feared the Greeks when they offered gifts.

"Oh, really, Skinner!" said Bunter reproachfully.

"Well, where's the butterscotch?" inquired Skinner suspiciously.

"In the Form-room—" Skinner chuckled.

"I tumble!" he remarked genially.

"That beast Steele left it on his desk," said Bunter. "A fellow could get into the Form-room and bag it—"

"Quite!" agreed Skinner. "He could also bag six from Steele for doing it!"

What?

"Well, a clever chap like you, Skinner—"

"Thanks!"

"A really sharp fellow like you, old chap, with his wits about him, and all that—" urged Bunter.

"Look!" said Skinner. He put a finger and thumb to his eyes, and opened

the optic a little wider than was normal. "Look in that, Bunter."

Bunter blinked at Skinner's wide-opened eye, puzzled.

"See any green in it?" asked Skinner. "Oh, really, you beast—"

Skinner chuckled and walked away.

Evidently, Harold Skinner was not going to take the risk of bagging the confiscated butterscotch from Mr. Steele's desk in the Form-room. There was no green in Skinner's eye. Bunter had to look a little farther for a cat-paw.

He looked farther! It was necessary to bag that butterscotch. Properly speaking, it should have been confiscated; but Steele had said that Bunter should have it again on Saturday. That was all very well; but Saturday was a long way off. Bunter, like the boy in the story, did not want jam to-morrow; he wanted jam to-day.

As a last resource, Bunter was prepared to creep stealthily to the Form-room and annex that packet of butterscotch himself. But that, of course, was a very final resource.

He might be caught! In which case, there were at least lines to be looked for, and probably a licking. And if a licking was to be handed out, Bunter had a natural disinclination to be the fellow who received it. Any other fellow in the Lower Fourth did not matter so much. So Bunter looked for another fellow to extract the butterscotch from Steele's desk in the Remove-room. He had not much time to lose if he was going to devour that comestible in break. And that was important; in fact, the most important matter within the wide limits of the universe, just then.

Skinner having failed him, owing to the lack of green in his eye, Bunter

asked Snoop of the Remove. But Snoop's eyes, too, seemed to be lacking in the verdant hue; Snoop only chuckled.

Then Bunter sighted Ogilvy of the Remove. Ogilvy was a fellow who cared little for risks—just the fellow to do it! But Bunter shook his head. The butterscotch belonged to Ogilvy; and if he recognised the packet as his own, he was quite likely to keep it instead of handing it over to Bunter. Bunter could not help thinking that he was capable of it. So he did not ask Ogilvy's assistance.

Then Bunter's fat face brightened at the sight of Fisher T. Fish. Fishy was the man he wanted.

True, Fishy was not the man to take risks. Fishy was remarkably careful of his transatlantic skin. On the other hand, the prospect of getting something for nothing was one that Fisher Tarleton Fish could scarcely resist. Fisher Tarleton Fish lived and moved and had his being in money, or money's value. What was left of that packet of butterscotch was worth ninepence. Halves meant fourpence-halfpenny for Fishy—for nothing! Could a keen, cute, spry youth, who had been raised in New York, resist the temptation to bag fourpence-halfpenny for nothing? It was not likely! Bunter rolled over to Fishy and put the case to him.

"Halves, Fishy!" said Bunter. "It's lovely butterscotch—scrumptious! Halves, if you bag it for me."

"Why can't you bag it for yourself?" grunted Fishy.

"I'm not so clever as you are, old chap."

That sort of "soft sawder" was no use to Harold Skinner; but Fisher T. Fish took it like a gudgeon. Fishy was conscious of being the cleverest fellow at

Greyfriars, bar none; but his cleverness was not acknowledged in the Remove as it ought to have been. It was pleasant to Fishy to have justice done him for once.

"You've said it," he agreed. "You see, it's easy enough," said Bunter. "Steele's gone to his study—I watched him. He won't go near the Form-room again till the bell goes for third school. Safe as houses! Only, of course, a fellow would have to be sharp. That's why I'm asking you."

"Sure!" assented Fishy.

"Halves!" said Bunter. "What about it, old chap?"

"How much butterscotch left in the packet?" Fisher T. Fish was nothing if not businesslike.

"Three quarters," said Bunter. "There were four chunks and I broke off one—"

"What price the packet?"

"A shilling."

"That means ninepence worth!" said Fisher T. Fish thoughtfully. "Look here, halves isn't good enough! A guy might get cinched. That means trouble! Make it two-thirds for me."

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Two-thirds or nothing!" said Fisher T. Fish decidedly, "that's only a tanner's worth for taking all the risk. That or nix."

Billy Bunter snorted. But even a third part of the remainder of the butterscotch was better than nothing. He nodded.

"It's a go!" he said. "I suppose you can't help being mean, Fishy, as it's bred in the bone. It's a go."

"Leave it to me," said Fishy.

He walked away with his jerky steps to the House. Billy Bunter rolled after him. He intended to keep Fishy in sight from a distance. But from a safe distance—he was not going to be caught near the Form-room. Fisher T. Fish vanished into the House, and whipped into the Form-room passage. It was close on time for third school now, and any minute the bell might begin to ring.

Bunter entered the House and lingered near the doorway, waiting for Fishy. He grinned as he saw the Bunder coming up the steps, with his muddy face. Vernon-Smith came in scowling. But Bunter gave him only one blink—he was not interested in the Bunder. He was anxious for Fishy to return from the Form-room with the recaptured butterscotch. And then, all of a sudden—

"Yaroooooooh!"

It was a fearful yell from the direction of the Form-room. It rang through the House.

Bunter jumped.

Something seemed to have happened to Fishy.

"Yooop! Wake snakes! Oh, Jeru-salem crickets! Yarooooop!" came the yelling voice of the American junior. "Thunder! Oooooooop! Grooooooh! Ow!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

"What—"

The Bunder started.

"What on earth—" he ejaculated.

"What—"

"Blessed if I know," gasped Bunter. "Fishy's gone to the Form-room—"

"The—the Form-room?" ejaculated the Bunder.

"Yes, to get my butterscotch—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Something's happened—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Grooooh! Yooop! Carry me home to die! Jumping Jehosaphat! Whoop!"

Obviously, something had happened!

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Inky!

"GUG—gug—gug!" An extraordinary-looking figure tottered in the doorway of the Remove-room.

It tottered and spluttered and gasped and gurgled.

There was a rush from all sides to see what had happened. The yells and howls of that extraordinary figure rang far and wide.

It was Fisher T. Fish—but the transatlantic junior was scarcely recognisable. His head and face were smothered with ink. Ink ran down his neck, and down his clothes in streams. Ink clothed him like a garment.

On the floor lay a flat tin pan. That pan, evidently, had been lodged on the top of the door, which had been left ajar. Equally evidently it had been filled with ink—pints of ink, if not gallons of it, to judge by the startling aspect of Fisher Tarleton Fish. Somebody had raided the ink supply in the Form-room cupboard for the purpose of that booby-trap, and had apparently used up the whole supply available.

Fisher T. Fish gouged ink from his eyes and nose and mouth. The fall of that pan full of ink had caught him fair and square as he pushed open the Form-room door. It had been planted with great care and judgment, and it had acted exactly as designed—though unfortunately falling on the wrong head!

Wingate of the Sixth arrived on the scene—thoughtfully bringing a cane under his arm. He fairly jumped at the sight of the inky figure standing in the doorway.

"What—" he ejaculated.

"Ow! Ooooh! Groogh! Gug-gug-gug!" spluttered the unhappy Fishy.

"My hat! Ooooh! Look at me! Groogh! Great gophers! Woooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker of the Fifth, coming up with a crowd. "Who is it? What is it? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh! I guess it's me!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I'll slay Bunter—I'll gouge him—I'll lynch him—wooooh!"

"Is that Fish?" exclaimed Wingate, recognising the nasal accent that came through the flood of ink.

"Yep! Ooooh! Sure! Woooooh!"

"A queer fish!" said Coker, with a brilliant attempt at wit. "A very queer fish."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The Famous Five came up breathlessly. "Hallo, hallo! Who—what—"

"Yaroooooh!"

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter, rolling up and blinking in horror and amazement at the wretched Fish. "I say—"

"It's a booby-trap!" said Hobson of the Shell.

"And it's jolly well caught a booby!" chuckled Coker.

"Ow! Ooooh! I'll spifficate that fat mugwump—"

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

Fishy dashed ink from his eyes, and glared round for Bunter. His impression was that Bunter had arranged this surprise for him, a natural impression in the circumstances.

"You fat guy!" he roared. "You figure you can drench a galoot with pesky ink and get away with it? I guess I'll make potato scrapings of you! Oh crumbs! Ow! Groogh!"

"I-I didn't—" gasped Bunter. "I never knew—I—I— Ow! Keep him off! Help!"

Wingate grabbed the American junior by the shoulder, as he made a furious rush at Bunter.

"Here, stop that!" he gasped. "I guess I'll burst him!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "Stop it—"

"Look at me!" raved Fishy. "Look

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

Here's another poem from the pen of our special rhymester, featuring yet another of the leading lights of Greyfriars.

This week:

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH.



THE toughest case in all the school (They still call him the "Bounder"),

Is Vernon-Smith; he is no fool, But quite a good all-rounder.

Time was when Smithy went the pace And scorned the consequences; In fact, he was a real disgrace,

Terrific his offences. He smoked and gambled like a fool, And spent a heap of money

With Harold Skinner (willing tool), And thought such things quite funny. The "Beak" came down, likewise the birch,

So Smithy, 'neath persuasion, Forsook his sporty, rorty perch— Until the next occasion!

Still, in the end his common sense And sporting nature blending, Gave Smithy wondrous recompense;

Also a chum in Redwing. For now he's turned a clean new leaf And left the path that's tortuous,

To play the game with all his beef In manner straight and virtuous.

His prowess on the footer ground; His mighty hits at cricket; All go to prove he's really found

His better self, he'll stick it. We wish him well; his lot is hard; An uphill fight laborious.

Against temptation he must guard And cads who are notorious.

His money is his biggest snare (He simply rolls in fivers); His pater is a millionaire

Who oft sends him "revivers." Then Smithy likes to cut a dash And spend in reckless fashion;

What of the price? He has the cash, To spend's his ruling passion.

We all have faults, and so has he; We must not then be judges. The Bounder's got his points, you see

(Forget those early smudges). So give three cheers, and three more still;

Come on, let's all be triers. And roar, my lads, with right good-will:

"THE BOUNDER OF GREY-FRIARS."

at me! Ain't I a sight for sore eyes!" I'll sure scrap that fat jay."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, keep him off!" gasped Bunter. "I never knew—"

"What is all this?" It was the deep voice of Richard Steele. "What has happened?"

"Fishy's happened," Bob Cherry murmured to his comrades. "Lucky Steele don't know how nearly he happened himself! What?"

The Co. chuckled.

How and why Fisher T. Fish had walked into the booby-trap prepared for Mr. Steele, they did not know, but obviously he had! It was not the first time that Fishy had thrust his long nose into places not healthy for it.

"Look at me!" roared Fishy. "I'll say that fat galoot fixed this up for me, he sure did, and I'm going to lynch him—"

"Calm yourself, Fish!" said Mr. Steele. "Bunter, did you put up this trap over the Form-room door?"

"Oh lor! No!" gasped Bunter. "I never knew it was there! Never knew anything about it, sir! I shouldn't have asked Fishy to go into the Form-room if I'd known, sir."

"You fat mugwump—"

"Suspicion seems to rest on you, Bunter," said Steele. "You asked Fish to go into the Form-room—"

"Oh, no, sir! I mean I never asked him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Why did you ask Fish to go to the Form-room, Bunter, if you had not prepared this foolish and disgusting trap for him?"

"It-it wasn't to get the butterscotch, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I never thought of the butterscotch, sir! I never asked Fishy to get it for me, and never offered him halves, sir! I—I never asked Skinner, either—did I, Skinner?"

Skinner chortled.

"I—I don't know why Fishy went to the Form-room, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Mum-mum—my mind's a perfect blank, sir."

"You had better tell the truth, Bunter."

"That—that's just what I'm doing, sir! Mr. Quelch would tell you how truthful I am, sir, if he was here. He knows."

"I guess I'll—"

"Come, come," said Mr. Steele, smiling. "If Bunter sent you to the Form-room to fetch the butterscotch, Fish, it is clear that he had not fixed up this trap."

"Of course not!" gasped Bunter. "I—I haven't got the butterscotch, sir! I never asked Fishy to get it, sir! I wouldn't! I never thought of it—"

"You will take a hundred lines, Bunter."

"Oh crikey!"

"You will take a hundred lines also, Fish."

"Groooh!"

"Now go away at once and clean yourself," said the Remove master. "You are in a revolting state, Fish."

"Don't I know it?" groaned Fish. "Go away at once."

"I guess I want to know who fixed up that dog-goned booby-trap. I guess I'm sure going to make potato-scrapings of that guy."

"Got!" snapped Mr. Steele. And Fisher T. Fish went, leaving an inky trail behind him. He left also a crowd of fellows roaring with laughter.

The Remove went into their Form-room, treading carefully round the lake

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of ink in the doorway. One member of the Form remained absent; it was likely to be a long time before Fisher T. Fish was in a fit state to appear in class.

Mr. Steele followed his Form in, also treading carefully round the inky lake. He fixed his keen eyes on the class.

His glance lingered for a moment or two on the face of the Bouncer. Vernon-Smith returned his look with cool assurance.

"My boys," said the new master of the Remove, "I cannot doubt that that wretched device, which I believe you would call a booby-trap, was intended for me personally, though fortunately it fell upon Fish."

"Wonder if Fishy thinks it was fortunate?" murmured Skinner; and there was a giggle in the Remove.

"I am afraid," said Mr. Steele, "that some boy in my Form intended this outrage for me."

The Form was silent. They had no more doubt about that than Richard Steele had, especially the Famous Five. But it was not their cue to speak.

"I command the boy concerned to step out before the Form," said the Remove master.

The command fell upon unheeding ears. Nobody stirred. Mr. Steele waited a few moments, and then resumed:

"The boy will be discovered and punished. In the meantime, the ink must be cleaned from the floor. As this is the work of a member of the Remove I assign that task to the Form. Wharton!"

"Yes, sir."

"You will go to the house-dame's room and request her, from me, to supply what is necessary for cleaning up that shocking mess from the floor. You will bring the utensils here, and the whole Form will take part in the cleaning."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

He left the Form-room. There was a murmur in the Remove. The prospect of mopping up that sea of ink was not a pleasant one.

"If you please, sir—" said the Bouncer.

"Well, Vernon-Smith?" The grey eyes dwelt with a very penetrating look on the Bouncer.

"May I mention, sir, that we are not sent to Greyfriars to do housemaid's work?" said the Bouncer coolly. "I object, sir, and I am sure my father would object."

The Removees caught their breath.

"Indeed!" said Steele. "Were your father here to express objection, Vernon-Smith, I should certainly listen to his opinion with respect. As Mr. Vernon-Smith is not here the question does not arise. As for your personal objections, they are of no moment whatever."

"I consider, sir—"

"You will be silent, Vernon-Smith." Mr. Steele did not raise his voice; but there was a tone in it that made the Bouncer realise that he had gone far enough—if not a little too far. He remained silent. Harry Wharton returned a few minutes later with a very red face and a pail of hot water and several mops and brushes and cloths and other implements.

The next quarter of an hour was very unpleasant for the Remove.

Certainly they escaped a part of third school. But the task that replaced school work was decidedly disagreeable. Steele was in grim earnest, and under his steely grey eye the juniors had to work at the cleaning process, till all the ink had been mopped up, the floor washed and rubbed clean and dry.

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There were enraged faces in the Remove, and murmured threats of what was going to happen to the born idiot who had fixed up that booby-trap and given them such a task.

If it was Steele's object to make his Form sick and tired of booby-traps in the Form-room, he was highly successful. After that grubby and inky quarter of an hour even the Bouncer was not likely to think of playing that trick again. Indeed, he was rather uneasy as to what would be the outcome when the fellows knew that he was the cause of all that ghastly trouble.

The task was finished at last. Fellows went to their places smeared with ink and in exceedingly bad tempers. Fisher T. Fish, still looking a little inky after a lot of rubbing and scrubbing, came in to his place with his "mad" still up, as he would have expressed it in his own language. Third school was not happy in the Remove-room that

share in cleaning up the ghastly muck after the fall of the booby-trap, and they were angry and indignant. It was all very well for Smithy to jape the Form master, against whom he had a feud, so long as he kept the results to himself. When the results were spread over the whole Form, it was quite a different matter, and that fact the Famous Five were now proceeding to make plain to the Bouncer.

"You frabjous, fozzling fathead!" said Johnny Bull. "What sort of a piffing idiot do you call yourself?"

"You howling ass!" said Harry Wharton. "A precious sort of jape on Steele—getting the whole Form a job of mopping up ink and cleaning floors."

"The fatheadfulness of the esteemed Smithy is terrific. The bumpfulness is the proper caper."

Vernon-Smith glared at the angry five. They had cornered him at the end of the Form-room corridor, and there was no escape for the Bouncer. The rest of the Form gathered round the Famous Five, and their looks showed that their opinion was the same.

"So it was you!" snorted Bolsover major.

"You silly ass!" said Skinner.

"You pesky mugwump!" howled Fisher T. Fish. "You fixed up that dog-goned ink to swamp on my cabeza!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snarled the Bouncer. "It wasn't meant for you, you bony freak; it was meant for Steele."

"I guess I got it!" howled Fisher T. Fish.

"Serve you right for poking your silly head in where it wasn't wanted."

"Why, you boneheaded jay—" roared Fisher T. Fish indignantly.

"Let me pass, you silly fools!" snapped the Bouncer, glaring round on the ring of indignant faces.

"Don't be in such a hurry!" said Bob Cherry, shoving the Bouncer back as he strove to push through the crowd of juniors. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, that fathead has given us a lot of mopping up to do. I move that we mop that fathead up next."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bump him!"

"Look here—" roared the Bouncer furiously. "Hands off! By gad, I'll— Oh, my hat!"

The Bouncer hit out furiously at the Famous Five collared him. But in a moment he was swept off the floor in the grasp of five pairs of hands.

Bump!

"Oh!" gasped Vernon-Smith.

Bump!

"Whoop!"

"Take that as a tip not to play the giddy ox, Smithy!" said Frank Nugent, and the Famous Five walked on, leaving Herbert Vernon-Smith sprawling and gasping on the floor.

Smithy sat up rather dizzily.

"And take that as another tip!" growled Bolsover major, giving the Bouncer a shove that sent him sprawling again.

"And that as another!" grinned Ogilvy, as he and Russell grasped the Bouncer and rolled him over.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I kinder calculate you can take a tip from me, too, you pesky jay!" snorted Fisher T. Fish, and he grasped the sprawling Bouncer's collar, and tapped his head on the floor.

Vernon-Smith uttered a yell of rage, and scrambled up; and Fisher T. Fish rather hastily departed.

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter.

The Bouncer made an enraged rush after Fishy. Someone put out a foot and he tripped over it, and went down again.

The Remove streamed out into the



RAISE A LAUGH AND WIN A USEFUL SHEFFIELD STEEL PENKNIFE

like Jerry Shefferman, of 45, Sarsfield Terrace, Cork, Ireland, who has sent in the following "rib-tickler."

THE RIGHT WAY!

A little boy had eaten too much cake for his tea and was soon roaring lustily. His mother's visitor was much disturbed. "If he was my child," she said, "he'd get a spanking." "He deserves it," the mother admitted, "but I don't believe in spanking him on a full stomach." "Neither do I," said the visitor dryly. "I'd turn him over!"

Send in your jokes to-day, boys.

morning. Steele went on with the lesson as if nothing had happened, and if he noticed that some members of the Form gave Smithy expressive looks—expressive of what was going to happen after class—he gave it no heed.

He appeared to have forgotten the incident by the time the Remove was dismissed. But the Remove had not forgotten—the Bouncer least of all. The Bouncer was feeling quite uneasy when he left the Form-room with the rest of the Remove.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Feels Sore!

"YOU benighted idiot!"

The Bouncer grunted.

"You born chump!"

"Oh, chuck it!" growled

Vernon-Smith.

"You burbling bandersnatch!"

The Famous Five were not disposed to "chuck" it. They had taken a full



With unerring aim the muddy football rose from Bob Cherry's boot and landed on the Bounder's somewhat prominent nose!

quadrangle, most of them pausing a moment or two to tell the Bounder what they thought of him as they passed.

Vernon-Smith picked himself up, and stood panting for breath, his face crimson, and his eyes glinting with rage.

Tom Redwing remained with him when the others were gone. He was Smithy's chum; but Smithy's look was anything but chummy as he glared at him. The failure of his jape on Steele and its unpleasant results had put the Bounder in a mood to quarrel with friend or foe.

"Well, haven't you anything to say, like the rest?" he asked bitterly.

"Only that you'd better come up to the study and have a brush down, old chap!" said Redwing mildly.

"The rotters!" breathed the Bounder. "They'd have cackled all right if Steele had got that dose of ink. The rotters!"

Redwing did not reply to that.

"I'll make them squirm for it!" said the Bounder, between his teeth.

"Better forget all about it, old fellow," said Tom, "and—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled the Bounder. "That fool Fishy spoiled the whole thing, poking his bony head into the Form-room before Steele got there. Steele would have got it—"

"It's rather lucky for you that he didn't," said Tom dryly. "There would have been a frightful row if a Form-master had got that swamping with ink. You must have been a duffer!"

"I don't look on him as a Form-master," snarled the Bounder. "He's a man wanted by the police, and you know it as well as I do."

"I don't know it, and you don't,

Smithy," said Redwing; "and if that yarn was true, that's no reason for catching him in a booby-trap, and it would have meant a Head's flogging!"

"I'm going to make him cringe!" said the Bounder savagely. "He's down on me, because he knows that I know him in his true colours."

"He's down on you because you're disrespectful and cheeky, old chap. Whatever he is, you can't expect a man in a Form master's position to stand cheek from a junior."

"I'll get him out of a Form master's position before I've done with him!" snarled the Bounder. "I've a jolly good mind to go to the police-station and tell them where they can lay their finger on the Courtfield crackman!"

"Come and have a brush down, instead!" said Tom, smiling.

"The rotter carries his head high, though he knows the whole Form knows what he is!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I'll bring it down a peg or two! I've got another stunt in mind that Fishy won't be able to spoil by poking his fool head into it!"

"Better let it drop."

"Is that your opinion?" sneered the Bounder.

"Yes, old chap!"

"Then keep it to yourself, and go and eat coke!" was Smithy's reply, and he turned and tramped away, leaving Tom Redwing with a troubled look on his face. Redwing was the Bounder's loyal chum; but a chum of a fellow like Herbert Vernon-Smith did not always find his lines cast in pleasant places.

The Bounder had a scowling face at the dinner-table that day. He loved to figure in the eyes of the Form as a daring fellow, reckless of authority, and regardless of "Beaks," admired for his

nerve and audacity. Had the new master of the Remove fallen into the booby-trap, no doubt Smithy would have been talked of in the Lower School in awed tones as a fellow of unparalleled nerve. But the way the jape had turned out was anything but gratifying; and the Bounder was feeling exceedingly sore.

But the Bounder had, as he had said, another stunt in mind, and after dinner he proceeded to get on with it. So far, the strange story of Richard Steele—the suspicion that the new master of the Remove was in reality no other than the notorious Courtfield crackman—had been talked of only in the Lower School.

Smithy wondered bitterly how he would like it, when it became the talk of the Upper School, and spread to Masters' Common-room; and it was Smithy's idea to help it on its way. And, with that amiable object in view, after dinner he took his way to the study of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Prout—and for Smithy!

MR. PAUL PROUT, master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, was taking his ease in his ample study armchair.

An armchair had to be ample for Mr. Prout to take his ease in it, for Mr. Prout himself was ample—very ample.

It was a very extensive armchair but Mr. Prout filled it almost to overflowing.

Prout was not in a good temper that afternoon.

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He had had some little difficulties in his Form-room that morning, chiefly with Coker of the Fifth. Coker was a rather trying pupil; what he did not know was enormous, but what he thought he knew was unlimited. Besides being Prout's most backward pupil, he had a contempt for Prout, which made it quite difficult for Prout to teach him anything.

But it was not only Coker who worried Prout. He was, after all, used to Coker—hardened to him, as it were.

Prout was hurt.

Prout was a chatty gentleman. The way he waylaid other masters in the corridors and engaged them in chats made him the terror of the staff.

Masters would turn corners, or even catch up their gowns and run, at the sight of Prout in the offing.

Prout's chats were lengthy. They were mostly about himself. They were one-sided affairs, too; in fact, as Prout did all the talking, the other masters wondered why he couldn't do it in his study, all by himself. But Prout, though he did not like the other fellow to say much, required an occasional "yes" or "no," or "just so" or "quite so."

His conversation was, so to speak, one-way traffic; but he liked the other fellow to be there to listen.

Fortunately, Prout was so thoroughly satisfied with himself, that he seldom observed what was obvious to everybody else. He chatted his little chats with great satisfaction to himself, and never guessed why his victim suddenly remembered that he had a class, or an appointment with the Head, or a trunk call.

Never—till now! Now, rolling down on Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, brimming with chatty good-humour, he had actually seen Capper whip round a corner and vanish—so unmistakably that even Prout could not be deceived.

It hurt Prout.

And it never rains but it pours. Stopping Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, to remark to him on Capper's curious conduct, he had not been given time to make a single remark. Hacker had stated, hurriedly and unthinkingly, that he had a class, and rustled on.

Now, obviously, Hacker hadn't a class just after dinner. Had he said that he had an appointment with the Head, or a trunk call, it would have gone down. But in the haste of the moment, Hacker had said that he had a class, which was obviously a terminological inexactitude. It could only mean that he did not want to talk to Prout—or, to be more correct, did not want to be talked to by him. In conversational matters, Prout was always in the active voice, his listeners in the passive.

With great dignity, Prout had rolled into his study—unaccompanied. In his present state of hurt feelings, he did not care to ask any other master in for a chat; lest they should act after the manner of Capper and Hacker.

Pondering over the matter, Prout realised that the other masters had often acted in a way that was perilously like Capper's and Hacker's. Little Wiggins, of the Third, for instance, only the day before, had broken off a most interesting conversation to rush off to tea with the Head—yet half an hour later Prout had seen him in the quad, nowhere near the Head's house, and obviously not at tea with the Head.

Then there was Twigg, of the Second; was it really the fact that he had had to rush off for that trunk call? Prout now doubted it.

Taking his case with his ample form
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filling every available inch of space in that ample armchair, Prout pondered rather bitterly.

At the present moment he could see only one bright spot on a murky horizon of doubt and wounded dignity. That was Richard Steele, the new master of the Remove. Quelch, the former master of the Remove, had been least amenable of all the staff to Prout's chattiness. But Steele was quite a different proposition.

Steele always listened with respect and attention, as was proper from a young man to an elder; he never said that he had a class when he obviously hadn't; he never seemed to be waiting for a trunk call; no appointment with the Head ever interrupted his talks with Prout. A most intelligent, indeed, intellectual, young man, Prout thought him—with irreproachable manners, a proper respect for superior wisdom, and altogether a shining example to the rest of the staff.

Prout's frowning face softened as he thought of young Steele. Really, a very pleasant and agreeable young man; well-informed, yet keen on acquiring additional information, for did he not always listen to Prout with marked attention? Uncommonly intelligent, for in practically everything, his opinions agreed with Prout's.

Tap!

The Fifth Form master's meditations were interrupted by that tap at his study door.

"Come in!" said Prout, in his booming voice, on its most agreeable note. He hoped that was Steele.

A talk with Steele would have cheered him in his present hurt and deflated state.

Steele, it was true, had a rather curious taste in topics; he liked discussing the strange series of burglaries that had taken place in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars during the past few months; that topic seemed to interest him more than Prout's tales of hunting grizzlies in the Rocky Mountains, and scaling Alpine glaciers in the dear dead days beyond recall.

As Prout was a fountain of gossip, Steele drew from him everything that everybody knew, thought, or said, on that topic.

Prout did not really mind. He was not really particular as to the topic so long as he did all the talking. When he was given his head in a chat he was happy; and Steele always gave him his head. A very pleasant and nice-mannered young man—very nice-mannered indeed. Prout liked him very much.

But he was doomed to disappointment now; it was not Steele who entered; it was a Remove junior.

Prout raised his eyebrows at the sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith.

He had no business with the Remove, and he could not imagine why a Lower Fourth junior had come to his study.

"What is it, Vernon-Smith?" he asked rather gruffly.

"May I speak to you for a few minutes, sir?" asked the Bounder very civilly.

"I see no objection if you have anything to say to me," answered Mr. Prout, staring at him. "You may speak."

Vernon-Smith closed the door.

"You're very kind, sir," he said. "I'm sure you will excuse me for troubling you. I'm in need of advice, sir."

"You had better go to your own Form master in that case, Vernon-Smith."

"My Form master is away from Greyfriars at present, sir."

"I am not speaking of Mr. Quelch. Mr. Steele is your present Form master. What do you mean?"

"The matter is one that concerns Mr. Steele, sir, and one that I cannot mention to him," said the Bounder.

Prout stared.

"I do not understand you! You may acquaint me with the matter if you like, however." Nothing would have induced Prout to admit that he was curious; indeed, he was not conscious of it. But, as a matter of fact, he took a deep and abiding interest in the affairs of others, as Herbert Vernon-Smith was very well aware.

"Thank you, sir! You have heard of the burglaries that have happened near Greyfriars this term and last, sir?"

"What? What? Of course! But what—"

"I believe, sir, that I've seen the man!" said Smithy.

Prout almost jumped.

"The burglar!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir!"

"Good gad! I do not understand how you can possibly have seen that notorious villain, who is quite unknown to the police. However, you may proceed—kindly tell me at once what you mean."

"One night last term, sir, two Remove fellows, Wharton and Bunter, lost trains coming back from Folkestone, and passed Hogben Grange after midnight. It was the night of the burglary there. They saw a man—"

"Indeed?" Prout was interested now; he was thinking that this would interest Steele on his favourite topic!

"He was climbing the park wall, sir, at that late hour of the night, and when they heard of the burglary next day, they thought he must have been the burglar—"

"I think I have heard something of this," said Prout reflectively. "I think Quelch mentioned something of the sort."

"Mr. Quelch sent Wharton to the police station, sir, to tell what he had seen. Since then Wharton saw the same man in the Christmas holidays, hanging about a place in Surrey that had also been burgled."

"Indeed?" repeated Mr. Prout.

"The man's description was well-known, sir—a man with grey eyes and a square jaw," pursued the Bounder. "Well, sir, I've seen that man now, and he has admitted that he was the man Wharton and Bunter saw that night at Hogben Grange."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Prout. "Are you sure of this, Vernon-Smith?"

"Quite, sir!"

"You have done your duty in mentioning it to a master, though I fail to see why you came to me instead of going to Mr. Steele. But certainly it was your duty to mention it."

The Bounder carefully suppressed a smile.

"I am very glad you think so, sir! It has troubled me a great deal," he said humbly. "The man I speak of is employed at the school."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, sir, and that makes me rather diffident about speaking out, and so I should like you to advise me, sir."

"My dear boy, you must not hesitate for one moment if you are sure of what you say. But I am very much perplexed," said Mr. Prout. "So far as I know, no persons have been taken into employment here for many months, excepting Barnes, the Head's chauffeur, (Continued on page 12.)

"Old Ref." talks Footer again this week, chums.

INSIDE INFORMATION!



By
The "OLD
REF."

"Old Ref." is absolutely in his element solving knotty soccer problems for "Magnetites."
Shoot your inquiries at him RIGHT NOW!

JUST now, as you cannot fail to be aware if you look at the newspapers, the Cup is the thing which matters in the world of big football. As the various rounds are worked off the interest increases, and the most absorbing question of which sides will eventually appear at Wembley is discussed from all sorts of angles.

So we will be in the fashion and talk about the Cup. In some respects there are vital differences in the regulations as between Cup-tie and League football.

For instance, it is very important to remember that no player can play for more than one team in the Cup competition in the same season.

The first of the Cup-ties were played last September when the weeding-out process among the five hundred entrants commenced. Now, let us suppose that away back in September a young and promising player turned out for some obscure club in the Cup competition. His club was knocked out in the very first of these early rounds.

Meantime, that player has been signed on and progressed with a big club. In due course his big club takes part in a Cup-tie. That particular player cannot play for his new club in the season as that in which he played for the Slocum Wanderers, or any other club, no matter how obscure.

Of course, this regulation sometimes proves a hard one, and a club which has developed a young player in the course of the season may be handicapped because he can't play for them in the Cup. But there is the regulation, and any club found guilty of breaking it would be likely to have the result of a Cup-tie challenged, and the game ordered to be replayed because one of the players was ineligible.

In the League, of course, the regulations are different. So long as the transfer arrangements are all in order a player may play for any number of clubs in the League games in the course of a season. I think the Cup regulations, on the whole, are fairer, don't you, even though they do result in a hard case from time to time.

THERE is another important respect in which League regulations and Cup regulations differ. This concerns the length of time a player must be registered by the club before he can play for them. In the League a player might be registered for a team at two o'clock on a Saturday afternoon and play for them in a match which started at two-thirty on the same day. No such close-fitting arrangement is possible in the Cup competition.

In the knock-out business

a player must have been registered by his club for fourteen full days before he can play for them in an English Cup-tie.

This regulation sometimes works hard on a club which has a big list of injuries. It was once responsible for Matthew Bell, a full-back of Hull City, having to keep goal for his club in a replayed Cup-tie. All the goalkeepers on the staff at Hull happened to be injured at the same time, and as it was impossible to get a new goalkeeper registered in time for that particular Cup-tie a full-back had to keep goal.

One interesting question relating to Cup qualification is raised by a correspondent from Burnley. He imagines the case of a player who has not been registered for fourteen days before a club plays a Cup-tie. But supposing that Cup-tie

ends in a drawn game and the particular player has been registered for fourteen days before the date of the replay. Can the player turn out in the replay? The answer is no.

A player who is not qualified to appear on behalf of a team in any particular Cup-tie cannot play for that team in the replay, no matter how long that replay may be after the first game.

TALKING of Cup replays reminds me of another point over which I saw certain players stumble not so long ago. You know, of course, that it is often necessary for extra time to be played in a Cup-tie in order that two clubs may settle which shall pass on. In the first round of the present season, Folkestone and Clapton Orient met twice. At the end of ordinary time at the second meeting the scores were still level, so extra time was ordered. The players of the two teams turned round, and prepared to kick in the opposite way to that which they had been playing during the second half of the match.

The referee, however, reminded the respective captains that they should again toss for choice of ends, just as they had done at the commencement of the game. The referee was quite right.

When an extra half-hour has to be played—a quarter of an hour each way—that extra half-hour is treated as a new match so far as the tossing for choice of ends is concerned.

But a lot of people forget that this is so, and I have often seen players turn round automatically at the end of the ordinary time and shape as if they would carry on without the formality of the captains tossing up again.

ONE other interesting point concerning Cup games, and this is in relation to what is called the luck of the draw. Teams like to be drawn to play at home, naturally, because they think that they have a better chance of winning if they play before their own supporters.

It sometimes happens, however, that a club with a small ground is drawn against a club with a big ground at which many more spectators would assemble if the game was played there. The point to be remembered is that nowadays a club is not allowed to sell its right to play on its own ground. If there is any arrangement to change the venue that arrangement must have the sanction of the Football Association, and the Association doesn't give it if, in the view of its officials, the rearrangement is a matter of money.

In the old days it didn't used to be so. Clubs quite frequently sold the right to play on their own ground, and I recall one case in this connection which caused the football world to laugh heartily.

Blackpool had been drawn at home to Sheffield United. Blackpool wanted money: Sheffield United wanted to win the match. So, for a financial consideration, Blackpool were persuaded to visit the Sheffield United ground instead of the game being played at Blackpool. Everybody thought that Blackpool had sold their chance of making progress, but to the general surprise, Blackpool, after being paid to play at Sheffield, actually won there. The result was considered a good football joke—outside Sheffield, of course!

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THE MYSTERY MASTER!

(Continued from page 10.)

who was given his present position early last term. You do not refer to Barnes, surely?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then who is it?"

"A master, sir!"

Prout jumped again.

"A—a master!" he stuttered.

"Yes, sir! Mr. Steele!"

"Mr. Steele!" said Prout faintly.

"Yes, sir! Mr. Steele is the man who was seen clambering over the park wall at Hogben Grange on the night of the burglary. I should like you to advise me, sir, whether I ought to go to the Head about it."

There was a pause.

The Bouncer had shot his bolt; and he waited to see its effect on Prout.

That Prout was a talkative old donkey, that he would welcome eagerly any new and startling topic for Masters' Common-room, the Bouncer knew, which was why he had come to Prout.

But the effect on Prout was not at all what the Bouncer had anticipated.

Prout sat for some moments in silence staring at Smithy, his plump face growing purple and more and more purple.

Smithy knew Prout; but he did not know that Prout had singled out Richard Steele for his very special regard, for a friendship that was almost, if not quite, affectionate. Steele was a new master, and old masters were generally down on new masters. Prout made an exception in Richard Steele's favour; but Smithy, who knew so much, could not know everything.

Prout found his voice at last.

"You young rascal!"

"Oh, sir!"

"You iniquitous young scoundrel!"

Prout heaved his mighty bulk out of the armchair. His fat cheeks were purple with wrath; his eyes gleamed with indignation.

"You—you—you unscrupulous young rascal!" boomed Prout. "You dare to come to me to repeat such a story—such a ridiculous story—such an absurd and unheard-of story—"

"It's true, sir!" gasped the Bouncer.

"Silence!" roared Prout. "How dare you? I repeat, how dare you? You venture thus to malign a gentleman for whom I have the greatest respect. You imagine for one moment, sir, that you can delude me with such a slander directed against your Form master! Good gad!" Prout fairly gasped. "Unheard of! Unprecedented! Unparalleled!"

Vernon-Smith made a strategic move towards the door. He began to wish that he had not selected Prout.

He did not reach the door. Prout made a mighty stride and dropped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

Smithy was jerked back.

With his free hand, Prout caught up a cane from the table.

"I am not accustomed," boomed Prout, "I am not accustomed to intervening in matters pertaining to another master's Form! But in the present case, sir, I shall depart from my usual practice! I shall chastise you severely for daring to come to me with such a story."

Whack!

"Ow!" roared the Bouncer.

He had wondered how Prout would take it. He had rather expected him to rise to it like a gudgeon to bait. But whatever he had expected, he had not expected this.

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Whack, whack, whack!

The Bouncer roared and wriggled.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Let go!" yelled the Bouncer, struggling. "Ow! Leggo! Stop it!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooo! Leggo!" shrieked the Bouncer. "You're not my Form master! Stop it! Let go! Oh, my hat!"

Whack, whack, whack! Whack!

The Bouncer, with a roar of anguish, tore himself away and bolted for the door. He tore the door open, just as Prout reached him again.

Whack!

The last whack caught Vernon-Smith as he bolted through the doorway. He let out a fiendish yell as he vanished down Masters' passage.

"Come back!" boomed Prout from the door. "I have not finished yet! Come back! Do you hear me, Vernon-Smith! Come back at once!"

Vernon-Smith heard him, but like the ancient gladiator, he heard but he heeded not! He vanished into space, and Prout was left booming.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Big Idea!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Bunter rolled into the Rag with a grin on his face.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and that afternoon the Remove had been playing football. Football, of course, was not in Billy Bunter's line, but he had found something very much more entertaining that afternoon than soccer. Lord Mauleverer had walked to Courtfield, and tea'd at the bunshop there; and Billy Bunter had walked in Mauly's wake, like the page following in the footprints of Good King Wenceslas, and also arrived at the bunshop.

There he tea'd with Mauly, much to his own satisfaction, if not to Mauly's. He entertained Mauly, over tea, with an account of the wonderful doings at Bunter Court in the Christmas holidays, perhaps by way of compensation for the tea. For which reason, possibly, Mauly suddenly sighted some fellow he wanted to speak to, went to speak to him, and disappeared—not returning to enjoy any more of Bunter's fascinating society.

However, as he had paid the bill, that did not matter very much. Bunter cleared up what was left in the way of catables, and walked forth in a fat and satisfied state, and strolled down the old High Street, blinking in at the shop windows till it was time to get back to Greyfriars.

It had been quite a nice afternoon for Bunter, much nicer than shoving a muddy footer about. And he had seen something in the dusty window of Mr. Lazarus, the second-hand dealer, that put an idea into his fat mind. That idea he was now going to propound to the Remove men, and the grin on his podgy face showed that it tickled him.

"I say, you fellows!" said Bunter, joining a cheery group before the fire in the Rag. "I say—"

"All serene, old fat man," said Bob Cherry. "We beat them!"

"Eh?"

"Three goals to two," said Bob. "Redclyffe put up a jolly good game right up to the finish. Then they seemed to peter out—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And Wharton got the winning goal," said Bob. "Jolly nearly on time, too. The goalie stepped out to it—"

"He shouldn't have stepped out to it," remarked Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "That was a mistake."

"I say, you fellows—"

"What do you think, Squiff?" asked Nugent.

Sampson Quincy *Inter. Field*, who kept goal for the Remove, shook his head.

"I shouldn't have stepped out to it, I think," he said. "Anyhow, the leather went in."

"Look here, you fellows—"

"I'd begun to think it would be a draw," remarked Peter Todd. "Redclyffe weren't half bad. But—"

"I say, you fellows, shut up a minute! I'm not talking football!" hooted Bunter.

"That's all right," said Bob. "We are."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The Bouncer's goal was a good one, too," said Bob. "A bit risky, running up the field like that—"

"You have to take risks in footer," said Vernon-Smith.

"Yes; but that Redclyffe back would have got you if his foot hadn't slipped, and there was nobody to take a pass when—"

"His foot did slip!" said the Bouncer.

"Yes, but—"

"But rats!" said Vernon-Smith. Smithy was the fellow to take risks, and was rather given to judging by results.

"I say, you fellows, do leave off footer jaw, and listen to a chap!" urged Bunter. "It's the jape of the term!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I've been to Courtfield—"

"Why couldn't you stay there?" demanded Toddy. "You know that Greyfriars is ever so much nicer when you're at Courtfield."

"Beast! I looked in old Lazarus' shop—"

"Dry up, Bunter," said the Bouncer.

"Shan't! I saw something in the window," said Bunter, "and it put an idea into my head."

"There was room for it," remarked Peter Todd.

"It was a second-hand pair of handcuffs," said Bunter impressively.

"A which?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Handcuffs! Like the Bobbies use, you know, for bagging burglars and things. Rather old-fashioned, I think. They're marked four-and-sixpence. That's cheap," said Bunter. "If I'd had four-and-six about me, I'd have bought them; but having been disappointed about a postal-order—"

"What the merry thump do you want an old pair of handcuffs for?" asked Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"You're not very bright, old chap," said Bunter patronisingly. "Don't you see what a jape it will be on Steele?"

"On Steele?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

Bunter had succeeded in getting attention at last. All the group of juniors were staring at him.

The Bouncer's eyes had a gleam in them; he had caught on to Bunter's idea.

Fisher T. Fish drew a little nearer to the group, and gave attention, which would have surprised the other fellows had they noticed it, for Fishy took no part in "ragging" the suspected Form master. There was, so far as Fishy could see, no profit in ragging Steele, so why should a guy take the trouble? But Fishy certainly seemed interested now.

"Don't you see?" pursued Bunter. "Suppose Steele finds a pair of handcuffs on his desk one morning, with a note tied on, 'With kind regards from the Remove,' or something like that! What?"

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! It's the jape of the term!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "It will make him fairly sit



An extraordinary-looking figure, spluttering, gasping and gurgling, tottered in the doorway of the Remove-room!

up! It will show him that we all know he's wanted by the police!"

"You frabjous owl!" said Squiff. "Do you think the police wouldn't have called for him before this, if they wanted him?"

"He's stuffed them somehow," said Bunter, shaking his head. "You know jolly well that Wharton and I saw him burgling Hogben Grange last term!"

"Fathead!" said Wharton.

"Well, I think it's a jolly good jape," said Bunter. "It will make him squirm."

"Who wants to make him squirm, ass?"

"Well, I do!" said Bunter. "He's given me lines. He's licked me. He's a beast, just like Quelch. I'd like to make him cringe!"

"Well, if you don't make him cringe till you raise four-and-six for the darbies, we shan't see him cringing in a hurry," grinned Bob.

"I'm giving you fellows this idea," explained Bunter. "If you're too mean to spend four-and-six on it—"

"The meanfulness is terrific, my esteemed, absurd Bunter!"

"It's a good wheeze," said the Bounder. "My hat! It will make the man wild to be presented with a pair of handcuffs by the Form!"

Wharton looked at him.

"Let it drop, Smithy! You haven't had a lot of luck so far with your feud against Steele. Better steer clear."

"Not till I've shown him up to all Greyfriars for what he is!" said the Bounder, between his teeth.

"For what he isn't, you mean!" grinned Bob.

"Oh, rats! Even a fathead like Bunter has a good idea sometimes," said the Bounder. "I'll jolly well cut down to Courtfield on my bike to-morrow, and bag those handcuffs. It will be worth while to watch Steele's face when he finds them on his desk."

"Look here, Smithy—"

"Rats!"

The Bounder left the group and walked away, evidently greatly taken with this new wheeze. Harry Wharton cast a frowning glance after him. If there was a doubt of Steele in Wharton's own mind, it was a very faint one, and he was well aware that it was personal dislike that made the Bounder so positive that Richard Steele was the Courtfield cracksmen.

But it was impossible for Wharton to intervene. The Bounder was too obstinate to be argued with.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"I say, you fellows, the old Bounder's the man for this!" he remarked. "He's got the nerve! You fellows haven't much pluck, have you?"

"Eh?"

"Lot of funks, you know," said Bunter. "The fact is, you're afraid of Steele. He's a giddy burglar, and I dare say his room here is fairly stacked with plunder. Look how he keeps his door locked at night. And then he had Quelehy's old room at first, and changed it for a room with a balcony on the quad. That's so that he can sneak out quietly at night and burgle. He may take you fellows in. He can't spoof me. I'm wide!" said Bunter complacently.

"You are," agreed Bob Cherry, with a chuckle, "very wide!"

"The widefulness is terrific!"

"I don't mean that, you silly ass! I mean—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" said Bob Cherry.

Bunter's put another fatheaded stunt into Smithy's head, which will land him in another row. I vote we kick Bunter across the Rag. Those in favour of the motion will signify the same in the usual way!"

"Yaroooo!" roared Bunter, as the

grinning juniors signified the same in the usual way.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter fled.

The Bounder, in a corner of the Rag, was in consultation with Skinner and Snoop and Stott and Bolsover major. Their grins and chuckles showed what they were discussing. Fisher T. Fish, with a grin on his bony face also, strolled out of the Rag and out of the House unnoticed. Harry Wharton & Co. resumed discussion of the football match, a much more interesting topic to them than the Bounder's campaign against the new master of the Remove.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Business Deal!

"FOR goodness' sake, Smithy—"

"Rats!"

"Look here, old chap—"

"Give us a rest!" yawned the

Bounder.

Prep was over in Study No. 4 in the Remove, and an argument was proceeding there.

The Bounder, with his most unpleasant sardonic expression on his face, was leaning back in the armchair; Tom Redwing standing in front of him. Redwing was looking distressed and a little angry.

The Bounder's new wheeze was the talk of the Remove by this time. Some of the fellows looked forward with amusement to what would happen when the suspected Form master found the handcuffs on his desk in the Form-room with a gibing message attached. Some of them were "down" on the scheme. But nobody argued with the Bounder—except Redwing, and he was aware that argument was futile. A wilful man had

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

to have his way, and opposition only confirmed the Bouncer in any resolution he had taken. Still Tom did his best.

"It's a rotten idea," said Redwing warmly. "Why can't you let the man alone?"

"Because I don't choose," said the Bouncer coolly.

"That's not a reason, Smithy."

"It's good enough for me."

"Steele's pretty certain to tumble," said Tom. "You'll get a Head's flogging if he does."

"I fancy not!" drawled the Bouncer. "Steele isn't anxious for the Head to be drawn into the business. The less the Head hears about what we know of him the better our cracksmen friend will like it."

"If he is a cracksmen—yes; but he isn't!"

"How do you explain—"

"I don't explain," said Tom. "There are a lot of queer things in connection with Steele; but I've no doubt that he could explain them all if he chose."

"Why doesn't he, then? It can't be pleasant for a man in his position to be under suspicion in his Form."

"I don't know! But it's all rot!" said Redwing. "The Head knows all about him or he wouldn't be here."

"The Head's an old donkey."

"Quelch knew him—"

"Quelch is another old donkey."

"Look here, Smithy—"

"Oh, chuck it!" said the Bouncer impatiently. "I'm going down to Courtfield to-morrow to get those handcuffs, and I'm going to plant them on Steele before all the Form. I'm going—"

Tap! The study door opened, and the long, sharp nose and bony features of Fisher T. Fish were inserted in the study.

"Say, you guys—" began Fishy.

"Oh, get out!" snapped the Bouncer. He was in a bad temper, and had no politeness to waste on Fishy.

"Keep your wool on, baby!" said Fisher T. Fish cheerfully, and he followed his long nose into the study and closed the door. "Look here, I guess I've been saving you a lot of trouble. You want those handcuffs from Lazarus' shop in Courtfield, Smithy."

"I'm going down for them to-morrow," grunted the Bouncer.

"I've sure saved you the trouble. I heard what that fat guy Bunter was saying in the Rag," explained Fisher T. Fish, "and I sure humped it down to Courtfield before lock-up, and bagged those handcuffs for you."

The Bouncer stared at him.

"You went down to Courtfield and fetched them?" he ejaculated.

"Yep!"

"Well, my hat!"

Smithy's expression grew a little more amiable. This was the first time on record, since Fishy had been at Greyfriars, that he had ever done anything for anybody. It was a pleasant surprise.

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"That was decent of you, Fishy," said the Bouncer. "You've got them with you?"

Fishy rattled his jacket pocket, and there was a clink of metal. The handcuffs were there.

"I sure got them," he assented.

"Good! That will save me a trip to Courtfield," said the Bouncer. "You've paid for them, I suppose?"

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"I guess old Lazarus wouldn't have let me bring them away if I hadn't," he answered.

"Well, hand them over," said Vernon-Smith, "and thanks. I owe you four-and-six for them." He felt in his pocket.

Redwing gave a grunt. He had had a faint hope that, by the morrow, the Bouncer might have thought better of it.

"You might as well have minded your own bizney, Fishy!" snapped Redwing. "What did you want to butt in for, you fathead?"

"I guess I'm an obliging galoot," said Fisher T. Fish. "Them handcuffs might have been sold before Smithy could cinch them. He would have been disappointed."

"All the better!" grunted Redwing.

"Oh, cheese it, Reddy!" said the Bouncer. "I'm much obliged to you, Fishy. Here's your four-and-six."

Fisher T. Fish coughed.

"I guess these handcuffs are a bit old and a bit rusty," he remarked, "but they're just as good as a new pair for what you want, I calculate."

"Quite!" said Smithy.

"And they're good," said Fishy. "Strong as anything! A guy that got them on his paws wouldn't get them off in a hurry. They're a bit old and rusty, but right as rain. The key goes with them. I'll say that those handcuffs are well worth ten bob."

"Old Lazarus would be likely to sell them for four-and-six, if they were!" said the Bouncer, with a laugh.

"Well, s'pose you wanted to buy a new pair?" said Fisher T. Fish argumentatively. "You wouldn't get them for ten bob."

"Blessed if I know! Anyhow, that old pair will do, for a jape on Steele. Why don't you hand them over?"

"Well, we ain't agreed on the price yet," said Fisher T. Fish.

The Bouncer stared at him.

"It's four-and-six. Bunter said so. Besides, that's what you've paid, isn't it?"

"What I've paid don't cut a lot of ice, I guess. You don't often find a pair of handcuffs for sale second-hand," said Fishy. "They go cheap in a second-hand shop because hardly any guy wants such things; but if a guy did want them, he'd have to pay through the nose for them. I'm treating you well in offering them to you for ten bob, Smithy."

The Bouncer started. He began to understand.

This was one of Fisher T. Fish's famous business deals. That cute and sly youth who had been raised in New York was always on the look out for a business deal. Like the ancient Roman Emperor, he considered that the smell of all money was sweet. So long as money came Fishy's way he did not mind how it came.

Smithy's brow darkened, and Redwing burst into a laugh.

"You—you mean rotter!" gasped Smithy.

"Aw, can it!" urged Fisher T. Fish. "Business is business, y'know. You want to buy handcuffs! I've got 'em to sell. No good chewing the rag—let's come to business. You could walk up and down Courtfield for a whole

term without finding another pair for sale. Fact is, I've cornered the market."

Fishy jingled the handcuffs in his pocket again.

"They're the goods," he said, "Cheap at ten bob. But I'll tell you what, Smithy! You being a friend, I'll sure let you have them for nine bob. Take it or leave it."

The Bouncer rose to his feet. He was very keen to get possession of those manacles, for his jape on the Remove master. But he was about the last fellow at Greyfriars to be "done" like this.

Fishy eyed him rather uneasily. Herbert Vernon-Smith had plenty of money; more than was good for him, in fact. Nine shillings was nothing to the Bouncer. Fishy knew that; and knew that Smithy would have wasted twice or ten times as much to carry out any scheme he was keen upon. So the astute junior from "Noo Yark" had counted upon bagging this little profit as an absolute certainty.

But it was one of Fishy's little mistakes that his astute thoughts always ran on lines of pure business. He did not allow for human nature, which is sometimes too strong for business considerations.

"Give me those handcuffs, you worm!" said Vernon-Smith, his eyes glinting at the American junior.

"For nine bob?" asked Fishy.

"For what you paid for them—four-and-six."

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Fishy. "You figure that I've moseyed down to Courtfield for nothing? Forget it."

"Yes or no?" snarled the Bouncer.

"Nope!" roared Fisher T. Fish angrily. "Nope!" Fisher T. Fish could not say "No," but he said "Nope!" very emphatically.

The next moment he uttered a still louder roar. It was caused by the Bouncer's knuckles banging on his sharp nose.

Fisher T. Fish staggered back against the door.

"Yarooooop!" he roared in anguish. His long nose felt as if it had been driven through the back of his astute head. It hadn't; but it felt as if it had. "Hyee, you keep off, you pesky guy! I guess I'll make potato-scrappings of you! I guess—Yarooooop! Oh, great jumping snakes! Wow—wow! Whooop!"

Fisher T. Fish got out of the study somehow. The Bouncer got in three before he escaped and every one a hefty one. Fish faded away down the passage at top speed, to the accompaniment of a metallic clinking in his pocket.

Not for the first time in his business-like career, Fisher T. Fish had failed to pull off a business transaction. Many and many times his astuteness had earned him more kicks than helpence. And now history had repeated itself once more.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Catching Fish!

"SAY, you guys!" Harry Wharton & Co. grinned.

They were taking a trot in the quadrangle, after breakfast the next morning, when Fisher Tarleton Fish bore down on them. A clink from his pocket told that he had his latest bargain with him.

There was an anxious pucker in the brow of Fisher T. Fish. The juniors grinned as they observed it. When Fishy lost money over one of his cute

transactions he never received any sympathy in the Remove. It gave Fishy a severe pain to lose money; but it afforded only heartless merriment to his Form-fellows. And Fishy looked like losing some more this time.

It had seemed to Fishy a very cute stroke of business—an absolute cinch—to bag those second-hand handcuffs from Mr. Lazarus' before Smithy could call for them. Sharp practice like this seemed quite justifiable to the business-like Fishy. So long as a transaction showed a profit, Fishy's conscience was satisfied. He could not even understand why the other fellows thought it mean.

But once more he had "slipped up on it," to use his own expressive expression. After the way the Bouncer had refused to be "done," Fishy had given Smithy a wide berth. Bolsover major and Skinner had been offered the goods at a reduced figure. Both were keen on that jape on Steele, but neither was prepared to spend any money on it. Snoop came next; and the price had fallen to six-and-six by the time it reached Snoop. But Sidney James Snoop declined to shell out even a sixpence.

And so it looked as if the goods would be left, after all, on Fishy's astute hands; which was an awful calamity, involving the loss of four-and-six.

Taking them back to Mr. Lazarus was not much use; that gentleman was almost as astute as Fishy, and would hardly have given a shilling for them.

Fisher T. Fish hardly slept that night. The prospect of losing a dollar was calculated to spoil the night's rest of any citizen of the United States; and Fishy stood to lose one dollar twelve and a half cents, that being the equivalent of four-and-six in what Fishy called real money.

Such a loss was likely to sadden Fisher T. Fish for the rest of his days, if not to shorten his life.

Naturally, he set his wits, such as they were, to work. Hence his hopeful approach of the Famous Five in the quad in the morning.

"Still got the goods, Fishy?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Keepin' 'em for you," explained Fishy.

"For me?" ejaculated Bob, in astonishment.

"Yes—for this crowd, I mean," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I been thinking of that stunt of ragging Steele, and I don't like it a whole lot. 'Tain't treating a guy square, now, is it? You fellows said so, and I guess I agree with you. I'm down on it!" said Fisher T. Fish emphatically. "I reckon I'm down on it as much as you guys are! Them handcuffs ain't going to be planted on Steele."

"Oh!" said Harry Wharton in surprise. "That's all to the good, anyhow."

"Sure!" said Fishy. "Why, it's insulting a man, ain't it? I don't call that sort of thing a jape—I call it pesky impudence. Yes, sir."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent.

The Famous Five regarded Fisher T. Fish with some interest. They were quite surprised to hear him expressing these views.

"I've said it!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I mean it; and I'll say that these handcuffs ain't going to be used for any such purpose. No, sir! Not by a whole jugful."

"Good!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Only I ain't aiming to lose money on them," said Fishy. "The big idea is this—you fellows want to stop that jape on Steele—"

"That's so."

"Well, I'm offering you these goods at a reduced figure, for that very reason," said the business man of the Remove. "Instead of selling them at a profit to those guys who want to jape Steele, I'm going to let you galoots have them at a cheap figure. I mean it! You can have this pair of handcuffs for six-and-six—and chuck them away if you like. What?"

Fisher T. Fish eyed the Famous Five anxiously as he made that offer.

They were opposed to the jape on Steele. He knew that. So there was a chance, at least, that they would take the goods off his hands to put a stop to it.

Certainly any fellow who spent money on anybody but himself was, in Fishy's opinion, an all-fired jay. But that cut no ice, for Fishy did not expect any Greystriars fellow to be anything but a jay. His experience in the Old Country had been that it was wholly inhabited by jays and boneheads. Fishy was firmly persuaded that he had more brains in his little finger than were contained in all the heads in Great Britain. What other fellow, for instance, would have thought of cutting in and bagging something he knew another fellow was going to buy, with the idea of putting up the price on him? Nobody but Fisher T. Fish!

But if the Famous Five were jays and boneheads, as Fishy believed all the population of the tight little island to be, they were not sufficiently jays to be caught like this.

They grinned and shook their heads. "Nothing doing!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"The nothingfulness is terrific, my esteemed swindling Fishy."

"Now, look here," argued Fisher T. Fish. "You want to stop that jape on Steele! You back him up! Well, can't you back him up to the tune of six-and-six? Besides, these handcuffs are useful! You could jape a fellow no end with them. Once they're on, they'll never come off unless you unlock them. Lots of fun to be got out of that! What?"

"Rats!"

"Look here, make it five-and-six!" said Fishy despairingly. "That leaves me only a bob profit on the deal. By gum, if you refuse that offer, I'll mosey along to Smithy and make him a present of them."

"Let's look at them," said Bob Cherry.

"Look here, you ass, you're not going to let that bony spoofer rook you!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"You let the guy alone, Bull!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish indignantly. "I guess I'll show them to you with pleasure, Cherry! Hyer they are."

Fishy dragged the old rusty handcuffs from his pocket. Bob Cherry took them and appeared to examine them.

His chums watched him in silence. Fishy eyed him almost hungrily.

"The key goes with them?" asked Bob.

"I—I guess I'll have to charge you threepence extra for the key," murmured Fishy. "You ain't grouching at that."

"Where's the key?"

"Here."

Bob Cherry took the key. He had an extremely thoughtful expression on his face. The glimmer in his eyes showed his chums that some jape was simmering in Bob's mind. But Fisher T. Fish was blind to that, and to everything else except his last chance of making a profit on his business transaction.

"I suppose these things work?" asked

Bob, fingering the manacles, "I've never handled any before."

"Work like a charm, old scout."

"Well, let's see how they work!" said Bob. "Try them on, Fishy! Do they go on like that—"

"Jest like that!"

"And snap shut like that—"

"That's it!"

"And they're unlocked again with this key?" asked Bob, surveying the handcuffs, which were now locked on Fisher T. Fish's bony wrists. "Suppose a fellow lost the key, after he'd locked the handcuffs on some chap's wrists for a joke?"

Fisher T. Fish laughed.

"I guess that guy would be in a pesky fix," he answered. "If you got an idea of pulling a guy's leg that-a-way, I ain't no objection. Once you buy these darbies, you do with them jest what you like."

Bob Cherry assumed an expression of portentous gravity. He seemed to be thinking it out very carefully.

"Five and six for the handcuffs, and threepence for the key," he said. "After all, a fellow could go to that, to prevent Smithy making a fool of himself, and all that. Besides, you might like to buy them back afterwards, Fishy, at the same figure."

"I—I might!" assented Fishy. He did not care what Bob thought on that point, so long as he sold Bob the handcuffs, which had become a drug in the market. Bob felt in his pockets.

"And you don't object to anything I may do with those handcuffs, Fishy, if I buy them?"

"Not the least little bit."

"I mean, you don't care if I jape a fellow with them, handcuffing him and leaving him to it, and so on?"

"Not a continental red cent."

"It's a go then," said Bob, and he slipped the key into his pocket, counted out five and ninepence, and handed it to Fisher T. Fish. Fishy took it rather awkwardly with his manacled hands.

"Well, you silly ass—" said Frank Nugent.

"My esteemed Bob—"

"A fool and his money are soon parted!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"My dear men," said Bob. "I've bagged a bargain—besides, I'm sure Fishy will be jolly keen to buy this key from me, presently, at the same price that I gave for the whole lot. Wait till he's had those handcuffs on for a few hours—"

"What?"

"Eh?" stuttered Fisher T. Fish.

"Come on, you men," said Bob, and he walked away. His chums, with a yell of laughter, followed him, and Fisher T. Fish was left standing, with a dazed expression on his face, in the quad—handcuffed!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Frightful for Fishy!

JERUSALEM crickets! Fisher T. Fish fairly stuttered. He gave a ferocious wrench at the handcuffs. He had allowed them to be slipped on his bony wrists, to demonstrate to the purchaser how efficient they were, though rusty and of an antiquated design. Unfortunately for Fishy, they were absolutely efficient.

He damaged his wrists a little with that furious wrench, but the handcuffs held. They were quite good handcuffs, and had probably held many a malefactor safe in their time. Now they were holding one more!

"Wake snakes!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "The pesky pie-faced mugwump!

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The ornery bonehead! Hyer, you all-fired jay, come and take these things off! You hear me talking?"

Bob Cherry strolled on cheerily with his friends. If he heard, he did not heed. He seemed to consider that he had done with Fisher T. Fish.

"You pesky jay!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "Say, you Cherry! You mosey right back and unfasten these dog-goned things."

He made a rush after the Famous Five. Bob Cherry looked round.

"What do you want, Fishy?" he asked.

Fishy gave him a homicidal glare. "I guess I want these durned things took off!" he roared.

"My dear man, you said distinctly that you didn't object to anything I did with those handcuffs, if I bought them. You said you didn't care a continental red cent, if I handcuffed a fellow and left him to it. You men heard him?" said Bob, looking round at his friends.

"We did!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"The heartfulness was terrific."

"I didn't mean me!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish.

"But I did!" said Bob cheerfully, "I meant just you, Fishy!"

"Pony up that key!" roared Fishy.

"The key? It's my key," said Bob.

"I gave you threepence for it. Why should I lend you my key, Fishy?"

"I—I—I guess—I—I reckon—" Fishy stammered with rage. "Take these things off, you dog-goned bonehead."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"I can't let you have the use of my key for nothing," he argued. "That wouldn't be business. You know all about business, Fishy, so you know that that wouldn't be business. I never was raised in New York, but I'm not quite unbusinesslike. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll sell you this key for five and ninepence."

"Five-and-ninepence!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish.

"Exactly. Then I shan't be out of pocket. The handcuffs remain mine and I shall throw them into the river. I'm not looking for a profit," Bob explained. "I merely want to cover out-of-pocket expenses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you slabsided jay—"

"You won't take the offer?"

"Nope!" yelled Fisher T. Fish.

"Well, think it over, and perhaps you will presently," said Bob. "I'm not going to charge you anything for the use of my handcuffs, while you keep them on your wrists. I dare say I should if I had been raised in New York, but as the matter stands, you can have the use of them for nothing. Come on, you men, or we shan't get our trot before classes."

"Hold on!" yelled Fishy.

But the Famous Five did not hold on. Chuckling, they broke into a run, and disappeared in the distance.

Fisher T. Fish was left almost foaming at the mouth.

He wrenched viciously at the manacles, but in vain. He hurled opprobrious remarks after the chums of the Remove till they vanished. He wriggled with fury. The loud laughter of the fellows who gathered round him did not have a soothing effect on Fishy.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "Come and look at Fishy! He's handcuffed with his own handcuffs! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared a crowd of juniors, as they gathered round the red and wrathful Fishy.

"Say, you guys, get these things off me somehow!" gasped Fisher T. Fish.

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't go into Form with them on!" wailed Fisher T. Fish. "I'll sure make potato-scrappings of that galoot Cherry! Say, help me get these pesky darbies off!"

"They won't come off without the key," chuckled Skinner. "Who's got the key?"

"That slapsided guy Cherry's got it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Smithy, I say, Smithy, get these things off me, and—and you can have them at a gift!" wailed Fishy.

"Go and eat coke!" snapped the Bounder.

"They won't come off!" roared Bolsover major. "Not without the key!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get that key off that jay!" howled Fisher T. Fish. "Go and hammer that guy and get the key off'n him."

"No takers!" chuckled Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Certainly nobody was likely to hammer the heftiest fighting-man in the Remove on Fishy's account. Nobody, in fact, was prepared to lend him a helping hand at all.

All the fellows were enjoying the joke at Fishy's expense. What he was going to do if Bob did not unlock the handcuffs was a rather interesting problem. It was quite a painful problem to Fisher Tarleton Fish, but nobody had any sympathy to waste on Fishy.

"Is it the first time you've had handcuffs on, Fishy?" asked Peter Todd.

"Yep, you pesky jay."

"Well, it won't be the last, most likely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody get a hammer and chisel or something," wailed Fisher T. Fish. "The bell will be going soon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish wailed, and pleaded, and oburgated in vain. He stamped away from the yelling crowd, his face crimson with fury. The Removites rocked with laughter.

"Jevver get left, Fishy!" yelled Bolsover major, as the transatlantic junior stamped away.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hapless Fishy struggled with the handcuffs, but he struggled in vain. His wrists were bony, but his hands, though also bony, were large, and would not squeeze through. The bell clanged for first school, and Fishy fairly gasped with dismay. Roars of laughter greeted him as he joined the crowd of fellows going to the House.

He tramped up to Bob Cherry, flaming with wrath.

"You pesky jay!" he roared.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Get these things off before we go in to class!" shrieked Fishy.

"You buying my key?" asked Bob.

"I—I guess I'll give you sixpence for it."

"Five and nine is the price."

"I'll make it a bob," moaned Fishy.

"You jolly well won't! You're not the only business man in the Form," said Bob cheerfully, what about five and nine?"

"You all-fired mugwump—"

"Last time of asking," said Bob, taking the key from his pocket. "If you don't buy this key, Fishy, I'm going to chuck it away."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob raised his hand, with the key in it. Fisher T. Fish gave a howl of apprehension. Once the key was thrown away it would be out of Bob's power to release him, and the last state of Fisher Tarleton Fish would be worse than his first.

"Hold on!" yelled Fishy.

"Going-going—" chanted Bob.

"I'm buying!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "Just in time!" chuckled Bob. "Cash down! I don't trust an American business man farther than I can see him."

Bob's five and ninepence was still clutched in one of Fishy's hands. He opened the hand with a groan and passed that sum back to Bob. It was like parting with teeth to Fisher T. Fish. Five shillings and ninepence was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream as Bob slipped it into his pocket.

Then, at long last, the handcuffs were unlocked. Bob slipped the "darbies" into his pocket and handed the key to Fishy.

"Your key!" he said politely. "My darbies! I'll get out in break and chuck them into the river. How much profit have you made on this deal, Fishy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish did not reply. He seemed bereft of speech. That business transaction had cost him four and six, a dead loss, there was no remote prospect of seeing any of it back again. Fisher T. Fish went into the Form-room looking as if he no longer found life worth living. He groaned as he sat down. He was one dollar twelve-and-a-half cents to the bad; and all Nature looked black to him. All through morning classes Fisher T. Fish wore an expression of the deepest pessimism. Like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and could not be comforted.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business!

HARRY WHARTON opened his eyes, and lifted his head from the pillow. A sound in the Remove dormitory had awakened him, and he peered round in the dim starlight that came in at the high windows.

A dim figure was visible in the shadows, and there was a murmur of voices.

"You funky rotter, Skinner." He recognised the suppressed, angry tones of the Bounder. "You howling funk! Where's the risk?"

"I'm jolly well not coming!" came Skinner's sullen reply. "You know jolly well what a man gets for breaking House bounds at night."

"First time you've ever done it, I suppose?" said the Bounder savagely.

"This is different! If you want a run down to the Cross Keys, I'm your man! But a jape on a master is sure to come out."

"A master who's a crackman, and very likely cracking a crib this very minute!" sneered the Bounder.

"Likely enough!" yawned Skinner.

"But till it's proved on him, and the peelers come for him, you can leave me out. Pretty asses we should look if Steele found us fooling about on his balcony."

"I only want you to bunk me up—you can stay on the ground, where you'll be safe," said the Bounder contemptuously.

"Not safe enough for me," said Skinner, and there was a sound of Harold Skinner settling himself down in bed again.

Wharton heard the Bounder draw a deep breath. Smithy was only a shadow to his eyes in the gloom of the dormitory, but he could guess what the expression on his face was like.

"Smithy!" he called out.

The Bounder started and peered round.

"Is that you, Wharton? You awake?"



With a yell of laughter, the Famous Five walked away, and Fisher T. Fish was left standing in the quad with a dazed expression on his face, handcuffed!

"Yes," Harry sat up in bed. "I believe it's gone twelve. Are you fool enough to be thinking of japing Steele at this time of night?"

"It's not a jape," said the Bounder. "Nothing of the kind. I'm going to nail him." He groped towards Wharton's bed. "Look here, Wharton, you can come and help. You've got more pluck than that funk, Skinner."

"I hope so," said Harry. "But what on earth's the game?"

"Steele goes out at night from the french windows on his balcony," said Vernon-Smith in a low voice. "He locks his bed-room door so that he can't be caught at it by any chance. You know that as well as I do."

"If it's so, it's no bisney of ours." "What do you think he goes roaming at nights for, if he isn't the Courtfield crackman?" sneered the Bounder.

"I don't know! I can't make it out! But I'm absolutely certain that Steele is a square man," said Harry earnestly. "It's not our business what he does, Smithy! You're on the wrong tack, and you'd better leave him alone."

"I'm going to nail him and show him up!" said the Bounder between his teeth. "The Head's heard talk about him. I know that, and takes no notice. But he would jolly well smell a rat, old ass as he is, if he knew that Steele sneaked out of the school at midnight."

"Possibly. But—"

"That's why he changed from Quelch's old room to the room he has now. You know it as well as I do. He can get out that way secretly."

Wharton was silent. As a matter of fact, he did know it, at least, he was sure of it, as sure as the Bounder. It

perplexed him, but he held to his faith in Richard Steele.

Deep as his suspicions had once been of the man with the square jaw, day-by-day contact with Steele had driven them away. If the Form master had a secret, as apparently he had, it was not, Wharton felt sure, a secret of crime.

"I want a fellow to bunk me up on that balcony," went on Smithy's suppressed voice. "There's a rain-pipe runs down beside it, but it's pretty old, and I don't care to trust myself to it. I want a bunk up."

"And what are you going to do on the balcony?"

"If he's gone out, he's left the french window unfastened, to get in when he comes back. I shall go in and fasten them. Then I can get out through the door. When the rotter comes back he won't be able to get into the House."

The Bounder's eyes glittered. "He can explain to the Head to-morrow what he was up to, when he's found shut out in the morning."

"It's a potty idea," said Harry uneasily. "Steele's not a crackman, though I can't imagine why he goes prowling at night out of the school. You'll make it awkward for him—but that's all."

"You won't lend me a hand?"

"Certainly I won't! Leave the man alone!" said the captain of the Remove impatiently. "If you've got the sense of a bunny-rabbit, you'll chuck it up and go back to bed."

And Wharton put his head on the pillow again.

The Bounder moved away from his bedside, breathing hard. He wanted help to carry out his scheme, and he

was not likely to find it in the Remove. There were plenty of fellows with nerve enough, but they did not belong to the party that was "up against" Richard Steele.

But the Bounder was not the fellow to turn back, when he had made up his mind.

Leaving Wharton to fall asleep again, Smithy drew on a pair of rubber shoes, and quietly crossed the dormitory to the door. There was a whispering voice from Skinner's bed.

"You're going, Smithy?"

"Yes, you funk!"

"More fool you!"

The Bounder opened the door, and closed it after him. It was nearly an hour after midnight, and the great building was deep in silence and slumber.

Vernon-Smith made no sound as he trod softly down the passage. He knew his way about in the dark; and in a few minutes he was in the box-room that looked over flat leads, from the window of which bounds had been broken more than once.

He let himself out, leaving the window ajar, crept across the leads, and clambered to the ground.

It was a cold, dark night; a few stars gleaming in an overcast sky, and a keen wind coming from the sea.

The cold, the silence, the solitude struck the Bounder; and perhaps for a moment he regretted that he had left his warm bed in the dormitory and the companionship of the rest of the Form. He would have been glad to have a companion with him in the reckless adventure.

But the bitterness in his heart spurred him on.

His feelings towards the new master of the Remove very nearly amounted to hatred by this time. In the first place, he had taken up the auspicious that rested on Richard Steele as an idle excuse for ragging the new master, caring little whether it was well founded or not.

It was a point of pride with the Bounder now to "show-up" Steele, as he termed it; to let all the school know the man as he knew him—or fancied that he knew him. And shutting him out of the House, while he was engaged on one of his mysterious night prowlings, was the most effective method of which Smithy could have thought.

He grinned, a sour grin, as he thought of Steele's face, when he found himself locked out. He pictured the scene in the morning, when the Form master was found to have been out all night; or, still more entertaining, the excitement and comment if Steele was driven to knocking up the inmates of the House at two or three in the morning. Whatever might be the outcome, it would be a show-up for Steele, once the Bounder succeeded in his scheme.

He reached at last the spot he sought—under the window of Mr. Steele's room on the first floor.

Outside the bed-room window was the little, railed balcony.

That, the Bounder was assured, was the way Steele came and went on his secret nocturnal excursions. No doubt he dropped from the edge of the balcony; but Smithy wondered how he got back when he returned. The balcony jutted out under the window, supported on a buttress underneath, that gave no chance to a climber. Close beside it ran an old iron rain-

pipe, clamped to the wall, extending to a gutter far above.

Smithy wondered whether Steele climbed that pipe.

Vernon-Smith stood peering about him in the dimness, considering the matter, doubtful and hesitating. But on one point he was determined; he would not go back without accomplishing his object, whatever might be the risk involved.

He made up his mind at last, and tackled the rain-pipe. He tested it with his weight, and then, taking his courage in both hands, as it were, clambered up, with his teeth shut hard.

The pipe, thick and rusty, and a little loose from the wall, gave plenty of hold for hands and knees; and the Bounder was an agile climber. He found that the ascent was fairly easy, after all; and the rain-pipe stood the strain well, though it creaked several times, with an uneasy creaking that sent the Bounder's heart almost into his mouth.

But he clambered grimly on, and reached the level of the balcony rail, only a foot or two from the pipe, reached over, and grasped it.

The rest was easy. He grasped the iron rail firmly, and dragged himself over, and landed on the little stone balcony.

There he stood quite still for a minute or two, breathing hard after his exertions, and taking care to make no sound. He had yet to ascertain whether Steele was at home or not.

Many nights—most nights, the Bounder believed—the mysterious Form master left the House secretly; but he was not likely to be absent every night; and it was as likely as not that on this especial night he might be at home. In which case, there was nothing for the Bounder to do but to abandon his

scheme, return to his dormitory, and postpone the matter till another night.

He approached the french window cautiously. He knew that its fastenings inside were bolts; there was no lock on it. If Steele had gone out, and intended to return the same way, he must have left it unfastened.

The glass door was shut; but it opened as the Bounder pressed it softly. It was not fastened inside.

He pushed it open a few inches, and listened intently, his heart beating rather painfully. The fact that the french window was unfastened did not prove that Richard Steele was not there. He might have gone to bed leaving the window unbolted. It was not likely; but it was possible.

Within, all was deep darkness. The Bounder pushed the glass door open wider and wider. His straining ears caught no sound from within.

He stepped within at last. He was sure that if a sleeper had been in the room he would have caught some sound of breathing. But, at all events, if Steele was there, he must be fast asleep, and the Bounder had to take a chance. He drew an electric flash-lamp from his pocket, and threw a jet of light on the bed.

It was empty.

Smithy instantly shut off the light, breathing more freely, with relief. Steele was out that night! It was beyond doubt now!

In the darkness the Bounder grinned. All was plain sailing now. He had only to bolt the french window, cross to the bed-room door, and let himself out, and go back to his dormitory.

Quickly he closed the french window and drove the bolts into place. Then he groped across the room.

He reached the door, and groped over the lock.

The door was locked—as he had expected to find it. But—what he had not expected—the key was not in the lock.

The Bounder started, his heart thumping.

He had taken it for granted that a man locking his door at night would leave the key in the lock. It had not even crossed his mind for a moment that the key might not be there.

Evidently he had under-rated the careful circumspection of the suspected man. Steele had taken the key out of the bed-room door after locking it. It might be somewhere in the room, or it might be in Steele's pocket. In either case, the Bounder had no chance of getting hold of it.

For a full minute the Bounder stood there, trembling with rage, his teeth gritting.

He could not get out of the room by the door. He was a prisoner in the room, until he unbolted the french windows and went back the way he had come, which necessitated leaving the way open for Richard Steele when he returned.

The Bounder's rage and disappointment could hardly have been expressed in words—had he ventured to utter any. After all his careful scheming, after all his trouble and risk, he was defeated once more; and there was nothing to be done but to swallow his chagrin and sneak away defeated.

With his teeth set, his eyes glinting with rage in the gloom, the Bounder reentered the room at last, and slid back the bolts of the french window. There was nothing doing, and the sooner he was out of that dangerous quarter the better. The thought of Richard Steele returning suddenly and finding him there made a cold chill run down his spine.

He drew open one side of the french

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window, and, from habitual caution, listened before he stepped out on the balcony.

And he did not step out. He closed the window swiftly, silently.

From without, a sound came to his ears. It was a sound quite close at hand—a suppressed breathing, and a brushing of clothing on the iron rail of the balcony as a man clambered over.

Smithy's heart almost missed a beat. He was caught!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Intruder!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH stood quite still, as if rooted to the floor.

His brain swam for a moment.

He was caught—hopelessly caught!

The man who was clambering over the balcony rail would be at the window in a minute—less than a minute. He was between the Bouncer and escape—there was no escape!

The Bouncer had a nerve of iron; and his courage equalled his recklessness. But in those terrible moments he was conscious of something very like terror.

He was alone there, in the darkness and the small hours; behind him a locked door; before him the man he believed to be a dangerous and desperate criminal, returning from some midnight robbery. At the least—if Richard Steele acted like a Form master—he had to expect a report to the headmaster, and a severe flogging. But if Richard Steele acted, not as a Form master, but as the dangerous criminal Smithy believed him to be—

What then?

The Bouncer had not much time to think. He heard a grunt from the clambering man as he dropped on the inner side of the balcony rail. A few more seconds—

The Bouncer moved at last; and when he moved, he moved swiftly. He backed across the room in the darkness, out of sight of the newcomer when he should appear at the window; turned, and desperately sought a hiding-place. By this time his eyes were used to the darkness in the room, and the faint glimmer of starlight from the window was enough for him. He knew where the bed stood, and he dropped on hands and knees and backed beneath it.

No plans were formed in his mind; only some vague idea of making his escape after Steele had gone to bed and was asleep. He was only thinking of escaping immediate detection.

His heart was beating in painful throbs, so loudly that he feared the sound might be heard in the room. He shut his teeth, and tried to still its throbbing.

The coverlet of the bed reached almost to the floor. There was no danger of the Bouncer being seen, unless Steele actually looked under the bed; and that was a risk the Bouncer had to take. After all, it was not likely; Steele was anything but a nervous man.

He could see nothing, but he could hear. He heard a soft, stealthy footfall; the man was in the room now.

The french window was closed, the bolts slid home. They were, as the Bouncer had already sardonically observed, well oiled, and moved almost without sound.

There was another slight sound, of rings that moved on a rod, as the thick, heavy curtains were drawn across the window.

Swift, soft footsteps crossed by the door, and then the Bouncer heard a suppressed exclamation:

"Locked!"

It was all that Vernon-Smith could do to suppress an exclamation of startled amazement.

For the voice was not Steele's!

The Bouncer lay in stupefaction. It was not Richard Steele who had entered the room by the window. The voice was not Steele's. Faint as it was, the suppressed utterance of only one word, Vernon-Smith knew that it was not the voice of the Remove master.

Who, in the name of all that was mysterious, was it?

The Bouncer's mind was in a whirl.

A burglar? That was his natural thought. If so, it was some burglar who had been watching the place carefully, for obviously he had known that Steele's window was unfastened, and knew that the Form master was not occupying the room at that moment.

Back into Smithy's mind came the memory of the attempted burglary at Greyfriars, the term before, accidentally defeated by Billy Bunter, who had blundered into the intruder in the dark.

Some of the fellows had surmised that the interrupted thief would pay Greyfriars another visit; though, in the lapse

ANOTHER BUDDING POET CARRIES OFF A USEFUL PRIZE!

The sender of the following clever Greyfriars limerick, E. Langdon, Hamdon, Swanmore Road, Pokesdown Hill, Bourne-mouth, has been awarded one of this week's useful leather pocket wallets.

Said Bunter, one day, with a shout:
"A good bandit I'd make,
without doubt,
I'd borrow a mask,
For Wibley's no need to ask,
For Wibley, the owner, is out!"

Have YOU won a prize yet, chum? Well, don't let the grass grow under your feet. Put your thinking cap on RIGHT NOW and turn in a limerick.

of time since, the matter had been almost forgotten.

Was this the man?

But the man who had burgled Greyfriars was the crackman who had been guilty of a dozen robberies in the neighbourhood; the Courtfield crackman, according to general belief. And the Bouncer believed that Richard Steele was the Courtfield crackman. But this man, whoever and whatever he was, was not Richard Steele.

Who was he? What was he? With his brain in a whirl, and his heart beating almost to suffocation, the Bouncer lay and listened.

The man was still at the door.

Seconds—minutes—Smithy did not know how long—had passed since he had heard that suppressed murmur.

A faint mutter reached his ears again, but he could not distinguish the words. Smithy wondered whether the man was puzzled by the absence of the key from a door that obviously had been locked on the inside. Or perhaps he was making sure that the door was fast.

Had he made use of Steele's room as a means of gaining easy access to the House for purposes of robbery? Or had he business in Steele's room itself? In either case, it was clear that he was well acquainted with the state of affairs at the school, and knew as much about

Richard Steele's nocturnal manners and customs as Smithy did.

That was in keeping with the character of the Courtfield crackman, who seemed to possess an uncanny knowledge of the places he looted. But the Bouncer was convinced that Steele was in reality the Courtfield crackman. Who and what was this man? Another crook in the same line of business working the same "lay"? It seemed unlikely. But who—what—

It was futile to seek to puzzle the matter out. The Bouncer could only wait and listen.

Soft and stealthy movements showed him that the man had turned from the locked door. There was a click, and the room was suddenly flooded with light—so bright and sudden that it made the Bouncer blink, shadowy as his hiding-place was.

The man had turned on the electric light.

Apparently his business was in Steele's room, not in the other part of the House. Indeed, if he was a crackman, and well informed as he seemed to be, he probably knew that the Head had placed the school valuables in the bank at Courtfield after the previous attempt at burglary just before Christmas.

But was he a crackman? What was his business in Steele's room? Hardly theft! There could be nothing in the Form master's room worth the risk he was taking.

From under the edge of the bed coverlet, that reached within a few inches of the floor, the Bouncer could see some distance by placing his eyes as low as he could. He sighted a pair of feet passing across the room. They were rather small feet, in rubber shoes—smaller than Steele's. If Smithy had not already known that the man was not Steele, he would have known it now.

Several times the Bouncer had a glimpse of those stealthy feet, moving to and fro, as the unknown man passed about the room.

He was searching.

That was fairly clear—but for what? Once or twice Smithy heard the rustle of papers; twice a click, as a lock was opened—by some instrument other than a key, he fancied. There were sounds of stealthy rummaging.

The Bouncer would have given much to raise the edge of the coverlet and take one look at the mysterious intruder. But he did not venture to move. Whatever the man was, it was not safe for the hidden junior to risk revealing himself.

Again the muttering voice came to his ears as the unseen man communed with himself.

"Nothing! Nothing! Not a sign—not a trace—not a hint! And yet—and yet who is he? What is his game?"

There was a grunt, as of a man tired and puzzled; suspicious, troubled, perplexed.

It seemed to the Bouncer that he must be dreaming.

For that muttering voice, faint and low as it was, came distinctly to his ears with a sound of familiarity.

He had heard it before—he knew it! It was a voice he had heard, though not, he thought, often. And he could not think, for the moment, whose voice it was. But he had heard it before—he was absolutely certain of that.

The man rooting about the Form master's room was some inmate of Greyfriars!

And with that thought came a possible explanation of the strange mystery. Was it someone who, like the Bouncer, suspected the mysterious

master, and was looking for some proof against him in his room, in his absence?

But then—who? Not a master. It was not the voice of one of the masters. Who—what—

The man was standing still in the middle of the room, sideways to the bed, a little turned away. That the Bouncer could see, by the way his feet showed on the floor. Apparently, he had finished his search, and was standing there, thinking, pondering, perplexed. The Bouncer could resist no longer his intense desire to learn who it was; and the feeling of danger had left him now that he realised that the mysterious intruder was someone he knew. With infinite caution Vernon-Smith raised the drooping edge of the coverlet and peered out.

He needed only one glance.

The profile, partly turned from him, in the glare of the electric light, was easily recognisable. The Bouncer suppressed a gasp of amazement. The man standing in Richard Steele's room, the man who had searched the room, was Barnes, the Head's chauffeur!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Message on the Glass!

BARNES stood for a full minute longer, silent.

He had not glanced towards the bed.

Obviously, he was still quite unaware that anyone else was in the room.

The Bouncer made no sound. He lay in concealment, his brain almost spinning with amazement. Barnes—Barnes, the Head's quiet and well-conducted chauffeur! Barnes, supposed in Greyfriars to be an ex-officer. It was he who stood within seven or eight feet of the hidden junior. Herbert Vernon-Smith almost wondered whether he was in a dream.

The man made a sudden movement.

Click!

The room was plunged into darkness again.

There was a faint whir of the curtain-rings moving on the rod.

Now that the light was extinguished Barnes was uncovering the window again. The Bouncer heard the french window open.

A stealthy movement, and then silence. The man was gone! With a thumping heart the Bouncer crawled out from under the bed.

He stepped to the window. In the faint starlight without, leafless branches of trees loomed dimly. Barnes was gone—back to the garage, no doubt.

"Barnes!" muttered Smithy. "My hat! Barnes!"

He was still lost in wonder.

What did it mean?

Smithy knew that Barnes was aware of the strange suspicion of the Form master that was talked of in the Remove. He remembered that Bunter had blurted it out to the chauffeur. Did Barnes share that suspicion, and was he, as a good and faithful servant, trying to find out whether his master was sheltering a wolf in sheep's clothing? It seemed a likely explanation, and was borne out by the words Smithy had heard him muttering. Yet it was not convincing.

There had been something stealthy, furtive, about all the man's movements in the room, and the Bouncer was almost sure that he had picked the locks of a trunk and a suitcase to look into them. Look-picking was a rather unusual accomplishment for a chauffeur.

Yet if the man was a thief, if he had taken advantage of the unfastened

window for the purposes of theft, the Bouncer was assured that he had, after all, stolen nothing. Smithy shook his head. Barnes had not been here as a thief. It could only be that he suspected—or, at least, doubted—the mysterious master, and wanted to find out something about him.

The Bouncer was no longer in a hurry to go.

Now that Barnes was gone the way was open for him to make his own escape. But Barnes, evidently, had felt safe in remaining in the room so long, and clearly, he had watched the Form master and knew how long he might be expected to remain absent on his nocturnal excursions. It was pretty certain that Barnes had left himself a margin, and taken no risk of being caught in the House.

A grin came over the Bouncer's face as he thought. Barnes had vanished; doubtless, he was back in the garage by that time. Vernon-Smith drew the curtains across the window as the chauffeur had done, and turned on the electric light again.

Then he took a chalk from his pocket and stepped to the tall glass over the mantelpiece.

Coolly and methodically he chalked on the glass, in large capital letters. He stepped back and surveyed his handiwork with a grin.

WANTED!

THE COURTFIELD CRACKSMAN,
ALIAS RICHARD STEELE!

The Bouncer chuckled softly.

He had not been able to carry out the scheme for which he had come to the Form master's room; but the Bouncer had a fertile brain. He had not, after all, taken his trouble for nothing.

He extinguished the light, drew back the heavy dark curtains, and opened the french window again.

All was still and silent without as he listened, save for the sigh of the wind from the sea, in the leafless branches of the trees.

He stepped out on the balcony and shut the window quietly behind him. He swung himself from the balcony rail to the rain-pipe, and clambered down it to the ground.

Once more he paused to listen and look round him. But all was still, and the Bouncer scudded away in the darkness.

A few minutes more, and he had climbed the leads at the back of the building, and was clambering in at the box-room window.

He trod softly back to the Remove dormitory.

A steady snore greeted him as he opened the dormitory door. Billy Bunter was going strong.

Vernon-Smith closed the door softly and crept towards his bed. A sleepy voice came from the darkness.

"That you, Smithy?"

"Little me!" answered the Bouncer coolly.

Skinner sat up in bed.

"You went, after all?"

"Yes."

"More ass you!" said Skinner. "If you'd got caught—"

"I didn't get caught."

"You've shut Steele out of the House?" asked Skinner, with interest.

"I couldn't. The brute had locked his bed-room door and taken away the key. I had to get out the way I got in."

Skinner chuckled.

"What a jolly old frost! Worth while breaking House bounds in the middle of the night for that—I don't think!"

The Bouncer made no reply. He threw off his clothes rapidly and rolled into bed. Skinner peered at him.

"But, I say, was the man actually out at this time of night?" he asked curiously.

"He was!"

"Looks jolly suspicious," said Skinner. "I wonder what the Head would think if he knew?"

"The same as I do, very likely. And he will know, if Steele makes a fuss about the message I've left chalked on his glass."

"My hat! What was that?" asked Skinner breathlessly.

The Bouncer told him.

There was a chortle from Skinner. Then another voice chimed in. They had awakened Harry Wharton.

"You awful ass, Smithy! You'll get a flogging from the Head, as safe as houses."

"Think Steele will make a fuss, and let the Beak know that he was out on the tiles all night?" sneered the Bouncer.

"Well, I hope he won't, for your sake," said the captain of the Remove. "But if ever a fellow begged for trouble, Smithy, you're the fellow!"

"How's he going to know it was I?" asked the Bouncer. "I didn't leave a visitin'-card in his room."

Another chortle from Skinner.

"Most likely he will spot you," said Harry.

"Are you going to tell him I was out of dormitory bounds?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a sneer.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" snapped Wharton. "Nobody in the Remove will give you away. But Steele will spot you, ten to one. You ought to know by this time that he's a downy bird."

"So am I!" yawned the Bouncer.

And he laid his head on the pillow and closed his eyes, and in less than a minute was fast asleep.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Early Bird Catches the Bouncer!

CLANG, clang, clang!

The rising-bell rang out in the grey winter morning.

Bob Cherry, always the first to move, sat up in bed and yawned.

Yawns answered from along the row of white beds.

Clang, clang!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wake up, you slackers!" boomed Bob Cherry. "All hands on deck! Show a leg!"

"Blessed if that bell doesn't get earlier every morning!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I'm fed-up with that bell!"

"The fed-upfulness is terrific!" shivered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Grooogh! The cold-fulness is preposterous, my ridiculous chums!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob.

He was about to make his usual brisk jump out of bed, when the dormitory door opened, and Mr. Steele entered.

Bob sat and looked at him.

Why the Form master had come to the dormitory at that early hour, at the first clangs of the rising-bell, he could not imagine.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Bob cheerily.

"Good-morning!" said Mr. Steele. He glanced up and down the dormitory. "Kindly remain in bed for a few minutes longer, my boys."

"Certainly, sir!" said Bob, with a grin. "As long as you like, sir! We shouldn't mind another hour."

The Remove master smiled.

"A few minutes will suffice," he said.

All the Remove were awake now, with two exceptions. On two pairs of ears the clang of the rising-bell had fallen unheeded. One pair belonged to William George Bunter, who never awakened till the last possible minute. Herbert Vernon-Smith was the other sleeper. As a rule the Bounder awakened as easily as any fellow in the Form. But the excitement and loss of sleep the previous night had tired him out, and he still slept soundly now, in spite of the clanging of the bell.

Most of the juniors sat up in bed. All of them that were awake stared at the Form master, wondering what he wanted there. It was obvious that something was "up."

Skinner's eyes followed Steele's glance. He, at least, guessed what had brought the Form master there—the message that Smithy had chalked on the glass in his room. The Bounder was drawing suspicion upon himself unconsciously.

"Wake up, Smithy!" called out Skinner. "Mr. Steele's here!" He tossed his pillow across to the Bounder, and Vernon-Smith was effectually awakened as it dropped on his head.

He started up with an exclamation.

"Oh! What silly ass—"

Then his glance fell on the Form master, and he was silent. He caught on instantly. The rising-bell was still clanging.

Vernon-Smith rubbed his eyes. "It's all right. I was awake," he said calmly. "No need to chuck pillows at me."

"Remain in bed!" said Mr. Steele. "I have a few words to say to you, my boys, before you rise. Last night someone entered my room while I was absent, and I cannot help suspecting that it was a member of this Form."

The Bounder's face was tense. But he was perfectly cool now.

"Someone entered your room, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Steele, his eyes on the Bounder.

"Before we went to dorm, do you mean, sir?" asked Smithy innocently.

"I do not mean that, Vernon-Smith. Whoever visited my room secretly last night, went there long after bed-time."

"Then you saw him, sir?" asked the Bounder, with the same innocence. Some of the juniors grinned.

"I did not see him, Vernon-Smith, or I should have dealt with him on the spot," said Mr. Steele calmly. "I had occasion to be absent from the school at a late hour last night, and it was during my absence that this boy visited my room."

The Removes exchanged glances. The suspected man made no bones about letting the whole Form know that he had been absent in the middle of the night.

"What is most serious about the matter," went on Mr. Steele, addressing the Form generally, "is that the boy must have broken House bounds at night, and entered my room by the french window, climbing on the balcony outside."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob



"How do you account, Vernon-Smith, for the fact that the sleeves of your jacket and the knees of your trousers are plainly marked with dirt and rust?" asked Mr. Steele.

Cherry involuntarily. Then he coloured, and was silent.

"But why not by the door, sir?" asked the Bounder, in the same innocent tone as before. "I should think a fellow would go into the room by the door, sir."

"The door was locked, Vernon-Smith."

"Oh, sir! I didn't know the masters locked their doors at night," said the Bounder.

"The boy who entered my room must have known," said Mr. Steele calmly, apparently not objecting to letting all the Lower Fourth hear of his unusual manners and customs. "That boy must have entered by the window, and to do so he must have broken House bounds late at night—a very serious infraction of the rules. It is my intention to inquire into this very strictly."

"It can't have been a Remove man, sir," said Skinner. "I'm sure that no fellow left this dormitory in the night."

"What makes you so sure of that, Skinner? Were you awake in the night?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Skinner, in a hurry.

"Then you can hardly be aware whether anyone left the dormitory or not."

"I—I think I should have heard him, sir."

"Possibly—and possibly not!" Mr. Steele's keen grey eyes passed up and down the line of faces. "The boy concerned will save time and trouble by confessing at once," he added.

Nobody in the Remove seemed to have any desire to save time and trouble. At all events, nobody spoke.

"Very well," said the Remove master, after waiting a few moments,

"I shall question you first, Vernon-Smith."

The Bounder breathed hard. "Why me first, sir?" he asked sullenly. "I don't see why I should be picked on."

"Then I will explain. You are the most audacious and impudent boy in the Form, and you have lost no opportunity of referring to the ridiculous story that has been spread about me in the Remove!" said Mr. Steele sternly. "The insolent message that was left chalked on my glass, is in keeping with many things you have done, Vernon-Smith."

"I never left the dormitory!" said the Bounder sulkily. "I never opened my eyes in the night, so far as I remember."

"If that is true, Vernon-Smith, you have nothing to fear. Fortunately, the matter can be cleared up without the possibility of error."

The Bounder felt a chill.

"Is every boy awake?" asked the Remove master, with another glance round. "No, Bunter seems to be still asleep. Bunter!"

Snore!

Mr. Steele crossed over to Bunter's bed, and shook him by the shoulder.

The fat junior started into wakefulness.

"Ow! Beast! Leggo!" he hooted.

"I ain't going to get up yet! Beast! Leggo! Rotter!"

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" Bunter jumped as he recognised his Form master beside the bed.

"Oh, is—is it you, sir? I—I—"

didn't know it was you, sir. I—I—

thought it was some other beast, sir, I—I—

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Wake up, you absurd boy!" said Mr. Steele.

"Oh! Yes, sir," gasped Bunter. "It wasn't me, sir!"

"What? What was not you, Bunter?"

"Anything, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Nothing! I assure you, sir, it wasn't me! I don't know what's up, but it wasn't me, sir!"

A chuckle ran along the row of beds. Billy Bunter groped for his spectacles, jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked at the Form Master in alarm. There were many sins on Bunter's fat conscience.

"If—if you've come here for me, sir," he mumbled, "I swear I never did it. If it's the pie—"

"The pie?" ejaculated Mr. Steele.

"Yes, sir; I know absolutely nothing about it. If the cook says the pie is gone, it's no good asking me, sir! I'm not the fellow to sneak down and bag a pie, sir! Any fellow in the Remove will tell you so. Ask Wharton! He knows me."

"Do you mean to say that you have abstracted a pie, Bunter?"

"Nunno! No!" yelled Bunter. "I was just saying that I hadn't, sir. Ask Snoop, sir. He can tell you I never touched it! He knows, sir. I gave him some of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Steele joined in the laugh that echoed along the Remove dormitory. William George Bunter was rather too much for his gravity.

"You utterly absurd boy, I am not here to inquire concerning a pie," he said. "You had better say no more, Bunter."

"Yes, sir. Only I'd like you to know that I never touched it, sir. I never knew anything about the pie. It may have been the cat—"

"That will do, Bunter. You had better be silent! I shall take no notice of the admission you have made."

Mr. Steele stepped back from the beds. Once more his keen glance swept up and down the dormitory.

"Every boy present will show his hands for inspection!" he said.

In blank amazement, the Remove fellows held out their hands for inspection. The Bounder was the only exception. He kept his hands under the blankets, a hunted look growing in his eyes.

There were plenty of hands for Mr. Steele to inspect, but he did not take the trouble to inspect those that were readily shown. He stepped towards the Bounder's bed, a grim expression on his face.

"Show your hands, Vernon-Smith!"

Slowly the Bounder drew them into sight, the palms downward.

"Turn the palms up," said Steele quietly.

Still more slowly, the Bounder obeyed.

"How do you account for the stains on your hands, Vernon-Smith—stains made, apparently, by grasping a rusty iron pipe?"

"I was doing some dumb-bell exercise in my study last evening, sir. The bars were a bit rusty. I forgot to wash my hands afterwards."

The Remove listened breathlessly.

They knew that whoever had entered Steele's room by the window must have climbed the rusty iron rain-pipe to the balcony, and evidently Steele suspected Smithy. The juniors wondered whether the Bounder was going to "get away" with this explanation.

"Is that the truth, Vernon-Smith?"

"Oh, quite, sir!" said Smithy, as impudently as he dared.

"You can show me the dumb-bells which are so rusty that they have stained your fingers and the palms of your hands?"

"Certainly, sir; they're in my study. Unless," added the Bounder, calmly and thoughtfully—"unless some fellow has bagged them. Fellows are always borrowing things up and down our passage, sir."

"I shall not look for the dumb-bells, Vernon-Smith. I am afraid it would prove that some person had, as you suggest, borrowed them."

"Sarc!" murmured Bob Cherry, sotto voce.

"It's quite possible, sir," said the Bounder coolly. "My things are borrowed right and left in the Remove passage. I let fellows come and take what they like."

"Very good!" said Mr. Steele.

There was a breathless pause. If Steele was going to be "stuffed" like this, he was not the downy bird the Remove had hitherto considered him. But Richard Steele was not finished yet.

He turned to the Bounder's clothes. Smithy had taken the trouble to fold them up neatly before turning in.

"These are your clothes, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bounder caught his breath.

"Yes, sir."

There was no help for it. The admission had to be made.

Mr. Steele examined the clothes.

"How do you account, Vernon-Smith, for the fact that the sleeves of your jacket, and the knees of your trousers, are plainly marked with dirt and rust?" asked the Form master, in a deep voice.

The Bounder was silent. A moment's thought told him that such signs must remain, after his climb up the rusty old pipe. Certainly he would have taken care to clean off those tell-tale stains had he been given time. The Remove knew now why Richard Steele had butted into their dormitory at rising-bell. Ten minutes later the Bounder would have had his clothes on, would have noticed how they were marked, and would have taken his measures. The early bird had caught the worm.

"I am waiting for your answer, Vernon-Smith."

No answer came.

Mr. Steele laid down the clothes.

"Vernon-Smith, it was you who broke House bounds last night, climbed in at my window, and wrote an offensive and insulting message on the glass in my room. Do you deny it further?"

"You know it was I," snarled the Bounder. "I don't care! You can take me to the Head, if you like."

Steele regarded him steadily.

"I am sorry for this, Vernon-Smith. You are a boy of nerve and courage, qualities which might serve you well if better directed. I am sorry that it is my

duty to punish you severely; but I shall do my duty! You will come to my study immediately after prayers."

With that Mr. Steele left the Remove dormitory. The rising-bell had ceased to clang. The juniors turned out, Smithy with a black brow and glinting eyes.

"Hard cheese, old man!" said Skinner.

The Bounder made no answer. He was quivering with rage and chagrin, and Skinner's perfunctory sympathy was not of much use to him.

"The hardness of the esteemed cheese is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The sympathise is preposterous, my worthy Smithy."

Smithy gave the captain of the Remove a bitter look.

"Why don't you say I told you so?" he sneered.

"Well, that wouldn't help, would it?" said Wharton. "I'm sorry you're bowled out and booked for a licking; but you really did ask for it, Smithy."

"Put some exercise books in your bags, old bean," said Snoop. "Steele looked as if he meant business."

The Bounder dressed in silence and went down. After prayers, he made his way to the Form master's study.

Some of the juniors waited for him to return. Many of them were sympathetic. A fellow up for a licking always had the good wishes of his Form-fellows. Skinner had told the fellows what it was that the Bounder had chalked on Steele's glass, and they had no doubt that Steele would "lay it on." There was no trepidation, but black, savage sullenness, in the Bounder's face as he went to Steele's study.

"If you have tears, my beloved 'earers, prepare to shed them now!" murmured Skinner.

Skinner could afford to be humorous.

"Oh, shut up, you worm!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust.

It was five minutes before the Bounder came back. When he came, his face was white and his eyes burning. The juniors did not need to ask if he had had it "bad." Evidently he had.

He tramped through the silent crowd and went out into the quad. When the breakfast-bell went, Harry Wharton joined him there. Vernon-Smith met him with a black look.

"Look here, Smithy, old chap," said Harry uncomfortably. "You're not a fellow to take advice, but I really wish you'd give up this feud against Steele. What's the good of it?"

The Bounder breathed hard.

"Give it up!" he repeated, between his teeth. "Likely, isn't it? I'm going on. I'll never rest till I've shown him up to all Greyfriars—till I've got it plain enough for the police to handle him! You'll see that I shall get my own back on Mr. Crackman Steele!"

"Look here, Smithy—"

"Oh, chuck it!"

The Bounder turned his back on Wharton and tramped to the House. Wharton followed him in uneasy silence. The Bounder's feud was going on, more bitterly than before; and Wharton wondered uneasily what the end of it would be.

THE END.

WHATEVER YOU DO, CHUMS, don't miss the next yarn in this splendid series, entitled:

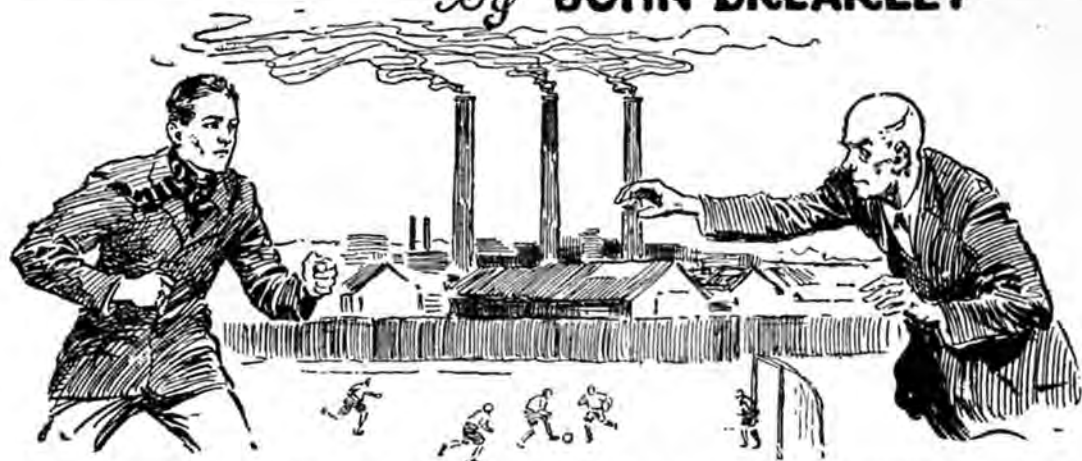
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STILL GOING STRONG . . . OUR GREAT SPORTING SERIAL.

Peter Frazer-Ironmaster!

by JOHN BREARLEY



The Gang's Master-Stroke!

PETER FRAZER, keeping tight hold of his nerve, thought fast. In grudging admiration, he reflected that his enemies had picked their time beautifully. The simplicity and boldness of the plan took his breath away.

Everything was in their favour now. They had seized the one short moment when field and foundry were deserted, darkness reigned, and even those shrewd watchdogs, Moller and Tim Osborne, having seen him comfortably sitting before his own fireside, had reckoned him safe. The scheme was a winner!

"Step forward!"

Peter rose and limped forward. The three men closed round him.

"Now, listen you!" began the man grimly, when Peter bent forward.

"Why, it's good old Granger!" he exclaimed. "Great Scott, hasn't your face mended yet, man? No need to hide it from me!"

With a bitter curse the man tore the handkerchief from his face, and for just one second Peter thought he would shoot. So did Spider Huggins.

"Steady, Red!" he called softly.

And, with a mighty effort, the gang-leader recovered himself.

"All right!" he choked. "But much good may it do you! We've got the laugh now, Mr. Suffrin Frazer! And you'll never be able to give me away!"

His gun-hand shook with rage.

"Well, get on! Shoot and get it over!" growled Peter contemptuously.

Granger grinned crookedly.

"That's for someone else!" he gloated.

"Now, listen, Frazer! I won't shoot 'nless I have to. But," he finished significantly, "I'm not going to be caught! We've had enough of you! Cut it out!"

he rasped madly as Peter's lips opened.

"Listen! We're going for a walk—you and I together. These two not far off—savvy? And wherever we go, this un'll be within two inches of you—so!"

With a lightning movement he thrust the gun into Peter's ribs, and grinned savagely into his eyes.

"We'll go out of here, together, and across that field to the yard—together."

Peter's face did not move; but Granger must have seen the quick gleam in his eyes.

"Forget it!" he gloated. "If anyone hails you, answer 'em—and quick! You're the great Mr. Bloomin' Frazer, Esquire, taking a walk with one of his lovin' workmen—talking football, or fancy knittin'—see?"

The gun-barrel bored deeper into Peter's side, and the man's eyes shone with diabolical fury.

"I see," replied Peter softly.

"You'd better! Now, listen again! You—mean—money—to us, and freedom! Money and freedom! So if you try to get away—well, you won't! That's all!"

He nodded his head, and the Spider and Murphy grasped Peter's shoulders, and thrust him out into the hall. One of them threw his Claytonian scarf round his neck, and jammed his soft hat on to his head, the other opened the door.

"Scat!" growled Granger; and they vanished.

Together Peter and the gang-leader

Peter Frazer kidnapped! Not a clue to his whereabouts! Has the "Man with the Scar" succeeded at last?

stepped down the path and out on to the football field.

The man's courage was marvellous; but Peter guessed that he and his men were desperate. Slowly they strolled across the field until they reached the middle.

Before them a light gleamed for a second on the asphalt path that bounded the field, then shone again a few paces further on. It was the patrolman.

Peter's breath came a little faster, but the pressure at his side increased steadily.

Once again the torch gleamed, but Granger did not move. And so they waited, a part of the dark night, until the gleam came again farther up, and the constable was safely past. A faint hiss sounded from the darkness ahead, and Granger prodded his captive onward.

The remainder of that walk was like a nightmare. Behind them the policeman continued his round in a state of

blissful ignorance, and ahead of them Spider and Murphy scouted silently.

They came to the path, crossed it, and were in the foundry yard. Then they were strolling past the foundry itself, trembling with the steady pulse of the furnaces. Peter prayed that one of the night-shift would come out, but Granger's luck held good.

There was not a soul in all the huge yard. Now they were past the corner of the foundry, and on to where the great mounds and heaps of ashes, slag, and coal were dotted among the trucks and rails. The wind from the wide marshes blew clean and salty in their faces.

Guided by the pressure of Granger's gun, Peter stumbled round the base of a giant heap, his ankle jarring painfully. Rough hands reached suddenly out of the darkness, and pulled him forward. Coal or ashes began to clink and roll beneath his feet, so that with his sound leg he dug harder in the hope of making as much noise as possible. He heard Granger curse softly, then his ankles were grabbed, and lifted high in the air.

Warily they carted him over the base of the great mound, and dumped him down at last by the wall of the foundry itself.

He had some idea where he was now. By the back wall of the foundry an immense mound of coal had accumulated for years. Now he guessed he was jammed down in the small space between the edge of the mound and the wall, and even had it been light, he would have been hidden from view by the great bulk of the mound itself.

But he had no time for further thought. A torch snapped on, and a gleam shone out for a second. It was long enough, however, for Peter to see—close against the wall of the foundry, a small manhole, and all around him and his captors, and above them, the great fuel heap.

Then, for the first time on the march, Granger's gun ceased boring into his side. It was his last chance, and he took it.

He left the earth like a catapult. There was no room for anyone to dodge, and Granger, bending downwards, took Peter's hard, black head slam in the face and buckled up feebly. At the same instant, a terrific kick, aimed

blindly, caught Murphy's leg below the knee.

But the gang's luck was in. Unbalanced, and slightly dazed by the collision with Granger's face, Peter struggled wildly to get a foothold on the rolling coal, and then his crooked ankle let him down. He slipped, tottered, and Spider Huggins, hitting like a mule from somewhere higher up the mound, knocked the breath clean out of him with one fierce drive.

Clutching wildly at nothing, Peter folded up like a penknife. The ground seemed to melt beneath him, and down into black darkness he went until he fetched up on stone flags with a force that finished him completely.

The next instant a shower of furious men descended on him, feet first, and the last sound his swimming senses registered was the soft, grating noise of a rusty cover being drawn carefully over the manhole!

Red Granger had landed his prize!

A Weary Search!

IT was not until half-past seven the next morning that old Anna, grumbling her way downstairs, discovered Mr. Dimmock securely bound and gagged in his own little study.

The manager, utterly exhausted and sleeping heavily, was slumped in a heap in his chair, and only after five minutes' frantic shaking by the terrified old servant did he struggle back to consciousness.

Within the hour, all Maxport seemed to know of Peter Frazer's disappearance. In the long parlour of Manston, a little group of serious men questioned the weary manager persistently, and already Inspector Button had flung a cloud of searchers over city and country.

"And you're quite sure you've no idea who the men were Mr. Dimmock? Can't you give any description at all?"

"Only what I've told you twice already, inspector!" replied Mr. Dimmock limply. "There were three of them, all masked, and the one who held a revolver was the leader! There was nothing distinctive about them, and only the leader spoke. There was only the firelight to see them by! They—they led me out and bound me—and what happened to Peter after that—"

His head dropped slowly into his hands.

Outside on the field, a huge group of Peter's workmen waited, silently, ominously, for news.

Only one man among them broke the silence, a big, dirt-begrimed stoker, who a few months ago would willingly have knocked Peter endways and kicked him on the ground. Clenching a hammer-like hand, he growled:

"Mate, if we find they scum have hurted our Pe'er—"

A low growl, like the mutter of wild animals, was his answer.

While the meeting at Manston was proceeding, Moller and Tim Osborne sat facing each other in their little cottage. The deep lines on the elder man's face had become grimmer even than usual, but Tim's features had undergone a complete change.

Vanished was the shy, youthful look that everyone in the foundry knew by now. Instead, he looked much older, and the expression of the tight-drawn mouth and glinting, steely eyes was fierce and menacing. Tim Osborne of Frazer's

had become Osborne of the Canadian Secret Service!

Moller spoke first, bitterly.

"Two years ago old Frazer invited me into this game to find out who was after his scalp!" he mused. "I didn't. And six months ago, just before he died, he asked me to take care of Peter. And now I've lost him!"

"Chuck it, dad!" snapped Tim. "I'm to blame. We really should have swooped earlier and chanced it! He's walked my feet off for nearly three months now, jazzin' after him on those mad prowls of his—and now—well, we've just got to find him!"

Moller nodded moodily.

"The moment I clapped eyes on that lad the morning after they'd fished him out of the river, I knew I'd have my hands full! I tried hard to get him to sell out and take up something else—the best course I could think of, Tim, for I tell you, just one glance at Peter Frazer was enough to tell me he'd go baldheaded after whatever trouble was going! He'd got old Desmond written all over him!"

Tim rose impatiently.

"What would have been the good of his pushing off somewhere else? We know who's after him, and why—now! We've misjudged our man, and now we've got to find Peter! I honestly didn't think they'd have the nerve to take him out of his own house—under the circus!" His eyes gleamed as he looked up at Moller again. "And now I'm going to find him, even if I have to comb every place in Maxport!"

Moller touched his arm as he turned.

"Take young Sparrow! He knows this place inside out."

Tim nodded briefly, and a moment later was gone. Moller looked after him wistfully, but he couldn't go. Someone had to keep things going in the foundry, and he had a stiff task before him to get the men back!

Meanwhile, Tim had picked Sparrow up on the fringe of the crowd outside. The little goalie's face was pinched with misery, and he turned a pair of dull eyes as Tim touched his shoulder. The disappearance of Peter Frazer affected him more than most things.

INTRODUCTION.

Peter Frazer, a struggling youngster of eighteen, straight from a public school, arrives in the squalid industrial city of Maxport to take over his strange legacy from his dead uncle—Frazer's Iron Foundry. Even before reaching his new home, Peter falls into the hands of a gang of ruffians led by a scarred man, and barely escapes with his life. At the Works the youngster learns from his manager, Mr. Dimmock, that this gang have brought Frazer to the brink of ruin, and with grim determination Peter sets out to smash them.

At first he finds even his own men hostile; but when once he has won them over the scarred man and his followers are practically beaten. Meanwhile, business for the foundry begins to improve, but Peter, not content, interviews Sir James Fossett, the mayor of Maxport, and secures huge contracts that set Frazer's on the road to prosperity.

At length, when every one of the scarred man's plots have failed, the gang, hunted and half-starved, grow desperate. Granger outlines a bold yet simple plan for "getting" Peter Frazer, and they decide to make their last effort within twenty-four hours. The following night Peter and Mr. Dimmock are taking their ease before the fire at Manston when the electric light suddenly snaps out, and there comes a low, fierce command from a masked figure in the middle of the room: "Up with 'em!" Then, while the young iron-master is kept helpless by the menacing revolver, two other men jerk Mr. Dimmock into his own study.

(Now read on.)

Tim took him by the arm and led him out of the crush; and in a quiet spot, spoke quickly and abruptly.

When he had finished, Sparrow stared at him, and a tiny ray of hope began to dawn in his eyes. He gripped Tim's hand feverishly.

"We've got to find him!" he muttered, from the bottom of his heart. "We've just got to!"

Throughout the long heartbreaking day that followed the mumbled words left the youngster's lips over and over again, till they sounded like a prayer.

"We've got to find him—we've just got to!"

Many strange and ugly places they slunk into during the day, in sordid alleys and filthy, reeking cellars that Sparrow knew. No one ventured to question them—Tim, with his fierce, level stare, and his right hand never far from his coat pocket, and Sparrow, who would have fought like a cornered lynx anyone who tried to hinder their search!

But, although they combed slumland and the docks, above and below ground, and Tim broke off every now and then to phone Inspector Button, not a trace, not a sign of Peter Frazer did they find. It was as though the earth had swallowed him.

Nor, though they tried desperately, did they pick up the trail of Granger's old gang.

Nearly exhausted, tired and hopeless in mind and body, they drifted finally to the dockside and dropped wearily to the stones.

"We've got to find him!" droned Sparrow mechanically; but presently his tousled head dropped heavily, and he sat limp and beaten.

No less tired, his thin face a mask out of which two bright eyes shone restlessly, Tim sat staring down the twisted alleyway before them.

They had searched everywhere, the long passage and the sunken cellar, out of which he had rescued Peter from drowning when he had first come to Maxport, and even the deserted beer-house, closed by police orders, that had masked the entrance to the warren below.

In his short career, Tim had sought for men in strange places, in ghettos and the crowded cities of Canada and the States; and he would not confess that this ramshackle old English slum had beaten him!

Peter was somewhere in slumland! Inspector Button was positive of that. But where?

Now he was tired and Sparrow was whacked. A rest was of absolute necessity! They could still go on searching afterwards.

At that moment, shuffling steps came from a watchman's hut, and an old man came towards them, peering belligerently with short-sighted eyes. He was a very ancient old man, indeed, and his voice quavered as he ordered them along.

"What be doin' 'ere!" he shrilled. "Goo on wi' ye, d'ye hear? None o' y' varmints can lark round while ole Marks is 'ere!"

Tim looked up alertly at the pugna-cious old chap.

"It's all right, dad," he said soothingly. "We're only tired! So you're ole Marks!"

"I'm ole Marks!" said the ancient proudly. "What's wrong with the boy?"

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"Tired," said Tim, his bright eyes on the old man's lined face. "We've been searching for Peter Frazer!"

"Have 'ee, now?" shrilled old Marks, relaxing a little. "Friends of his'n, are ye? Ah, a fine lad—a fine lad! He's gone, they tell me. Bolted, some 'un said—but I shut his mouth, I tell 'ee!"

"Friend of yours, too?" asked Tim. He was more tired than he thought, and didn't want to shift yet.

The old watchman swelled importantly. "I was I fished un out of that!" he quavered, nodding at the swirling river. "An 'e thanked me—ay, like a gent arterwards!"

Tim nodded. He remembered having heard that it was old Marks the watchman who had found Peter after his escape from Peterson's ship.

The old man, his fierceness forgotten, shuffled nearer still, glad of someone to talk to. He became garrulous.

"His uncle was a man, too," he went on. "A proper gent! Knew what he wanted and got it, he did!"

Edging over to a bollard, he sat down slowly, folding his gnarled hands over his stick the while he stared at Tim through the fading light.

"I mind when he first built yon foundry!" he mused. "Came back to Maxport from furrin' parts. Maxport wasn't in the iron trade, rec'ly—that's farther north—but he was full o' notions he'd picked up in America, and he ups and builds this foundry!"

Tim had switched his thoughts back to the day's fruitless search and was barely listening to the old man. The river lapped at the old dock, stars began to appear, and the old watchman, happy with an audience, rambled on.

"Folks laughed at un—but 'ee didn't care, look 'ee! He couldn't find no place to build his works, so at last, d'ye know what he ups and does, lad?"

"No!" mumbled Tim absently.

"He ups and builds out 'ere on the marshes! 'River's 'andy, land's cheap, fresh air for the men, says 'e, and so 'e buys the ole Abbey ruins!"

"What?"

Tim's explosive question made the old man jump.

"Don't 'ee shout, b'y! 'E buys what's left o' the poor ole Abbey. Folks cried out, but 'e didn't care! 'Foundry's better'n ruins!' says 'e. 'Ruins don't make work—foundry does! The foundations'll do for my foundry, the stream'll come in handy for a dock, and the lads can play on the green! So 'e builds his foundry and told Abbey goes out like a headstrong man 'e was!"

And old Marks chuckled and wheezed again. But Tim was not amused. Instead, he sat bolt upright, and his eyes never left the old man's face.

A flock of new ideas raced through his head. This was the first time he had ever heard of the old Abbey. So the foundry stood in its place, its stream was the cinder-grimed drain, and where the monks had once paced devoutly, Frazer's team played football!

Suddenly he bent forward and touched the old watchman's hand.

"Most old Abbeys had cellars and passages underground!" he hinted gently. "Did you ever hear of passages under this Abbey, Mr. Marks?"

"Ear of 'em!" shrilled the ancient, so triumphantly that Tim sprang to his feet. "Why, lad, I played in 'em when I was a b'y! Why, all round yonder's just 'oneycombed with passages. Under the marshes, lad! Just 'oneycombed!"

"What a fool I am!" cried Tim, jumping to his feet excitedly.

He bent and thumped Sparrow's tired shoulders.

"Sparrow, where did Granger's lot

disappear the night they tried to bust the galvanising bath? Get up, for the love of Mike!"

Heedless of the startled old watchman rocking on his bollard, he bent down and fairly yanked Sparrow to his feet.

"Got to find him!" mumbled the lad dully.

"We've done it—I bet we've done it!" chortled Tim, and without another word he was off along the dock towards the foundry at top speed, Sparrow following open-mouthed in his wake.

Found!

THE moment Tim reached the foundry he hurried to find Moller. A few words jerked over his shoulder sent Sparrow off to collect a trusty squad for emergencies, and the first men he bumped into were the Macdonalds.

To them he gasped out some of the day's adventures, and Tim Osborne's slender hope, and without a word the giant Scotsmen wheeled and vanished.

Thus, when a few minutes later Tim and Moller appeared in the dark yard with powerful torches in their hands, practically the whole of Frazer's football team stood in a quiet, ominous group in the black shadow of the wall!

Those who were not on the night shift the Scotsmen had found in the gymnasium. Silent, tense with hope and excitement, and every man armed with some sort of weapon, they were as tough a crowd of fighting men as could have been found in Maxport!

But there was no trace of excitement about Moller or Tim. They set about their programme quietly and methodically, as though searching in the dark for a hidden trap in a great muddy foundry yard was everyday work.

Everything in the yard was in darkness; only away across the football field gleamed a solitary light from Manston, telling them that Mr. Dimmock was indoors.

Moller turned to the silent group of ironmen.

"Mullins, Haggerty, Hammond! Out on the field. Keep quiet, stand still, and warn me if anyone comes! Any-one, mind!"

The three went off, and the search was on.

To the men watching it was a difficult task to keep themselves in hand as they saw two pools of light quarter the ground foot by foot, and heard the tap, tap of Tim's hammer as he sounded the path for the passage beneath.

Gradually they worked along the wall. Now they were at the corner—no result! Baker's huge fist tightened on his bar of iron and he fumed with impatience, but neither of the patient searchers turned a hair.

Then came the open yard and the dumps, with the marsh breeze blowing stiffly into their faces. Tim flicked his light round cautiously. Only the great long mound of coal gleamed in the ray, crouched like a great beast against the foundry wall!

"Rats!" His light snapped out. It was his first sign of disappointment.

"Wait!"

Moller's voice electrified them. His light began suddenly to waver over the coal-mound. Tim's followed.

The ironmen held their breath, then—

"Look, Tim!"

Between the wall and the slope of the mound was a space just big enough for a man to walk. It was one of the strictest foundry regulations that a big dump must never be allowed to lean flush against a wall in case the wall collapsed.

Both lights shone down the tiny black alley.

"There!" growled Moller softly. Tim whistled.

"Someone's been behind there recently!"

"Ay! Just what caught my eye!"

"One of the kids larking about?"

Moller shook his head.

"No one in a foundry is ever fool enough to lark about between a big dump and a wall!"

There was a significant silence.

"I'm going in!"

"Careful!" grunted Moller, and cast an apprehensive eye upward. If that moment was started and slid in towards the wall—

But Tim was already in. They heard the coal rustle under his cautious steps, and saw his light go in farther until it stopped suddenly. Flattened against the wall, Moller watched him.

The light deep down in the mound swayed about, on the ground, up the wall, on the ground again, up on the mound.

There came a stifled exclamation from the little alley, then the sound of boots clambering recklessly up the sliding coal! The little group outside held their breaths with fear, and Moller's mouth opened in a warning, but before he could say a word Tim came out.

"Bullseye!" he gloated.

The men swarmed round him. Tim held something in his left hand, and he turned his torch on to it.

There was a triumphant cry from Baker as he saw what Tim was holding. For in the light, dirty with coal and bedraggled, Tim held a silken scarf, green, black, and gold—the Old Clay-tonian colours!

Footsteps sounded. It was Haggerty. "Thought I heard some excitement," said the outside-left. "Found anything?"

"This," whispered Moller. "You seen anything?"

"Not a soul!" declared Haggerty. "Mr. Dinmook's light's just gone out, but he's gone into Maxport."

"We're wasting time," said Tim suddenly.

Next instant he was down the alley again, crouching low, his light flooding every inch of the ground. Within a matter of seconds he came upon the trap, and grunted with satisfaction as he saw bootmarks round it. Moller joined him, and they whispered together.

"The twine, Sparrow!" breathed the engineer.

"Here it is!" Sparrow answered, and pushing down the alley, passed a huge ball of twine over Moller's shoulder into Tim's hands.

Bending together, they opened the trap. A gust of cold, damp air blew up, and they listened intently, for the trapdoor had creaked a bit as it came up. There was no alarm, however.

Tim took the string and looped an end round his wrist. Then he passed the ball to his father, tested his light, patted his right pocket, and, without

another word, lowered himself into the dark trap.

Moller watched him go, his face set, as Tim Osborne disappeared into the earth for all the world like a ferret into a rabbit warren.

And as far as Granger's gang was concerned he was as dangerous.

His feet hit the stone flags with the faintest of thuds, and then he was on his way below ground into darkness blacker than night. He dared not use his torch, for he had no idea yet where the enemy might be, but there was a sixth sense that Tim Osborne possessed, a developed sense of touch that stood him in good stead; and silent as a shadow he felt his way onwards.

He was in a long passage. At first he could hear a muffled drumming coming through the earth from the foundry above, but soon he turned an angle and the noise stopped as though a door had been closed.

Left hand forward, right hand in pocket, he edged along. Still not a sound. He had counted his paces, and so far had turned two corners. His outstretched left hand came sharply on to another corner, and at that he stopped dead.

Somewhere, only a pace or so round that corner, a man was leaning idly against the wall. Tim could hear the soft sound of his regular breathing.

How far off was he? Tim knew the man was off his guard, for a man on the alert breathes hard and short.

Tim's wrist jerked twice. Up above, crouched and cramped against the coal-dump, Moller caught the signal.

Down below, Tim took a bold chance. He could not use his light; pot-shots in the dark with himself as the illuminated target did not appeal to his sense of humour.

So he bunched himself, drew his gun, and whipped round the corner and into his man in a twinkling of a second.

The unfortunate sentry was the Irishman, Murphy. Waiting there in the dark, his thoughts had been far away, but they came back with a rush as Tim leapt at him, thrust an arm across his body, and nearly pushed a gun-barrel right down the frightened man's throat!

(Young Tim's determined to rescue Peter Frazier at all costs, chums, and he'll take a lot of stopping, believe me! There are thrills galore in next week's gripping instalment. Don't miss a line of it, whatever you do!)

JUSTLY REWARDED!

(Continued from page 15.)

Now what do you think has transpired as a result of that meeting?"

"Give it up, sir!" grinned Barleigh.

"You may well do so, for you'd never guess in a month of Sundays!" said Sir Frederick. "Let me relieve your burning curiosity at once! Briefly, my esteemed colleague, Colonel Fiery Sparkes has been in communication with the War Office, and they have instructed him to purchase the patent rights of Clevercove's invention for ten thousand pounds!"

For a minute, the Skool could hardly grasp the meaning of Sir Frederick's words. When they did so, cheer after cheer rang out, while Clevercove himself stood staring at the Chairman, almost unable to believe his good fortune.

As for the Head, he almost collapsed when he realised that he had been going to flog a junior worth ten thousand pounds. He went up to Clevercove with a fawning, grovelling look in his face, apologized profusely and shook hands with him before anyone could say him neigh.

Little remains to be told. On signing a form, Clevercove received from Colonel Fiery Sparkes the sum of ten thousand pounds in notes, silver, and copper. This sum he placed to the credit of his account at the tuck-shop, so that there was no danger that Clevercove would go short of grub for some time to come.

To sallybrate Clevercove's success, Sir Frederick, Funguss, arranged with the Head for the Skool to be given a day's holiday. This wasn't so good as Jack Jolly & Co. had hoped for; but still, a day wasn't to be sneezed at, and the Fourth accepted it with gratitude.

Naturally, the Head made a grato fuss of Clevercove for a time. But the young inventor was wise to the Head's little trick by now, so that the greedy, cunning old fogey didn't get so much as a doanutt out of the deal.

As for Clevercove's great invention, that is now the property of the War Office, who will doubtless plial it away in the arkives at Whitehall.

THE END.

(Next week's MAGNET will contain the first of a new series of St. Sam's yarns, entitled: "FAGGING FOR THE FIFTH!" Make certain of a real good laugh by ordering your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

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R. ALFRED BIRCHMALL, the headmaster of St. Sam's, tramped into the Fourth Form room, wearing a scowl upon his scollery dile.

That scowl was not visible to the Fourth. As a matter of fact, his scollery dile wasn't visible either. The only thing belonging to the Head that was visible at present was a birch-rod which appeared to be suspended in mid-air, but was really being grasped in the Head's invisible hand!

An amazing state of affairs egg-sisted at St. Sam's. Clevercoove of the Fourth, the inventor of St. Sam's, had hidden away his apparatus for making people invisible, just at the very time when the Head was in an invisible state. The result was that Dr. Birchmhall was still wandering about without the means of making himself into a visible object. By this time he was in a state of blue funk. He realised that unless Clevercoove's brainy invention was recovered, he might never be seen any more, and the prospect was not a pleasant one. Dr. Birchmhall was not a pleasant one. Dr. Birchmhall was the kind of gentleman who liked to be seen about now and again. Apart from that, he knew that he could never keep his job if he remained invisible. How could he strike terror into the hearts of his pupils with his majestic scowls and sinistral grins when those egg-spressions couldn't be seen? It was impossible, and the Head knew it. Hence his state of blue funk.

"Boys!"

It was Dr. Birchmhall's voice. Mr. Lickham, the Fourth Form master, stopped lecturing on the fourtheoming round of the English Cup-tie, and nodded to the birch-rod.

"Good-morning, sir! You're looking well this morning," he remarked humbly.

The Head glared an invisible glare. "I wish you wouldn't joke about serious subjects, Lickham!" he growled. "Blessed if I can see anything to be funny about!"

"Ha, ha! I can't actually see anything funny myself, sir," admitted Mr. Lickham, with a grin. "But I egg-spect you're just as big a clown as ever, if only we could see you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth. The Head obtained silence by rushing at the hilarious juniors and hitting them right and left for a few seconds. When this maneuver had quelled the outbreak of laughter, he addressed the Fourth as follows:

"Boys, you see in me a man who cannot be seen. By an unfortunate accident which has not, at the moment, been satisfactorily egg-splained, the gadget which I use for making myself visible has vanished. Consequently, I am condemned at present to walk about in this unhappy state."

"Hard cheese, sir!"

"It is hard cheese, my boys, and no mistake!" murmured the Head, with a sad shake of his invisible napper. "Now, on thinking the matter over, I've come to the conclusion that everything points to someone in this Form knowing something about the missing apparatus. Taking it all round, you're a cheeky lot, and putting them two and two together and making them five, I should say that the culprit is to be found in this here Form, if anywhere."

"Oh, sir!"

"So I've come along to see you and throw myself on your mercy," went on Dr. Birchmhall, his voice becoming ringing and fawning all of a sudden. "Unless I can be seen soon, my pitie will be a despit one. The Governors are coming to St. Sam's. The MASTER LIBRARY—No. 1,145.



JUSTLY REWARDED!

By DICKY NUGENT.



*With apologies
Pound notes to left of him,
Pound notes around him literally fluttered.*

*There's not to reason why—
Just meet the lucky guy—
Whose "crest" of bread—both sides is buttered!*

to-day, and they're bound to kick up a dust about it. They may even give me what is vulgarly termed the sack, but which refined people like myself call the bullet. Imagine that, boys! St. Sam's without Alf Birchmhall in charge! Wouldn't it be simply too rotten for words?"

"Jolly good idea, I think!" said Frank Fearless, in his usual blunt way. The Head snorted. "If that's how you think, Fearless, I suggest you give your think-box a rest! St. Sam's without my self is impossible, and I'm not going to allow it, any way! So I've simply got to change back again somehow. Now, who'll tell me where Clevercoove's apparatus has been hidden?"

Clevercoove himself stood up and glared grimly in the direction of the Head's birch-rod. "That's all very well, sir," he remarked. "But you've got to remember that when you could change about as you liked, you led the Skool a pretty dance then."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the Fourth. The invisible Head gulped. "Possibly I did, my boys. But I am more than sorry now. I promise you it won't occur again; and, just to prove I mean to play the game, I'll chuck away this instrument of torcher."

So saying, the Head flung away his birch, which sailed gracefully across the room, to collide violently with Mr. Lickham's nose. "Yaroooooo!" roared Mr. Lickham, clapping his damaged nose in agony; but the Head ignored him and went on:

"There, boys! Now you've seen I mean what I say, and I hope you'll tell me where Clevercoove's invention is. Who's going to be sporty enuff?"

Clevercoove egg-schanged a wink with Jack Jolly. It was the moment the heroes of the Fourth had been waiting for. "Well, sir—" began the young inventor, turning towards the invisible Head again. "You know where your missing apparatus may be found, Clevercoove?" asked the Head eagerly. "If so, my dear boy, tell me, and I will be your pal for life!"

"Matter of fact, sir," he said, "I do know where the apparatus is concealed at the moment. There's only one thing to be settled before I reveal the secret to you—" "What's that?" asked the Head. "The Fourth bent the invisible Head gave a violent start. "C-compensation?" he stammered. "You see, sir," said Clevercoove calmly, "since you collared my invention, and started making yourself invisible, we've had to endure even more trouble than we usually get from you."

"Hear, hear!" came a harty yell from the Fourth. "You've got into the habit of eaves-dropping in the Fourth passidage, and wallowing chaps who happened to mention you're a beastly rotter, or any other obvious truth like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And in many other ways you've been an awful cad, sir," continued Clevercoove. "Now, I think, under the circumstances, that we're entitled to compensation. Well, I'll tell you what I suggest."

"I suggest an extra week's holiday and an enormous free feed for the whole Form!"

For a minute there was silence. Then a wild roar of cheering broke out. And while the boys cheered they could hear down the front of the class, nashing his teeth with baffled rage.

"What about it, sir?" asked Jack Jolly at last.

The Head's restless pacing stopped, and the boys heard him scratching his nose as though wondering what to do. At last the Head emitted a faint chuckle.

"Right-ho, Clevercoove! I agree!" he said.

"You agree to stand us all a feed and give us an extra week's holiday?" asked Clevercoove. "Dell it!" came the Head's voice. "Now tell me where your selfy-chaired electro chair may be found, so that I can become visible again before the Governors arrive!"

"Very well, sir. As a matter of fact, it's up in the topmost box-room, answered Clevercoove. "Like me to fetch it down for you, sir?"

"Thank's awfully, Clevercoove! Don't be long!"

Clevercoove grinned, and quitted the Form-room.

Within five minutes he was back again, dragging behind him the famous electric chair. Immediately he came through the doorway there was a clatter of hob-nailed boots across the Form-room floor as the invisible Head made a rush to get into the chair.

With a crash, he landed in the seat, and there was a click as he pressed the control into its socket.

Instantly Dr. Birchmhall became visible again. The Fourth saw him appear like a flash from nowhere, grinning all over his dille, as though he was very pleased to be a reckermisable object again.

"My giddy aunt! It's good to be back again!" grinned the Head. "I'll buy you a bottle of jinger-pop to selfy-brate this, later on, Lickham!"

"Thanks very much, sir!" grinned the master of the Fourth.

"And as for you, Clevercoove—" "When do we get our feed and holiday, sir?" asked Clevercoove.

Dr. Birchmhall grinned. "Never!" was his surprising answer. "I suggest a very surprising answer."

"No-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!" said the Head, displaying his usual ignorance of spelling.

"But—but you said—" "Poo! What does that matter?" asked the Head, with a careless snap of his fingers. "I was in a bit of a dilemma, and I had to get out of it somehow. Now that I am out of it, my boy, the position is very different, as you are soon going to learn."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" asked Clevercoove patteringly.

Dr. Birchmhall farted gaily. "Simply this: Instead of getting holidays and feeds, the Fourth are going to get half a dozen detentions. And instead of having the honour and glory of having secured grate benefits for your colleagues, you are going to be publicly dogged for gross disportment!"

"You—you—" "You—"

"Knuff!" snapped the Head. "See that this cheeky ladd is taken up to the punishment-room, will you, Lickham! And have the Skool assembled for two-thirty! Cheeostski!"

And the Head stalked off with majestic dignity.

"Hear, hear!" yelled a crowd of Fourth-Formers, led by Jack Jolly & Co. "Everybody knows you've been out truck-rattling day after day, when you've made yourself invisible. Then, again you—"

But Dr. Birchmhall was not going to listen to any more of this libellous talk. He held up his hand in a majestic gesture. "Stop!" he thundered. "I forbid the banns—that is to say, I forbid you to utter another syllable! Fossil! Where's Fossil?"

"Which I'm 'ere, sir!" growled Fossil, the porter, waking up, with a start.

"Kindly take Clevercoove on your shoulders while I birch him black and blue, will you? I shan't be more than an hour or so!"

"Suttin'ly, sir!" said Fossil, touching his fourlock, and hoisting Clevercoove into the required position.

Dr. Birchmhall grasped his birch with both hands and raised it over his head like a sledge-hammer, ready to strike the first blow.

But before he could do so there came a sudden and dramatic interruption to the proceedings.

The door at the side of the platform was kicked open, and amid terrific eggstement from the assembled Skool, a person entered consisting of the principal Governors of St. Sam's!

Sir Frederick Fungus, the Chairman, was the leader of the newcomers. He seemed rather surprised at what was going on.

"Well, Birchmhall!" he cried gruffly. "Engaged in punishing this boy for some dreadful crime?"

"Hem! I—I—" stammered the Head. "Ay, ay! Well, boys will be boys, you know!" remarked Sir Frederick sagely. "Anyway, you'd better postpone it for a moment. We've called on important business, haven't we, gentlemen?"

"Oh, rather!" came a chorus of deep, bass voices from the rest of the Governors.

"There is someone in the Skool by the name of Clevercoove," intimated Sir Frederick, tugging at his misosches as he spoke. "I wonder if we might have a word with him?"

"Peznu! Sir Frederick!" said the Head. "Clevercoove is the very boy I was just about to wallop when you entered!"

Sir Frederick Fungus recoiled as from a blow.

"You were going to wallop the most brilliant genius St. Sam's has ever per-jooiced?" he gasped, in amazement. "Why, you must be potty! Are you not aware that this wonderful youth has invented a machine for making men invisible?"

"Fah!" "You're daft!" sneered the baronet. "Release him at once, and I will address the Skool."

The Head hurriedly ordered Fossil to lower the inventor of the Fourth to the ground. When this had been done, the Chairman of the Governors addressed the Skool.

"Boys," he bellowed, "you must all have heard of the marvellous invention created by your brany skool-fellow, Clarence Clevercoove. What I have to say concerns that invention."

A thrill of interest ran through the serried ranks of the St. Sam's boys. "Some days ago," continued Sir Frederick, "word of this wonderful invention reached my ears. I was, naturally, delited to hear that St. Sam's sheltered such a genius as Clevercoove, and I called a meeting of the Governors to acquaint them with the news."

(Continued on page 28)

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