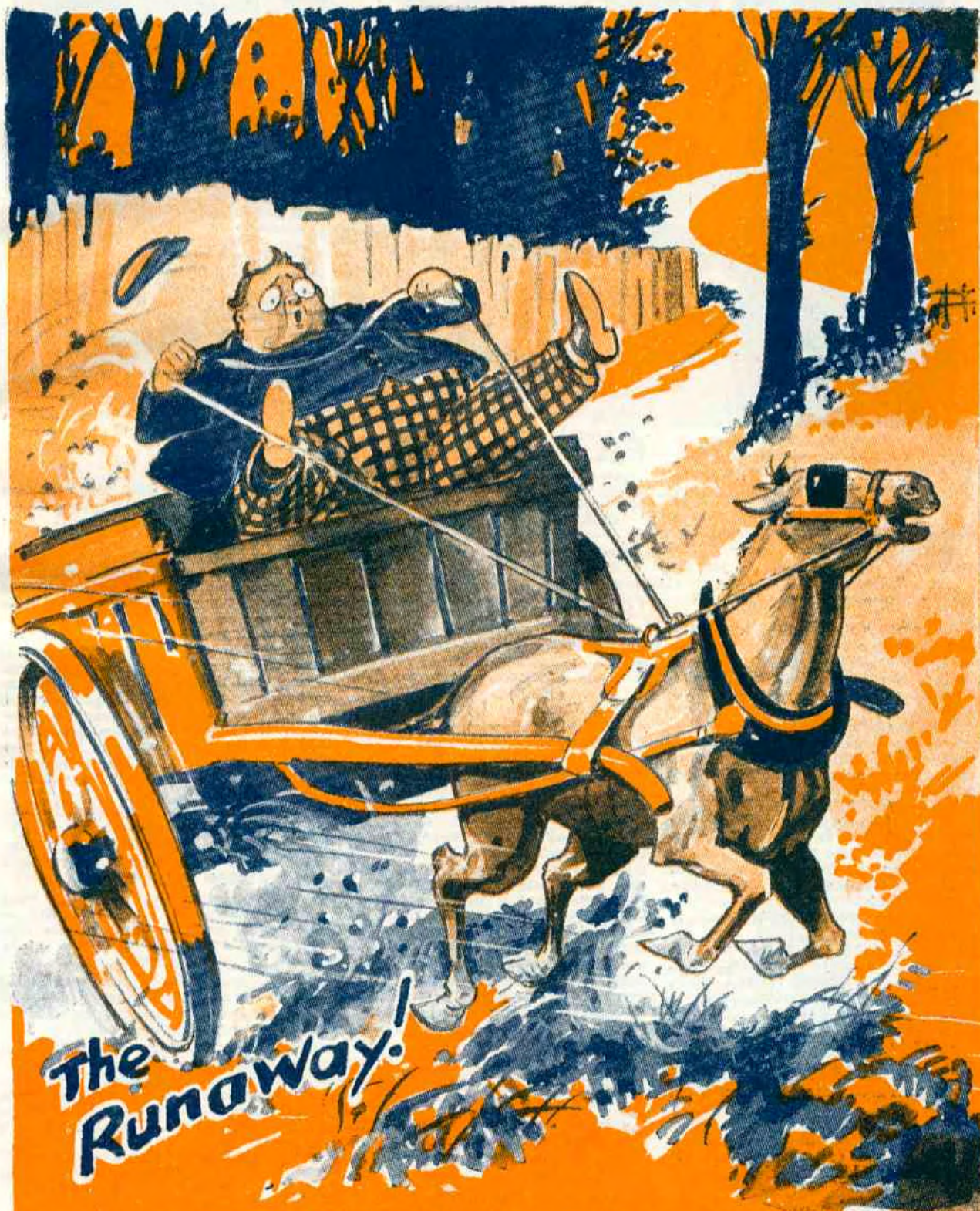
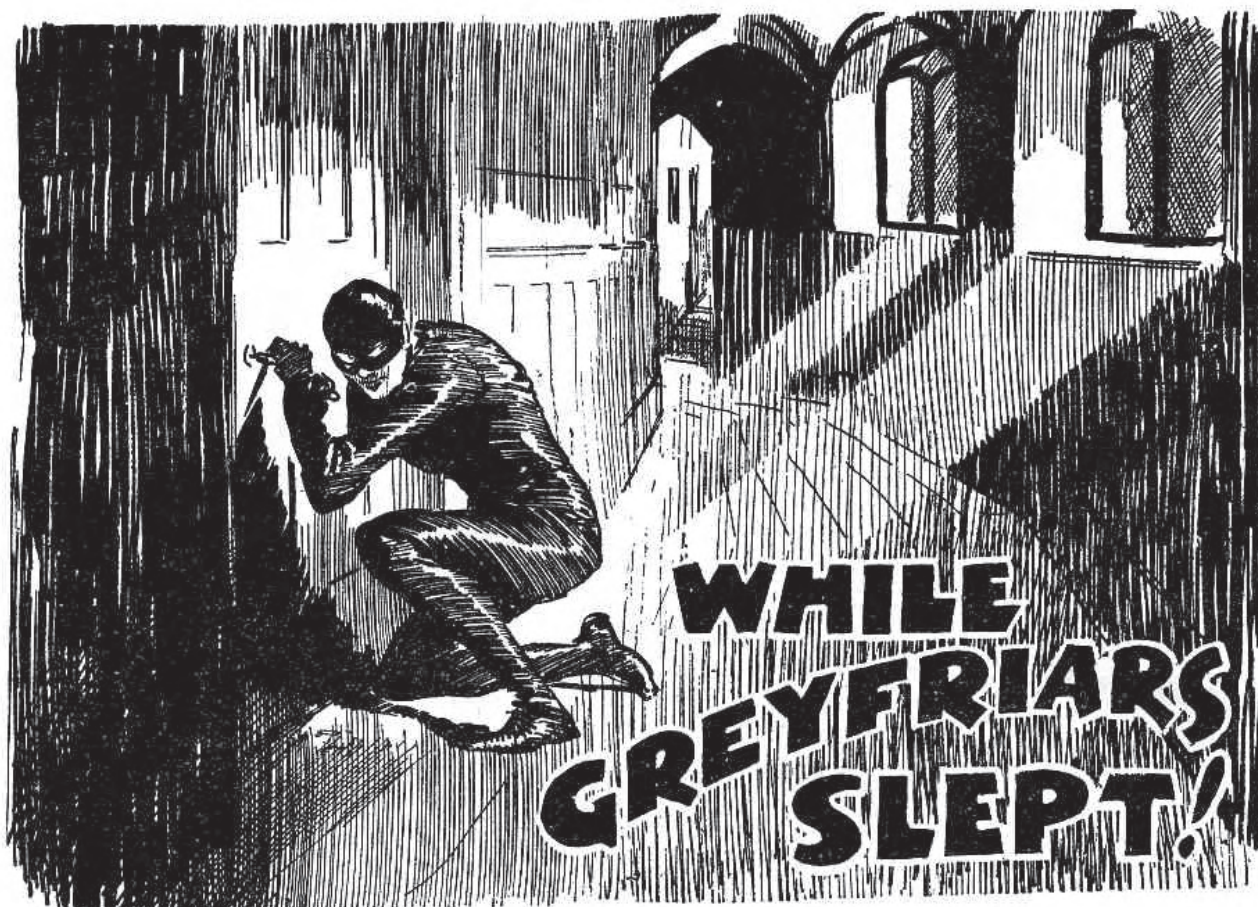


"WHILE GREYFRIARS SLEPT!" Thrilling School and
Adventure Story—Inside!

The **MAGNET** 2^D





BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"POOR old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.

"The poorfulness of the esteemed old Bunter is terrifiol!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"He asked for it!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"A fellow doesn't always want what he asks for," remarked Frank Nugent. Harry Wharton & Co. were sympathetic.

They were standing in the quad, below the windows of the Remove Form-room. One of those windows was open, and framed in it was the fat face of Billy Bunter.

The expression on that fat face was deeply woebegone. Seldom had Billy Bunter been seen to look so lugubrious.

Any fellow who could have beheld his fat face, at that moment, without feeling sympathetic must have had a heart of stone.

The Famous Five of the Remove were anything but stony-hearted. So they felt sympathetic. So far as sympathy was any use to Billy Bunter, they were prepared to hand it out. Unfortunately, sympathy, though grateful and comforting in itself, did not improve matters very much for the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, I'm jolly well not going to stand it," said Bunter, blinking down dismally through his big spectacles at the sympathetic five. "It's awful, you know! I thought we were in for a good time when Quelch fell ill and was laid up in sanny. But the new beak's a worse beast than Quelch. It

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almost makes a fellow wish that Quelch had never got ill, you know."

"Quelch is on the mend," said Harry Wharton. "I hear that Lagden's only at Greyfriars for another week."

"But I've got detentions every day!" groaned Bunter. "How's a fellow to stand it for a week—even if Quelch lets me off when he comes back. And he may not. He may take Lagden's word for it that I've done something to deserve it, you know."

"And haven't you?" ejaculated Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—" "You asked for it, you know," said Johnny Bull. "In fact, you sat up on your hind legs and begged for it."

"Oh, really, Bull—" "The begfulness was terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the sympathise is enormous and preposterous."

"Detained an hour every day, and every half-holiday for the rest of the term," groaned Bunter. "That's what they call justice. I'd appeal to the Head, you know, but a headmaster always backs up a Form master. I—I believe Dr. Locke would take Lagden's word before mine. He's doubted my word before," said Billy Bunter sorrowfully. "Otherwise, I'd go to him at once and explain that I never did it."

"But you did do it!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The Famous Five grinned. The fact that he had "done it" seemed to Bunter a trifle light as air. But really the other fellows could not blame Mr. Lagden, the new master of the Remove, for having come down rather heavy.

The new master was a young man, given to cycling, and he kept a push-bike

in the bike shed. That bike had been found with the tyres slit and gashed—when Mr. Lagden went to take it for a spin.

Bunter felt that it was most unjust that suspicion should fall upon him. It was true that Mr. Lagden had caned him for not handing in lines that were long overdue, and that Bunter had confided to all the Remove his intention of making the beast sit up somehow. It was true that Gosling had seen him going into the bikeshed on Saturday afternoon, and that Bunter denied having been anywhere near the bikeshed, explaining—variously—that he had been in his study writing lines, that he had been down to Courtfield to the pictures, and that he had been watching the football on Big Side.

Perhaps it was not surprising that Mr. Lagden declined to believe him.

At all events, Bunter was found guilty, "whopped," and sentenced to detentions for the rest of the term.

And as Bunter was especially weak in the classics, Mr. Lagden kindly set him Latin exercises to fill in the long hours of detention—which was really like adding insult to injury.

"Picking on a fellow, you know," said the fat Owl, blinking dismally at the juniors under the window. "What a fellow wants is justice!"

"But that's what you've got, old fat bean!" said Frank Nugent. "Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Well, we've got to get over to Lantham," said Johnny Bull. "We've listened to the tale of woe; now let's get off!"

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, I'm

not going to stand it! I'm going to cut detention!"

Harry Wharton shook his head. "Better not," he said. "It's only asking for more!"

"I'm jolly well not going to stick in the Form-room on a half-holiday," hooted Bunter. "Besides, the beast is giving me an exercise in deponent verbs. He may be here any minute with it!"

"Then you'd better get back to your desk," said Harry. "If he catches you talking to fellows from the window you'll get six!"

"Let's get off!" said Johnny Bull. "Hold on, you fellows! I say, Lagden will be going out this afternoon—he goes out every half-holiday on his push-bike. You fellows stay in and keep an eye on him—"

"What?" "And come round and tell me when he's gone out, and I'll chance it," said Bunter.

"You fat ass! He mayn't go out for hours—if he goes out at all."

"That's all right! Keep on the watch till he goes—"

Bob Cherry chuckled. "Anybody keen on spending a half-holiday, hanging around and watching Lagden?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "The answer is in the esteemed negative!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—" "You fat duffer, we're biking over to Lantham to see a League match," said Harry Wharton, "and we couldn't help you break detention, anyhow. Look here, get back to your desk before Lagden comes to the Form-room. You're asking for more trouble."

"Oh, really Wharton—" "Bunter!" came a deep voice, from someone within, invisible to the juniors in the quad.

It was the voice of Mr. Lagden, the new master of the Remove. Evidently he had arrived in the Form-room with that exercise in deponent verbs.

"Oh lor!" Billy Bunter disappeared from the window. But the Famous Five heard his faint squeak.

"I—I say, sir, I—I wasn't looking out of the window. I wasn't speaking to anybody in the quad, sir. There isn't anybody under the window, sir."

"Time there wasn't, anyhow," murmured Bob Cherry. "Hook it, before we get spotted."

And the Famous Five faded out of the picture on their highest gear. Speaking to a fellow under detention was against the rules, and, deeply as they sympathised with the unfortunate Owl, they did not want to share his fate. By the time Mr. Lagden reached the window and looked out the Famous Five had vanished into space.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Luck!

BILLY BUNTER blinked dismally at the new master of the Remove as he slumped down at his desk. The man did not look a beast, by any means. He was young—quite twenty years younger than Quelch—he was good-looking, he had a genial smile. But he was a beast, all the same. He was, so to speak, of the beasts beastly, for he was interfering seriously with the fat comfort of William George Bunter, the most important person within the wide limits of the universe.

It was a bright afternoon, with quite

a touch of spring in the air, and though Billy Bunter did not feel very keenly the call of the open spaces, he loathed spending the afternoon in the dusky old Form-room all on his lonely own.

All he had to keep him company was an exercise in deponent verbs; those irritating verbs which are passive in form but active in meaning; the kind of verbs that Bunter detested more than any other verbs.

Really, it was awful, and it was no wonder that Billy Bunter grumbled and grouched. When Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was taken ill it had not seemed possible to Bunter that the time would come when he would yearn for Quelch to return to his old duties. Now he longed for Quelch to come back. On his looks, Mr. Lagden seemed a much nicer man than Quelch; but the fat Owl had learned by sad experience that Lagden could not be taken at face value.

"I have prepared an exercise for you, Bunter!" said Mr. Lagden, with a severe look at the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh lor!" "What? What did you say, Bunter?"

"I—I said thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter. "It—it's very kind of you, sir. I—I'm rather fond of—of deponent verbs."

"This task will keep you occupied till five o'clock. At that hour you may leave the Form-room."

Like a grim shadow, the mysterious Jimmy the One—the gangster with a price on his head—steals along the darkened passages of Greyfriars, intent on silencing the one person who has learned his secret!

Bunter blinked at the exercise and suppressed a groan. Then he blinked at Mr. Lagden again. The young master looked quite good-tempered, though there was a steely gleam in his eyes that Bunter did not quite like. He resolved to try his luck with a pathetic appeal.

"I—I say, sir—" "You need say nothing, Bunter."

"Yes, sir; but I say, sir, I—I'm awfully sorry somebody cut up your tyres the other day, sir, but it wasn't me, sir—"

"That will do, Bunter."

"Yes, sir; but it really wasn't! I never went anywhere near the bikeshed on Saturday afternoon!" groaned Bunter. "I—I can prove it, sir."

"Indeed!" "You—you can ask Wharton, sir—Wharton and his friends!" groaned Bunter. "They're witnesses, sir; they saw me there—"

"What?" "I—I mean, they didn't see me there; that is, they saw me when I wasn't there!" stammered the fat Owl. "I never knew anything about it till long afterwards, sir. I—I was quite surprised. I—I never thought of puncturing your bike because you licked me, sir. Wharton said it was a dirty trick, and—and I quite agree with him, sir."

Mr. Lagden, heedless of the voice of the charmer, turned towards the door. Bunter blinked after him dolorously.

"I say, sir, just a minute—it's important!" he gasped. "I—I wanted to

get out this afternoon very particularly, sir."

Mr. Lagden had reached the door, and had his hand on it. He seemed quite deaf to Bunter.

"About poor old Flip, sir—" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Lagden turned back suddenly. "What! Who? What do you mean?"

"Flip, sir—" "Who is Flip?" snapped Mr. Lagden.

"That kid in the Second Form, sir, who disappeared a week or two ago," said Bunter. "He hasn't been found, sir, and—and I'd like to put in the afternoon looking for him, sir, if you'd let me off detention."

Mr. Lagden came back towards Bunter's desk and fixed his eyes on the fat Owl—eyes that looked more steely than ever.

"What do you mean, Bunter?" he asked quietly. "I remember the boy now; some waif who was sent to this school at the beginning of the term, I think. He disappeared, and there seems to be a suggestion that he was kidnapped—"

"Oh, there's no doubt about that, sir!" said Bunter eagerly. "He was mopped up by an awful villain called 'Jimmy the One'—a beast he had known when he was a vagrant in Puggins' Alley. He's a prisoner somewhere, sir, and I—I've been worrying about him a lot—"

"I fail to see why you should have concerned yourself about a boy in the Second Form, Bunter, who is not related to you."

"Well, sir, I was his benefactor," said the fatuous Owl. "I picked him up, a regular ragged robin, when I was staying with Mauleverer over the Christmas holidays. I got Mauly to ask his uncle to send him here and pay his fees—and all that, and make a Greyfriars chap of him. So—so he's rather under my care, sir."

"If that is true, Bunter, this boy Flip would never have been at Greyfriars at all but for you," said Mr. Lagden, with a very strange look at the fat Owl.

"Exactly, sir. In my generous way I—"

"Even if you had intended to devote your half-holiday to looking for this boy, Bunter—which I very much doubt—you must be aware that he must have been taken to a great distance from the school. I have heard that his cap was found at Ashford, thirty miles from here."

"Some of the fellows think he mayn't be very far away, sir—"

"Nonsense! Who thinks so?" exclaimed Mr. Lagden sharply.

"I've heard Wharton and his friends talking about it, sir! They think poor old Flip isn't far away, all the same, because the detective chap Brent is still hanging about here—"

"Nonsense!" repeated Mr. Lagden.

"I—I should like to go and—and look for him, sir!" said Bunter hopefully. "Think how nice it would be, sir, if—if I found him—"

Mr. Lagden laughed.

"Very nice indeed," he agreed. "I am sure everyone would rejoice, and I should be particularly pleased. But as the matter is in the hands of a detective from Scotland Yard, Bunter, I hardly think that your assistance is needed—valuable as it would doubtless be."

Bunter realised that this was "sarc"; this beast Lagden could be as sarcastic as old Quelch.

"I think," continued Mr. Lagden, "THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,254."

"that your time would be better spent, Bunter, in improving your knowledge of Latin verbs, which is seriously deficient. I shall expect that task to be completed when I return."

With that Mr. Lagden left the Form-room.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

Evidently there was nothing to be hoped from Lagden. Certainly, had Bunter been released from detention he would not have been likely to spend the afternoon searching for the kidnapped fag. Frowsting over a study fire, or tucking into tarts and ginger-pop at the school shop, was more in Bunter's line. It was true that Bunter had been the original cause of the little waif from Puggins' Alley coming to Greyfriars School; but it was equally true that Flip's disappearance had not caused him any undue perturbation. Billy Bunter's own troubles loomed large in his eyes; but the troubles of others he could bear with considerable fortitude.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter, blinking at his deponent verbs. "I wish Queleh was back. Oh crumbs!"

He sat at his desk till Mr. Lagden's footsteps had died away. Then he went back to the window.

Harry Wharton & Co. were gone, but Skinner of the Remove was to be seen strolling along with his hands in his pockets. The fat Owl hailed him.

"Skinner! I say, Skinner, old chap!"

Harold Skinner looked round. He grinned at the sight of the dolorous, fat face in the Form-room window. Skinner was not of a sympathetic nature.

"Hallo, old fat bean!" he said cheerily. "Going to your own funeral this afternoon? You look it."

"I'm jolly well going to cut!" said Bunter. "I say, old chap, take your bike out of the shed, will you, and leave it in the road for me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I shall have to clear off quick when I cut, you know."

"Not on my bike, I fancy!" chuckled Skinner. "What about your own jigger?"

"Well, it's punctured, and the crank's bent, and the mudguard's off, and the chain's broken, and—"

"And you'd like to serve mine the same! No takers!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Feel any better if you had a packet of toffee?" asked Skinner, groping in his pockets.

The fat face at the window brightened wonderfully.

"Yes, rather! You're a good chap, Skinner."

"One of the best!" agreed Skinner. "You think you'd feel better if you had some toffee?"

"What-ho!" said Bunter fervently.

Skinner withdrew his hands from his pockets—empty.

"Then I'm sorry I haven't any!" he said cheerfully, and walked away.

Bunter glared after him with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Beast!" he roared.

Skinner chuckled and disappeared. But Bunter did not return to his deponent verbs. Detention couldn't be helped, but looking out of window was more agreeable than Latin exercises. So Billy Bunter left his detention task untouched on his desk, and continued to adorn the Form-room window with his fat face, blinking out dismally into the sunny quad.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Detective!

"I'M chucking it!"

Billy Bunter had made up his mind.

Breaking detention meant a licking; but leaving his detention task undone meant a licking, too. So—as far as Bunter could see—it was as broad as it was long. He had not touched his task—and had no intention of touching it. Even a licking was better than two or three solid hours at deponent verbs.

The fat junior crossed to the door and blinked out into the corridor. His fat brows knitted over his spectacles at the sight of Mr. Prout, at the end of the passage, in conversation with Mr. Twigg. There was no escape that way—at present.

He grunted, and rolled back to the window.

The window was high, and Bunter was no acrobat; still, it was possible for even the fat Owl to drop from the sill to the ground. It depended on whether the coast was clear. If a master or a prefect was in sight, Bunter had to wait.

There was a heavy tread on the path that ran under the Form-room windows. Bunter blinked down at a stocky, thick-set figure, and frowned.

It was Inspector Brent, the man from Scotland Yard, who was walking below.

"The silly ass!" breathed Bunter.

Nobody else was near at hand, and Bunter waited for Mr. Brent to pass on and vanish. He passed on; but, instead of vanishing, he turned, and came pacing back.

Bunter gave an almost homicidal blink at the top of his head.

Instead of clearing off, the man was pacing to and fro, having apparently selected that quiet spot for a quiet stroll.

"Blow him!" hissed Bunter.

He debated in his fat mind whether to chance it. John Brent was at the school to search for Flip, the missing fag of the Second Form, and the kidnapper who had spirited him away. He had nothing to do with the boys. It was not his business to intervene if a fellow under detention dropped from a Form-room window. Most likely he would take no notice—he looked like a man who could mind his own affairs.

Still, there was a doubt. Bunter watched his passing and repassing head, and longed to see him go.

Quite unconscious of the fat Owl, Mr. Brent continued to pace to and fro, perhaps thinking out the problem that had brought him from Scotland Yard, certainly not thinking how very much he was in the way of a fat junior detained in the Remove-room.

A quarter of an hour passed, and Mr. Brent was still there. Bunter shook a fat fist at the crown of his hat, and retired from the window to take another blink along the passage.

The plump figure of Prout was still in view, still in conversation, at a distance. Mr. Twigg was shifting from one leg to the other, and from the other to the one, like so many of Mr. Prout's victims when he stopped them for a chat. But Prout's booming voice was still going strong, and Twigg had no chance of getting away—and so neither had Bunter.

Once more he rolled to the window.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

The stocky form of the Scotland Yard man was no longer pacing to and fro. Bunter blinked to the right, and blinked to the left. Mr. Brent was not to be seen.

It did not occur to him to blink directly below, under the broad sill of

the window. Had he done so, he might have observed that Mr. Brent was not gone; he had only stopped his pacing, and was leaning on the wall, gazing meditatively across the quadrangle. But as his bowler-hat was below the level of the sill, and as Bunter never thought of looking there for him, he remained unobserved. A fellow couldn't think of everything.

So far as the fat Owl could see, the coast was clear.

But there was no time to waste. Some other beast might appear in the offing at any moment. A fellow who was cutting detention could not be too rapid in his movements.

Bunter crawled out cautiously on the wide, old, stone sill, shoved his fat legs over, and dropped.

John Brent, detective-inspector of Scotland Yard Criminal Investigation Department, had probably had a good many surprises in his life. But he had never been so surprised as he was now.

With his square jaw jutting, and his bushy brows knitted, he was thinking—of anything but a sudden attack from above. Two fat legs dawned on him all of a sudden, sprawling and scrambling, as Bunter heaved his podgy form over the sill. He jumped. The toe of a boot caught him in the eye, another boot clumped on his waistcoat, and John Brent gave a gurgle. He started away from the wall in utter amazement, as Bunter plumped down, and there was a startled howl from the fat junior. Bunter had expected empty space below, and he became aware that there was something alive there!

"Ooooooh!" gasped Bunter.

Bump!

Inspector Brent hardly knew what was happening.

But he knew that he sat down, suddenly and violently, on hard earth, and that something fat and flabby sprawled over him, spluttering.

"Good gad!" gasped Mr. Brent.

"Yarooooh!"

"What—what—"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter scrambled wildly up. He planted a knee on Mr. Brent's waistcoat as he rose, and the man from Scotland Yard gurgled horribly. The fat Owl was on his feet the next moment, and in a moment more he would have taken to his heels. But Mr. Brent, though almost winded, was quick to move. A hand that seemed of iron dropped on Bunter's shoulder and spun him back.

"You young rascal!" gasped Mr. Brent.

"Ooooooh! Leggo!"

"What do you mean by this?" barked Mr. Brent. "Is this a schoolboy prank, eh?"

Shake, shake, shake!

Mr. Brent had been startled and shaken and winded. He seemed annoyed. He shook the fat Owl till Bunter gasped and gurgled.

"Oooh! Leggo! It wasn't me!" gasped Bunter. "I say—Yow-ow-ow! Leggo! Oh crikey! Yowp!"

"Now, what do you mean by this?" snapped Mr. Brent. "I've a good mind to take you to your headmaster for playing such a trick!"

"Oh dear! Ow! Leggo! I wasn't!" gasped Bunter. "I never saw you! Oh crikey! Leggo my neck! How was I to know you were sticking under the window like a stuffed dummy? Ow!"

Mr. Brent gave him one of his disconcerting, penetrating glares. He ceased to shake the fat Owl, but kept a grip on his shoulder.

"Why did you drop on me from the window?" he demanded.

"Ow! I keep on telling you I never saw you!" gasped Bunter. "Besides, you ain't a Form master! Look here! You let me alone! I'm not breaking detention!"

"What?"

"I'm not detained!" gasped Bunter. "Nothing of the sort! I—I get out of the window sometime for—for exercise, you know."

"Good gad!" said Mr. Brent.

"Besides, I never did it!" said Bunter. "It was all frightfully unjust! They made out that I did it, you know."

"What on earth do you mean? You never did what?" John Brent had met all sorts and conditions of people in his career as a detective in the Criminal Investigation Department, but William George Bunter of Greyfriars was a new experience for the experienced detective.

"I never touched Lagden's jigger last Saturday!" gasped Bunter. "Somebody cut up his tyres, you know, and he had to borrow Wingate's bike to go out on. They made out that I did it, and I've got detention. A lot of fellows can prove that I never did it! They came in and saw me at the very time—"

"At the time you did it?" asked Mr. Brent, with the ghost of a smile on his grim face.

"Nunno! At—at the time I didn't do it, I mean. Besides, Lagden borrowed Wingate's jigger, so it was all right. He got it pinched, too, only some of the Remove fellows got it back," said Bunter. "I never knew anything—"

"You are breaking detention?"

"Oh! No! I'm not detained!" gasped Bunter.

"You have just said that you were detained for damaging your Form master's bicycle."

"I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"That—that was only a figure of speech!" gasped Bunter. "I—I meant to say that I haven't got detention. Being perfectly innocent, you know—"

"You young ass!" said Mr. Brent, releasing the fat Owl.

Bunter gave him one blink and cut off.

Apparently the man from Scotland Yard had decided that Bunter's antics were no business of his. Which was a great relief to William George.

He rolled away in haste, and vanished, the man from Scotland Yard staring after him with a peculiar expression on his face.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Trouble!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

Five cyclists were at a halt on the Redclyffe road—on the way to Lantham.

Frank Nugent's bike was up-ended by the roadside, and Frank, with a set expression on his face, was giving his best attention to an old puncture which had broken out again at an unfortunate moment.

His expression was not only set, it was dogged, in fact, almost deadly. Harry Wharton held the bike, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh held a tube of solution, Bob Cherry looked on with cheery patience, while Johnny Bull remarked, not once, but several times, that that tyre had needed earlier attention, and that he had told Nugent so.

This was perfectly correct, but not grateful or comforting to a fellow who was struggling with a particularly troublesome and obstinate puncture. The puncture was irritating, as it was

keeping the chums of the Remove away from the League match they were going to see at Lantham, and they were already late for the kick-off. But Johnny Bull's sage remarks were probably quite as irritating as the puncture.

From a woodland path near at hand, a fat and breathless figure emerged into the road, and the juniors stared at it—excepting Nugent, who had eyes only for his troublesome tyre.

"Hold the bike steady!" said Nugent.

"Yes, old chap!"

"Puncture?" asked Bunter. "He, he, he!" Bunter seemed to find something amusing in the up-ended bike, and the expression on its owner's face.

Nugent looked up.

"You fat tick! You punctured this tyre the day I was idiot enough to lend you the bike. Kick him, somebody!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! Don't be shirty about a puncture," said Bunter cheerily.



Detective-Inspector Brent was thinking deeply when Bunter's fat legs suddenly dangled over the sill above him. Before he could jump back, the fat junior plumped down on top of him. "Ooooooh!" gasped Bunter, whilst Mr. Brent gasped and staggered under the weight.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that Bunter, or his ghost?" roared Bob.

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

He rolled up to the group.

"Lagden let you off detention?" asked Wharton.

"Likely!" snorted Bunter. "I've cut!"

"You fat duffer! That means a licking!"

"Well, it was a licking anyhow, as I wasn't going to do those filthy verbs! I say, you fellows, fancy meeting you here! What a happy surprise all round!" said Bunter.

"The happiness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

"Besides, it's rather lucky you had that puncture. Otherwise you wouldn't have met me here—you'd be at Lantham by this time!"

"Which would have been awful!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, it's rather jolly to meet like this, isn't it?" said Bunter. "I came this way, thinking I might pick up a lift to Lantham in a car or something. I knew you fellows would be glad if I turned up there! I suppose you'll be having tea at the Pagoda after the match?"

"Where's that solution?"

"It is here, my esteemed Franky!"

"For goodness' sake let a fellow have it!"

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"Certainly, my ridiculous friend!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Harry Wharton smiled, but did not speak. He understood the feelings of a fellow handling a troublesome puncture; at such moments allowances had to be made, and silence was golden.

"If you'd looked at that tyre before we started—" remarked Johnny Bull.

"I didn't!" said Nugent curtly.

"I know you didn't, old chap! But if you had—"

"You fellows had better get on," said Nugent, breathing hard. "I'll follow when my bike's ready. You're missing the match!"

"Oh, rot!" said Johnny Bull. "Sink or swim together! But if you hadn't been ass enough to lend Bunter your bike the other day—"

"If 'ifs' and 'ands' were pots and pans," remarked Bob Cherry gravely, "the tinkers would be on the dole!"

"Quitefully so," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If the if-fulness and the and-fulness, my esteemed Johnny, was the potfulness and the panfulness—"

"Well, I told Frank about that tyre before we started—"

"Don't tell me again!" said Nugent.

"If you're getting huffy, old man, I'll shut up!" said Johnny.

"Time you did, at any rate!" said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, which of you is going to give me a lift to Lantham on the back of his bike?" asked Bunter.

"The whichfulness is terrific!"

"Got any more solution?" asked Nugent.

"I shouldn't swamp it, old chap!" said Johnny Bull. "I shouldn't put on too much if I were you!"

"You're not me," remarked Nugent.

"If you were, you'd be a more sensible chap!"

"Here's the solution!" said Bob hastily.

"Well, I think—" said Johnny.

"Rot!" said Nugent, over his shoulder. "You never have so far—don't make out that you're beginning to-day!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"One of you might kick that fat idiot, and keep him quiet while a fellow's busy!"

"Oh, really, Franky! Look here, you're not making much of a job of that puncture," said Bunter. "What about sticking the bike somewhere, and getting a lift. I'll be glad of your company, old chap!"

"More than I should be of yours," said Nugent.

"That's what you call civil, I suppose, when a fellow's offering to stand you a lift to Lantham. I passed old Joyce's wood-cart in the wood ten minutes ago—he would give us a lift for a few bob! I'll pay, of course. At least, one of you fellows could lend me the money, and I'll settle to-morrow. I'm expecting a postal order to-morrow—"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Look out, Bunter—"

"What?"

"Ware beaks!"

Bob pointed along the road, and Bunter blinked in alarm in the indicated direction.

A cyclist had appeared in sight, from the direction of the distant school, coming on at a good rate.

Distant as he was, Bob Cherry had recognised Mr. Lagden, the new master of the Remove.

"I say, who is it?" asked Bunter. His range of vision was limited.

"Jolly old Lagden!" chuckled Bob.

"If he catches you here, he may guess that you've cut detention, old fat bean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He gave a blink at the approaching cyclist, and vanished again into the woodland path from which he had emerged.

Billy Bunter did not want to meet Mr. Lagden out of gates that afternoon. Very much indeed he did not want to meet him. The fat Owl vanished like a spectre at cock-crow.

Four of the juniors watched Mr. Lagden come up, while Frank gave the finishing touches to his repaired puncture.

They wondered whether he had seen the fat Owl in the group. They were aware that Mr. Lagden's eyes were very keen. And although he was only a temporary master at Greyfriars, taking the Remove while Mr. Quelch was laid up, he had already shown that he was not a master to be trifled with.

He slowed down and jumped off his machine, a big black Raleigh, as he reached the group by the roadside. There was a frown on his face.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. He knew by Lagden's tone that the master had seen Bunter.

"I think that was Bunter I saw with you," said Mr. Lagden.

Wharton was silent.

"Bunter is under detention," said Mr. Lagden. "Apparently he has broken bounds. Am I to understand, Wharton, that you, the head boy of my Form, have encouraged him in this?"

"I never knew Bunter was out of the Form-room, till he suddenly showed up here, ten minutes ago," answered Wharton coldly.

"He is not only out of detention, but he must have reached this spot by coming through Redclyffe Woods, which are out of school bounds," said Mr. Lagden severely. "Had he come by road, I should have seen him. You have not forgotten, Wharton, that last week I had occasion to punish you for rambling in these woods?"

"I have not forgotten that you punished me unjustly, after I had explained that I did not ramble in the woods!" answered the captain of the Remove in a tone of ice.

"What! How dare you answer me like that, Wharton? You are impertinent!"

Harry Wharton was silent, his face setting doggedly. His comrades looked a little anxious. The puncture was forgotten now, and the League match at Lantham, too. Trouble between the captain of the Remove and the new Form master had impended more than once, and it looked as if it was coming now.

Mr. Lagden raised his hand.

"Wharton, go back to the school at once! You are detained for the half-holiday!"

Wharton's eyes gleamed, but he did not speak.

"When I return," said Mr. Lagden, "I shall inquire of Gosling what time you reached the school. If you have not obeyed my instructions to the very letter I shall report you to your head-master for a flogging. You will go into the Form-room and write out Latin conjugations till six o'clock."

Wharton was still silent.

"You hear me?" snapped Mr. Lagden.

"I hear you, sir," answered Harry quietly.

"Take care that you obey me, then." With that the new master of the Remove remounted his bicycle. Harry Wharton stood breathing hard and deep

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as Mr. Lagden shot away along the road and vanished.

"What rotten luck!" said Nugent dismally. "Blow that blessed puncture! But for that we'd have been at Lantham now—"

"Lagden's a bit of a Tartar," said Bob. "Look here, we've missed a good bit of the match already; let's cut it and get back."

Wharton set his lips.

"I'm not going back!" he said.

"Better, old man!" said Bob anxiously. "Lagden's rather an outsider, but he's a beak, you know. No good kicking. We'll all go back."

"I'm going on to Lantham."

"My dear chap—"

"I've had enough of Lagden's airs and graces. I've done nothing to get a detention, and I'm not going back. I'm going on to Lantham!"

The Co. exchanged uneasy glances. Their sympathies were with their chum—but a beak was a beak.

"Your jigger's ready, Frank?"

"Yes, but—"

"Let's get on, then."

Wharton went to his own machine and put a leg across.

"Look here, old chap—" said Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed and ridiculous chum—" murmured the Nabob of Bhani-pur.

"Oh, come on!"

Harry Wharton started—in the direction of Lantham. And his chums, in a rather troubled mood, mounted and followed him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Driver!

BILLY BUNTER halted, gasping. The fat junior had covered a hundred yards at top speed, and nearly another quarter of a mile at a trot, after bolting at the sight of his Form master.

He halted on the woodland path where Joyce's cart was tied up, and leaned on the woodcutter's cart and panted for breath.

The pony, who was nibbling at the grass, lifted its head and looked at Bunter and then went on nibbling. For ten minutes at least the fat Owl leaned on the cart and pumped in breath. Almost he wished that he had remained in the Form-room. Exertion did not appeal to Billy Bunter. Still, he realised that even exertion was preferable to deponent verbs. Anyhow, he had shaken off that beast Rupert Lagden, M.A., and the hour of reckoning was postponed.

Bunter had headed for the Redclyffe road through the wood after getting out of the school, with the idea of getting a lift on some vehicle going to Lantham. Other Remove fellows as well as the Famous Five were going over to see the League match that afternoon—he knew that Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Peter Todd and Tom Brown, and several other fellows would be there—and some of them, at least, would be having tea at the Pagoda afterwards. The fat Owl had hopes of scrounging a tea at the Pagoda, once he could get there. But the sight of Rupert Lagden had scared him back into the woods like a fat rabbit.

Now, as he leaned on the woodcutter's cart and gasped and gurgled, Bunter considered the question of a lift.

Joyce, the woodcutter, and his sons were not to be seen; no doubt they were somewhere deep in the woods, hard at work, leaving the pony to feed till they wanted him. The cart was empty now,

but it was evidently there to carry away the out faggots later; and even for a "tip" Mr. Joyce was not likely to leave his faggots in the wood and drive Bunter to Lantham.

And there were difficulties in the way of tipping Joyce—Bunter was in his usual hard-up state—and even Bunter realised that it would be no use telling Joyce that he was expecting a postal order.

Moreover, Joyce and his sons were not on the spot. They were out of sight and hearing.

If Bunter wanted a lift in the woodcutter's cart there was only one way of getting it.

There were many things that Bunter fancied that he could do. Driving was one of them.

It was easy enough to clamber into the cart and drive off, borrowing the vehicle for a few hours.

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The only question that troubled Bunter was whether there would be a row afterwards.

Joyce might be annoyed when Bunter brought the cart back. Bunter realised that. He might complain to Dr. Locke at Greyfriars.

That, obviously, would not do. But Bunter's fat thoughts worked further. Joyce was only too likely to be disrespectful and ungrateful when Bunter returned his cart safe and sound after going to Lantham in it. But why return it? Joyce's pony could be trusted to wander home when done with—horses could always be relied on to find their own quarters. Joyce would get his horse and cart back, and would not know who had borrowed them. That evidently was the simplest way.

Having come to this sage decision, Billy Bunter untied the pony and clambered into the cart and gathered up the reins and the whip.

The pony looked round at him as he jerked on the reins.

Bunter cracked the whip.

"Gee-up!" he exclaimed.

The pony got into motion.

He ambled along the grassy woodland path at an easy pace, and Bunter smiled with satisfaction.

Driving was jolly easy—besides, Bunter was a jolly good driver!

But it was a good many miles to Lantham, and this easy amble, though agreeable in itself, was not covering the ground fast enough. Moreover, Bunter was rather anxious to get clear of the spot where Joyce had tied up the cart, in case the woodcutter should appear in the offing. So he cracked the whip and whacked the pony and got the animal into a gallop.

The cart rocked along merrily.

All was going well. Bunter rather wished that some of the Remove fellows could see him now, driving at this rate and handling the ribbons in such a masterly style.

Bunter's idea of driving a horse was to jerk at the reins and whack with the whip. This seemed to be a successful method, so far as getting the gee-gee to go was concerned. Joyce's pony put on more and more speed till the cart fairly rocked.

Then Bunter decided to pull him in a little.

He did not want to come out on the Redclyffe road among the motor-cars at full tilt.

Pulling in presented unexpected difficulties.

Jerking and whacking had got the gee-gee to go, there was no doubt about that he was going strong! But neither jerking nor whacking would induce him to moderate his transports, as it were.

Instead of slowing down, the pony galloped on faster than before.

Slowly it dawned on Bunter's fat mind that the pony had taken the bit between its teeth and was running away with him.

Bunter fancied that he could drive. Now he made the alarming discovery that it was only fancy. He couldn't!

A toss of the pony's head tore the reins from his grasp, and they dangled and tangled over the heaving back. Even Bunter realised that whacking the horse would not make him stop. And he had to drop the whip now; he needed both hands to hold on with, with the cart rocking and bumping and oscillating like a boat on a stormy sea.

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked to either side, with the wild idea of jumping out. But the pace was too hot for that.

Bunter was not thinking of driving to Lantham now. He shuddered at the thought of getting out on the main road, where motor-cars whizzed by every few minutes, with the pony following his own guidance and his own sweet will. He would have given all the jam tarts in the tuckshop at Greyfriars to get safely out of the cart. He squeaked with alarm as he rocked on.

Fortunately, the pony did not emerge from the wood into the high-road. Bunter was spared that. He turned from one track into another, and galloped on, still in the wood. Perhaps he did not like motor-cars any more than Bunter did.

Redclyffe Woods were many miles in extent, crossed by bridle-paths and cart-tracks in many directions. Where the pony was taking him Bunter had not the faintest idea. Neither did he care much, so long as he got there alive. That was the dubious point.

Bump, bump! Crash!

The cart rocked over a trailing root and almost capsized. Bunter rolled over and landed in the bottom of the cart with a terrific concussion.

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"Oooooogh!"

He sprawled in the cart, spluttering. The pony raced on, the cart rocking after him, fortunately still on both wheels.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He crawled to his fat knees, and another jolt of the cart sent him rolling over again.

"Oh lor'! Oh crumbs! Stop that beastly horse!" roared Bunter. "I say— Help! Rescue! Yaroooooh!"

But there were no ears to hear Bunter. Only the woods replied with echoes as he roared.

The cart rocked on. Bunter decided to remain where he was, in the bottom of the vehicle.

As he could neither stop nor control the runaway horse, it was really not of much use to see where he was going. He lay and blinked up at the steely February sky, and the branches that stretched across the track. How many miles he had gone Bunter did not know; but he knew that he must have covered a good distance.

To his immense relief, the pony dropped into a slower gait at last—having, no doubt, recovered from the effects of Bunter's driving.

The cart still rocked, but the fat Owl was able to clamber up, and peer out at his surroundings. The pony, at a trot now, was following a wide track through the woodland, marked by the ruts of wheels. Bunter blinked round for a sight of any familiar landmark. He could see nothing but trees and sky, and a rutty track over which the woodcutter's cart rolled.

But he was still alive—which was something to be thankful for, after his driving methods.

At the present pace of the cart Bunter could have jumped out; but it was not much use jumping out, and landing himself in a wood miles from everywhere. The pony was trotting on contentedly, as if with an understood destination, and it dawned on Bunter's fat intellect at last that the animal was going home.

It really might have dawned on him earlier. Left to his own devices, it was natural for the pony to go home.

Bunter, blinking dismally round him, had an impression that he had followed this route before. Where a track turned from the main path, the pony turned, pulling the cart round, following the new track towards a building that could be glimpsed through the trees.

The fat Owl blinked round him, in perplexity.

He knew all about Joyce, the woodcutter, who was a familiar figure on the roads, with faggots to sell. The woodcutter, with his wife and two sons, had always lived in a lonely cottage in the heart of Redclyffe Woods, miles from any other building. That cottage, however, had been let to some stranger in the locality, who kept a big, fierce Alsatian dog running loose in the garden.

Only a week ago Harry Wharton & Co. had gone to the lonely cottage, unaware that Joyce was no longer there, and Harry had had a narrow escape from the Alsatian. Joyce now lived at Woodend, a village several miles away on the other side of Greyfriars, and Bunter, when he guessed that the pony was going home, had expected to arrive at Woodend. But to reach Woodend, the pony would have had to cross the Courtfield road, and he had crossed no roads at all. Now he had arrived at a

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solitary building in deep woods, surrounded by a high fence. And he stopped at the gate, as if accustomed to stop there.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He understood at last.

Joyce's pony was an intelligent pony. He knew how to find his way home when he was left unguided. But evidently he was not yet used to his new quarters in a distant village.

He had gone home; but to his old home.

Bunter sat in the cart and blinked.

He was landed at the woodcutter's old cottage, two miles at least from any other building, in the heart of Redclyffe Woods.

The pony, halting, began to browse round the gate. He was quite calm and peaceful now; but he had looked quite calm and peaceful when Billy Bunter had first undertaken to drive him. Bunter was not going to be deceived by appearances a second time. He had no intention whatever of gathering up the reins and driving Joyce's pony to Lantham or anywhere else. One narrow escape was enough for Billy Bunter. Often and often Billy Bunter never knew when he had had enough. Now he knew!

He gave the pony's back a ferocious glare.

"Beast!" he grunted.

Had that intelligent pony landed him at his new home, at Woodend, Bunter could have picked up the motor-bus for Lantham. But there was nothing to pick up at this lonely cottage, in the heart of the wintry woodland. What the dickens he was going to do was a mystery to Bunter. His only resource appeared to be to alight from the cart, and take to Shanks' pony—a slower but more reliable pony. As he was several miles from everywhere, that was not attractive. For the present he sat in the cart and grunted and groaned.

This process did not get him any "forrarder," so to speak; but it relieved his feelings a little.

The cart moved again.

"Oh lor'!" ejaculated Bunter.

The pony was only moving on in quest of fresh herbage. But the bare possibility that he was about to bolt again was enough for Bunter. He rolled hastily over the back of the cart, held on a moment, and dropped.

Bump!

Bunter sat down.

The pony looked round at him, as if in surprise. Bunter, indeed, was a driver that might have surprised the most intelligent pony. Then the animal trotted a little distance, the cart rumbling after him, and stopped once more to browse. Bunter blinked after him, and ejaculated:

"Beast!"

The pony did not seem to mind. He nibbled contentedly, and Bunter sat and blinked.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Neck or Nothing!

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He picked himself up at last.

It was cold, sitting on the ground, and more serious than that, Bunter was getting hungry. It was getting near tea-time, and Bunter was always ready for a meal long before it was due.

He stood and blinked at the gate before him.

Who it was that had taken that

lonely cottage as a tenant, Bunter had not the faintest idea.

Evidently it must have been somebody with a taste for solitude. For miles on every hand the woods swept, and the paths and tracks were little frequented in the winter. All Bunter knew of the place was that when the juniors had stopped there, a week ago or more, a big Alsatian had been loose in the yard, and the brute had chased Harry Wharton when he clambered over the locked gate to knock at the cottage door.

The thought of that Alsatian was quite unpleasant. Nevertheless, Bunter was debating in his mind whether to get over the gate and knock at the cottage. It all depended on whether the brute was chained up now. If the people at the cottage were nice, hospitable people, they might ask a fellow to stop to tea—a nice, pleasant, well-mannered, fascinating sort of fellow like Bunter! Or alternatively, as the lawyers say, he might find somebody who would be willing to drive him to Lantham in Joyce's cart, for a promised tip.

The tip itself would not be forthcoming; but Bunter felt that the cottager could hardly be so distrustful as not to take the word of a gentleman and a Public school man. Anyhow, it was worth while trying his luck—if only that beastly Alsatian was on the chain. Bunter was not afraid of a dog on a chain, if he was out of reach and the chain was strong.

Whether that alarming brute was loose, could only be discovered by scouting. With a terrific effort, the fat junior heaved himself to the top of the gate, rested his podgy chest thereon, and blinked into the yard.

The cottage, more than a dozen yards away, had a silent, deserted look. The door in the wooden porch was shut, and the windows were shuttered. Still, it was fairly certain that somebody must be living there; nobody would be paying Joyce rent to keep the building empty. Bunter was not so much concerned about that, as about the Alsatian.

He blinked anxiously over the gate.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way, and he looked that way.

There was no sign of the dog.

No doubt he was safe in his kennel at the back of the house. All was silent, and Bunter resolved, at last, to take the chance.

He heaved himself over the gate and dropped.

Swiftly he trotted up the path to the house. He had no doubt now that the dog, if at home, was chained up in his kennel; but the thought of the brute was still unpleasant, and he did not linger.

In a few moments he was at the wooden porch. There was a large, old-fashioned iron knocker on the door, and Bunter lifted it and knocked.

Knock, knock!

The sound rang loudly through the silence of the woods.

Knock, knock, knock!

There was no sound of movement within. There seemed no sign of life about the lonely cottage at all.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

He lifted the knocker again and delivered a terrific crash. If anyone was within the lonely building he could not have failed to hear that.

But still only the echoes replied.

Billy Bunter gave an angry snort.

Whoever was the queer tenant of Joyce's cottage, he seemed to spend a good deal of time from home. Evidently he was not there now.

Bunter gave one more crash on the knocker and then desisted, with a grunt of disgust. He had had all his trouble for nothing. There was nobody at home.

But as he turned from the door he heard a sound—a sound that almost froze the blood in his veins. It was a deep growl.

Bunter started, his fat heart thumping. There was a sound of pattering in the yard.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

porch creaked under his weight, but, fortunately, it supported him. With a rapidity that was amazing, considering the weight he had to lift, Billy Bunter clambered on the slanting roof of the porch and clutched hold there.

He was only just in time. A few seconds and the Alsatian was baying below, his fierce eyes glaring up at the fat junior out of his reach.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter through his chattering teeth.

With eyes almost popping through his

below; but the great brute was watching him and waiting for him to come down. There was no escape for Bunter till the dog's master should return and release him from his awful predicament.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

He blinked over the yard, and over the gate, at the track beyond. Joyce's pony was moving farther and farther away, browsing as he went. But there was no other living thing in sight. The dog's master must surely come back sooner or later; but, if so, there was no sign of him as yet.

Bunter waited, and the Alsatian waited. A long hour passed, and the winter dusk began to fall on the wood. The awful thought was in Bunter's mind that perhaps the dog's master was away for the night; in which case the fat Owl's position was really terrifying. Not for worlds would he have ventured to descend from his perch while the Alsatian was there, and the dog hardly stirred while the long minutes passed.

Bunter groaned dismally.

The cold wind from the sea chilled his fat limbs. He was cramped, he was



With a rapidity that was amazing, considering his weight, Bunter clambered on to the slanting roof of the porch. With eyes almost popping through his glasses, he blinked down at the vicious-looking Alsatian on guard below!

The Alsatian was loose, after all!

The pattering feet were coming round the house! In utter horror Bunter realised that the knocking on the door had disturbed the animal—probably asleep in his kennel when Bunter had arrived.

That swift pattering of feet told that he was not, as Bunter had taken for granted, chained up.

The fat Owl peeped in terror out of the porch.

His eyes almost bulged through his spectacles at the sight of a huge, fierce brute coming round the corner of the building.

"Urrrggh!" gurgled Bunter.

He made a step towards the distant gate. But his fat legs refused to run. He knew that he could never reach the gate before the Alsatian reached him. Before he could cover half the distance the swift brute would be upon him.

White as chalk, frozen with terror, Bunter blinked at the Alsatian for one fearful instant. The huge dog, with flaming eyes and bared teeth, was coming towards him at a pattering run. Only for that second the fat Owl stood transfixed; then his terrible danger woke him to action. He clutched frantically at the trellis-work of the porch, and clambered up. The old wooden

glasses, he blinked down at the terrible animal.

A deep-throated bay came from the Alsatian. It told Bunter what he had to expect if he fell.

He held on for his life.

The great dog pattered round the porch and rose on his powerful hind legs, as if seeking to reach the school-boy above. Then he dropped back, and Bunter longed to see him disappear round the house again. Instead of which the Alsatian lay down a few yards away, his eyes fixed with a steady, unwinking stare at Bunter.

The fat junior trembled in every limb.

The dog had settled down to watch him.

Obviously that Alsatian was left on guard while his master was away, and he was doing his duty. Tramps who wandered by the paths of Redclyffe Woods were kept from entering and looting the lonely cottage. One look at the Alsatian would have been enough for the boldest tramp. Nobody was likely to trespass in the yard while the Alsatian was there—unless, like Bunter, he took too much for granted. And Bunter was fairly "treed." So long as he remained on the top of the porch he was safe from the savage teeth

cold, he was hungry. He thought of the Form-room at Greyfriars, and even of deponent verbs, with longing. Anything—detentions, lickings, floggings, would have been better than this. No sound came to him, but the sough of the wind in the trees. No sound of a voice or a footstep. Only, when once he slipped and almost slid off his perch, there came a low, deep growl from the Alsatian—a sound to curdle the blood.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

He stirred at last. He was chilled to the bone, tired and famished. It came into his mind that there might be some upper window, a garret window or a skylight, by which he could enter the cottage. What the tenant would say if he came back and found him there was not the pressing question. The question was to get away from his precarious perch, and the keen wind that searched him through and through, and the watching, fierce eyes of the Alsatian.

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There was another growl from the dog as Bunter moved. He half rose, ready for Bunter to descend. But Bunter was not thinking of descending. He rose cautiously on the wooden top of the porch and blinked at the slanting, slated roof of the cottage. It was an irregular and rambling building, additional rooms having been added at different dates, mostly of wood. With great caution Bunter extended his fat form on the sloping slates and proceeded to crawl up to the ridge.

The Alsatian growled again as Bunter disappeared from his sight. The fat junior heard a pattering of feet. Possibly the dog suspected him of intending to escape on the other side of the house. Bunter could hear him pattering to and fro and baying.

An old wooden framework jutted from the slope of the slates. Bunter guessed that it was a window of an upper room. He crawled on cautiously till his fat hands grasped the wood. He pulled himself higher, and blinked over the top.

It was, as he had guessed, a roof window, with the same slant as the slates round it. It was closed and fastened, the square pane thick with grime. It was impossible to open the window. But this was no time for half measures. Bunter had to get into the cottage somehow, out of the bitter wind and the danger of slipping and falling into the jaws of the Alsatian. He made up his fat mind to it, and jammed a fat elbow at the glass.

Crash! Clatter! Jingle!

Fragments of broken glass clattered and jingled and tinkled into the room below. From within a startled cry reached Bunter's ears, and in amazement he peered down at an amazed, upturned face. The lonely cottage in Redclyffe Woods was tenanted, after all!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Detective Makes a Move!

INSPECTOR BRENT, of Scotland Yard, pacing under the old elms at Greyfriars, paused in his walk and fixed his keen eyes, under the bushy, dark brows, on a handsome figure that came from the direction of the bikeshed. Mr. Lagden had returned from his spin and put up his machine, and was strolling in a leisurely way towards the House.

He did not glance in the direction of the detective's stocky figure. But Brent had an impression that Rupert Lagden observed him, all the same.

Three or four times on his way to the House Mr. Lagden stopped to exchange a few pleasant words with someone—Prout or Capper, Wingate of the Sixth, Blundell of the Fifth. The new master of the Remove had very agreeable manners, and there was no doubt that he was popular in the school. He treated the older masters with a respect that was grateful and comforting to those elderly gentlemen; he played football, which made him liked by the games men in the Upper Forms; he had a pleasant smile and a cordial word for everybody.

Only in his own Form the fellows had had to observe that under the smiling exterior was hidden a hard and savage temper which was liable to break out at any moment. Handsome and agreeable as he was, generally very genial and easy-going, many of the Remove fellows were wishing that Mr. Quelch would get well and come back to his Form. And Harry Wharton, the cap-

tain of the Remove, made no secret of the fact that he was fed-up with Lagden and his uncertain temper.

Brent's eyes, strangely watchful, followed the handsome, athletic figure as it disappeared into the House at last.

Then the man from Scotland Yard resumed his pacing, with a darker shade of thought on his brow than before.

A good many fellows who observed Mr. Brent stared at him, and some of them smiled. They could not help wondering what the detective was up to.

He had come down to Greyfriars to look for the kidnapped fag, Flip of the Second Form. Wherever Flip was, it was certain that he was not at the school. Yet Mr. Brent spent hours every day at Greyfriars, and, so far as could be seen, he did nothing but "mooch" about the place, and ask questions of fellows and masters.

If he was looking for a clue, it was rather a mystery why he was looking for it at Greyfriars. He seemed to be at the wrong end of the trail. Yet there he was, and the general opinion was that Mr. Brent was a puzzled man, beaten by the case he was trying to take hold of. He had done nothing, so far, apparently, because he could find nothing to do.

Yet he looked a capable man, and a determined man. His keen, penetrating eyes seemed to bore through a fellow. His strong, square jaw gave him a bulldog look. If he was baffled by this strange and mysterious case, at least he looked like a man to hold on to it till he had worried something out of it.

Dr. Locke came down from the House, crossing the quad towards the library. He glanced at the man from Scotland Yard, lifting his eyebrows ever so little. The Head, like almost everyone else at Greyfriars, could not make out what the detective was "up to" there. He was not the man to say so, or to give a hint of what he thought. But undoubtedly he was perplexed, and wondered what Mr. Brent fancied would come of his habit of haunting the school.

Inspector Brent stopped in the Head's path, and Dr. Locke paused politely. The detective had something to say; but the headmaster of Greyfriars had almost given up the hope that he would hear news of the missing fag.

"No news, Mr. Brent?" he asked mildly.

"None, sir!" said Mr. Brent, in his gruff, barking voice. "So far, none! But I have not been so idle as you suppose."

The Head coloured faintly. If Mr. Brent was unable to find the kidnapped Flip, at least he seemed able to read a man's thoughts.

"My dear sir—" murmured Dr. Locke.

"This is a strange case, sir—a very odd case," said Mr. Brent. "Am I delaying you?"

"Not at all, sir. I am quite at your service."

"I shall not detain you more than a few minutes. The case is a very odd one!" barked Mr. Brent. "In the first place, it is odd that the boy Flip should have been here at all. It seems that the boy Bunter befriended a nameless, penniless vagrant, and somehow induced a rich boy's uncle to take him up and send him here. Such kind actions as this are not common. It is a very odd case."

"No doubt," assented the Head.

"Still more strange," continued Mr. Brent, "is the circumstance that this waif, at a school like Greyfriars, should have seen anything of his old associates

of his slum in London. That is amazing! Yet there appears to be no doubt that here, or hereabouts, he saw the crook called Jimmy the One, and, according to the statements of a number of boys whom I have questioned, he told them that the first attempt to kidnap him, which failed, was made by this crook, Jimmy the One. The crook's object was to get him away from the school to keep his mouth shut. At the second attempt he succeeded."

"Quite!" said the Head.

He was aware of all this. Mr. Brent was going over old ground. But the Head was patient and courteous.

"Well, why?" barked Mr. Brent.

"According to the boy's statement to me, and to Inspector Grimes," said the Head, "the criminal had some design on the school—robbery, of course—and he feared that the boy would betray him."

Mr. Brent stared at the Head in his disconcerting way.

"So you have told me before, sir. That design has not been carried out, however."

"No," The Head smiled. "Possibly your presence here, Mr. Brent, has deterred the criminal."

"Possibly," assented Mr. Brent. "But—"

He broke off, gnawing his lip. For a full minute he was silent, apparently thinking. And the Head waited politely. He was getting used to Mr. Brent's rather weird manners and customs.

"The boy's cap was picked up at Ashford, thirty miles away!" barked Mr. Brent, suddenly breaking his long silence. "The idea is that Flip found an opportunity of throwing it out of the car—if he was taken away in a car—to leave a clue to the way he went."

"It would seem so," said Dr. Locke. "He was certainly a very intelligent and quick-witted lad."

Mr. Brent grunted.

"You have wondered why I am still here, sir? I will tell you. It is largely because the boy's cap was picked up thirty miles away."

"Indeed!" ejaculated the Head.

"You know why I took up this case? I should not have taken it up on account of a missing schoolboy. Such a matter is not in my line at all. It was the mention of the name of Jimmy the One that brought me into the case. I have hunted that crook, sir, for ten years or more. I may hunt him for ten years or twenty still, but I shall get him!" Mr. Brent's square jaw closed like a vice for a moment. "The remotest clue to Jimmy the One would draw me a thousand miles. And this boy Flip could tell me all I need to know—if I could find him. When I find him, I shall find Jimmy the One."

Mr. Brent paused again.

"Can you give me a room here to-night?" he barked suddenly.

The Head almost blinked. Mr. Brent's sudden barks were quite disconcerting to the calm, scholastic old gentleman.

"A—a room? Oh, yes, certainly! With pleasure!" answered Dr. Locke. "I will give orders for a room to be prepared in my own house without delay."

He wondered almost dizzily what Mr. Brent wanted to put up at Greyfriars School for. The ways of the man from Scotland Yard were past finding out, so far as Dr. Locke was concerned.

"I believe a room is available that belonged to a Form master now in the

(Continued on page 12.)

FOOTBALL FAVOURITES!

No. 18.
DAVID HALLIDAY,
the
stalwart centre-
forward of
MANCHESTER CITY.



A Useful Tip!

WHEN travelling with strangers—during a railway journey, for instance—it is sometimes difficult to make conversation; to find a topic of mutual interest. I mentioned this difficulty to a Lancashire friend of mine some time ago, and he gave me a bit of advice. "If ever I want to talk to some fellow who is a stranger to me," he said, "I always try him—after the preliminaries about the weather—on the subject of football. About nineteen times out of twenty it proves to be a 'winner'; we are on common ground immediately."

I have found this tip very useful, and I pass it on to my readers for what it is worth. On the very last occasion on which I was in the Manchester district I tried opening up with this subject, and as my new-found friend was interested in football, we quickly travelled to the doings of the Manchester City club.

"I hear that the Arsenal have been looking for a new centre-forward," said my friend. "If that is so, I can't for the life of me imagine how they came to let Manchester City have the services of Dave Halliday. He has done the City some good, and no mistake!"

It is certainly a fact that centre-forward David Halliday has done Manchester City some good since he was transferred by Arsenal in November of last season. At that time Manchester City were doing badly, occupying a lowly position in the League table, and people were suggesting that they would follow the other Manchester club, the United, into the Second Division. But as soon as Halliday arrived at Manchester he assisted the Maine Road team to climb up the League table, and they finished the season well in the top half.

During this season, too, Halliday has done much good work for Manchester City, both in the Cup and the League—such good work, that there was justification for my friend being mystified over the Arsenal agreeing to his transfer.

A Boy at Heart!

IN regard to these so-called blunders by managers of football clubs, however, there is a point which is often overlooked. It does not necessarily follow that when a club allows a player to leave, the manager of that club considers that the footballer transferred is not good. Manager Herbert Chapman, of Arsenal, believed that Halliday was a good centre-forward when he secured his transfer, and he still believed that Halliday was a good centre-forward when he was transferred to Manchester City.

A football side, though, cannot be considered in the individual sense. It is only the results returned by the team as a whole which matter. And the simple fact is that these are manager Chapman's own words to me concerning the present Manchester City centre-forward: "Halliday did not fit in. His style of play was not suited to the play of the other members of the Arsenal forward line, so it was no use keeping the player and allowing his undoubted talents to be wasted." And there, my lads, you have the real reason why Arsenal allowed Dave Halliday to go to Manchester City.

This Halliday, who never allows opposing goalkeepers to have a holiday, is very Scotch. He was born at Dumfries, and of him the same story has to be told as of so many other Scottish boys. He played some sort of football almost as soon as he was able to run about. They have some pretty names for football clubs in Scotland, and one that I very much like is Queen of the South. It was with that club that Halliday first began to attract attention.

"My left foot was always better than my right," he told me, "and I suppose that is why I played at outside-left

from the real start of my football career." This real start goes back to 1920, so, you see, that by now Halliday is "getting on" in the football sense. But if a player is only as old as he plays—and that is the true test—then the six-foot Dave is still a boy at heart. How he enjoys his football!

A Wonderful Goal Average!

QUEN of the South to St. Mirren, and then on to Dundee, still as an outside-left. "Mostly with Dundee, however, I was left outside rather than outside-left, because there was a winger there named Alec Troup, who was too good to be ousted from the team by me."

In due course, however, Troup went to Everton, and then Halliday got his chance. Again a strange thing happened which affected the whole of Halliday's career. No sooner had he got a regular place at outside-left than the team fell short of a centre-forward. As it had been noticed that Halliday could do a bit in the goal-scoring line, he was tried in the centre of the attack. And from that day to this, except in emergencies, he has always been a centre-forward.

For the 1925-26 season he went to Sunderland, the Roker Park club paying a big fee for his services. By way of repayment he scored forty-one goals for them in League matches alone—an average of over a goal per game. And to-day Halliday is at the head of the list of individual goal-scorers still remaining active in first-class football. In all games—Cup-ties as well as League matches—he has found the net over three hundred times. It should be mentioned that while he was still at Dundee he played for the Scottish League against the English League. He has never been capped for Scotland in International matches proper, though he has been reserve on many occasions. In this respect Halliday has been merely unlucky, because Scotland has had, in his time, a succession of super-excellent players to lead their attack. Another reason why he has not been chosen for International games is that he is essentially a player who needs to be known well by his colleagues in order that the best may be got out of him.

Seven Seasons—And One Pair of Boots!

HALLIDAY has a long, raking stride and a deadly shot, particularly with that left foot which he used so much as a boy. He uses his head in more senses than one. He delights in the long run up the middle, and has a most deceptive swerve which takes him past opponents by sending them the wrong way.

When I asked him what he didn't like, he was very quick to reply. "New boots," he said. "Whenever I have left one club for another I have always asked that I should be allowed to take my boots with me. I can't claim, as Bob Kelly does, that I have played in the same boots for thirteen years; but I have a pair of old boots here with which I have scored over two hundred goals in League football. I wore them for nearly seven seasons."

Halliday is a motor engineer by trade, and he took good care to complete his apprenticeship before he took up football seriously, so that he has something to fall back on when his football career is over. He is also a more than useful golfer, and while with the Arsenal had many great tussles on the links with his fellow Scot, Alex James.

When I had nearly finished my little chat with the centre-forward of the Maine Road team, we retired to the players' recreation-room, and there I was challenged to a game of billiards by Halliday. I am not going to tell you a lot about that game of billiards, because if I put down the final score you might have an impression that I am no good at all on the green cloth; so I shall be content by saying that I am not so good at the game of billiards as Halliday. And I know a lot of professional players who have also found out that they are not so good as Dave.

WHILE GREYFRIARS SLEPT!

(Continued from page 10.)

sanatorium!" barked Mr. Brent. "That will do, with your permission."

"Mr. Quelch's rooms are now occupied by the new master who has taken his place temporarily—a Mr. Lagden," explained the Head.

"Oh, quite! A Mr. Lagden!" grunted Inspector Brent. "Quite so! Give me the nearest vacant room, then."

Dr. Locke raised his eyebrows.

"The rooms in that quarter, sir, are assigned to members of my staff," he explained. "Guests are accommodated in my own house."

"Is there any objection to my occupying a room in the quarters assigned to your staff, sir?" barked Mr. Brent.

"N-n-no, certainly not!" stammered the Head, quite taken aback, and completely puzzled and perplexed. "But—but—"

"If there is no objection, I will take the room on the same corridor as Mr. Quelch's old room, which is now vacant," said Mr. Brent.

Evidently the detective had acquainted himself with the interior of Greyfriars, and knew which rooms were occupied and which not.

"But, really, my dear sir—"

"Can I have the room I have referred to?" asked Mr. Brent, with ruthless directness.

"Oh, yes, certainly! But I hardly see—"

"Very well, I will send for my things from Courtfield, and take the room. Thank you!"

Mr. Brent stepped back; and the Head proceeded majestically on his way, a very puzzled and bewildered headmaster.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face!

RUPERT LAGDEN, Master of Arts, stared from his study window across the quad at the stocky figure that stood in conversation with the Head of Greyfriars. The expression that grew on the handsome face of the young Form master made it much less handsome. His brow was black, and his eyes gleamed with distrust and suspicion, and something like fear, as he watched the man from Scotland Yard.

Greyfriars follows and Greyfriars masters looked on Mr. Brent's lingering at the school as a waste of time, and wondered at it. But Mr. Lagden was an exception. Rupert Lagden, Master of Arts—alias Jimmy the One, crook and cracksmen—had eyed that stocky form, day by day, with growing uneasiness and suspicion.

Why was the detective still there, unless it was that he believed that the clue to the kidnapped fag, kidnapped by Jimmy the One, was to be picked up at the school? And if he believed that, in what direction had his keen eyes turned—upon what object of suspicion had they rested? That was a pressing question to the man who led a double life.

Rupert Lagden, M.A., was above suspicion. His record was clear, known from the day he had left Oxford. No one knew, no one dreamed, that the man who had filled many posts at Public schools, led in secret another life—that in the underworld he was the man who was called Jimmy the One—the elusive crook of whom the police had

picked up hardly a trace in the ten or twelve years during which he had followed a successful career of crime.

Few knew him—old Isaacs, the "fence" in Puggins' Alley, who had received loot from him to be disposed of, little Flip, the waif who had "dossed" in a garret in Isaac's old dingy den—two or three others, perhaps. He had never had reason to fear betrayal, till he came to Greyfriars as a temporary master—as he had gone to a dozen places before—and found Flip, the nameless waif of Puggins' Alley, a boy in the school.

And he had found Flip reformed, determined to keep to straight ways—not only useless to him but a danger to him. And he had taken drastic measures to keep the boy's tongue quiet. But there was danger still—he could feel it in the air. So long as that man with the stocky figure and the bulldog jaw was at the school there was danger.

In a week, or less, his engagement at the school, as a temporary master, expired. His planned coup had not been carried out yet. Jimmy the One had a nerve of iron, but he hesitated to crack the Head's safe while a man from Scotland Yard was at the school. But the time was running short, and if Brent hung about much longer Mr. Lagden would have to go without carrying out the purpose for which he had come.

For that, perhaps, he would have cared little; one coup more or less was not a matter of great moment to a crook whose career had been one of unbroken success. He had even thought of making some pretext for cancelling his engagement and leaving at once—merely to elude the keen eyes of the C.I.D. man. But he felt that that would hardly do—it might draw upon him the attention he desired to avoid, and if Brent suspected him he would follow and watch. And when Rupert Lagden left Greyfriars Jimmy the One had to remove the kidnapped fag from the lonely cottage in Redoliffe Woods, where he was kept a prisoner—and such a move might be disastrous with the keen eyes of John Brent on his trail.

Did the man suspect him?

Or was it only a vague intuition that the clue was to be found at Greyfriars that kept the detective there?

Lagden could not tell.

But he feared the stocky man, and his fear grew. And with it grew a savage fierceness, like that of the hunted tiger in the jungle, debating whether to turn on the hunter.

Rupert Lagden, M.A. had a record open to inspection. Nothing of any kind was known against him. But once the eye of suspicion fell upon him—what then? A series of mysterious robberies might be traced out, every one of which had taken place at some large school, or public institution, or the home of some eminent man, where Rupert Lagden had held a mastership or a secretaryship.

Such a series of remarkable coincidences, once brought to the attention of Scotland Yard, would be enough for the hard-headed, keen-eyed men of the C.I.D. Concentrated investigation would elicit more, once it was set to work. Sooner or later they would track out his associations in the underworld—the various banking accounts, under assumed names, that concealed his loot—a thousand-and-one hidden clues to his real identity and occupation. It was only needed for suspicion to be awakened.

Was it awakened yet?

He wondered, as he watched the stocky man in talk with the Head. Yet what

could have awakened it—what unlooked-for chance? The crook's hand slid to his hip-pocket, and for a moment his fingers closed hard on the butt of a revolver. If Jimmy the One was hunted down he would be a dangerous man in a corner.

He saw the two figures in the quad separate, and the stocky man came slowly towards the House. From his window, Mr. Lagden watched the detective pass in at the door.

Brent disappeared from his sight.

The new master of the Remove left the window and threw himself into a chair. He lighted a cigarette, with a hand that trembled slightly. John Brent, the hard-faced man from Scotland Yard, was in the House now. What was his game?

Heavy, solid footsteps came along by Masters' Studies. Rupert Lagden started, with a thrill at his heart.

He knew those footsteps—slow, solid, steady, bodeful to his ears. John Brent was coming to a master's study—and Lagden knew by instinct that it was to his study that Brent was coming. Why?

Tap!

For a second the crook's face was that of a hunted tiger. But Jimmy the One had himself well in hand. His voice was as pleasant as usual as he called out "Come in!" and there was a smile on his face as the door opened and John Brent entered the study. His glance at the detective expressed a faint surprise, mingled with polite welcome.

"I hope I am not interrupting you, Mr. Lagden," said the inspector.

"I have some papers to correct for my Form," said Mr. Lagden, with a smile. "But they can wait, Mr. Brent. Pray sit down."

He pushed out a chair, and the solid, thick-set form of the detective settled in it. Lagden made a gesture to the box of cigarettes, but Mr. Brent shook his head. The Form master sat down again, slightly shifting his chair so that his back was to the window. He looked at Mr. Brent with polite inquiry, as if wondering, as any other Greyfriars master might have wondered, why the man from the Criminal Investigation Department had called on him.

"I shall not detain you long," jerked out Mr. Brent. "But you may be able to help me by replying to a few questions, sir."

"I should be very glad, of course," said Mr. Lagden. "If you will make it a little clearer—"

"I am here to search for the boy Flip! You are aware of that, no doubt. But I am less interested in the boy than in his kidnapper. Have you ever heard of a crook called Jimmy the One?"

Mr. Lagden laughed.

"Crooks have not come much in the way of a hard-working schoolmaster, Mr. Brent. I do not think I had ever heard the name till I heard it here. I have been told that the missing boy had some connection with some criminal of that name."

"That is so. That is why I took up the case. Eleven years ago I had my hand on the shoulder of Jimmy the One," said Mr. Brent. "I have not seen him since—to my knowledge. I should not know him if I saw him."

"I conclude that he got away on the occasion you mention?"

"Exactly. He had carried out a daring robbery, and he was escaping with a fortune in jewels. It was, I believe, among the first crimes of his career—before he had grown so wary and cunning as he became later. I had him by the shoulder, I struggled with him, but he escaped, leaving his

plunder behind—worth many thousands of pounds."

Mr. Brent's eyes for a moment lingered on the athletic figure before him. "An athlete," he said—"a slim, young man, but a powerful athlete. Unluckily, I never saw his face. Few, if any, seem to know what he looks like. The boy Flip knows—when I find him."

"No doubt you will find him soon," remarked Mr. Lagden. "I gather that he is supposed to have been taken back to London—a cap or something was picked up at Ashford, which, it seems, he must have thrown from the car—"

"A trick!" barked Mr. Brent.

Mr. Lagden's eyes narrowed for a moment.

"A trick?" he repeated.

"Yes—to throw the police on a false scent. The boy is not far from here."

"You think so?" asked Mr. Lagden, smiling.

"I am sure of it."

"I have no doubt you are right, if you think so," assented Mr. Lagden, "though I should imagine that this person, Jimmy the One, would take him as far from the place as he could. But in what can I help you, Mr. Brent?"

"A few days ago some foolish boy—Bunter, I think—played a trick on your bicycle, Mr. Lagden. You borrowed a machine from a Sixth Form boy named

It did not occur to them that he was disguised. It occurred to me."

"This grows very interesting," said Mr. Lagden. "From what the boys reported to me the man they dealt with undoubtedly seems to have been a bicycle thief. But I can hardly imagine Inspector Brent, of Scotland Yard, following such small game."

Mr. Brent stared at him.

"That man was Jimmy the One!" he barked.

Mr. Lagden started violently.

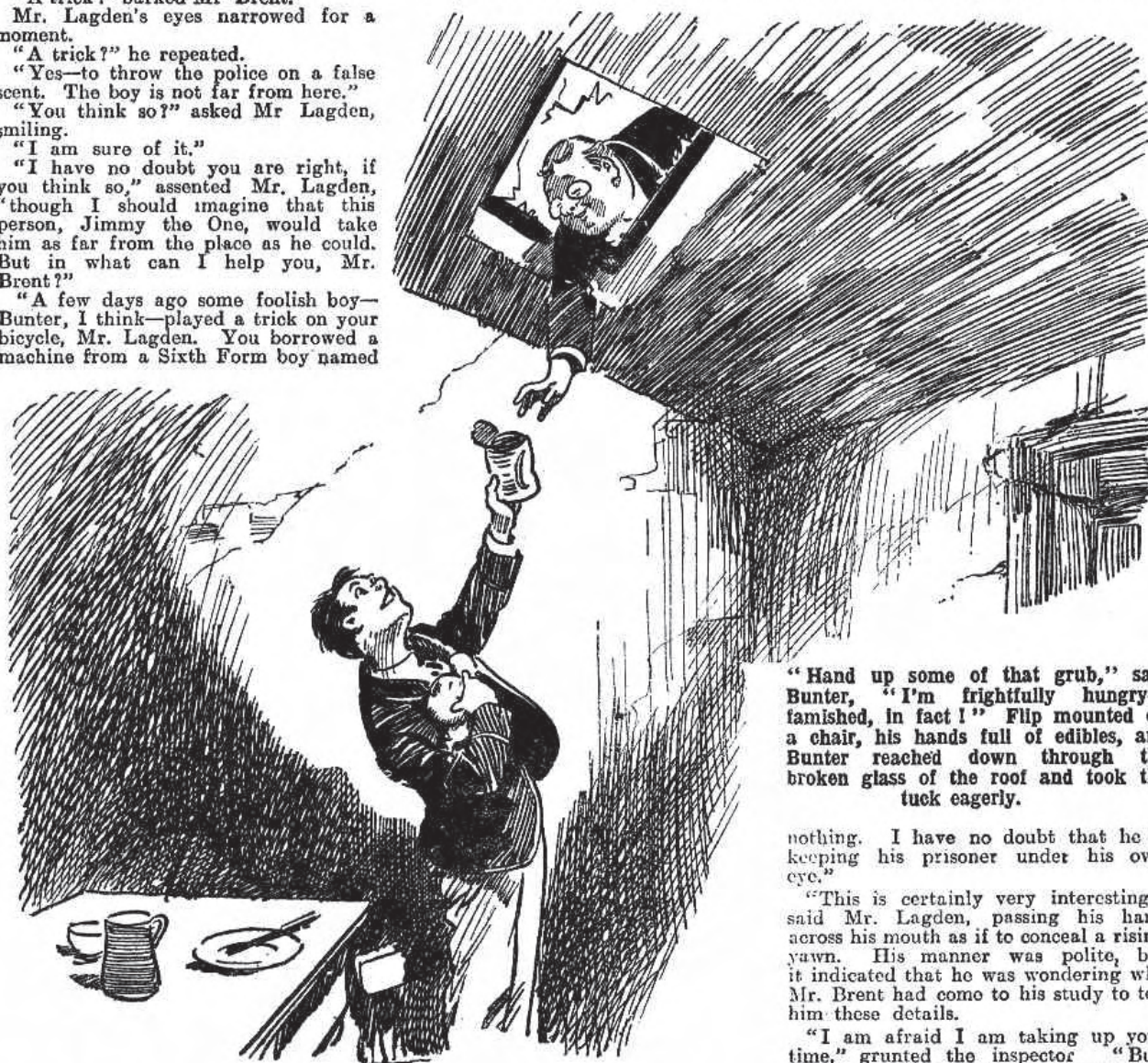
"Jimmy the One!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir! I have little doubt—or no

Scotland Yard for assistance that I received the news, and the case was handed to me as a matter of course. The kidnapping of the boy proves that Jimmy the One did not intend to go."

"Now that you point it out, it certainly looks like it," agreed Mr. Lagden, with a nod.

"If the man is still in this vicinity the boy is still in this vicinity!" barked Mr. Brent. "Jimmy the One has gone scot-free so long because he does not work with confederates. Occasionally he makes use of the services of some thug, but he tells them



"Hand up some of that grub," said Bunter, "I'm frightfully hungry—famished, in fact!" Flip mounted on a chair, his hands full of edibles, and Bunter reached down through the broken glass of the roof and took the tuck eagerly.

nothing. I have no doubt that he is keeping his prisoner under his own eye."

"This is certainly very interesting," said Mr. Lagden, passing his hand across his mouth as if to conceal a rising yawn. His manner was polite, but it indicated that he was wondering why Mr. Brent had come to his study to tell him these details.

"I am afraid I am taking up your time," grunted the inspector. "But, as I have said, you may be able to help me. When I heard of the incident of the stolen bicycle, I was not told that it had been in your hands—I concluded, as a matter of course, that Wingate had left it somewhere and had it stolen. That was a natural conclusion. I have learned to-day that the bicycle was lent to you by the Sixth Form boy; it must have been from you that the man in the horn-rimmed glasses obtained it. I have told you so much of my theories, to make it clear to you that I desire very strongly to get on the track of that man in the horn-rimmed glasses. Any information you can give me—"

"I understand!" said Mr. Lagden.

(Continued on page 16.)

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Wingate, to go out on Saturday afternoon."

"That is correct."

"It came to my knowledge," said Mr. Brent, "that some boys in the Lower School—Wharton and his friends—found Wingate's bicycle outside a shop at Redclyffe. They guessed that it had been stolen, and took it away from a man there, who ran away and left it in their hands. The man had fastened a bundle on the machine, which was abandoned when he fled. This bundle was found to contain a large quantity of various foodstuffs."

"Is that so?"

"That is so. They described the man as middle-aged, dark-complexioned, with a moustache and horn-rimmed glasses.

doubt—that he was taking the supply of food to a prisoner kept within reach of a bicycle ride—in a word, the boy Flip."

"You astonish me," said Mr. Lagden blankly. "In that case it would seem that the scoundrel is still in the neighbourhood."

"I have never doubted that, from the first hour I came here," said Mr. Brent. "The boy Flip saw him in this vicinity. It is known that he was unwilling to betray the man—that he gave him the choice of clearing out, or being denounced. Had the man gone, Flip would obviously have said nothing. I should never have heard of Jimmy the One from this quarter. It was when the local police applied to



(Continued from page 13.)

"What can you tell me of the man?"
 "Nothing, I am afraid," said Mr. Lagden. "I never saw him, or heard of him, till the boys reported the matter to me."

"How did you lose the bicycle?"

"I had taken a ride to the village of Woodend, and near the village I left the machine leaning on a fence while I ascended the hill, for the view. When I came back it was gone. As you may imagine, I was very much relieved when, after walking back to the school, I found that some boys in my Form had found it."

"You saw nothing of the thief?"

"Nothing, I am sorry to say. Had I seen him he would hardly have escaped with it."

"Woodend is the opposite direction from Redclyffe, I think?"

"I think so."

"Others may have seen the thief. Did you make any inquiries after you had missed the bicycle?"

"The spot was a rather solitary one," explained Mr. Lagden. "I did not suppose that anyone had seen the thief take the machine."

"So you made no inquiries locally on the subject?"

"None."

Mr. Brent grunted.

"That's very unfortunate. You can tell me nothing, then?"

"I fear not."

"Then I am sorry that I have wasted your time, Mr. Lagden!" barked the detective, and he rose and left the study abruptly.

The door closed on him.

Like a mask thrown aside, the smile dropped from the face of Rupert Lagden when the door was closed. That handsome face was almost haggard.

So that was it? The merest chance. He had punished that fat fool Bunter of the Remove for having wandered near the lonely cottage in Redclyffe Woods—on the pretext that the woods were out of school bounds. In fatuous retaliation, Bunter had "crooked" his bike. He had borrowed Wingate's machine—surely an act from which he could never have expected danger to accrue? Yet it had spelled danger.

Harry Wharton & Co. had found the machine in the possession of a man who was a stranger to them—and whom they certainly never dreamed was their Form master in disguise. They had collared it and brought it back to the school. There was nothing in the incident—if it had not reached John Brent. Mr. Lagden had had to give an explanation—and he had explained that the borrowed machine had been stolen at Woodend by some unknown person. It was a natural explanation; no one gave it a further thought. But what satisfied schoolboys did not satisfy the man from the C.I.D.

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Evidently, Mr. Brent was giving it further thought.

Had he come to the study simply to inquire what Mr. Lagden could tell him of the supposed bike-thief? Or did he suspect that Mr. Lagden and the man in the horn-rimmed glasses were one and the same?

It was a tormenting doubt to Jimmy the One.

If Brent suspected that, he suspected everything! From suspicion to action would be only a step!

There was a feeling like ice at the crook's heart.

He had always feared the hard-faced man with the bulldog jaw. In all his career of crime, only once had he been near capture—and it was John Brent's hand that had fallen on his shoulder. John Brent who had taken a fortune from his hands. His revenge on the detective had been a ruthless one. Brent was a widower with one small son; and the crook had stolen the child and abandoned him in a slum, to grow up a vagrant and a thief. But that revenge had turned Brent into a human bloodhound, with whom the hunting down of Jimmy the One had become an obsession. He had never found his boy again, and he knew that he owed the loss to Jimmy the One; and for ten long years his thoughts by day, his dreams by night, had been concentrated on his one object—the capture of Jimmy the One. And now they were face to face, and the crook knew—he felt in his bones—that he was suspected.

Rupert Lagden paced his study.

There was suspicion—if only a vague suspicion as yet—in the mind of the C.I.D. man. It would grow. The game was up!

To throw up everything, to flee beyond seas under an assumed name while there was yet time—that was one resource. But there was another resource, a darker one; and the crook was thinking of it as he paced the study with a blacker and blacker brow.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Makes a Discovery!

FLIP!" Billy Bunter gasped the name.

The owl of the Remove could scarcely believe his eyes or his spectacles.

Sprawling on the slate roof of the lonely cottage, blinking down into the room below the window he had shattered, Billy Bunter's eyes fixed on the upturned face that looked up at him—the face of Flip of the Second Form!

He fairly goggled at Flip.

It had surprised the fat junior to discover that the cottage was occupied at all. There had been no answer to his loud knocking, no sign of life during the long time that he had crouched on the porch, watched by the Alsatian in the yard. Now he understood why. The lonely cottage in Redclyffe Wood had one occupant—a prisoner! And the prisoner was the waif of Greyfriars—Flip of the Second Form.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Bunter.

His eyes almost popped through his spectacles! The local police had hunted for the kidnapped fag in vain—a special detective from Scotland Yard was at Greyfriars, seeking him; and Billy Bunter had found him!

"Flip!" gasped Bunter.

The little fag stared up at him blankly.

"Master Bunter!" It was a whoop of joy from Flip. "Oh, Master Bunter! It's you, and you've found me."

"It—it—it's really you!" gasped Bunter.

"Wot to!" chuckled Flip. "Oh, sir, fancy you finding me! Arter all you've done for me, sir, to find me 'ere!"

Bunter grinned.

He almost purred.

He forgot, for the moment, that he had found Flip by the sheerest, purest accident! He forgot that he was, so long as the Alsatian watched, as much a prisoner as Flip was. The fag's face was full of eager gratitude, and that, in Bunter's opinion, was very right and proper. He was not the fellow to disclaim it.

"You've found me, sir!" repeated Flip joyfully.

"What ho!" said Bunter cheerfully. "I've found you, kid! I dare say you knew I should be keeping an eye open for you!"

"Well, I 'oped I'd be found, sir!" answered Flip. "But I own up I never thought you'd be able to do it, sir! 'Ow you found me, I can't think!"

"Well, you see, you had to be found," said Bunter calmly, blinking down at the delighted face of the fag. "I asked that beast Lagden for leave from detention to look for you, and he refused. I cut detention, and—and here I am!"

Flip looked startled.

"I say, sir, that bloke Lagden don't know you're here?" he exclaimed.

"No fear! I dodged him all right!"

"Oh, good!" said Flip with a deep breath. "But, I say, sir! 'Ow did you get past the dorg? There's a big Alsatian dorg—"

"I'm not afraid of a dog!" answered Bunter cheerfully. "The beast nearly had me, but I climbed on the porch in time. Dogs can't scare me, Flip!"

"You're jest as brave as they make 'em, sir!" said Flip admiringly. "There ain't many as would try to pass that there dorg!"

"Precious few, I think!" said Bunter, hardly remembering, as he spoke, that he certainly was not one of the few. "I say, kid, have you got any grub there?"

"Lots!" answered Flip. "Jimmy the One don't starve a bloke!"

Bunter felt a sudden qualm.

"I—I say, that villain isn't in the house, is he?"

"No fear, sir! He'd have been on to you in a tick, if he was here!"

"Is—is he likely to come back?"

"Might come any time, sir!" said Flip. "I reckon he comes along when he can get away without being noticed. Sometimes at night, and a few times by day. He has to feed and look arter the dorg—and bring me grub, too. Nobody else don't know I'm 'ere. Jimmy the One is the bloke to keep secrets!"

"Oh lor!" murmured Bunter.

The fat junior's object in breaking the roof window had been to get into the cottage. But he changed his fat mind about that now. He did not want to be in the building if that mysterious crook, Jimmy the One, arrived to see his prisoner.

It was cold and windy on the roof, and it was growing dark, but anything was better than a meeting with Jimmy the One, whoever Jimmy the One was!

But Jimmy the One was not there at the moment, and Bunter was hungry. His fat thoughts returned to food—a subject that was never very far from the thoughts of William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Look here, Flip, I—I'd better stay up here," he said. "See if you can

pass up some grub. I haven't had my tea, and I'm frightfully hungry—furnished, in fact!"

Flip grinned. He knew the weakness of his podgy patron for anything in the way of eatables.

"Right you are, sir!" he answered.

He placed a chair in position, and mounted on it, with his hands full of edibles.

He could not reach as high as the window, but Bunter, reaching down through the broken glass, easily reached his extended hands, and lifted the "grub" from them. Several times Flip mounted the chair and handed up supplies—corned beef and ham and bread-and-butter and cake and other things. There was a steady sound of champing on the roof of the lonely cottage. Not a word came from Billy Bunter now; his jaws were too busy for that.

The February darkness deepened over the wide sweeping woods. Lamplight from Flip's prison-room glimmered up into the night. Occasionally a howl came from the Alsatian roaming in the yard. Billy Bunter ate and ate, forgetful of less important things.

Flip, standing on the chair, watched him, with a happy grin on his face. Flip, no doubt, was the only Greyfriars fellow who found anything to admire in Billy Bunter, but the little waif's gratitude and admiration were deep. And after long days and nights of loneliness, broken only by rare visits from the ruthless crook who held him a prisoner, the waif was overjoyed to see a human face again—and of all faces, Billy Bunter's fat visage was the one he was gladdest to see!

Even Billy Bunter had to slack down at last, he ate more slowly, and then, at long last, stopped eating. He blinked down benevolently at Flip.

"That was good!" he said, with deep feeling. "I was frightfully hungry. I hoped I might get tea here, but I'm blessed if I thought I'd get it like this! He, he, he!"

Flip's eyes widened.

"You 'oped you'd get tea 'ere?" he repeated.

"Yes, rather! What do you fancy I knocked at the door for?" Billy Bunter was of the class of persons who, proverbially, ought to have good memories, but he, unfortunately, had a bad one.

Flip's eyes widened still more.

"But you came 'ere to find me, sir!" he said, perplexed.

Bunter started.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Of course! I—I came here, and—found you! I—I sort of suspected this was the sort of place you might be parked in," he stammered. "So—so I—I just butted in, you know, and chanced the dog! Don't you fancy that I came along here by accident, because the beastly pony ran away and landed me here. Nothing of the sort!"

"Eh?"

Flip blinked at him.

"As for knocking at the cottage to see if I could get some tea here, or a man to drive the cart, I never thought of anything of the kind!" added Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Flip.

Had not the Greyfriars waif's faith in Bunter been so very strong, he might have suspected that his fat patron was a champion fabricator. Even Flip's sturdy faith was a little staggered.

"The fact is," added Bunter, "I never came here in a cart at all, and I haven't left it outside the gate!"

"Oh!" gasped Flip.

"As I told Lagden only this afternoon, I fancied I could root you out!" said Bunter, blinking at Flip. "And I've done it, haven't I? I shall get into a row for cutting detention, but I don't care! I've got you, anyhow!"

"You 'ave, sir!" said Flip, loyally. "Look 'ere, sir, if you reach down and 'old my 'ands, I could climb out of that winder! I don't weigh a lot. We'll get away together, sir!"

"What about the dog, though?" asked Bunter, as a whine from the disappointed Alsatian came floating to his fat ears.

"Well, sir, you chanced him, and I'll chance 'im along with you, sir!"

Billy Bunter shuddered at the thought.

He had "chanced" the Alsatian quite unintentionally and involuntarily, and he assuredly had no idea of chancing him again.

It began to dawn on Bunter's fat brain—now that the important question of food was disposed of, and he was free to consider smaller matters—that he was in a bad box. He dared not, for his fat life, descend and face the Alsatian's teeth, and the only alternative was to remain where he was—till Jimmy the One arrived.

"Oh crumbs!" said Bunter blankly.

"We—we can't get away. That awful beast nearly had me, like he nearly had Wharton last week. Oh crikey! He'd tear us to pieces!"

"But you chanced him, sir—"

"Oh, don't be a young ass!" said Bunter irritably.

"No, sir!" said Flip obediently.

From the darkness, came a deep baying from the Alsatian. Bunter started and listened. Someone was approaching the cottage, and the thought that it might be the crook, almost made Bunter's fat heart die in his podgy breast. Through the broken window, the sound floated to Flip's ears, and his little grubby face grew grave and alarmed.

"I know that row he makes when Jimmy the One's coming, sir!" muttered Flip. "It's Jimmy—"

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

"Get back from the winder, sir!" panted Flip. "Keep out of sight, for mercy's sake. If he sees you, you'll be lagged 'ere along of me!"

"Oh crikey! But—but he'll see the winder broken—" gasped Bunter.

"I'll tell him I heaved something at it, sir," said Flip. "He ain't likely to guess there's a covey on the roof, with that awful dog loose in the yard. You keep quiet and out of sight, sir! I'll stuff him all right about the winder!"

"Oh, good! I mean, that's telling lies, Flip, a thing I'm down on," said Bunter. "It's not a thing I could do myself. Still, in the circumstances—"

"You keep mum, sir, and out of sight!"

Bunter really did not need urging. He was not likely to make a sound, or to show so much as an eyelash, so long as Jimmy the One was on the premises. He flattened himself on the slates out of sight of the window, his fat heart palpitating as he heard the sound of a key in the gate, and footsteps in the yard,

and the murmur of a voice speaking soothingly to the Alsatian. It was impossible for him to be seen from the yard, and Bunter could only hope that Jimmy the One would swallow Flip's explanation of the broken window. If the crook found him— But Bunter dared not think of that. He lay flat on the slates and palpitated with funk.

Footsteps crossed the yard to the door of the lonely cottage. A key grated in a lock, a door opened and closed again. Then Bunter could hear the sound of steps on the stair within. He heard the bolts withdrawn on the door of the prison-room. He heard the footsteps enter the room, and the door close behind the newcomer. Terrified as he was, the fat Owl longed to peep in at the broken window and obtain a glimpse of Jimmy the One. But he dared not; and he lay where he was, as if glued to the slates.

Through the gap in the window a voice floated up.

"So you've been trying to escape, Flip! The chair under the window—and the window smashed! You young fool! Did you think you could reach the window and climb out? Do you think I should have left you here with your hands free if you could? Lucky for you you could not, Flip. I've warned you that the Alsatian is on the watch, and I pity you if you get within reach of his jaws."

It was all that Billy Bunter could do to suppress a yell of amazement as he listened.

He could not see the speaker. But he knew the voice—a voice that was very familiar to his ears—a voice that he had heard, very many times, in the Remove Form room at Greyfriars. It was Jimmy the One who was speaking to Flip, and he was speaking with the voice of Rupert Lagden, M.A., temporary master of the Greyfriars Remove. Billy Bunter lay glued to the slates, his eyes distended behind his spectacles, wondering whether he was dreaming.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Jimmy the One's Last Word!

FLIP of the Second Form stood staring at the crook, breathing hard and quick. His heart beat fast.

Jimmy the One looked at him curiously.

But there was no suspicion in the crook's mind of how matters really stood. Well he knew that the imprisoned fag thought and dreamed constantly of escape, and Flip had left the chair immediately underneath the window deliberately to give the impression that he had himself broken the

(Continued on next page.)

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glass, intending to make a desperate attempt to climb out.

Jimmy the One was not likely to suspect that an intruder had escaped the Alsatian, climbed up from outside, broken the window, and was still crouching on the roof. He seemed faintly amused as he looked at the Greyfriars waif.

"You've had no luck, Flip!" His tone was mocking. "It must be some time since you smashed the glass—or I should have heard it as I came. But you're still here."

"I'm still 'ere, Jimmy!" muttered Flip.

"Did you fancy you could climb out?"

"I 'oped I could!"

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast!" grinned Jimmy the One. "You may try as often as you like—but look out for the Alsatian! Break all the panes if you choose—you must take your chance from the rain, Flip! In the circumstances, I cannot call in a glazier to repair the window." He laughed.

The fag watched him keenly.

"You come 'ere to let me out, Jimmy?" he asked.

"Hardly."

"You ain't the same as usual," said the keen-witted waif. "Something's appened, Jimmy! 'Ave they found out that Mister Lagden is Jimmy the One?"

Jimmy the One did not answer that. He stood in silence, his brow growing darker.

"Last time you came, you was got up in moustache and 'orn-rimmed specs," said Flip. "You've chucked that, Jimmy?"

"I've chucked that, Flip! I've been seen in that rig—by a set of meddling young rascals! It's unlucky, for it was in that rig that I hired this cottage from Joyce, the woodcutter. The merest chance—due to a fool's trick played by that young idiot Bunter. He cut the tyres of my bicycle, and I borrowed Wingate's, and Wharton and his friends found it in possession of a man in horn-rimmed glasses who was a stranger to them. You see how the blindest chance can disconcert the most carefully laid plans, Flip."

"You can't watch every point, Jimmy," said Flip. "A crook is a fool, arter all. It's a mug's game!"

"You're a keen little scoundrel, Flip!" went on the crook, after a pause. "You've spotted at once that something has happened. Well, something has. I'm in danger!"

"Glad to 'ear it!" said Flip coolly.

He watched the crook closely. Jimmy the One bore no more resemblance, now, to the man in horn-rimmed glasses, than to Rupert Lagden, M.A. His face was half-hidden by a thick, reddish beard, and there was a black patch over one eye. He was dressed in rough clothes, worn over his own attire, giving him a bulky look quite unlike the slim elegance of Rupert Lagden. Even Flip, who knew him so well, would not have known him on his looks. Had Bunter ventured to peer in at the roof-window, he would have been amazed to see the man who spoke with the voice of his Form master.

But the crook's disguise could not conceal his state of nervous tension. There was a suppressed, fierce excitement in him that was new to Jimmy the One, and Flip had guessed at once that matters were not going to his liking at the school.

"Danger!" repeated Jimmy the One. "Danger at last, Flip—after twelve years of snapping my fingers at the police! Did you ever suppose that I should be afraid of a man?"

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"Not you, Jimmy!" said Flip. In spite of all, the waif of Puggins' Alley had not quite lost his old admiration of the handsome crook—once something like a hero in his untutored eyes.

"There's a man at Greyfriars now that I'm afraid of, Flip," said Jimmy the One quietly. "Chance—blindest chance—has given him the clue that he has sought for in vain for years and years. I believe that he suspects me—and if he does, I have no time to lose. I shall make sure—as sure as I can—and then—then—" He broke off, but the glitter of his eyes startled the fag, and made him draw a quick breath.

"You'd be a fool to do it, Jimmy," said Flip earnestly. "Chokey's better than that. They'd get you sooner or later."

"I'm not here to ask your advice, Flip! I'm here for the last time—so long as John Brent stays at Greyfriars. I've brought you food. If my next visit is delayed, you must make it last. If I strike, and fail, I shall never come again."

"And me?" muttered Flip.

Jimmy the One shrugged his shoulders. "You've got your chance," he said. "Take the offer I've made. I'll make you my companion and partner. There was a time when you would have jumped at such an offer, and not so very long ago. The offer's still open—but this may be the last time that I shall make it."

Flip shook his head.

"I done with pinching, Jimmy!" he answered. "If you leave me 'ere to starve, it's all the answer I got for you. I'd die sooner!"

"You may have to make your words good!" said the crook. "I've come here at risk to-day. I had to make sure that John Brent did not follow me from the school—I suspected that he might. Luckily, I had obtained the food earlier in the afternoon, at a distant place, and hidden it in a tree to pick up later, after dark. But for that, I should have brought you nothing."

"But I am not taking more chances. If I find that Brent's eye is not on me, I shall play a careful game, and never set foot outside the school walls again so long as he is there. I shall leave when my engagement terminates—without cracking the safe. But if—" He broke off again, gnawing his lip.

The fag watched him in silence. Jimmy the One in this mood was almost a stranger to him.

"If he suspects, I shall soon know—and then— Well, the future is on the knees of the gods!" said Jimmy the One. "If he gets me, Flip, you will perish here, long before you can possibly be found."

"You'd say the word, Jimmy, if the game was up with you," said Flip, in a low voice. "You wouldn't want to 'urt a bloke that's never 'urt you."

The crook gave him a strange look.

"If he gets me, that's all the revenge I have left!" he said.

"I don't see 'ow! This man Brent what you speak of, what's it to 'im whether I'm found or not?"

"Never mind that! Take it from me, Flip, that if I go down, you go down with me. This may be your last chance of life!"

"You ain't going to make a thief and a crook of me, Jimmy!" said the waif stubbornly. "Not since you told me that you knowed who my father is, and that he's an honest man and an officer of the law. I keep on thinking of him, and I'll let you cut me into little pieces afore I'll do anything to make him ashamed of me."

"That's that, then!" said Jimmy the One lightly. "I've given you your chance. I may see you again, Flip—but don't bank on it. When the hunted stag turns on the hounds, he has to take chances. This may be the last time you will ever see me—or any human face. As you make your bed, you must lie on it."

The door closed on the crook.

The bolts outside grated into the sockets.

Flip heard the footsteps of the crook descending the rickety stairs and the closing of the door below.

He stood with a pale, troubled face. Faintly through the silence came the sound of the Alsatian's whine in the yard, the shutting of the gate, the click of the key in the lock.

Then all was still. Jimmy the One was gone—gone to strip off his disguise in some remote shadowed nook, and to return to Greyfriars as Rupert Lagden; gone with murder in his heart, as the waif well knew. The man who suspected him was at Greyfriars, and that man was under the shadow of death. Flip, a prisoner in the lonely cottage, could give no word of warning; the desperate crook was free to carry out whatever desperate scheme was hatched in his cunning brain. If he succeeded— Flip shuddered at the thought. If he failed— If he failed, if he was taken, he would not speak, and the kidnapped waif would perish miserably in his hidden prison.

"Oh swipes!" murmured Flip.

There was a sound on the roof. He had forgotten Bunter; now he was reminded of him. He stared up at a fat, scared face blinking in at the gap in the roof-window through a pair of big spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Flip's clouded face brightened.

The crook had left him, as he believed, as safe a prisoner as he had been through the long days of his imprisonment. But there was a chance for Flip of which Jimmy the One never dreamed.

Jimmy the One, like Ishmael of old, had his hand against every man, and every man's hand was against him. Danger dogged his footsteps like his own shadow. But from whatever quarter Jimmy the One feared defeat, certainly it was not from the quarter from which it was, after all, likely to come. In all his cunning and desperate calculations he gave not a jot or tittle of thought to so utterly negligible a person as Billy Bunter of the Remove. Yet it was in the shape of a fat and fatuous Owl that Nemesis was on his track!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Surprising!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. rode back from Lantham in the falling dusk, a cheery bunch of cyclists, but not quite so cheery as usual. They had arrived at Lantham football ground in time to see the finish of the League match; quite an exciting finish, and well worth the ride to keen footballers like the heroes of the Remove. But when they mounted to ride back to the school they could not help thinking of the wrath to come.

Wharton's face was grave and a little dogged in expression. His chums were anxious.

The head boy of the Remove, whose duty it was to set an example of cheerful discipline to the Form, had deliberately disobeyed his Form master. The injustice with which he had been treated

rankled deeply; but on reflection Wharton could not help realising that he had done wrong. Had he been dealing with his old Form master, Mr. Quelch, he would have gone straight to him and expressed his contrition and apologised, and taken without complaint any punishment that was meted out. But with Mr. Lagden he did not think of doing so.

The fact was, that with Mr. Quelch the circumstances would not have arisen; for Henry Samuel Quelch, though severe, was neither distrustful nor unjust. There was, as Wharton had long since discerned, a "yellow" streak in Lagden not wholly hidden by his elegant

"I can stand it, anyhow," he said. "Come on!"

The juniors joined the stream of fellows going in to call-over. The owl was called by Mr. Prout, and when the Fifth Form master came to the name of Bunter there was no answering "adsum" from the Remove. Several juniors glanced round, and it was noted that Billy Bunter was not present.

Prout glanced up, repeated the name, and then marked Bunter absent. The Owl of the Remove was the only absentee; excepting, of course, Flip of the Second, whose name was not called.

After roll-call the Remove fellows went to their studies to tea, many of

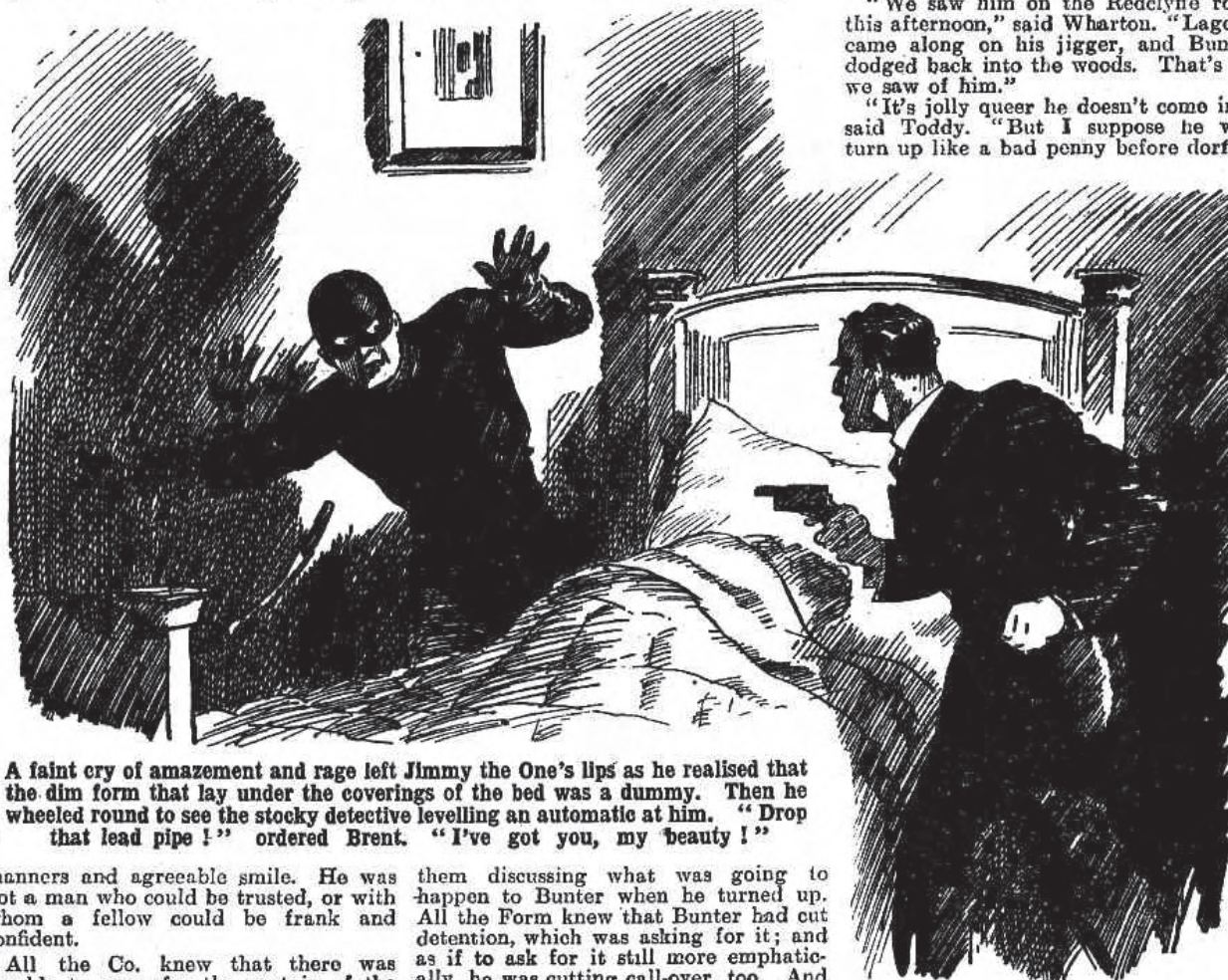
good temper was mostly on the surface. Prep over, the Famous Five went down to the Rag. They met Peter Todd on the stairs, and Toddy called to them. "You fellows know what's become of Bunter?"

"Not the foggiest!" answered Harry. "The fat ass!" growled Peter. "He's still out of gates! He can't be staying out because he's booked for a licking, can he? Even Bunter isn't such an idiot as that."

"Is not the esteemed Bunter idiot enough for anything, my absurd Toddy?" asked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But perhaps he has lost himself in the ridiculous woods."

"We saw him on the Redclyffe road this afternoon," said Wharton. "Lagden came along on his jigger, and Bunter dodged back into the woods. That's all we saw of him."

"It's jolly queer he doesn't come in," said Toddy. "But I suppose he will turn up like a bad penny before dorn."



A faint cry of amazement and rage left Jimmy the One's lips as he realised that the dim form that lay under the coverings of the bed was a dummy. Then he wheeled round to see the stocky detective levelling an automatic at him. "Drop that lead pipe!" ordered Brent. "I've got you, my beauty!"

manners and agreeable smile. He was not a man who could be trusted, or with whom a fellow could be frank and confident.

All the Co. knew that there was trouble to come for the captain of the Remove. And the grim look on Wharton's face hinted that he was only too likely to meet it with stubborn defiance.

The Famous Five reached the school in time for call-over, and put up their machines in the bikeshed.

"Lagden's out!" remarked Bob Cherry, with a gesture towards the stand where the Remove master's machine was kept—now empty.

"That puts it off, anyhow!" said Nugent, rather relieved.

Wharton gave a shrug. "Not much good putting it off," he said. "I'm booked for a row with Lagden!"

"Keep your temper when you see him, old bean," said Johnny Bull. "No good making matters worse."

"The soft answer turns away the wrath of a bird in the bush, as the English proverb remarks," observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton laughed.

them discussing what was going to happen to Bunter when he turned up. All the Form knew that Bunter had out detention, which was asking for it; and as if to ask for it still more emphatically, he was cutting call-over, too. And it looked as if he was going to cut prep also, for when the hour came for prep the Owl of the Remove was still conspicuous only by his absence.

"Begging for it!" said Skinner, with a grin. "If he's staying out because he's afraid to come in, the poor old podgy bean won't make things any better. Lagden will make his hair curl."

"Let's hope he'll roll in before Lagden does!" said Bob Cherry.

Bunter did not roll in before prep, at all events. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, in Study No. 1, got through prep rather wondering that the captain of the Remove was not sent for. They concluded that Mr. Lagden had not yet returned. Not for a moment did Wharton expect the Remove master to overlook what he had done; it was scarcely possible for any master to ignore such direct defiance. Even the most good-tempered master could hardly have done so; and the juniors knew well enough, by this time, that Mr. Lagden's

The Famous Five went down. At the foot of the staircase Bob Cherry uttered a suppressed ejaculation.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Lagden's in!"

At a little distance the slim, athletic figure of the Remove master could be seen. He was talking with Mr. Twigg, the master of the Second. Harry Wharton fixed his eyes on the man, with a gleam in them. He had no doubt now that the trouble was coming as soon as Lagden's glance fell on him.

"Give him a miss, Harry!" murmured Frank Nugent uneasily.

"Why?" answered Wharton. "It's got to come, and it's no good dodging it and putting it off. I'm not finking that outsider."

And Wharton walked on, passing within a few feet of the Remove master. His chums followed him in an uneasy mood.

They expected Mr. Lagden to call to Wharton. He could hardly have failed

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to be aware that Wharton had disregarded his command that afternoon and gone on to Lantham instead of returning to the school. He had said that he would inquire as soon as he was back at Greyfriars, and it seemed impossible that he had forgotten to do so.

But he gave the captain of the Remove no attention. Certainly he saw him, but he gave him no heed whatever.

The juniors, passing near the two masters, heard Mr. Twigg's words as he was speaking to Lagden.

"Yes, the room next to yours, Lagden," he was saying. "You have Quelch's room, you know, while he is absent. It is the next room to yours that has been given to Mr. Brent."

"Then he is staying here?" said Mr. Lagden carelessly. "Of course, I am new here, Mr. Twigg, but is it not rather unusual for a guest of the headmaster to be accommodated in Masters' quarters?"

"Very unusual indeed!" answered Twigg. "I should naturally have supposed that Inspector Brent would be accommodated in the Head's own house. I have indeed referred to the matter in speaking to Dr. Locke, and I gather that Mr. Brent selected that room himself for reasons which I confess are quite inexplicable to me."

"Very odd!" said Mr. Lagden.

"Very odd indeed!" agreed Twigg.

Lagden, with a nod to the Second Form master, walked on. His eyes fell on the Famous Five as he passed them, but if he had not forgotten Wharton, at all events he gave him no heed.

It was a puzzle to the chums of the Remove, and a considerable relief to Wharton. If Lagden was going to let the matter drop, it was all to the good. But he certainly did not understand it.

They went into the Rag, where the chief topic was the absence of Billy Bunter. It was getting towards bedtime, and the fat Owl had not put in an appearance.

Wingate of the Sixth came in to inquire if anyone knew anything of Bunter, and the Famous Five told him

what they knew. They had been the last to see Bunter alive, as Skinner expressed it. Wingate grunted and went away to report to Bunter's Form master that the fat junior was still out of gates.

"Lost in the jolly old woods!" said Skinner. "Let's hope that he will enjoy his night out. It will be rather parky."

"Even that ass wouldn't stay lost all this time!" said the Bouncer.

But certainly it looked as if Bunter was lost, for he was not back when Wingate shepherded the Remove off to their dormitory.

As the juniors went to the stairs Harry Wharton & Co. saw Mr. Lagden again. He passed within a few feet of the master of the Remove, and Lagden's eyes fell on him; but the master of the Remove seemed to have forgotten, not only his offence, but his existence.

It was surprising enough in a Form master. But it was hardly surprising in Jimmy the One, who had matters on his mind that quite banished from his thoughts such things as school discipline.

Wingate stopped to speak to Mr. Lagden.

"Bunter has not come in yet, sir," he said.

"Bunter?" repeated Mr. Lagden. He seemed to come out of deep thought with a jerk. "Indeed! Bunter is still absent?"

"Yes, sir. Wharton says he saw him run into Redclyffe Woods this afternoon, and nobody seems to have seen him since."

"Dear me! The foolish boy may be lost in the woods," said Mr. Lagden. "No doubt he will find his way back later."

The juniors went on, some of them wondering that the Form master took the matter so lightly. They little dreamed of what was in the mind of that Form master. Certainly Mr. Lagden was not likely to trouble himself that night—of all nights—about the absence of a dozen Bunters.

There was a vacant bed in the Remove dormitory that night. The snore that generally rumbled through the dormitory was not heard.

The Removites wondered where Billy Bunter was, and what he was up to. But no conjecture came anywhere near the truth.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

In the Night!

MIDNIGHT had long passed. Greyfriars School lay dark and silent under a black winter sky.

Two deep strokes had boomed out from the clock-tower. The echoes died away into deep silence.

The silence was not broken when a door opened softly on a gloomy corridor. Jimmy the One was accustomed to making no sound when he stirred in the dark hours of the night.

Mr. Lagden's door opened and closed without a sound. The figure that stepped out, silent in rubber shoes, was almost invisible in the gloom. It was clad in black from head to foot, and the face was hidden by a black mask.

For several long minutes it stood there motionless, the head bent slightly to listen.

Then with soundless footsteps it moved along the corridor and stopped at a door at a little distance.

A black-gloved hand glided over the door. It was locked on the inside. The black mask hid a grim, sneering smile on the face of the crook John Brent was not likely to sleep with his door unlocked if he suspected that Jimmy the One was at hand.

But a look was nothing to Jimmy the One. There was no sound, but the nimble fingers were busy for a few minutes; then the door was pushed back softly on its hinges.

Within all was dark.

The curtains at the window were partly drawn; where they parted, the dimmest glimmer of the winter stars came through.

Jimmy the One was as accustomed to moving in the dark as a cat. The merest glimmer was enough for him. But he stood for a long minute in the open doorway listening, his eyes burning through the holes of the mask.

Through the silence the sound of quiet, steady breathing came to his straining ears. It was the regular breathing of a sleeper, and it came from the direction of the bed on the opposite side of the room.

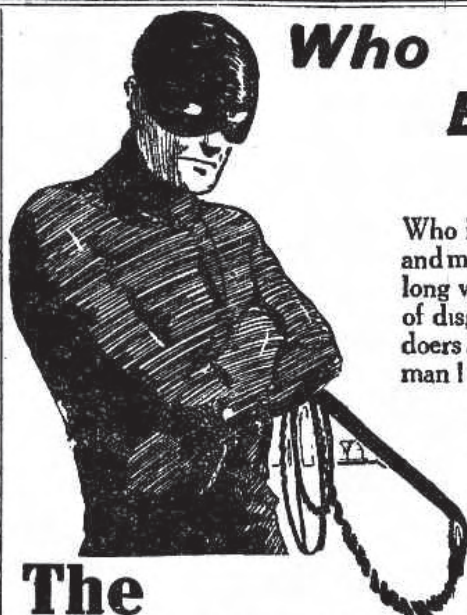
Harder and grimmer grew the face under the mask, a handsome face, not handsome now. Rupert Lagden, Master of Arts, had disappeared from existence; in his place was Jimmy the One—and Jimmy the One was in the mood of the tiger in the jungle when he turns on the hunters to tear and rend.

He stepped into the room. The door closed again without a sound. Again he stopped, and his hand slid into a pocket of the black coat, and came out with something in it. It was a thick lead pipe wrapped in an old stocking—the weapon of the city "thug." One blow from that deadly weapon in a sinewy hand, and the skull upon which it fell would crack like an egg-shell. The crook's fingers closed on it savagely in a tense grip.

A few more steps, and he was staring at the bed.

Dark as it was, he could make out the form of a sleeper. Quiet and steady and regular came the sound of breathing.

The crook's eyes blazed. John Brent had long hunted him—hunted him as a dangerous crook; hunted him as the thief of his child, kidnapped in revenge. That long, long



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hunt had come to an end at last—and this was the way it ended!

The right arm of the crook rose, and he made a swift stride towards the bed.

The blow came down with crashing force, fairly on the dim shape of the head on the pillow, and the desperate crook panted with fierce malevolence as he struck.

There was not a twinge of remorse in his heart, not a pang of compunction. The hunter had hunted him down. He knew that the man from Scotland Yard suspected him; that he had taken up his quarters at the school to watch him; that only the death of this human bloodhound could save him. And without compunction, without ruth, the crook struck that deadly blow with all the strength of his strong arm.

Thud!

For a split second Jimmy the One stood still, bewildered. Then a faint cry of amazement and rage and terror left his lips.

It was not a skull that had cracked under the murderous blow. The crashing lead pipe sank deep into a soft pillow. There was no sleeper in the bed; the dim form that lay under the coverings was a dummy.

In that moment of terror the crook knew that he had been tricked; expected, waited for—tricked and taken!

From the opposite side of the bed a figure rose. It was not from the bed, but from the figure crouched beside the bed, that that sound of regular breathing had come which had deceived the crook; he knew that now—if the knowledge was of any use to him.

Sudden illumination flooded the room as the electric light was switched on.

Face to face across the bed stood John Brent and the masked crook—the thick-set, stocky detective standing solidly, fully dressed, an automatic in his hand, aimed directly at Jimmy the One.

"Drop that!"

The lead pipe dropped from the crook's hand. The eyes that glinted over the levelled automatic told him what to expect if he attempted to use the weapon.

His eyes burned at the man from Scotland Yard.

"You knew!" he almost whispered through the mask.

"I was fairly sure," said Inspector Brent quietly. "I had to make sure, and I gave you 'his chance'—and you have taken it, Jimmy the One. It makes little difference; having had the clues in my hands it was only a matter of time. That is why you are here."

A quiver ran through the crook. He backed a pace; and the stocky man's deep-set eyes glinted over the revolver.

"Stand where you are, Jimmy the One!" said Brent. "And keep your hand away from your hip! If you touch a weapon I shall pull trigger!"

Still covering the crook with the revolver, Brent came round the bed.

His cold, hard face was almost expressionless; only a glimmer of grim satisfaction showed in his eyes.

The masked man burst into a low, bitter laugh.

"Your game, at long last, Brent!" he said, and he held out the black-gloved hands. "Put them on!"

Brent's left hand slid into his pocket for the handcuffs. His right held the automatic steady, and his eyes never left the crook. Jimmy the One, hunted for more than a decade, was holding out his hands for the "irons," taken at last. But even as the man from Scotland Yard drew out the steel handcuffs, the desperate crook made a spring like a



TOM REDWING is a son of the sea,
And a sailor bold and brave;
And his father, who is a sailor,
Is too,

Is tossed on the clamorous wave.
A favouring breeze on the billowy seas,
And the salt of the flying spray,
Remains to Tom an attraction from
Which nothing can tear him away.

Now Tom began to worship a man
At the early age of one;
His hero's name is still the same,
For Tom's his loyal son.
At reefing sails or fishing for whales,
Or anything else while afloat,
Tom's father can beat every man,
For he's spent all his life in a boat.

This likeable old sea-dog has told
Us tales we can't forget.
Though slow of speech, when on the
beach,
He sits to mend his net,
With dreamy eyes his memory flies
To friends of long ago;
To those who crossed the seas and
lost
Their lives where wild winds blow.

He will recall and tell us all
About the sights he's seen,
From the time when he, at twenty-
three,
Was a sturdy young marine,

GREYFRIARS HEROES.

No. 20.

This week's poem by the Greyfriars Rhymester is devoted to Tom Redwing, whose hero is a staunch and honest "tar"—to wit his loyal pa.

And felt with pride a sword at his side,
With his brand-new buttons bright,
As proud he stood, with an awfully good
Opinion of his might.

Until at last, his zenith past,
His face all tanned and brown,
He came once more to England's shore,
To land and settle down.
With fishermen he's lived since then,
A staunch and honest tar,
A British son who much has done
To make us what we are.

It's no surprise that Redwing tries
To imitate his dad;
A life of zeal is a great ideal
For any British lad.
Our wish we give that he will live
In happiness to dwell,
And still abide and work beside
The sea he loves so well.



tiger, desperately taking the risk of the automatic.

Crack!

The bullet grazed the masked cheek as Jimmy the One struck the firearm aside. A second more, and his grip was on the detective, and they were rolling on the floor in a fierce struggle,

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

"**N**OT yet!" hissed Jimmy the One. Brent did not speak.

The automatic had fallen from his grasp, as he went down in the crook's desperate clutch; he gave his enemy grasp for grasp, and struggled silently, fiercely, grimly, like the human bulldog that he was.

The crook was a powerful man, athletic, with muscles of steel. But he had no advantage over Brent. There was the strength of a bull in the stocky thick-set frame of the man from Scotland Yard. The crook struggled with almost mad intensity. It was the last throw of the dice for Jimmy the One, and everything was staked on it.

No sound of alarm came from without. The crack of the automatic had not been heard by distant sleepers. The adjoining room—Mr. Quelch's old room—was vacant—now that Jimmy the One

was in the detective's room. It was doubtful whether a call from Brent would have roused sleeping ears. But he did not call. The grim, silent detective seemed to count upon himself with certainty to overcome the crook he had so long hunted—perhaps he was unwilling that any other should share in the capture of Jimmy the One. The man was not only a breaker of the law, but his enemy, the enemy whose revenge had shadowed his life, and the grim, hard-faced man desired to take him with his own hands.

And fiercely as the crook struggled, it was borne in upon his mind at last, that Brent was having his way.

They rolled over, twice, thrice, and yet again, and then Brent was uppermost, and remained uppermost.

Savagely, with tigerish ferocity, the crook struggled, exerting every ounce of his strength, straining every muscle; but the iron grasp on him never relaxed for a second, and slowly but surely his strength flagged under the terrible strain.

Panting, gasping, still resisting, the crook lay in the detective's grip, with the bitter knowledge that he was beaten; that the last throw of the dice had failed him.

One last fierce effort he made to get at the revolver in his hip pocket, and the weapon was half-drawn, when

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Brent's fist struck it from his hand, and it slid away.

It was the finish! A minute more of desperate wrestling and then the crook's black-gloved hands were drawn together, and there was a click as the handcuffs locked on his wrists.

John Brent rose to his feet, breathing hard and deep. Man of iron as he was the fierce struggle had told on him.

The crook lay panting.

The game was up at last; with the handcuffs on his wrists Jimmy the One had no hope. He staggered to his feet and sat on the edge of the bed, his handcuffed hands before him, his breath coming in gasps, his eyes burning through the mask at the man from Scotland Yard.

"You've got me, Brent!"

Brent nodded, and stretched out a hand to remove the mask from the face of the man he had taken. The crook's head drew back.

"One moment!" he said.

Brent paused.

"Make it a trade!" said Jimmy the One in a low voice. "You've got me—you've got Jimmy the One! Have you got your son?"

The grim face of the detective grew harder and grimmer.

"No!" he said quietly.

"You know who took him from you. I left word when he was taken—a written message to put you wise. You knew to whom you owed it."

"I knew!"

"That was all you knew. You never found the boy—you never knew that he was abandoned in a slum, to grow up a vagrant and a thief like those around him. But you know now that I tell you, that the son of John Brent, Detective-Inspector of Scotland Yard, may end his days in prison—may even fall as a captured thief into his own father's hands—you know that now that I tell you, Brent. Make it a trade! Give me my freedom—and silence—and I will give you back your son."

The detective did not answer.

"Save him, from what is coming to him," said Jimmy the One. "I have kept him under my eye—I know where he is to be found; I will give him back to you, to save from a life of crime—if you make it a trade. Answer before you take the mask from my face."

"I have my duty to do," said John Brent.

With a steady hand he dragged the mask from the face of the man who sat on the edge of the bed.

The light gleamed on the face of Rupert Lagden.

Brent gave him one look, and nodded.

"I knew!" he said.

The handsome face was distorted with rage.

"You've got me. Not even to save your son—you bloodhound! Listen to me, then!" said Jimmy the One, between his teeth. "Shall I tell you where the boy is? He is a prisoner—hidden safe and sound—search for him if you like; but you will never find him. If I do not return to take him food, he will die of hunger, alone, helpless, unaided. Think of that, Brent, while you put me behind the bars."

A spasm crossed the detective's iron face.

"Is that true?"

Jimmy the One gave a scoffing laugh.

"You know it is true! I see in your face that you know it is true. You have already guessed, now I have told you so much, who the boy is—there is only one boy likely to be held a hidden

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prisoner, by Jimmy the One—and that—"

"The boy Flip!"

"The boy Flip!" assented Jimmy the One. "Your son, John Brent, a waif and a vagrant in the slums, whom an almost miraculous chance brought to this school to bring about my ruin. A vagrant and a thief—now a prisoner, depending on me to save him from death by hunger."

"You lie!" said Brent, his voice calm, though his hard face worked. "I have heard all about this boy—he was a vagrant and a thief, but he reformed; he was given a chance by kind friends, and he made the most of it. At this school he won friendship and respect. I have talked with many of the boys—the best boys in the school, who were friends to him here—Wharton, Cherry, others, who would not have touched a thief with a pair of tongs. Whatever you made of my son, you dog, he cast it off at the first chance."

He broke off.

"Where is the boy?"

"Safe and sound behind locked doors—and my prisoner."

"But where—"

"Where you will never find him, if I go behind the bars," answered Jimmy the One. "Take me to the stone jug, Brent, and condemn your boy to a lingering death. His life for my liberty."

"If he is the son of his father, he will place duty before life itself," answered Brent coldly. "I have my duty to do, and my duty is to relieve the country of a human wolf who has preyed on it for more than ten years. The handcuffs will remain on your wrists, Jimmy the One, until you are inside a cell."

His hand dropped on the crook's shoulder, as it had dropped more than ten long years ago.

"Come!" he said curtly.

Greyfriars still slept.

But in the Head's study, Dr. Locke, in his dressing-gown, sat and stared in dazed amazement, at the handcuffed man who waited with a black and bitter face, while Inspector Brent stood at the telephone, speaking to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield Police Station. Only the Head had been called, to be told the facts before the new master of the Remove was taken away. It was likely to be a long time before Dr. Locke recovered from his astonishment.

"Bless my soul!" he said faintly, for the twentieth time. "Bless my soul! Lagden—Mr. Lagden—I really had the best recommendations—Mr. Lagden—Bless my soul!"

The crook did not speak.

John Brent put up the receiver and turned from the telephone.

"A car will soon be here with the constables to take the man away, sir," he said.

"Bless my soul!" was all the Head could say.

Some Greyfriars fellows awakened at the sound of a car on the drive, and wondered what was up, and went to sleep again. If the Remove fellows were dreaming, they little dreamed that Rupert Lagden, M.A., was leaving Greyfriars in that car with the handcuffs on his wrists, and a watchful constable seated on either side of him. The Remove were to awake in the morning to find themselves a Form without a master, while stone walls and iron bars closed round the crook, who had been known at Greyfriars as Rupert Lagden, and in the underworld as Jimmy the One.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

"**E**RE we are, sir!" murmured Flip.

Billy Bunter grunted. "There," undoubtedly, they were, but they did not seem much "forrader."

Bunter, fortunately, was not hungry. He had made several onslaughts on the provisions Jimmy the One had left for the kidnapped waif. But he was cold; he was tired; he was sleepy. The February night was dark and windy, and Bunter thought of a warm bed in the Remove dormitory with deep yearning. He had to face the music for cutting detention; but he was almost eager to face it, if only he could get to bed.

But there was no bed for Bunter. He was worse off than the gentleman in the song, whose lodging was on the cold, cold ground. Bunter's lodging was on a cold, cold roof.

Flip had joined him there. The keen-witted waif had not been long in thinking of a way out, now that he had help from above. He tore up the sheets of his bed, plaited them into a rope, and tossed the end up to Bunter to catch. Bunter, of course, missed it three or four times; but he caught it at last, and made it fast to the framework of the roof window. Then the active fag swarmed up the improvised rope, and clambered out through the broken window.

But it seemed a case of "thus far, and no farther." Jimmy the One counted on the Alsatian running loose in the yard to guard the lonely cottage. And the brute was a far more efficient guardian than a human would have been. The pair on the roof hoped that he might go back to his kennel to sleep, and give them a chance of getting away across the yard. But nothing was less likely. Flip tossed down a light missile from the roof, to ascertain whether the dog was still wakeful; and a deep growl and a pattering of feet replied. The Alsatian was on the watch.

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter. "It's c-c-cold!"

"Blooming cold, sir!" agreed Flip, with a shiver.

He had a coat on, but the cold wind was searching. Bunter had no coat; he was just as he had dodged out of the Form-room. But Flip had tossed up a couple of blankets, and the fat Owl had wrapped himself in them. Still, it was cold.

"How are we going to get out of this?" grunted Bunter. "Look here, we can't stay here all night."

Flip made no reply to that. It looked as if they had to stay where they were, or take their chance of the Alsatian. And Bunter, most decidedly, had no idea of taking that chance.

"It's jolly nearly freezing!" grumbled Bunter.

"Ain't it just!" agreed Flip.

"Oh dear!"

"We got to stick it out, sir," said Flip encouragingly. "We shall be all right, sir. You 'eard what Jimmy the One said—he ain't comin' back 'ere. We're safe from that villain, sir. Well, when daylight comes somebody may come along, and we can shout to them. We can be seen on this roof from a dozen parts in the wood. 'Tain't as if we was down in the room, you see, sir. We're in sight on the roof once it's daylight."

"You silly young ass!" howled Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Think I can stick on here in this freezing wind till daylight?" roared Bunter. "Don't be a fathead!"

"I—I don't see what else we're going to do, sir," mumbled Flip. "We can't get past that dorg."

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

"Look 'ere, sir," said Flip, "s'pose you drop into the room, and go to bed there, sir? Me, I'll stay on the roof and watch. Jimmy the One ain't coming back, and you'll be safe in the 'ouse, sir."

fragments of broken glass from the window, and then heaved his bulk into the opening. He grasped the rope of sheets, and hung on, to slide down. He had not far to go to reach the rickety old chair below. It was an easy drop, if he had chosen to drop. As a matter of fact, he dropped without choosing.

The moment Billy Bunter's avoirdupois hung on the rope of sheets it snapped.

Bump!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

"Oh swipes!" gasped Flip.

Billy Bunter landed on the chair and slipped off, roaring.

much more comfortable that Bunter quite forgot that Flip was still on the windy roof.

"Mind you keep your eyes open, Flip!" he called out.

"You trust me, sir!"

Bunter's eyes closed, and his mouth opened.

Snore!

Bunter was asleep.

There was no sleep for Flip; but he was in no mood for sleep. Escape was possible at last. Indeed certain, unless the crook returned to prevent it, and that was little likely. Anxiously Flip watched through the long hours of the winter night for the first glimmer of dawn.

It was cold, it was windy, it was dark and dreary; but Flip cared little. With wakeful eyes he watched, while from below came the deep, unceasing snore of William George Bunter. At intervals a whine from the wakeful Alsatian mingled with the sound of Bunter's snoring. The brute was still sleepless and watching.

At last—after ages, as it seemed to the waif of Greyfriars—the darkness of the sky was broken by a glimmer. Dawn was coming.

As Flip watched from the roof, his heart fairly in his mouth, the savage Alsatian leapt at the woodcutter like a tiger. Joyce raised his cudgel to defend himself. Then a fight for life ensued!

"He might come back," said Bunter, with a shiver.

"He won't come to-night, sir, that's a cert, arter being 'ere. Soon as it's daylight I'll see somebody in the woods, and we'll get 'elp."

Billy Bunter nodded slowly.

The prospect of bed was attractive. It was necessary for one to remain on the roof to keep watch for help. But it was not necessary for that one to be Bunter, so far as Bunter could see. What was necessary was that Bunter should be made comfortable. That was a matter of the first importance.

"Well, if that beast comes back, you can call me, and I'll come up the rope, same as you did," he said.

Flip loyally suppressed a grin. The rope of sheets had easily taken his weight. Under Bunter's it was likely to snap like a pack-thread.

"It isn't as if I weighed a lot," said Bunter thoughtfully. "Mind you keep watch, Flip."

"Leave it to me, sir."

"Mind you keep awake."

"I ain't likely to sleep 'ere, and in this wind, sir," grinned Flip.

"No, perhaps not; just as well it's so cold, in the circumstances," agreed Bunter. "It wouldn't do for you to go to sleep. Mind you call me in time to get up the rope if that villain comes."

"He won't show up, sir," said Flip. "And when we get 'elp, you can be let out at the door."

"Well, I think I'll drop inside," said Bunter, blinking into the orifice in the window. "I'll slide down the rope."

"If you 'old on with your 'ands, sir, you can drop on the chair easy," suggested Flip. "I can't move the table, 'cause it's clamped to the floor."

"I'll go down the rope."

Bunter carefully knocked out the last

Bump!

"Whoooop!"

He sprawled on the floor and belatedly. Flip stared down at him anxiously.

"Urt yourself, sir?" he asked.

"You silly fathead! Of course I have!" roared Bunter. "Oh! Ow! Wow, wow! Yow! Why didn't you make the rope stronger, you young ass? Wow!"

The patient Flip made no answer to that. Billy Bunter picked himself up and rubbed his injuries, which were not really very serious. But it was clear, even to Bunter, that in case of alarm, he would never be able to climb up that rope of sheets.

"Chuck those blankets down!" he grunted.

Flip tossed down the blankets. The fat Owl rolled into Flip's bed, tucked himself in warmly, and gave a grunt of satisfaction. This was better than a windy roof—so much better, and so

It came at last—a grey winter's dawn. The shapes of the trees loomed out dimly from the shadows, and grew clearer and clearer. Light and a faint warmth came to the shivering fag on the roof of the lonely cottage.

More eagerly now Flip watched, standing up on the roof, his eyes sweeping the woodland paths that were in sight. Once or twice he had a glimpse of the Alsatian roaming in the yard. How long he had to wait for help in so lonely a spot he could not guess. Perhaps the whole day, perhaps another, day. But sooner or later someone was sure to come within sight of the lonely cottage. That was certain. And, as it happened, it was sooner, and not later.

A figure came tramping up the path to the cottage in the rising sunlight. Flip's heart bounded. At a distance he recognised Joyce, the woodcutter.

Before the man was in hearing he began to shout. But Joyce was coming

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directly towards the cottage, and in a few minutes he heard the shouting voice and stared blankly at the figure standing on the roof, wildly waving. The old woodcutter's eyes almost popped from his head at the startling sight.

He stopped at the gate, a dozen yards from the cottage, and stared blankly at Flip.

"Elp!" yelled Flip.

"You young rogue, what be you doing there?" exclaimed the woodcutter.

"Elp!"

"Who be you?" demanded Joyce suspiciously.

"I'm Flip. I belong to Greyfriars. Elp me out of this 'ere!"

The woodcutter jumped. The kidnapping of Flip was known far and wide round Greyfriars, and it dawned on Joyce that this was the kidnapped schoolboy whose name was on every tongue in the locality.

"Look out for the dorg!" yelled Flip, as Joyce, having tried the gate and found it locked, began to clamber over it.

The woodcutter, unheeding, dropped over the gate. He had a thick black-thorn under his arm, and even the fierce Alsatian had no terrors for him. There was a deep, savage growl and a pattering of running feet as the old woodcutter dropped within the gate, and the Alsatian fairly flew across the yard at him.

Flip, from the roof, watched, with his heart in his mouth. Even for the stout old woodcutter, with the thick cudgel in his hand, the great dog was a dangerous assailant. It came at the man like a tiger. But Joyce faced it coolly, and a terrific crash from the cudgel drove it howling back.

Twice again it flew at the woodcutter, and each time the crashing cudgel drove it, yelling, off. Then Joyce grasped the collar, and the dog was caught. Flip panted with relief as he saw the old man force it away to the kennel at the back of the house and he heard the clink of the chain as it was secured there.

The woodcutter came back and looked up at Flip's eager face.

"You can come down now, sir," he called.

"Wotto!" chuckled Flip.

He put his head in at the roof window.

"Master Bunter!" he shouted.

Bunter's melodious snore still floated up. He had not awakened, and Flip's shout did not awaken him. The fag shouted again and again, but only the deep snore replied.

"Oh swipes!" gasped Flip.

The fag called down to the woodcutter:

"You bust in the door, Mr. Joyce. There's another bloke 'ere, Master Bunter, what came and found me last night. He can't get on the roof agin. You bust in the door!"

The old woodcutter pondered for a moment or two, then he nodded and went to a corner of the yard where logs were stacked. He came back with a heavy log in his grasp, and Flip heard the crash as it was driven against the door below.

With a cheery grin, the fag dropped in at the window, landed on the chair, and jumped on the floor. He shook Bunter by the shoulder.

"Wake up, Master Bunter!"

"Groooooogh!"

"Wake up, sir!"

"Lemme alone, you beast! 'Tain't rising-bell!" mumbled Bunter. Flip chuckled.

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"You wake up, sir! It's 'elp! Can't you 'ear 'im a-busting in the door!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He rubbed his eyes, jammed on his spectacles, and rolled off the bed.

Crash, crash, crash! came from below.

In a few minutes the cottage door was driven in. They heard the footsteps of Joyce in the cottage.

"Where be you?" came the old woodcutter's voice.

"This way!" yelled Flip, thumping on the door of the room.

Joyce came tramping up the stairs. The bolts were shot back, and Flip dragged the door open, his eyes dancing.

Joyce stared into the room.

"Jolly glad to see you, my man!" said Billy Bunter affably. "Jolly lucky you came along!"

"Yes, sir," said Joyce. "I'm glad now that some idjit turned my horse and cart loose yesterday, sir. That's how I came here."

If you fancy yourself as a
"poet," try your hand at writing a
GREYFRIARS LIMERICK!

Here is one which earns

A TOPPING PRIZE

for Jack McDowell, of 23, Hill
Street, Lurgan, Co. Armagh,
Ireland:

When Bunter went hiking one day,
He met a fierce bull on the way.
He quickened his pace,
But the bull won the race;
Bunter lost the "toss up" so they
say!

Now, forge ahead with YOUR
attempt, chum, and see if you
can catch the judge's eye.

Billy Bunter started.

"Your—your horse and cart!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir," said Joyce. "I left it tied in the wood, three or four miles from here yesterday afternoon. And somebody must have set the pony loose, for it was gone when I came back for it. I'd like to know who it was. I'd give him something! I hope I'll find the raskil!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He did not share Mr. Joyce's hope that the old woodcutter would find the rascal.

"That pony's still wandering with the cart," said Joyce. "I thought he might have wandered back here, as he never came home to Woodend, so I came along first thing in the morning to see."

"I—I think you'll find him not far away," said Bunter. "In fact, I—I saw him last night quite close to here. I—I fancy it was some gipsy who let him loose. In fact, I saw a gipsy—saw him quite plainly. A rather big chap with a—black beard."

"Come on, sir!" said Flip. "I'll race you to Greyfriars, sir. You'd better go to the police station, Mr. Joyce, and tell 'em about the bloke you let this 'ouse to. Come on, Master Bunter!"

And even Billy Bunter put on speed as he started with Flip for the school.

Read the Splendid School Stories
of Tom Merry & Co. in the

2d.

GEM

Every
Week.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Father and Son!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry fairly yelled.

Greyfriars was in a buzz of excitement that morning.

After brekker the news had spread through the school of what had happened in the night, and all the fellows knew that Rupert Lagden, alias Jimmy the One, was in a cell at Courtfield Police Station.

In the excitement of that amazing revelation the fellows almost forgot that Bunter was still missing, and that Mr. Brent, though he had captured Jimmy the One, was as far as ever from having found the kidnapped Flip.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quad, discussing the latest news, while they waited for the bell for first school. Inspector Brent was with the Head in his study—he was still at Greyfriars. The chums of the Remove ceased their discussion suddenly, and stared in blank astonishment at two figures that came trotting in at the gates. If they had forgotten Bunter and Flip, they were reminded of them now.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Flip!" yelled Bob.

"And Bunter!" gasped Nugent.

"The Bunterfulness is terrific!" ejaculated Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "My only esteemed hat! The absurd Bunter has found the ridiculous Flip."

"Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull. "Oh, my hat!"

"Back ag'in, you blokes!" grinned Flip. "Oh swipes! I can tell you I'm jolly glad to see your blooming chivvies ag'in."

"Well, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"How—"

"Master Bunter found me—"

"Bunter did? Oh, Jerusalem!"

"I say, you fellows, where's Lagden?" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I say, he's the man who kidnapped Flip—I've found him out—"

"Jolly old Brent's found him out, too," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Lagden's in chokey—"

"They got Jimmy the One!" gasped Flip.

"The gotfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Flip!"

"Oh swipes! Jimmy the One—taken at last!" said the wail, with a whistle.

"But how—" began Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, I can't stop here talking to you—I've got to tell the Head that I've rescued Flip!" said Billy Bunter. "Can't waste time on you chaps! Come on, Flip!"

And Billy Bunter marched importantly on. Crowds of staring fellows gathered round and followed to the House. Billy Bunter held his fat little nose high, and fairly strutted. Billy Bunter was the "goods" now—there was no doubt of that—and Billy Bunter was the man to make the most of it.

"Flip—"

"Bunter—"

"Bunter's found Flip—"

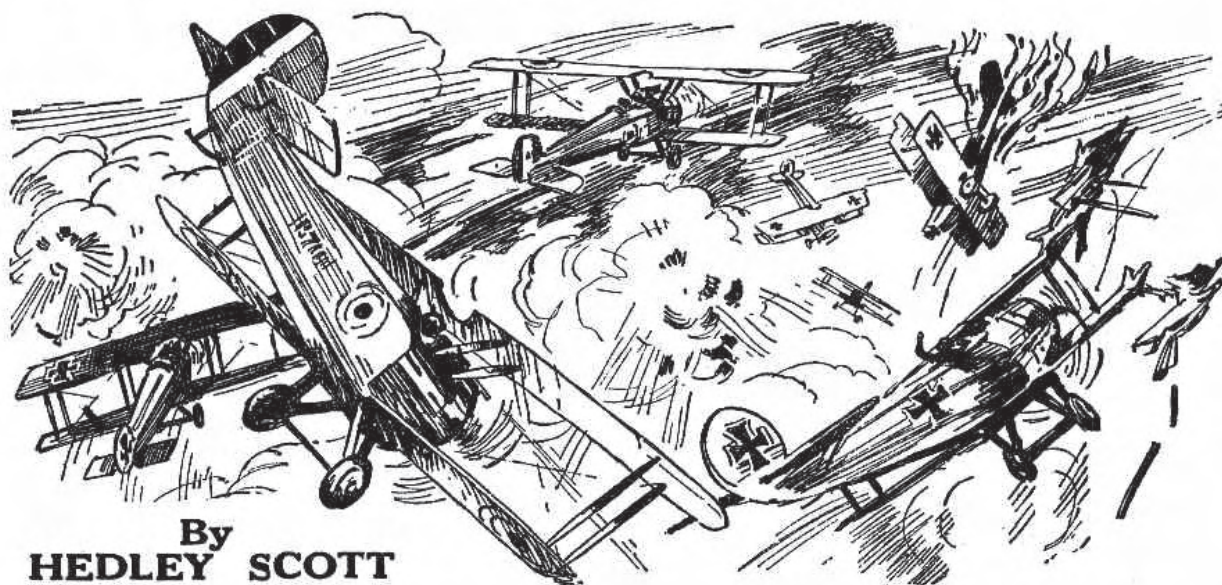
It was a roar of voices that followed them to the Head's study. Bunter tapped on the door of that study. The deep voice of the Head bade him enter, and he marched in, with Flip at his heels.

Dr. Locke, grave and stately gentleman as he was, jumped from his chair. The hard, grim-faced man who sat talking with him turned his head and fixed his eyes on Flip.

Bunter did not heed Inspector Brent. He blinked at the Head through his big spectacles.

(Continued on page 28.)

WINGS OF WAR!



By
HEDLEY SCOTT

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

FIRE WITH ENTHUSIASM TO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR, THREE YOUNGSTERS, JIM DANIELS, RON GLYNN, AND BRUCE THORBURN, STRAIGHT FROM SCHOOL, JOIN THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS AS CADETS. DURING THEIR COURSE OF TRAINING AT INGLESHEON AERODROME THEY FALL FOUL OF SERGEANT WILKINS, A TYRANT AND A BULLY, WHO MAKES THEIR LIVES A MISERY. UNDER GREAT PROVOCATION JIM DANIELS STRIKES THE SERGEANT AND IS PUT UNDER ARREST. THE CHARGE IS "WASHED OUT," HOWEVER, FOR PAPERS ARE RECEIVED FROM THE AIR MINISTRY ANNOUNCING THAT THE CADETS HAVE BEEN APPOINTED TO COMMISSIONED RANK AND ARE TO PROCEED OVERSEAS FOR SERVICE IN FLANDERS. THE HORRORS OF WAR ARE SOON BROUGHT HOME TO THE YOUNGSTERS, FOR THE TROOPSHIP TAKING THEM TO FRANCE IS MINED IN THE CHANNEL. BY A STROKE OF GOOD FORTUNE THE THREE SUCCEED IN CLAMBERING ON TO A GRATING WASHED FROM THE WRECK, BUT EACH SUCCESSIVE WAVE THREATENS TO OVERTURN THEIR FRAGILE CRAFT.

The Ferry Pilot!

LIKE specks on the horizon were the lifeboats that had taken off the major portion of the draft.

What fate had befallen the unfortunates who had essayed the jump from the sinking ship the three chums did not dwell upon. For a radius of a mile there was no sign of a human being. The storm had abated somewhat, but their crazy craft was buffeted and tossed about in such a manner as to suggest that an early parting from it was not unlikely.

"So this is war," grunted Jim at last. "If ever I get through this little lot I'll make the Huns sit up! Mining a shipload of fellows is like hitting below the belt."

"War is war," said Thorburn between chattering teeth. "Besides, for all you know, that mine might have been one of our own that has broken adrift."

Silence again.

The passing minutes developed into an hour—two hours. Dusk was beginning to cloud the heavens. All around was a seemingly limitless expanse of sea. Through the dusk came the squawking of seagulls; faintly at first, then in growing volume throbbed the rhythmic pulsing of aero engines.

The three chums caught the familiar sounds at the same moment, and all eyes focused in the direction whence they came.

"It's a bus!" whooped Jim. "Flying jolly low, too!"

His pals followed his pointing finger. Away to the south taking shape every

second came a large Handley-Page bomber. At a rough calculation the twin-engined monster could not be flying higher than four hundred feet. At sight of her the chums' hearts leaped high.

"Give her a yell, boys!" said Jim.

With all the strength of their lungs the youngsters bellowed for help, hardly conscious of the fact that their combined voices would not carry above the roar of the engines, to say nothing of the distance.

Jim stood up on the grating in imminent danger of capsizing it and his pals, and waved frantically. The bomber forged on. Jim's face fell as the monster plane, now directly overhead, threw its shadow on the tiny raft and kept to its course.

His last despairing wave, however, caught the attention of the observer-gunner in the front cockpit. There came an answering wave, then round banked the Handley, like some giant snail, and slowly circled the raft.

The chums watched it with anxious faces. Six times the plane circled, losing height at every turn, until it was no more than thirty feet above them; then something snaked out from the trapdoor in the fuselage.

"Hurrah!" roared Jim. "It's a rope!"

He had no sooner said it when the rope slashed by and knocked him head-over-heels into the water. The grating canted perilously, and all but shot Ron and Thorburn off to keep him company. As they steadied themselves the rope

whizzed by again. Instinctively, Ron grabbed at it, and as he started to urge Thorburn to essay the first trip he realised that his pal was now twenty yards or more away, and that it behoved him to start climbing.

Like a monkey—and all a monkey's agility was required—Ron forged, hand over hand, up the rope.

It was a longish job; it seemed interminable to Thorburn and Jim, waiting their turn below. But patience and the skill of the pilot brought their own reward, and eventually three breathless, excited chums once more stood together in the spacious cockpit of the bomber.

"Well, you're three bright specimens, I must say!" chuckled the pilot. "Sorry I can't offer you a change of clobber and a drink."

His levity changed when he heard of the disaster that had overtaken the troopship.

"Poor devils!" was all he said; but from an old campaigner like himself it meant a lot.

"I shall have to take you three with me to Etaples," he said at last. "Got to dump this flying omnibus there. That's the worst of being a ferry pilot; they don't study the feelings of a fellow who's used to Camels. They give him this wallowing duck."

Jim smiled.

"Good job they did in this case!" he remarked. "A Camel would never have got us aboard. Hallo, boys! Land-ho!"

"France!" ejaculated Thorburn eagerly, with such eagerness indeed that

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the ferry pilot turned a pitying glance upon him. "France!"

"You'll see more of it than is good for your digestion, son, before you're much older!" said the ferry pilot. "I've had three years of it over there, and I shan't lose a wink of sleep if I never see it again!"

It was on the tip of Thorburn's tongue to ask him a hundred and one questions, but the pilot made a pretence of busying himself at the controls. He knew these youngsters—had, indeed, been a comparative youngster himself when hostilities had commenced. They were all keen, eager to do their bit. The price, the disillusionment would come quite quickly enough without any comments on the subject from him.

He talked of fighting scouts, and displayed interest when he heard that the three had flown Bristols.

"They're good buses, lads. The best two-seaters in the war, bar none! A good observer, handy with his gun and nippy with his eyes, and you'll pull through. Sure thing!"

"Oh, we're as keen as mustard!" said Jim. "They kept the War on as long as this especially for us! We'll give Jerry something to take home with him!"

"What-ho!"

Just outside Etaples lay the depot for which the ferry pilot was heading. In lumbering circles, and what was to the three scout pilots novice's banks, the giant plane lost height steadily. A gentle side-slip for about five minutes—always an exhilarating operation even to the hardened flying-man—brought the Handley within landing range.

Down went the nose, the engines were throttled back; up came the nose again out of the glide, a few hardly felt bumps, a burst of throttle, and the monster was humming along the grass towards the sheds as comfortable as a perambulator on a polished paving.

"Some landing!" said Jim, admiringly.

"They land themselves," chuckled the ferry pilot. "You can't go wrong in a Handley unless you meet a Fokker or a burst of direct Archie. In either case there's no need to worry."

The chums did not fathom the significance of that remark, and a moment later they were tumbling out of the trap-door underneath the fuselage and making their presence known. The whole story of their adventure had to be told afresh in the presence of the commanding officer.

He congratulated them at the end of it.

"Deuced lucky! You boys had better camp down here for to-night. I'll get in touch with the authorities over the wires, so you can stand by to move off at dawn to-morrow."

The chums snapped a salute, and retired. A good square meal and a change of clothes borrowed for the nonce put them in high good fettle. Their one grouse against the hospitality of the Etaples depot in the morning was that they had not been notified when the Jerry night-bombers had selected that locality as an admirable target for a ton or so of bombs, what time the three had been deep in the arms of Morpheus.

A Warm Welcome!

CAPTAIN DOUGLAS OAKLEY was in high feather.

In the mess-room of No. 256 Squadron he had gathered around him the choicest spirits of the squadron. Being the captain's birthday,

he had celebrated it in fitting style. He was something of a veteran flying-man, was Oakley, for he had arrived in France in the early days of 'Fifteen, and, so far, had passed through the campaign unscathed.

Like so many warriors similarly experienced, the captain was beginning to crack through nerve strain. His own particular pals had advised him to take a long leave in "Blighty." His commanding officer had added his insistence. Still the captain had stayed on. At his best the captain was one of the nicest fellows breathing; a safe pilot, plucky, and a born leader.

When his periodical attack of nerves took hold of him his temper was as vague as the newspaper weather reports.

"Drink up, boys!" he called out boisterously. "It's my birthday—the third I've survived in this eternal war. Drink up!"

The mess steward hastily filled the glasses and was handing them round when the door opened and three newcomers stepped across the threshold.

Jim, Ron, and Thorburn had arrived for duty.

All eyes turned upon them.

"Three more targets for the Huns arrived!" said Lieutenant Gilton, in an audible whisper, at which there was a snigger.

Captain Oakley came away from the counter and eyed the trio appraisingly.

"Why, they're sendin' 'em out younger than ever! Kids! Ought to be with their mothers, not out here!"

There was a wealth of disgust in his voice, also a strain of pity, for the captain had seen two score or more youngsters fresh from Blighty join No. 256 Squadron, only to fall speedy victims to wily Fokker scouts that roamed the skies under Baron von Richthofen. His words had the wrong effect on Jim and his pals.

They stiffened and crimsoned.

"We wish to report for duty, sir," said Jim coldly.

"What are your names?" snapped Captain Oakley.

The youngsters gave the necessary information somewhat grudgingly. They didn't quite know where they stood. Kids were they? And who was this man to talk? He didn't look to be more than twenty-two himself.

The captain sensed the underlying rebelliousness, and frowned darkly.

"Cheeky young pups!" he said, with a laugh that found a chorus from the rest of the flying-men. "As this is our regular bath night, we'll give you yours first as a special favour. Up with 'em, boys!"

In a moment the three chums found themselves the centre of a struggling mob that hustled them through the door of the mess into the night air. It was useless to struggle against such odds, so the pals awaited what was coming to them with commendable fortitude. They hadn't long to wait.

A gleaming patch of water showed suddenly in the flickle light.

Next minute the chums had been shot into it. A roar of laughter went up from the pilots and observers at their plight.

"That'll cool you off, kids!" roared Captain Oakley. "You'd better kip down in Hut B. So-long! Nighty-night!"

"We'll come and tuck you up if you'll say the word!"

Laughing like a lot of schoolboy raggers, and they weren't very far removed from that, the leading lights of

the squadron departed for the mess, leaving Jim, Ron, and Thorburn to scramble out of the water and find Hut B as best they could.

"Here's a go!" grumbled Ron. "This kit of mine is a real Jonah. After all the trouble I took to have it pressed at Etaples this morning, too!"

Jim grinned ruefully.

"Don't know whether I like that captain fellow or not. The ducking doesn't worry me, for we've found out that they've made a swimming-pool here."

Thorburn shook the water from him and grunted.

"Much sooner have found that out in the morning in a bathing costume. However, let's hunt up this Hut B."

The sleeping quarters were not far away, but the short journey to Hut B saw the pals collecting a lot of Flanders mud, for the aerodrome was almost under water. A batman on duty stifled a groan when he saw their condition, for it meant extra work for him in the morning putting the kits to rights, and politely asked them where their baggage was.

"At the bottom of the Channel," said Jim breezily. "Except what we stand up in we haven't a rag between us."

The batman scratched his head and mumbled that he would see what he could do. While he was gone the trio warmed themselves round the smoky stove in the centre of the hut and viewed what was to be their quarters. Six camp beds and baggage almost filled the available floor space already.

"Don't think much of this," grumbled Ron. "Hallo, here's his nibs!"

He caught sight of Captain Oakley, closely followed by the batman, striding towards the hut.

Shivering somewhat, the three stood to attention as the captain entered.

He frowned at them for the space of a minute, then his face broke into a beaming smile.

"Good kids!" he exclaimed boisterously. "You took the ducking darned well. I don't mind telling you we always put our new men to the test like that—it's a form of initiation peculiar to the squadron. Right stuff. Two-five-six welcome you."

The three thought simultaneously if that were so then 256 Squadron had a peculiar way of showing it. However, they said nothing.

"Sorry to hear about your kit!" The captain scratched his head. "I seem to remember some brass-hat from Etaples phoning me about three kids—ahem!—officers who had had a rough passage in the old Rupert. Clean forgot all about it. My birthday, you know—"

"Many happy returns!" ventured Jim beginning to realise that Captain Douglas Oakley had been celebrating.

"The C.O.'s away for the day," went on the captain, "and I'm acting his nibs' job. Let me see. You'll want a change of clobber. Treluce"—this to the batman—"hop over and scrounge the major's bed for the night, also his second best suit. Jump to it!"

The batman departed.

"That's one of you fixed up," said the captain reflectively eyeing Jim Daniels. "You two"—turning to Ron and Thorburn—"had better dig into my baggage. Some of my stuff will just about fit you. Kim on!"

With a wink to Jim, Thorburn and Ron ambled in the captain's wake.

"There's my corner," said Oakley, springing open the door of a hut with his foot, "and there's my kit. Help yourselves."

He was about to go when another thought struck him.

"We're short of two beds. Hum!" He toyed with his moustache for a few moments and then grinned. "By Jove, the very thing!"

Before Ron and Thorburn could say a word the captain was speeding hot foot for the mess. A moment or so later the whole squadron trooped out into the night. Wonderingly Ron and Thorburn watched them until they merged with the blackness and were lost to sight.

"What the thump are they up to?" asked Ron. "Strikes me, Bruce, this is a queer squadron."

"That's just what I was thinking. But that three-pip merchant isn't at all a bad sort. Something about him I like."

"Same here, old bean. Now, what the—"

From the darkness outside the hut came a floating chorus of yells, challenging derisive, triumphant, alarming.

"Is it the Huns?" gasped Ron.

"Don't be an ass!" chided Thorburn, "we're miles behind the lines. Sounds like a dog-fight, though."

It certainly was a dog-fight.

Through the gloom came a number of running figures. In the van four flying officers were carrying between them two camp-beds complete with bedding. Their comrades a few yards behind them were fighting a rearguard action. Yelling, laughing, the members of 256 Squadron came charging back to their own quarters.

The camp-bed bearers reached Oakley's hut first.

"Here you are, you lucky bargees!" yelled one, flinging the beds into the hut. "It isn't every new kid that can sleep in a captain's bed on his first night in France."

Even then enlightenment did not come to Thorburn and Ron, and it was not until the sounds of battle had died away that they timidly asked for an explanation. Captain Oakley gave it.

"It's all right, young 'uns. Those beds belong to captains Beverley and Forester of 257 Squadron. They're our friendly rivals. We've scrounged the beds. You can borrow 'em until your batmen fix you up to-morrow."

"Oh!" gasped Ron and Thorburn.

"I say, what a rag!"

The captain smiled.

"It's one of the pastimes that keeps us young. Two-five-seven are pretty hot as a rule, but we surprised 'em to-night. Better trot those beds over to Hut B. Then join us in the mess."

"Yes, sir," chorused Ron and Thorburn.

"If you 'yes, sir' me I'll have you chucked into the swimming-bath again," threatened the captain. "My names are Douglas and Oakley. You can try Oakley to start with. Savvy?"

"Ye-es, sir—hem!—Oakley!"

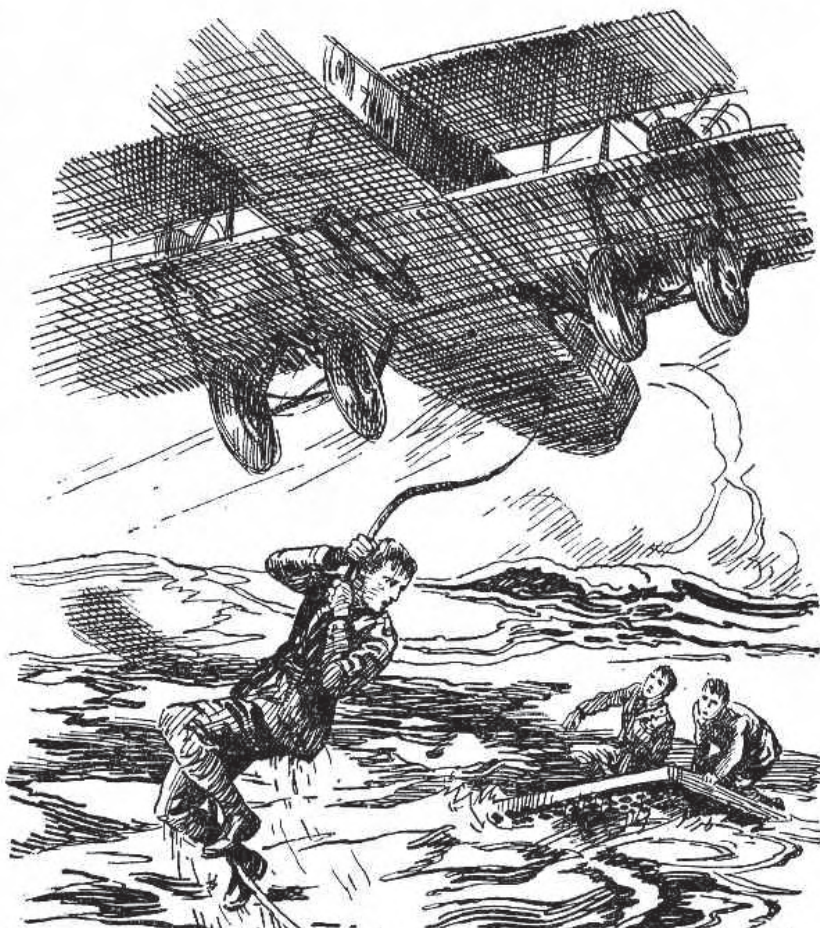
And the door of the hut slammed.

"I say, Ron," breathed Thorburn, "this is a ripping squadron, what?"

"Agreed," chuckled Ron. "Funny how soon we've changed our minds, Bruce. Come on, let's hunt up Jim and tell him the news. How's this jacket of Oakley's fit me?"

"Where it touches!" retorted Thorburn. "And that's nowhere."

He avoided a playful lunge from his chum and scudded off to Hut B, and five minutes later the three newcomers to No. 256 Squadron were shaking



A rope snaked down from the monster plane and Ron seized hold of it. Like a monkey the shipwrecked youngster began to climb hand over hand!

hands all round with their colleagues of the future, and being treated as guests of honour.

Just before they turned in, Oakley came over to them, the "Orders of the Day" sheet in his hand. Something of his good-humour had gone.

"I'm awfully sorry, boys," he commenced apologetically, "but we're short-handed in this squadron. Rotten lot of casualties these last few days. Don't like the idea of putting you on a show your first day here, but I've no alternative."

The eyes of the three lit up eagerly. They saw no reason for an apology at that piece of news.

"Oh, we don't mind!" said Jim, acting as spokesman. "We're keen to have a smack at old Jerry."

"Hum!" The captain pursed his lips. "Well, your wish will soon be gratified. We shall escort a bombing squadron to Arleux at dawn to-morrow. It'll quite likely be a sticky show. Richthofen's circus is giving us jip these days. But don't lose your heads. I'll put some old stagers each side of you, and they will do all that's necessary if things get too hot."

"Yes, sir—Oakley!" replied Jim, crimsoning. "We won't let the squadron down."

"Good-night, boys! Sleep tight."

The chums turned and made off for their own quarters. Captain Douglas Oakley stood looking after them, and finally shook his head.

"It's a pity," he communed with himself. "They're made of the right stuff. But it's a pity."

"Good luck, Ron! Good luck, Bruce!"

Jim Daniels gripped his pals firmly by the hand and clambered into the cockpit of his Bristol, bestowing a cheery wave to the observer in the back seat, who was giving his Lewis gun a final test.

Jim, like his chums, was thrilling in every sinew. This was to be his first show over the lines.

The drome was a hive of activity; whirling propellers adding a note to the pictures lit up by the early crimson rays of the sun.

In the formation the three chums were spaced apart, experienced pilots with Huns to their credit, ranged each side of them.

As Captain Oakley gave his engine a burst of full throttle the rest of the squadron did likewise, shattering the silence of morning with a devastating roar that had in it the note of a challenge.

Then the squadron was on the move as chocks were whipped away by the perspiring mechanics. In solid formation No. 256 skimmed the drome, rising almost simultaneously as Captain Oakley in the leading plane pulled back on his joy-stick. For twenty minutes or so the squadron mounted high in the heavens, and Jim's altimeter needle flickered at ten thousand feet.

Then in V formation the planes turned their noses towards the firing-line.

(The great moment has come. The three chums are about to undergo their first experience of war in the air! How will they fare? See next week's all-thrilling chapters of this great story, boys!)

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WHILE GREYFRIARS SLEPT!

(Continued from page 2A.)

"Please, sir, I've found Flip and rescued him," said Bunter cheerfully.

"Bless my soul!" stuttered the Head.

"I hope, sir, that I shall be excused for cutting detention yesterday, as I was going to find Flip and rescue him—"

"Goodness gracious me!" gasped the Head. "This is—is amazing! Mr. Brent, this is the boy—this is Flip—by some amazing chance, Bunter seems to have found him—"

Inspector Brent rose to his feet.

He did not heed Bunter, important as Bunter was. He stepped nearer to Flip and fixed his eyes on the waif, with a steady, intense stare that almost scared the fag.

"I—I ain't done nothing, sir!" faltered Flip. "I—I ain't a pincher now, sir—not since I come to Greyfriars, sir—Master Bunter'll tell you so, sir, and any of the blokes—"

"You have nothing to fear from this gentleman, Inspector Brent, of Scotland Yard, Flip," said the Head gently. "But I think you have much to hope. You told me once, my dear boy, that the wretch you called Jimmy the One had said that your father was an officer of the law—"

"Yes, sir," said Flip.

"Heaven is merciful," said John Brent, in a low, tense voice. "The boy's face is enough for me, even if I did not believe what Jimmy the One told me in revenge. I have found my son!"

Flip stared at the grim-faced man. He saw the grim face working, and he understood.

"You—my father!" he breathed.

"I am your father, my boy!" said John Brent.

Billy Bunter backed out of the room. Even Billy Bunter realised that his presence was superfluous at that moment. Besides, Bunter had something to tell the fellows to make them jump.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter, as he emerged into the quad, "I say, he's Flip's father!"

"Eh! What? Who is?" gasped Cherry.

"He is—that chap with a face like a gargoyle—old Brent! He's Flip's father!" gasped Bunter. "I—I found it

out, you know! Old Brent is Flip's father!"

"Great pip!"

Flip had found his father.

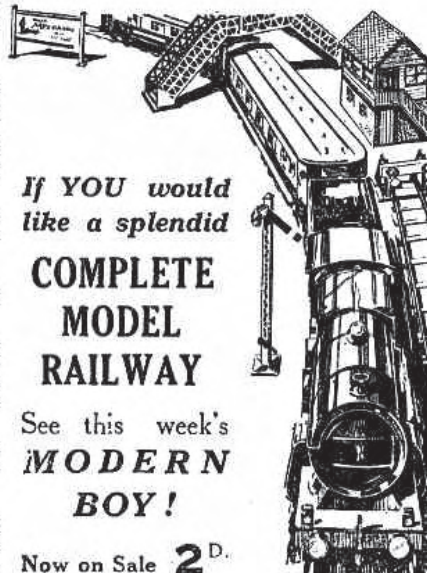
It was a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars.

When John Brent left the school his son went with him, and though Flip was sorry to leave his friends—and especially Master Bunter, his little face was bright with joy when he trotted away by his father's side.

Mr. Quelch, released from "sanny" at last, came back to take his Form. The Remove was not, perhaps, overjoyed, but they agreed that "old Quelch" was vastly preferable to Jimmy the One; and certainly nobody regretted that the temporary master of the Remove was safe in the place where he had been put by Flip's father..

THE END.

(Next Saturday's MAGNET will contain another ripping long yarn of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled: "THE COMPLETE OUTSIDER!" Make a point of ordering your copy well in advance, chums!)



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Mother (to little boy): "Johnnie, have you been mixing water with the ink?"

Little boy: "Yes, mummy. I wrote a letter

to daddy, and I wanted to whisper it!"



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You'll find more fun and thrills in next week's number than you will in half a dozen other boys' papers, believe me!

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"THE COMPLETE OUTSIDER!"

By Frank Richards.

Do you know, I hardly know what to say concerning Frank Richards' stories, nowadays! For years, I have been telling you how good they are, and for years, successive numbers of the MAGNET have proved me to be correct. So perhaps I'd better just say that next week's yarn is well up to scratch, and maintains the usual high level which has been set for so long by this popular author. So look out for it!

Our powerful new serial—"Wings of War," is proving a sure winner, and there are thrills enough for anybody in the next instalment. As for the "Greyfriars Herald"—well, if you don't chuckle at the coming issue, you ought to see a doctor! "Old Ref's" Soccer article, and another poem by the Greyfriars Rhymester, will complete this excellent programme.

Any questions you want answering? Any information you would like? If so—just drop me a line, and I'll do my best to oblige.

YOUR EDITOR.

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