

BILLY BUNTER

the Fattest and Funniest Schoolboy in the world
in another amusing yarn of Greyfriars

Inside!

The **MAGNET** 2^D



a Bump for Billy Bunter!



Come Into the Office, Boys!

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

SPLENDID news for you this week, chums!

Of course, you are all going in for our magnificent free gift scheme, and, naturally, you want to get as many coupons as you can. So here's your chance! In this week's issue of our splendid companion paper, the "Gem," you will find an

EXTRA-SPECIAL BONUS COUPON!

In addition to the usual 50 points coupon, there will be a Big Bonus Coupon worth 250 points—making **THREE HUNDRED POINTS** in all! That's going to give you a big lift with your collection, so take my tip and hurry round to your newsagent at once. Tell him to reserve you a copy of this week's "Gem." There is bound to be a tremendous demand for it, and you don't want to be one of the unfortunate fellows who are told that it is "Sold Out!" Jump to it, chums!

I have just received a most interesting letter from one of my readers who is a fisherman. He sends me along another interesting item for my record of "Things you would hardly believe." Here it is:

ARE THERE SUCH THINGS AS MERMAIDS?

The average person would answer "No!"—but wait until you hear what this reader, Mr. J. Dodsworth, of Hull, has to say. In a shop near his home there is on view an animal that is half human and half fish! There is no fake about it, for this reader has handled it himself, and as he is a fisherman he ought to know! Here is his description of it:

"It has a human head, with eye sockets, ears, nose and mouth—but the teeth are fishes teeth!

"It has a neck, shoulders, arms, four fingers and a thumb on each hand, which are webbed; a chest, back and waist. But the rest of the body is a fish's, with fins, scales and tail complete! The colour of the fish part is golden, and the human part black—although it might have been white when alive.

"It has no gills, which makes me believe it was warm-blooded and breathed in air. In all, it is about two feet long."

Any of my readers who live in or near Hull have an opportunity of seeing this amazing sight, for I am told that it is still on view.

NOW for a few RAPID-FIRE REPLIES.

"The Return of Dennis Carr." "Old Reader," of Wrexham, N. Wales: Thanks for your suggestion. I will endeavour to oblige later with a story featuring this popular character.

Back Numbers of The MAGNET. London Reader: Back issues can be obtained from our Back Number Department, Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. The cost of each issue is 2d., and additional stamps should be enclosed to cover the cost of postage of the particular numbers required.

Are the Finger-prints of Two Different People Ever Alike? D. B., of Chelmsford: No. The chances against this are sixty-four thousand millions to one—and there are not so many people in the world!

How Long is the Great Wall of China? "A Reader," of Brixham: It is 1,500 miles long, and broad enough at the top to construct a motor-way!

Where is "The Golden Gate"? T. Y., of Edinburgh: This is the name given to the entrance to San Francisco Harbour—one of the finest in the world. The "gate" is a narrow strait, five miles long, and leads into a harbour that is fifty miles long. "The Golden Horn" is the entrance to the harbour of Constantinople.

What does KPHTH on a Postage Stamp Mean? "Collector," of Whitstable: It stands for "Crete"—the island issuing these particular stamps.

Have I received a Greyfriars limerick, or a funny yarn from you yet? If not, why not? Don't forget I'm still handing out topping real leather pocket wallets and Sheffield steel penknives, for stories and limericks. Miss Doris S. Darier, of 46, Main Street, Rosettenville, Johannesburg, S. Africa, is another winner this week. Here is her winning joke, which well deserves the prize which has been sent to her:



Mother: "You've been a very naughty boy, Johnnie, and I must send you to bed without any tea."

Johnnie: "All right, but what about my medicine that I have to take after meals?"



NOW come along, chums! "Roll 'em up!" as they say at fairs! Are you interested in mathematics? Not very, I expect. But here's a little mathematical query that you can try on anyone who is:

CAN YOU ANSWER THIS ONE?

Could you write down the value of $9(9^9)$? That particular figure represents 9 raised to the 9th power of 9, and it is the largest sum that can be written down in three figures. Try it on your maths master—and then run for it!

Because, you see, the answer to the above "simple" sum, will contain no less than 369 millions of digits! Suppose you wrote down five digits to the inch, you would want a strip of paper 1,164 miles in length to put down the answer! Even if you wrote for the whole of your life, you would never be able to get it all down!

You can get some fun out of figures, if you know how. Have you heard the story of a boy who got a job, and was asked what wages he required? He said he would work for a half-penny the first day if his employer would double his salary every day for a month. The employer innocently agreed. But when he discovered, at the end of the month of thirty days, how much he owed the boy for that day alone, he faded away!

How much do you think it was? Try to work it out for yourselves—but if you can't be bothered, you'll find the answer at the end of this chat. It will surprise you!

A splendid pocket wallet goes this week to Edward Styles, of 159, High Street, Bloxwich, Walsall, Staffs, in return for the following Greyfriars limerick:

Billy Bunter, who well deserves trouncing,
On a tree of green apples was pouncing.
He fell, with a shout,
And, passing, Paul Prout,
Was amazed at the way he kept bouncing!

MORE good things in store for you next week! Frank Richards gets "bang off the mark" with

"THE MYSTERY OF NUMBER ONE STUDY!"

A ripping complete yarn of the Famous Five, and the other fellows of Greyfriars. It'll keep you thrilled and interested from the first line to the last.

What do you think of the latest series of Doctor Birchmell stories? Good stuff, aren't they? Well, look out for the next one which will appear the week after next. It will make you chuckle—and keep you chuckling.

Then there are the concluding chapters of our war serial, and another of my little chats, in which I hope to answer a number of queries from readers which I have not had space to deal with this week.

The answer to the question I gave you above is £1,118,481 ls. 4d. for the last day's work alone!

YOUR EDITOR.

WHO
SAYS

A LEATHER POCKET WALLET or a USEFUL POCKET KNIFE?

These handsome prizes are offered for Storyettes and Snappy Greyfriars Limericks.

All efforts to be sent to: "Limericks and Jokes," Editor, c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

HAVE A SHOT AT WINNING ONE OF THESE TOPPING PRIZES TO-DAY!

COKER'S CAMERA CLICKS!



Featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the Famous Chums of Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Baffled!

"HUSH!"
"Eh?"
"Hush!" repeated Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared blankly at the fat Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter was mysterious!

He was so exceedingly mysterious that the chums of the Remove rather wondered whether he had taken leave of his senses—such as they were!

Tea was over in Study No. 1. But the Famous Five were still sitting round the table, talking cricket, when Bunter happened.

Billy Bunter inserted a fat face and a large pair of spectacles into the doorway and blinked into the study. Then he rolled in.

In his fat hand was grasped a round red cricket ball.

What Bunter was doing with a cricket ball was a deep mystery. He never played cricket if he could help it. But if he had been the keenest of cricketers he could hardly have come to a Remove study to do bowling stunts.

He was in a state of suppressed excitement.

He breathed hard, and his little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles.

The window was open, letting in a flood of bright sunshine. Billy Bunter crossed to the open window.

Five blank stares followed him.

"What the merry thump—" began Bob Cherry.

"Hush!" breathed Bunter.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Hush!"

"Potty?" asked Johnny Bull in wonder.

"Will you fellows shut up?" hissed Bunter. "He might hear!"

"He!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "Who?"

"Carne! Quiet, while I get him!"

Bunter reached the study window. He leaned out a little—a very little—just enough to enable him to blink down

Coker's latest craze is photography, and what he doesn't know about this fascinating hobby would fill volumes! Despite this handicap, however, Coker's "blundering best" with a brand new camera is the means of saving an innocent junior from expulsion!

at the path below in the quad. The Famous Five stared at his podgy back.

"Is the esteemed idiot off his ridiculous rocker?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Is he ever on it?" grunted Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton jumped up.

Billy Bunter had lifted his fat hand, with the cricket ball in it. Wharton grasped a podgy wrist and jerked it back.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

The ball dropped with a thud on the floor of the study.

With a swing of his arm Wharton twirled Bunter away from the window. The fat Owl spun round like a humming-top.

Bump!

Bunter sat down on the cricket ball.

"Wow!" howled Bunter.

Harry Wharton glanced down from the window.

A path ran below, and on the path a Sixth Form man was sauntering with his hands in his pockets. Wharton could see little more than the top of his head and his blazer, but he knew that it was Carne of the Sixth. The official ashplant of a prefect was tucked under his arm as he sauntered to and fro.

Wharton turned from the window.

"Bunter! You howling ass!" he exclaimed.

"Ow! Beast!" Billy Bunter scrambled up. "Don't make a row! I tell you the beast might hear you."

"He's not likely to hear anything from this study, fathead; it's more than forty feet down—"

"Well, you can't be too careful, you know! Not when you're chucking a cricket ball at a prefect's napper!" said Bunter. "I don't want Carne to know it was me! He would be waxy!"

"Oh, my hat! I fancy he would!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Just a few!"

"The waxfulness would be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, do be quiet!" urged Bunter anxiously. "You don't want to make him look up! I'm going to catch him right on the napper—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You're jolly well not, you dangerous lunatic!" he said. "What has Carne done, anyhow?"

"He's a beastly bully—"

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"We all know that! But that's not a reason—"

"He's given me six—for nothing!"

"You always get it for nothing, don't you?" said Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Yes, old chap! I never get justice here," said Bunter. "I never did anything, you know, and it was a sheer accident, too. That beast Skinner pushed me down the steps, and I couldn't help falling on Carne, could I, when he was coming up? He gave me six! I'm going to pay him out. See?"

"Not quite!" said Harry Wharton, shaking his head. "You'd better forgive and forget, old fat bean! It's safer—with a Sixth Form prefect."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" grunted Bunter. "The beast laid it on as if he thought he was beating carpet! It was an hour ago, but it still hurts. As soon as I saw him taking a walk under the Remove windows I saw my chance—see? Easy as winking, from a study window."

"And why not from your own study window?" asked Nugent.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Well, that's rather a silly question, old chap," he answered. "Carne may spot the window it comes from. I don't want him to come up to this passage after me, you ass."

"Why, you fat villain!" exclaimed Wharton. "If he spotted it coming from this window he would come up after us!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

That consideration apparently weighed very lightly with William George Bunter.

As usual, his fat thoughts were concentrated on himself. He had none to waste on less important persons.

"That wouldn't matter, I suppose?" remarked Nugent.

"Exactly, old chap! Now, keep quiet, for goodness' sake—don't make the beast look up! He might hear something! I'm going to get him right on the napper—"

"You fat foozler," said Bob. "You might hurt him, landing a cricket ball on his napper."

"That's what I want," explained Bunter.

Wharton glanced down from the window again. Arthur Carne was still strolling up and down the path, evidently quite unconscious of his danger. Probably it had never occurred to a great man of the Sixth that a vengeful junior might think of buzzing a cricket ball at his "napper." Certainly there were very few juniors at Greyfriars who would have thought of it. It was a case of fools rushing in where angels feared to tread.

"Is he still there?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"He's still there," said Harry, laughing. "But you're not buzzing that ball at him, you frabjous ass! Roll away, and don't play the goat."

"Look here, you beast—"

"It would mean a fearful whopping, you fat ass—perhaps a Head's flogging! Chuck it!"

"Shan't!" howled Bunter. "You fellows jolly well mind your own bizney! I'm going—"

"You are!" agreed Wharton.

And Bunter went—not to the window, but to the door. He went with a grip of iron on his collar, and was landed in the Remove passage with a bump.

"Now hook it," advised Wharton—"and leave Sixth Form prefects alone! They're not safe."

"Ow! Beast!"

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Wharton stepped back into the study and shut the door.

It opened again a minute later, and a red and wrathful face glared in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hook it, fathead!"

"Gimme my ball, you beasts!"

"Oh, here you are!" Bob Cherry picked up the cricket ball. "Where will you have it?"

Bob lifted his hand and took aim.

Billy Bunter gave him one blink and slammed the door again. Apparently he did not want it anywhere.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter, through the keyhole.

And then his dulcet voice was heard no more.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Coker and a Camera!

"BUT—"

"Dry up, Potter."

"But—"

"Don't jaw, Greene!"

Potter and Greene, of the Greyfriars Fifth, dried up, and ceased to jaw, at the behest of Horace Coker. Instead of jawing they exchanged a wink, and smiled.

Coker of the Fifth had no use for "jaw." Coker, in fact, could put in all the "jaw" that was necessary, and a little over.

The three Fifth Form men stood under the elms, facing the House, at a distance. In Coker's hand was a camera.

It was a large and expensive camera. It was a recent present from Coker's Aunt Judy; and all Aunt Judy's presents to her beloved Horace were expensive. Coker did not know a lot about cameras; he did not, indeed, know a lot about anything. But he was not in need of advice from his friends. If he had little knowledge, and less gumption, at least he had plenty of self-confidence. Potter was rather good at photography; but all the more for that reason, Coker was not going to receive instructions from Potter. And he wanted to make that clear.

Coker's friends were with him, not to help, but to play the part of admiring audience. Coker had no other use for friends.

In acknowledgment of that handsome gift from Miss Judith Coker, Horace was going to send her photographs of the House. He was going to take them himself with the new camera. He was going to take a number of "shots" from different angles, and pick out the best for Miss Coker. He wanted Potter and Greene with him while he did his photographing, because Coker was a gregarious fellow, and liked company. But he did not want advice and assistance from them. He did not want jaw. Potter and Greene were to watch him at work with admiring eyes.

"I'll take the whole dozen on the roll," said Coker. "May as well take the lot."

"But—"

"I can't take photographs while you're jawing, Potter. I've mentioned that before," remarked Coker.

"Oh, fire away!" said Potter, and he bestowed another wink on Greene.

Coker took aim with the camera, and fired away.

Click!

"That's one!" said Coker. "Rather good, I think." He glanced at his friends. "What are you grinning at?"

"I was going to say—" murmured Potter.

"This way!" said Coker, and he moved off.

His friends followed him in silence. They were still smiling. Coker had inadvertently omitted to insert the roll of film in the camera before he started snapping. With an empty camera it seemed probable to Potter and Greene that Coker would not get those views of the House that he wanted. But as Coker did not want them to jaw, and made that fact quite plain, they refrained from jawing. If Coker preferred to take snaps with an empty camera, they were willing to let him get on with it.

Click, click, click, went the camera. From one spot after another, Coker took aim at the old, grey, ivy-clad buildings, snapping away merrily. Potter and Greene watched him. They would have preferred to join the other Fifth Form men at cricket practice; still, they found Coker rather entertaining with a camera. They followed him from spot to spot, and smiled as he snapped.

"How many's that?" asked Coker suddenly.

"Ten, I think," said Potter blandly.

"There's a number shows somewhere, to show how many films you use," said Coker, blinking at the camera. "I don't seem to see it. There's a sort of slot, or something, where a number shows, or something. Never mind."

"You see—" murmured Greene. Kindly, he was going to point out that Coker could hardly expect to see the number on the film when there was no film in the camera. It was really expecting too much. But Coker still had no use for jaw.

"Dry up, Greene, old man," said Coker. He was taking aim again from a new angle, getting the row of windows of the Remove studies.

"I was going to say—"

"Give a man a rest when he's taking photographs," said Coker. "I keep on telling you that you talk too much, Greeney."

"Oh, all right!" said Greene.

Snap, snap!

"That's the lot!" said Coker.

"Is it?" smiled Potter.

"Haven't I snapped a dozen?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, these films are made in rolls of a dozen; so that's the lot. Now I have to wind something, or—or something—and take out the roll of negatives," said Coker. "You fellows watch me, and you'll pick up something about photography."

Coker ruthlessly ignored the fact that Potter was quite a dab at photography. Coker regarded instruction as one of those things which it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Coker found the necessary handle, and proceeded to wind and wind. He wound and wound and wound. Then he opened the back of the camera to take out the roll.

Then he stared into an empty camera.

"My hat!" ejaculated Coker.

For some moments Horace Coker was simply astonished. His powerful intellect was not quick on the uptake. But it dawned on Coker at last that he had omitted to put the film in. He had snapped the camera a dozen times, but—in the circumstances—there was no results.

"My hat!" repeated Coker. "You silly chumps!"

"What?" ejaculated Potter and Greene together.

"You howling asses!" said Coker.

"Us?" gasped Potter.

"Yes, you!" roared Coker, in wrath.

"You couldn't remind a man to put in the film! Oh, no! You stand there and jaw and jaw and jaw, till you make a fellow's head spin; but you couldn't say a word about the films. Oh, no!"

"You silly owl!" shrieked Potter. "I tried to tell you half a dozen times—"

"So did I!" yelled Greene.

"Of all the silly, blithering idiots, I think you two fellows take the cake," snorted Coker. "Standing there like a pair of silly, cackling geese, while a fellow snaps away at a camera without any films in it! I don't expect much sense from you fellows; but really, this is the limit. Where did I put that roll of film?"

"You—"

Coker, with an indignant snort, proceeded to insert the roll into the camera. He glared at it, with knitted brows.

"They make these things jolly carelessly," he said. "It doesn't seem to fit the place at all."

"Perhaps that's because you've got it the wrong way round," suggested Potter satirically.

"Oh!" Coker reversed. "Blessed if I know how a man's to do anything right, with you fellows talking all the time. I'm showing you how to use a camera, and all you can do it to jaw and jaw and jaw, and never say a word of sense. Don't stand in front of me when I'm going to take a shot, Potter. I don't want to send my aunt a view of the

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Coker. "Walking off when a chap's taking the trouble to show them how to use a camera! Talk about ingratitude!"

And Coker, with another snort, proceeded to finish his roll of films on his lonely own.

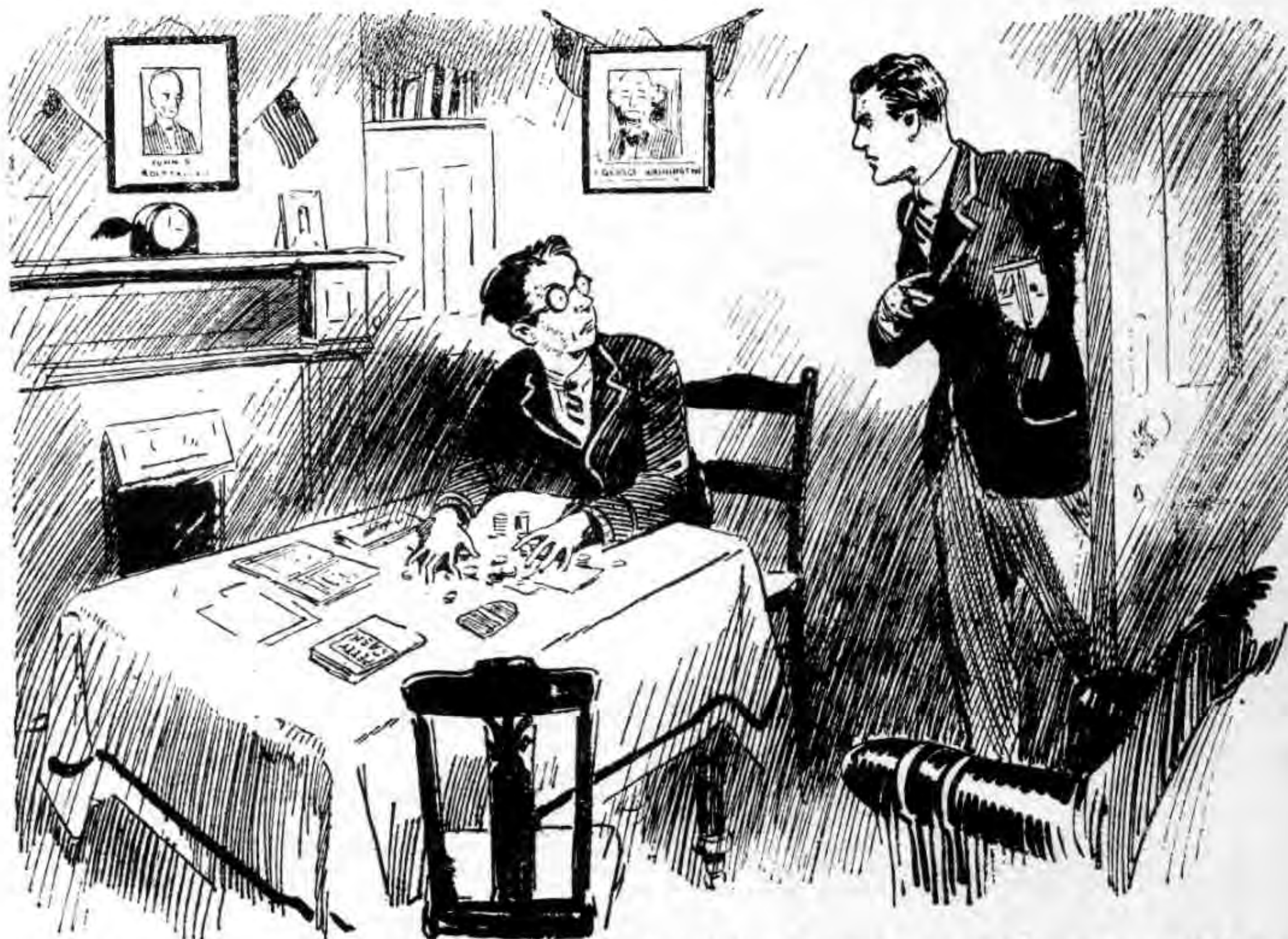
THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Chance for Skinner!

"SKINNER, old chap—"

Harold Skinner of the Remove stared round as Billy Bunter inserted a fat face into Study No. 11 and glared.

Skinner was not sitting down in his study. Since he had seen Carne of the



Fisher T. Fish was so busily engaged counting his money that he hardly noticed the door open. "What's that game, you young ass?" asked Wingate. The American junior looked up. "I guess I'm giving my spondulies the once over," he answered. "I kinder figured I'd lost sixpence."

"For 'goodness' sake don't cackle now. If you wanted to jaw you might have told me that I hadn't put the roll in. I must have left it on that seat under the elms. Cut off and get it, Potter."

"I tell you—"

"Will you cut off and get that roll? I don't want to lose this light while you're wagging your chin, Potter."

"But I tell you—"

"They say that a sheep's head is nearly all jaw," said Coker. "But you beat a sheep's head hollow, Potter. Will you cut off and fetch that roll of film, and jaw afterwards?"

"I tell you," raved Potter, "that it's in your pocket."

"Eh!"

"You put it in your pocket."

"Oh!" Coker groped in his pocket, and found the missing roll. "Well, why to goodness couldn't you tell a chap so?"

silliest face at Greyfriars. Keep out of the light, Greene—if you think your face will improve the picture, it only shows that you don't know what your features are like."

Coker took aim again. Potter and Greene exchanged a glance, and walked away in the direction of the cricket-field. They seemed to have had enough of Coker and his camera.

Coker, busy taking aim for his shot, did not notice their defection, for the moment. He snapped away merrily, and snapped again.

"That's all right, I fancy," remarked Coker, unconscious that there were no longer any ears to hear. "There was some young ass looking out of one of those Remove windows, but at the distance—Hullo! Where are you, Potter? Where are you, Greene?"

But answer there came none. Coker stared round in surprise and snorted.

Sixth about an hour ago, Skinner had a disinclination for sitting down. He was comforting himself with a cigarette, leaning on the table and scowling through a haze of smoke.

"I say, old chap—"

"Get out, you fat idiot!" snarled Skinner.

Skinner was a humorous fellow, with a kind of humour that generally led to the discomfort of others. It had seemed quite funny to Skinner to push Billy Bunter down the House steps—funny to see him roll, funny to hear his startled yell. It had been funny, too, to see him land on Carne of the Sixth Form, who unluckily started up the steps as Bunter started down. It had been funny to see Carne sit down suddenly, with the fat Owl sprawling over him. It had been funny to see Carne give Billy Bunter "six" on the

spot. But the fun of the thing vanished quite suddenly when Carne gave Skinner six, too. The incident ceased to be comical at once.

Carne had laid on that six hard. Skinner was still squirming from it, after the lapse of an hour. He had had it harder than Bunter, and he was feeling more vengeful than Bunter. But he was a very cautious fellow, and was not thinking, like Bunter, of "taking it out" of Arthur Carne. A Sixth Form prefect was rather too dangerous an animal for Skinner to tackle. Not unless it was perfectly safe, or unless he could contrive to let the blame fall on some other fellow, was Skinner likely to attempt to give Carne back something for that six.

Skinner laid down his cigarette and reached for an inkpot. Billy Bunter blinked at him warily.

"No larks, you know," said Bunter. "It wasn't my fault you got six. It was your fault I got six, you beast! If you hadn't pushed me over on Carne I—"

"Buzz off, you fat bluebottle!" growled Skinner.

"Got a cricket ball?" asked Bunter.

"A what?" ejaculated Skinner.

He stared. He could not imagine what Billy Bunter wanted with a cricket ball.

"Lend me a cricket ball, if you've got one, old bean," urged Bunter. "I—I want it very particularly. I'm not going to sling it down on Carne's head, you know," added Bunter cautiously.

Bunter's recent experience in Study No. 1 had taught him caution. But the fat Owl had his own inimitable way of being cautious.

"You're going to bung a cricket ball at Carne of the Sixth?" gasped Skinner.

"No. Nothing of the kind. Carne's not walking up and down under the Remove windows, old chap. You needn't look out. I suppose you can take my word. I—I want a ball for—for games practice. Wingate has asked me to bowl to him," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner, forgetting his twinges for the moment as Bunter made that statement. The idea of the captain of Greyfriars calling on the services of a bowler like Billy Bunter struck him as hilarious.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said the fat Owl. "Gwynne—I mean Wingate—has asked me to send him down a few, and I—I want a ball. As for Carne of the Sixth, I don't know where he is. I haven't seen him since he whopped me. I got Teddy's ball, you know, and those beasts in Study No. 1 stopped me, and kept the ball—not that I was going to chuck it from their window, you know. If you've got a ball in this study—"

Skinner's eyes glinted.

Skinner would have been very pleased to "bung" a cricket ball, or anything else, at the head of Carne of the Sixth. It was too dangerous a game for Skinner. But if Billy Bunter was egregious ass enough to perform such a performance, Skinner was not the man to stop him. So long as it was "all clear" for Skinner himself, he was more than willing for the fat Owl to go ahead.

"Of course, I couldn't lend you a cricket ball to bung at a prefect, Bunter," said Skinner, shaking his head. "But if it's to bowl at games practice—"

"That's it, old chap," said Bunter eagerly. "Sykes of the Sixth fairly begged me to send him down a few—"

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"Well, you can borrow my ball, if you like," said Skinner. "There it is on the mantelpiece."

"Good!"

Billy Bunter grabbed the ball from the mantelpiece. Then he blinked at Skinner through his big spectacles.

"You staying in this study, old chap?"

"Yes," said Skinner briefly.

He was quite keen for that cricket ball to be "banged" at the prefect strolling below the windows; but he was not keen for it to fly from his own window. Carne might, or might not spot the window from which it came. Skinner was not taking the risk.

"Oh, know whether Smithy and Redwing are out?" asked Bunter.

"Yes; both out of gates."

"Right-ho!"

Billy Bunter rolled out with the cricket ball in his hand. Skinner, watching him from the doorway, saw him roll into Study No. 4, which belonged to Tom Redwing and the Bounder. As both those juniors were out of gates, the fat Owl had a clear field.

Skinner chuckled.

Cautiously he approached his own window, and glanced out and down. Carne of the Sixth, his hands in the pockets of his flannel bags, his ashplant tucked under his arm, was strolling up and down the path. Harold Skinner's eyes gleamed at the top of his head. With a grinning face he waited for the cricket ball to descend from the window of Study No. 4. Carne of the Sixth seemed to be in deep thought. As a matter of fact, Arthur Carne had recently backed Nobbled Nick for the Welshe Stakes. And he was thinking out the problem of meeting the claims of the greasy gentleman who had taken his bet, Nobbled Nick having come in eleventh. With that problem on his mind, the Sixth Form sportsman was not likely to remember a couple of fags whom he had "whopped" an hour ago, still less likely to think of them as going on the warpath.

Skinner waited.

He continued to wait.

Every moment he expected to see the round red ball whiz out of the window of Study No. 4. But it did not whiz.

Something, apparently, had deterred Bunter. Perhaps his fat heart had failed him. Perhaps he had realised, when it came to the pinch, that it was rather too dangerous a game to buzz cricket balls at Sixth Form prefects.

Skinner gritted his teeth. It was a bitter disappointment.

He left his study and went quietly along to Study No. 4. The door was half-open. On the study table lay the cricket ball. Bunter was not visible from the passage, but there was a sound of steady champing in the study. Skinner put his head round the door.

Then he had a back view of Billy Bunter.

The fat junior was standing at Vernon-Smith's cupboard. His fat hands were reaching within; his active jaws were at work. Skinner glared at his podgy back.

Evidently Bunter, having entered Smithy's study, had looked into the cupboard, and found something there which banished thoughts of vengeance from his mind.

Revenge is sweet, but not so sweet as jam tarts. Bunter, apparently, had abandoned vengeance in favour of jam tarts. Smithy had laid in tarts for tea; but he had not yet come in to tea. When he did arrive, he was likely to

find his study cupboard in the same state as the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard's. Bunter, standing before the cupboard, was not losing a second. The jam tarts were going down like oysters.

Skinner opened his mouth to speak. He closed it again. Bunter had not heard him, and he was too busy to look round.

Evidently Bunter was not going to bung that ball at Carne of the Sixth. Even if he had not changed his fat mind, it was probable that Carne would be gone before Bunter had finished at Smithy's study cupboard. Skinner's thoughts moved quickly. He tiptoed into the study, picked up the ball from the table, and tiptoed out again. Bunter, gobbling jam tarts, neither saw nor heard. Probably nothing short of the crack of doom would have turned Bunter's attention just then from his entrancing occupation, and even if the crack of doom had occurred, Bunter would have stopped for just one more tart.

With a cricket ball in his hand, concealed under his jacket, Skinner moved along the passage. He did not go back to his own study. He slipped into Study No. 7, the study which Billy Bunter shared with Toddy and Dutton. The two latter were on the river, as Skinner knew, and Bunter was safely occupied in Study No. 4. Skinner closed the door of Study No. 7 after him, and stepped across quietly to the window.

He glanced down.

Carne of the Sixth was pacing the path below, still deep in his problem. He did not look up, or think of looking up. He passed below the window from which Skinner was cautiously peering. Skinner, gripping the ball, waited for him to turn and come back.

Skinner's heart was beating rather fast. But his scheming, calculating head was cool.

He was a good deal more vengeful than Bunter, though with less cause; for Skinner had deserved his "six," and the fat Owl, as it happened, had not. But Skinner's view was that Carne had given him six, and that Bunter was the cause of it—and he was feeling sharp twinges, and was likely to feel them for some time to come. He yearned to "buzz" the round red ball at Carne, and only the consideration of the risk deterred him. But it looked as if Bunter was taking the risk, in the circumstances, as the fat Owl had evidently been "gassing" up and down the passage that he was going to buzz a cricket ball at Carne. Ten to one, Skinner considered, nobody would be spotted—and if anybody was spotted, it would be the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove. And if Bunter got another "six," it would not worry Skinner.

His mind was made up.

Carne came pacing back.

He passed below the window of Study No. 7.

Skinner breathed quick and hard. For a moment more he hesitated, and then, as another twinge caught him, he acted—swiftly.

Whiz!

Crash!

Yell!

Skinner leaped back from the window and whipped out of Study No. 7. Billy Bunter, in Study No. 4, went on gorging tarts, undisturbed even by the fearful yell that woke every echo of the Greyfriars quadrangle.

(Continued at foot of next page.)

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TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT THIS GRAND SCHEME!

(Continued from previous page.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

One for His Nob!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What the thump—"

"Oh, my hat!"

That fearful yell from below floated in at the window of Study No. 1, where Harry Wharton & Co. were still talking cricket—forgetful of Billy Bunter and all his works.

But they ceased to talk cricket as that awful howl floated in. They jumped up and rushed to the window.

Five heads were put out in a bunch, and five pairs of eyes stared down.

"Great pip!"

"That fat chump—"

"Carne's got it!"

"The gotfulness is terrific."

On the path below, Carne of the Sixth appeared, to a casual eye, to be doing a song and dance.

Both his hands were clasped to his head, he hopped and jumped like a kangaroo, and he yelled frantically.

Carne was hurt! There was no doubt that he was hurt. A fatuous duffer like Bunter did not reflect on the damage that might be done by a cricket ball dropping from a height, and a malicious fellow like Skinner did not care. Carne's cap had protected his

luckless head a little—but only a little. He had had a very hefty crack, and he was hurt. His frantic yells were telling all Greyfriars so.

Fellows ran up from the quad in surprise and alarm. In a very few moments there was a crowd under the Remove windows.

"What on earth's the matter, Carne?" exclaimed Wingate of the Sixth.

"Yaroooh!"

"What is it—a wasp?" asked Blundell.

"Ow! My head! Wow!"

"But what—"

"Something hit me—ow! A cricket ball, I think—yow! Dropped from a window—wow! Ow! My napper! Yow—ow—ow!"

"Here's a cricket ball!" exclaimed Hobson of the Shell. He picked up the ball, which lay on the path a yard or two from Carne.

Wingate stared up at the windows above. His face was stern.

"Some young ass dropping a cricket ball from a window!" he exclaimed.

"By Jove!"

There were plenty of windows over the path. High up were the windows of the Remove passage. From one of them five faces were staring down, and the Greyfriars captain fixed his eyes on those faces.

"Wharton!" he roared.

"Hallo, Wingate!"

"Who threw that ball down?"

Wharton hesitated a second. He had not the slightest doubt that Billy Bunter had carried out his fatuous scheme of vengeance on the prefect who had whopped him. Still, what he suspected was not knowledge, and certainly he could not have said so, even if he had wanted to—which he did not. So his answer savoured rather of the wisdom of the serpent than of the innocence of the dove.

"I never saw anybody throw it, Wingate."

"Not one of you?"

"No fear!" answered Wharton promptly.

Carne glared up. He had a bump on his head, and a pain in it. He rubbed the bump, and glared with fury.

"It wasn't that window," he snarled. "It dropped fairly on my head—it must have come from a window just over me—as I was passing underneath—"

Wingate ran his eye along the range of windows.

"That would be Study No. 7 in the Remove," he said. "You're standing just under it—I suppose you stopped as soon as the ball hit you—"

"Of course I did!"

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"Looks as if it came from that study, then. I'll cut in and see if there's anybody in that study—you'd better do something for that bruise, Carne! Leave it to me to spot the young scoundrel."

"Owl! Wow! Owl!"

Wingate ran into the House. Carne followed him more slowly, with his hand pressed to his damaged napper. A crowd of fellows were left excitedly discussing the incident.

In Study No. 1, the Famous Five left the window and looked at one another, with grave faces.

"That howling ass!" said Harry Wharton. "He must have got another ball, and played the goat after all."

"Not much doubt about that," said Bob Cherry. "Still, we don't know for certain; mum's the word, anyhow."

"The mumfulness of the esteemed word should be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The fogginess of the idiotic Bunter would be preposterous."

"He jolly well ought to be flogged, for cracking a man's head with a cricket ball!" growled Johnny Bull. "Still, we're not giving the born idiot away."

"No fear!" said Nugent.

The juniors left the study as they heard Wingate's heavy tread in the passage. The captain of Greyfriars, with a grim face, strode along to Study No. 7. Harry Wharton & Co. watched him rather anxiously. If Bunter was still on the spot—

But Wingate's expression, as he stared into Study No. 7, showed that that study was vacant.

He turned back, and looked at the Co.

"Wharton! Do you know where the fellows are who belong to this study?"

"I think Toddy and Dutton are on the river," said Harry.

"Isn't this Bunter's study, too?"

"Yes."

"Where's Bunter?"

"I—I haven't seen him for some time."

"It could hardly have been Bunter," said Wingate slowly, "that young ass is as blind as a bat—he would have missed Carne by yards at the distance—unless by an accident."

The Famous Five made no reply to that. Wingate's remark was well-founded; but they had no doubt that it was the "accident" that had happened. Who could it have been but Bunter? He had been stopped from making that very attempt in Study No. 1, and it seemed clear enough that he had gone to his own study and tried again.

"I'd better question Bunter, though," added Wingate. "If he's in the House, we shall see. Of course, any fellow may have dodged into another fellow's study, if it was empty—in fact, the young rascal, whoever he was, was not likely to choose his own window. I suppose."

He gave the Famous Five a sharp glance.

"You know nothing of it?" he rapped.

"We never knew anything had happened till we heard Carne yell!" answered Harry Wharton.

Loder of the Sixth came up the Remove staircase, with several more fellows at his heels.

"Found him, Wingate?" he called out.

"Not yet! Keep an eye open, Loder, and see that nobody dodges out of this passage, while I look along the studies."

"Right-ho!"

Wingate came back to Study No. 2, and looked into it, and, starting from that point, he progressed up the Remove

passage, looking into study after study. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances in silence. They had no doubt that it was Bunter, and that Bunter would be rooted out, and they could not help feeling concerned for the fatuous Owl.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

By Whose Hand?

BILLY BUNTER jumped.

He was almost at the last tart when he heard the sounds of footsteps in the Remove passage.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

He spun round from the study cupboard.

It was not the first time that the fat Owl had raided the Bunder's tuck—not the first by many a time. Smithy was a wealthy fellow, and the good things in his study often tempted Billy Bunter. Bunter could not possibly have remembered how many times Smithy had kicked him for that very reason. He did not want to be kicked again. The Bunder had a bad temper and a heavy foot.

Of what had happened in the quad Billy Bunter had not the faintest idea. Footsteps approaching Study No. 4 meant, to Bunter, that the Bunder was coming in. The fat junior blinked in terror towards the half-open door. There was no possibility of escape—he was cornered in the study, if it was the Bunder coming in.

Bunter did not stop to think. There was no time for thinking. He cast a terrified blink round for a hiding-place. The next moment he had squeezed into the lower part of the study cupboard and drawn the door shut. It was the only available hiding-place, and Bunter bolted for it like a fat rabbit for a burrow.

There were all sorts of things in the lower part of the cupboard—old football boots, a tennis racket, two or three boxes, odds-and-ends of all sorts. Billy Bunter squeezed among them and palpitated.

He heard a footstep in the doorway.

His fat heart jumped.

Someone, unseen by Bunter, stepped into the study, and looked round. Then, to the fat Owl's intense relief, he stepped out again. Billy Bunter heard the door shut.

If it was the Bunder, he had not come to stay. But Billy Bunter sagely remained where he was. If the beast came in again, Billy Bunter did not want to be spotted.

As a matter of fact, it was Wingate who had looked into the study—and found it empty, as he supposed. It did not occur to him that a fat Removeite was crouching amongst the lumber in the bottom of the cupboard.

The Greyfriars captain proceeded farther up the passage. No one was found till he reached Study No. 11.

In that study was Harold Skinner, industriously engaged in writing lines. Skinner looked round from his lines as Wingate glanced in, and rose to his feet.

"I've nearly done them, Wingate!" he said meekly.

"Eh, what?"

"My lines for Quelch," said Skinner.

"I haven't come here about lines. How long have you been in this study?"

"About an hour," answered Skinner.

"You haven't left it?"

"I've been doing my lines," explained Skinner meekly. "Quelch told me to take them in after tea."

Wingate gave him a keen look.

Skinner was not a fellow he trusted. But it certainly could not have been from the window of No. 11 that the ball had whizzed, and there were no suspicious circumstances. He gave Skinner a curt nod, and passed on.

In Study No. 12 Lord Mauleverer was found—stretched on his sofa, lazily waiting for Jimmy Vivian to come in to tea. His lordship sat up and gave the prefect an inquiring look; but Wingate did not trouble to question him. He passed on, and the next discovery was Fisher T. Fish, in Study No. 14, the last study in the passage. Fisher T. Fish was busily engaged in counting his money—an occupation in which Fishy found undying pleasure. Half-crowns and shillings and sixpences and coppers were piled in little heaps, and Fishy's bony fingers lingered over them lovingly. Fishy was so entranced that he hardly noticed the door opening. Wingate gave him a grim stare.

"What's that game, you young ass?" he asked.

Fisher T. Fish looked up.

"I guess I'm giving my spondulies the once-over," he answered. "I kinder figured I'd lost sixpence—that would have set me back twelve cents in real money. But I guess I found it all right."

"How long have you been in this study?"

"I sure forget!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I been kinder busy." When Fisher T. Fish was handling money he forgot time and space. But he reflected and remembered. "I guess I moseyed in about five, Wingate."

"Do you know anything about a cricket ball being thrown from a Remove window?"

"I surely do not."

Wingate turned away. He had drawn the Remove passage blank. Few fellows were indoors on that sunny afternoon. Only cricket "jaw" had kept the Famous Five in after tea, but Wingate could hardly suspect those cheery youths of having cracked Carne's head with a cricket ball—neither was Lord Mauleverer open to suspicion.

And the other two—Skinner and Fisher T. Fish—had been found in their own studies, industriously occupied. Bunter had not been found—and Wingate had no suspicion that the fat Owl was parked in a study cupboard—and did not guess that, as he went down the passage again, and passed the door of Study No. 4, a fat face that had been put out of the cupboard was hastily drawn in again at the sound of his footsteps. Billy Bunter was still lying low.

The Greyfriars captain joined Loder at the Remove landing.

"No luck?" asked Loder.

Wingate shook his head.

"Look here! The young scoundrel's got to be found!" exclaimed Loder. "Carne's got a lump on his head as big as an egg."

"He will have to be found!" agreed Wingate. "I've no doubt he dodged away as soon as he had thrown the ball. He had plenty of time, of course, before I got into the House. It must have been a Remove kid—"

"No doubt about that."

"I shall report to Quelch—it's up to him."

Wingate went down the stairs. He had done all he could, and made no discovery; but he had little doubt that the gimlet eyes of Mr. Quelch would search out the culprit. He proceeded to the Remove master's study to make his report.

Harry Wharton & Co. remained in the



"I've no time to waste," bawled Coker, "I want Potter. Potter! You deaf ass! Potter!" To Coker's surprise and indignation, the senior cricketers prodded him with their bats, following him up as he retreated, till they prodded him off the cricket ground.

passage. Bunter had not been found, and they wondered where he was. Skinner came out of his study, with his finished imposition in his hand.

"Anything up, you men?" he asked. "What did Wingate want up here?"

"Haven't you heard?" "I've been getting through my impot—it's got to go in at six, and it's just turned six," answered Skinner. "I've got to rush down to Quelch. I heard somebody yell, I think—"

"It was Carne." "What on earth's happened to Carne?"

"Somebody buzzed a cricket ball at his napper from a Remove window."

"Oh, my hat! One of you fellows?" asked Skinner.

"No!" snapped Wharton. Skinner laughed.

"Don't bite a fellow's head off, old bean. I shouldn't give you away if you told me."

"Don't be an ass," said Harry. "The fellow who would chuck a cricket ball at a man's head is either a fool or a rascal."

"That means a fellow like Bunter, or a fellow like you, Skinner," elucidated Bob Cherry blandly.

"Oh! That fat idiot!" exclaimed Skinner. "Is that what he wanted the ball for? He told me he had to fag at bowling."

The Famous Five looked at Skinner. "Did Bunter get a cricket ball in your study?" asked Nugent.

"Yes. Of course, I never knew—"

"You might have guessed that he didn't want it for cricket," grunted Johnny Bull. "Who the dickens could want that fathead to bowl to him?"

"Well, that was what he said," answered Skinner. "Not that I believe

it was Bunter, come to think of it. He wouldn't have the nerve."

"I'm afraid it was," said Harry. "For goodness' sake, don't mention lending him the cricket ball to anybody outside the Remove. There is going to be a fearful row about this."

"Mum's the word, of course," assented Skinner. "I'm not the chap to give a man away, I hope! Don't repeat what I've said."

And Skinner went on down the staircase with his impot for Mr. Quelch.

"Well, that settles it," said Bob. "It was Bunter, of course. Well, we knew it must have been Bunter."

"But where is the silly owl?" asked Nugent.

"Lying low somewhere, of course," said Harry. "Oh, my hat! Look!"

The door of Study No. 4 opened; and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered out into the Remove passage.

Billy Bunter blinked up and down the passage, evidently to ascertain whether the coast was clear.

He gave a jump at the sight of the Famous Five. Then as he saw that the Bounder was not there, he rolled out of the study.

"I say, you fellows, don't mention that you saw me come out of Smithy's study, will you?" said Bunter.

"You frabjous ass! How was it you weren't spotted there?" asked Wharton.

Bunter grinned, a fat and rather jammy grin. There were a good many traces of Smithy's jam tarts on Bunter's podgy countenance.

"You see, I dodged into the cupboard when the beast looked in," he said. "Not that I've been up to anything, you know. I—I went into Smithy's study to—to—to borrow a Latin dictionary." He blinked at the

grave faces of the chums of the Remove. "I say, you fellows, mind you don't tell Smithy. He's a suspicious beast and he might think I'd been after his tarts. You know he made out that I had his cake last week. I say, has he gone out again?"

"He hasn't been in, that I know of." "Eh! Wasn't it Smithy looked into the study?"

"You fat ass! It was Wingate."

"Oh! I didn't see him, of course, as I was in the cupboard! I thought it was that beast Smithy! I shouldn't have minded Wingate seeing me there."

"You wouldn't have minded?" exclaimed Bob.

"No! Wingate wouldn't have fancied that I was after the tarts—he couldn't have known that Smithy had any tarts—"

"You burbling jabberwock!" howled Bob. "Wingate was looking for the dangerous maniac who buzzed a cricket ball at Carne's Napper."

Bunter jumped.

"Oh crikey! Has somebody buzzed a cricket ball at Carne?" he gasped.

"Haven't you?" roared Johnny Bull. "Oh, really, Bull—"

"Didn't you buzz it from your study window and then dodge into Smithy's study to hide?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You frabjous owl, you will get a flogging for this," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

Skinner came up the Remove staircase again.

"Form-room, you fellows," he said. "All Remove men who are in gates are wanted! Quelch is on the warpath! Hallo, that you, Bunter? Where have you been hiding, you fat owl?"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Come on, you men," said Harry Wharton. "Look here, Bunter, the best thing you can do is to tell the truth. Quelch will drag it out of you, and if you tell any lies, it will make matters worse."

"I hope I'm not the fellow to tell lies, Wharton," said Bunter, with dignity. "You're thinking of yourself, old chap—"

"Why, you fat villain—"

"It's bound to come out, Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "We're not going to say anything, and Skinner isn't; but Quelch is a downy bird, and he's sure to get at the facts. Tell the truth, old fat bean."

"Do I ever do anything else?" demanded Bunter.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Of course, I know nothing whatever about it," said Bunter. "If any fellow has buzzed a ball at Carne's napper, it wasn't me! I never even dreamed of such a thing."

"You fat idiot!" gasped Wharton. "I had to collar you to stop you in my study."

"Oh! I—I mean, I—I changed my mind!" gasped Bunter. "That is, I never really meant anything of the sort! I—I was only pulling your leg, old chap, in your study. I never did it, you know! I wouldn't! I—I like Carne! I say, you fellows, don't you get making out that I buzzed a ball at Carne, if anybody did! I'm as innocent as—as—as a babe in arms!"

"Let's hope Quelch will believe that!" grinned Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five went downstairs, Billy Bunter rolling after them with alarm in his sticky countenance.

"Well, you fellows know well enough that I always speak the truth," said Bunter.

"Too true!" remarked Johnny Bull.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker Asks for It!

"POTTER!"

George Potter of the Fifth did not heed.

"Potter!" roared Coker.

Still Potter seemed deaf.

Horace Coker, with the camera slung over his arm, had walked down to Big Side, where a number of senior men were at games practice. He wanted Potter. The fact that Potter was at the wickets, and that Sykes, the champion bowler of the First Eleven, was testing him with a variety of bowling, mattered nothing to Coker. Coker did not think much of First Eleven cricket anyhow; he was not in the eleven. As he wanted Potter, he bawled to Potter; apparently expecting that youth to toss aside his bat at once and come off to see what was wanted—which George Potter did not do! Potter passed the powerful voice of Horace Coker by like the idle wind which he regarded not.

"Potter!" roared Coker.

It really was irritating—to Coker! He had taken his roll of a dozen pictures in his new camera. The next step was to unload and develop the negatives in the dark-room.

With all his sublime confidence in his own powers, even Coker did not think that he would be successful in the developing line, without knowing anything at all about it. Even Coker realised that a fellow who did not even know the names of the fluids to be used, might spoil the films instead of successfully developing them.

He was going to let Potter do it—in a lofty, patronising way, of course—taking care that Potter did not put on airs, or assume a manner of superior knowledge! Anything of that kind,

Coker was prepared to put a stop to, promptly and efficaciously.

And Potter, apparently, was not available! Again Coker bawled, and yet again, and still Potter, with inconceivable regardlessness, gave his attention to Sykes' bowling, instead of Coker's bawling.

Two or three seniors came over to Coker. Tom North, of the Sixth, touched him on the arm.

"Shut up!" said North.

"What?" ejaculated Coker.

"Hold your row!"

"You silly ass! I want Potter."

"Can't you see the man's batting?" asked Walker of the Sixth.

Snort from Coker.

"What he calls batting, I dare say!" he assented. "But I want him, you see, and I've no time to waste." And Coker bawled again. "Potter! You deaf ass!"

Whereupon, to Coker's surprise and indignation, the senior cricketers prodded him with their bats—and, apparently amused by Coker's glare of indignant wrath, prodded him again and again, following him up as he retreated, still prodding, till they had prodded him right off the cricket ground. After which, they walked back towards the pitch laughing; leaving Horace Coker glaring and gasping.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Coker.

Coker of the Fifth restrained his natural desire to rush on the senior cricketers and strew them in small pieces all over Big Side. Snorting with indignation, he marched off.

That roll of films, a series of fine views of Greyfriars School destined for the delectation of Aunt Judy, had to wait—while Potter was playing the goat at what he called cricket! It was undoubtedly very irritating. But the wrathful frown cleared from Coker's manly brow, as he sighted Penfold of the Remove, coming in from the gates. He was aware that that member of the Lower Fourth dabbled in photography; and he decided to patronise Pen in lieu of Potter.

"Here, kid!" called out Coker.

Penfold looked round.

"Hallo, old bean! Want anything?" he asked.

Coker frowned again. He did not like "old bean" from a Remove kid.

"Don't be cheeky!" he said. "I want you to come along to the dark-room and lend me a hand developing some photographs."

Coker did not put it politely. He had little politeness to waste on fags. But Pen was a good-natured fellow, and he nodded assent.

"Right-ho!" he answered. "I'll come along after I've had my tea."

"Never mind your tea," said Coker. "I want you now."

"My dear man," said Dick Penfold, "I've been out since class, and I'm an hour late for my tea. Leave it till afterwards and I'm your man."

Coker glared.

It was bad enough for Potter to pass his behests unheeded; but Potter, after all, was a Fifth Form man. This junior was a Lower Fourth fag—a mere microbe, a negligible atom, a nobody who was honoured and distinguished by Coker of the Fifth taking notice of his existence! Coker was not likely to wait till Penfold had had his tea. He was more likely to whop Pen for suggesting it. Coker, as he often said, had a short way with fags.

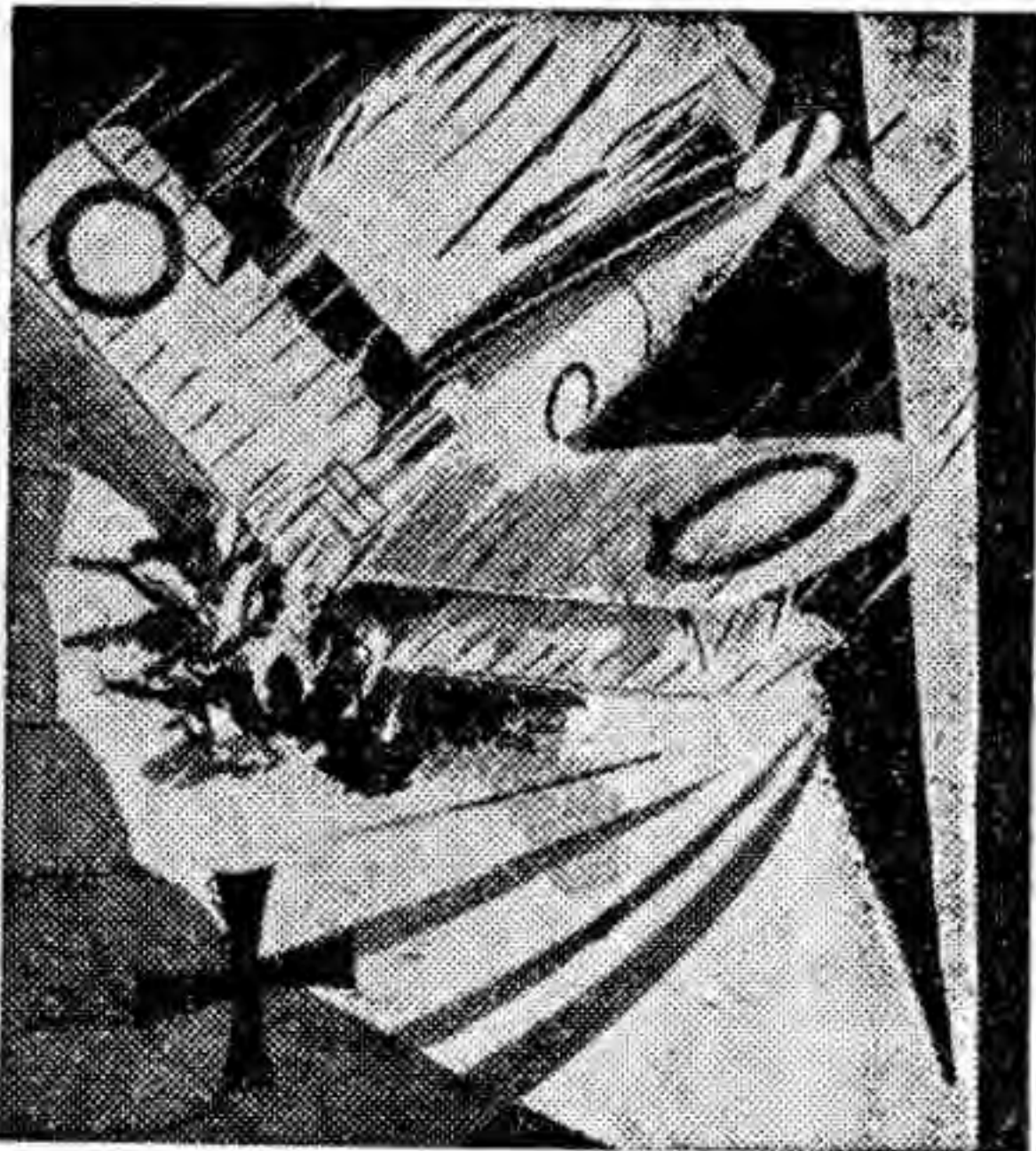
"Come along—and at once!" said Coker briefly.

"Bow-wow!" said Penfold.

"Are you coming?"

"Not in the least, old bean!"

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Coker's heavy hand dropped on Penfold's shoulder. One of the ancient Greyfriars elms was near at hand, and Coker tapped Pen's head on the trunk, as a tip.

"Now!" said Coker.

"Oh, my hat! Leggo! Rescue!" yelled Penfold.

Several more Remove fellows were coming along from the gates. They rushed to the rescue at once. Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, reached Coker at the same moment and collared him. At the same time Harry Wharton came out of the House. Mr. Quelch had instructed his head boy to round up all Removites who were within gates into the Form-room for the inquiry that was to take place there. But Wharton left that duty over for the moment, and rushed to lend a hand with Coker.

"Here, you cheeky young sweeps!" gasped Coker.

"Bump him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker hit the quadrangle quite suddenly. He hit it hard, and he roared.

"Give him another!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Oh, my hat! I'll smash you!" roared Coker. "Mind that camera! Don't tread on that camera! Yaroooh!"

Vernon-Smith lifted Coker's camera out of the way with his foot. Coker, struggling wildly in the grasp of half a dozen Removites, felt his bullet head tap the quadrangle again. Coker's head was hard, but the surface of the globe seemed harder. Coker's wild yells awoke the echoes.

"Have another, old bean?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Whooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo! I'll spifficate you! I'll—Yaroooh!"

"Bang!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors, chuckling, released Coker of the Fifth, and walked on to the House, leaving the great Horace sitting up dizzily and rubbing his head. It was a full minute before Coker was on his feet again, and then he was still spluttering. By that time the Removites had vanished—which was perhaps just as well for Coker, who certainly would have asked for more, and equally certainly would have received what he asked for.

Coker picked up his camera, and tramped wrathfully into the House. He found a number of fellows in rather excited discussion. Something had happened of which Coker had been too busy to take heed while he was performing with his camera.

"What's up?" asked Coker.

"Some Remove kid has cracked a prefect's nut with a cricket ball," answered Blundell of the Fifth.

Coker laughed—one of those sardonic laughs!

"This school is coming to something!" he said. "Fags handle a Fifth Form man in the quad, and crack a prefect's nut! What they want is whopping! Who did it?"

"They haven't found him yet."

"They wouldn't!" said Coker, still sardonic. "I'd find him fast enough if I were a prefect! I'd like to see the fags crack my nut with a cricket ball."

"Nothing in it to damage, if they did!" remarked Price of the Fifth.

To which Coker, who was not quick at repartee, replied with a snort, and stalked on.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Found Guilty!

MR. QUELCH, master of the Remove, looked over the juniors assembled in the Form-room with glinting eye. Many of the Removites were still out of gates; but Harry Wharton had rounded up all he could find, and there were fifteen or sixteen fellows present. Some of them, who had only just come in, were wondering what was up. Quelch's frowning brow and glinting eye showed that there was trouble on the tapis.

"Wharton, you have collected all the Remove boys who were within gates?" asked Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well! I have ascertained that the assault on a Sixth Form prefect occurred at precisely six o'clock," said Mr. Quelch. "All boys who were in the House at that time will step out."

TELL A TALE AND WIN A POCKET-KNIFE

like Leonard Gardner, of White House Cottage, Station Road, Worle, near Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, who has submitted the following winning joke:



Householder (surprising burglar): "Put all that stuff back on the sideboard at once! Do you hear me?"

Burglar: "Lumme, guv'nor, not all of it! Be fair, 'arf of it belongs to the people next door!"

Try and win one of these useful prizes—I've heaps of them in stock.—Editor.

The Famous Five came out before the Form, followed by Lord Mauleverer, Skinner, and Fisher T. Fish. The rest sat tight, including Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter certainly had been in the House, gorging jam-tarts in Smithy's study when the clock struck six, and the cricket ball struck Carne. But the fat Owl considered it judicious not to mention it to Quelch.

Bunter knew what had happened now, and he was in a quaking state. It was true that his fat hand had not hurled the ball which had cracked Carne's "nut"; but he could not help realising that suspicion would be very strong against him if the circumstances came to light.

Bunter sat tight, and hoped to escape observation. But there was little that escaped the gimlet eye of Henry Samuel Quelch.

That gimlet eye roved over the fellows who had not stepped out. Mr. Quelch proceeded to question them separately.

"Vernon-Smith! You were not in the House?"

The Bounder grinned.

He was precisely the fellow who might have been suspected of so reckless and audacious a proceeding as "cracking the nut" of a Sixth Form prefect. He could see the glimmer of suspicion in his Form master's eye. But the scapegrace of the Remove for once had a clear conscience.

"No, sir!" he answered.

"Where were you, Vernon-Smith, at six o'clock?"

"Out of gates, sir."

"Vernon-Smith has just come in, sir—" began Harry Wharton.

"You need not interrupt, Wharton. Were you alone, Vernon-Smith, when you were out of gates?"

"No, sir!"

"Who was with you?"

"Redwing, sir."

"We came back together, sir," said Tom Redwing.

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch's brow cleared at once. Redwing's word was as good as gold, which certainly could not be said for the Bounder's. "Very good! Todd! Penfold—"

"Just come in, sir," said Peter Todd.

"Just come in, sir!" said Penfold.

"Dutton!"

"Eh?" Tom Dutton was deaf, and he was in blissful ignorance of what was going on, so far. "Eh? Did you speak, sir?"

"I did, Dutton! Were you in the House at six o'clock?"

"Eh?"

"Dutton came in with me, sir!" said Peter Todd.

"You may allow Dutton to answer for himself, Todd. Dutton, where were you at six o'clock?"

"In my study, sir!" answered Dutton.

Mr. Quelch started a little, and gave Peter Todd a grim look.

"In your study, Dutton?" he boomed.

"Yes, sir," answered Dutton. "In my study, sir, on the mantelpiece."

Mr. Quelch jumped; so did the Removites.

"What?" ejaculated the Remove master. "I warn you, Dutton, that this is a serious matter. Did you say on the mantelpiece?"

"Yes, sir, on the mantelpiece in my study," answered Dutton. "I always keep it there, sir."

"What? You always keep what there, Dutton?"

"My clock, sir!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Didn't you ask me where was my clock, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "No, Dutton, you stupid boy, I did not ask you where was your clock. I asked you where you were at six!"

"Oh, I was out of gates, sir—I've just come in with Toddy."

"Very good! Bunter!"

"I—I was at Courtfield, sir!" gasped Bunter, in a great hurry. "I—I was at the pictures, sir."

"Bless my soul! You were at the pictures at Courtfield at six o'clock, Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Yes sir—miles away—"

"Bunter! It is now only twenty minutes past six, and if you had been in Courtfield at six o'clock you could not possibly have returned here by this time."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I meant to say that I was—was on Big Side, sir, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,270."

watching the cricket. I—I'm frightfully keen on cricket, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Step out before the Form, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter rolled out dismally and joined the group standing at the Form master's desk. He wished that he had made it Big Side instead of Courtfield, in the first place. But a fellow couldn't think of everything.

To Bunter's intense dismay Mr. Quelch now proceeded to give him his very special attention.

"Bunter! You have answered me with your usual untruthfulness. I have no doubt that you were in the House at six o'clock."

"Oh, no, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I can prove I wasn't, sir. Skinner knows—I spoke to him in his study, sir."

"Bless my soul! Skinner!"

"Yes, sir!"

"At what time did Bunter speak to you in your study?"

"Just before six, sir—about ten minutes, I think," answered Skinner.

"Then you were in the Remove passage at ten minutes to six, Bunter. You have answered me untruthfully. Where did you go after leaving Skinner?"

"I—I didn't go to Smithy's study, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"I do not suppose that you went to Vernon-Smith's study, Bunter. I have little doubt that you went to your own, and that you are guilty of the assault on a Sixth Form prefect," said Mr. Quelch, in a terrifying voice. "Did you go to your own study, Bunter?"

"Oh lor'! No, sir!"

"Did you hurl a cricket ball from the window at Carne of the Sixth Form?" boomed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh crikey! No!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you tell Mr. Quelch that I didn't! You jolly well know!"

The fat Owl gave the Famous Five an appealing blink.

"What do these boys know about the matter, Bunter?"

"They—they know I never cracked Carne's nut, sir," groaned Bunter. "Wharton stopped me—"

"What!"

"He collared me, sir, and bunged me out of the study, and Bob Cherry kept the cricket ball!" gasped Bunter. "They jolly well know they did!"

"Upon my word! You admit, then, that you had a cricket ball, with the intention of throwing it at a Sixth Form prefect?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'! No, sir! I—I mean—"

"Bunter never threw that ball at Carne, sir," said Harry Wharton hastily. "We kept it in the study, and it's there now."

"Bunter may very easily have obtained another cricket ball, Wharton. He has admitted his intention. Did you obtain another cricket ball, Bunter?"

"I—I—I—"

"I—I—I never bunged it at Carne, sir. Skinner's ball is still in Smithy's study, sir; I—I left it on the table there, and—and forgot it."

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes turned on Skinner.

"Skinner! When Bunter spoke to you in your study at ten minutes to six was it for the purpose of borrowing a cricket ball?"

"He told me he had to fag at bowling, sir, and—"

"Did you lend him a cricket ball?"

"Well, yes, sir."

"Bunter! For what purpose did you borrow a cricket ball from Skinner, Bunter?"

after your own ball had been taken away from you in Study No. 1?"

"I—I was going to bowl to—to Wingate, sir—"

"Will Wingate bear out this statement?" asked Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

"Oh lor'! I—I mean, I—I—"

Bunter gurgled, and gave it up. "Whoppers" seldom ran short with Bunter, but he seemed at a loss for one now.

"The matter appears to be clear," said Mr. Quelch. "On your own admission, Bunter, you intended to commit this assault on Carne, and were stopped by the boys in Study No. 1. Then you obtained another cricket ball from Skinner, making a false statement to him when you did so. The matter could scarcely be clearer."

"I—I didn't do it, sir," groaned Bunter. "I—I was going to—but going to ain't doing it, sir! I never did it!"

"Bunter!"

"I hope you can take my word, sir." "Certainly I cannot take your word, Bunter, when you have already told me a number of reckless and absurd falsehoods!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You will be taken to your headmaster, Bunter, after third school to-morrow, for a flogging!"

"Oh crikey! But I never did it!" howled Bunter. "The Head won't flog a chap because of what he was going to do, and never did, sir!"

"What you did is perfectly clear, Bunter."

"I—I can prove it!" gasped Bunter. "I—I left the ball on Smithy's table, sir. It's there now! I can't have chucked it at Carne's head, sir, when it's still in Smithy's study, can I, sir?"

"It is impossible for me to believe any statement you make, Bunter. But I will give you every chance. Wharton! Go to Vernon-Smith's study in the Remove passage and ascertain whether a cricket ball is on the table there. If so, bring it to me."

"Very well, sir."

Harry Wharton left the Form-room.

There was deep silence while he was gone. Nobody in the Form-room, excepting Bunter, expected Wharton to bring back a cricket ball with him. To the general surprise, Bunter had a hopeful look.

Bunter, in fact, had no doubt that Skinner's ball was still where he had laid it down. He had forgotten it in the ecstatic joy of scoffing Smithy's jam-tarts, and during his thrilling moments of taking cover in the study cupboard. And he had not remembered it afterwards until now. Bunter knew, if no one else did, that he had not buzzed that ball at Arthur Carne, so he fully expected Wharton to return with it.

The expression on the fat Owl's face puzzled Mr. Quelch, who was watching him with keen eyes. A doubt even crossed his mind. If there was no cricket ball to be found in the study, Bunter's guilt was clear—and the hopeful relief in Bunter's fat face indicated that he fully expected Skinner's ball to be found there. It was rather perplexing.

Wharton was gone only a few minutes. Billy Bunter's big spectacles turned on him as he came back into the Form-room. He came empty-handed.

"Did you find a cricket ball on Vernon-Smith's study table, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"No, sir."

"Why, you silly ass!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "Why haven't you got it? It's there!"

"Bunter—"

"I tell you it's there!" squeaked Bunter. "I left it there, on Smithy's study table—"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch picked up a cricket ball from his desk.

"This," he said, "is the ball that was thrown from Study No. 7 window at Carne of the Sixth Form. Skinner, can you identify this ball?"

"It's mine, sir!" admitted Skinner. "I know the marks on it."

"It is the ball you lent Bunter?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may keep it, Skinner. Bunter, do you dare to repeat your statement that you left Skinner's cricket ball on Vernon-Smith's table when it is identified as the ball that struck Carne?"

"Oh crikey! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Upon my word!"

"Some—some other chap must have got hold of that ball and bunged it at Carne, sir!" groaned Bunter. "Perhaps it was Wingate—"

"What?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Those fellows told me that Wingate went into the study, sir, while I was there," groaned Bunter. "Nobody else did that I know of. So—so perhaps it was Wingate buzzed the ball at Carne, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Quelch's face was a study. The suggestion that the head prefect of Greyfriars might have buzzed the cricket ball at the head of another prefect seemed to have taken his breath away.

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch at last. "How dare you! Are you not aware that Wingate went to the Remove studies after the assault had happened, in order to discover the offender?"

"Oh!" gurgled Bunter. "Well, if it wasn't Wingate, sir, I—I don't know who it was! I never did it, sir."

"I will listen to no more of this!" said the Remove master sternly. "Bunter, your guilt is perfectly clear, and I shall report the matter to your headmaster! Such an offence is too serious for me to deal with as a Form master, and I shall not cane you. You will receive a flogging after third school to-morrow."

"Oh crikey!"

"Dismiss!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

And the Removites marched out of the Form-room, Billy Bunter limping after them with a woebegone fat face, looking as if he found life hardly worth living in a weary world.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker Asks for More!

"THEY'VE got him, old bean!" "Owl!" groaned Carne of the Sixth.

"Feeling bad?" asked Gerald Loder.

"Wow!"

Arthur Carne looked as if he felt rather bad.

He was sitting in his study armchair bathing the bruise on his unfortunate "nut." It was rather a bad bruise, and it was painful. Even the news that the offender had been discovered did not seem to buck Carne a great deal. Certainly boiling in oil was too good for that offender, in Carne's opinion. Still, even boiling the offender in oil would have made no difference to the bruise and the headache.

Loder and Walker of the Sixth had dropped into Carne's study with the news. They found him dismal and dolorous.



"Oh, my hat! I'll smash you!" roared Coker. "Mind that camera—don't tread on that camera—yaroooooh!" Vernon-Smith lifted Coker's camera out of the way, with his foot, while the rest of the Removites upended the Fifth-Former and tapped his bullet head on the hard quadrangle. Bang! "Whoop!" yelled Coker. "I'll—yoop!"

"It's young Bunter of the Remove," said Walker. "Blessed if I know why the potty young ass played such a trick!"

"Ow! I gave him six this afternoon for barging me over on the House steps!" groaned Carne.

"That was it, then! Well, he's getting a flogging in the morning," said Walker comfortingly. "Head's flogging!"

"Ow! Sure it was Bunter?" asked Carne. "I shouldn't have thought that potty owl could have done it."

"Sure thing! Quelch has nosed him out already," said Loder. "He seems to have admitted it, or as good as admitted it. It's come out that some Remove kids stopped him when he was trying it on and took his cricket ball away—and then he went and borrowed another ball and did the trick. Determined little beast! You must have laid on that six!"

"I gave Skinner six for pushing him over on me," said Carne. "Sure it wasn't Skinner? More like him."

"No; it seems quite clear—in fact, I hear that he borrowed a ball from Skinner to buzz at your nut. Quelch is pretty downy; he's nosed it all out. Wary old bird, you know. Feel like a smoke?"

"Wow! No."

Cigarettes could not comfort Carne in his affliction. Even the news that Bunter was to be flogged gave him little comfort.

Loder and Walker lighted cigarettes and sat on the table to comfort their pal with their company so long as the smokes lasted. Which was really kind of them; for of late they had been rather dodging Carne. Since his favourite gee-gee had come in eleventh Carne had been trying to raise funds

from his friends—but Loder and Walker were not the kind of friends from whom it was easy to raise funds. However, Carne was too occupied with his cracked nut even to bother about his little problem of raising the wind. He bathed his bruise, groaned, and groused.

There was a heavy tread in the passage, and a knock—or, rather, a thump—on the door. Two cigarettes disappeared as if by magic. Walker waved a newspaper to clear off smoke as the door opened, and the rugged features and burly frame of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form were revealed.

Walker threw down the newspaper. Coker did not matter. He had feared that it might be a master looking in.

Coker sniffed.

Why Coker of the Fifth had come to a Sixth Form study was unknown so far; Coker had nothing to do with the Sixth, and hardly knew Carne. But there he was, and the atmosphere of smoke in the study made him sniff. Coker had his faults—lots and lots of them—but he had no vices. Smoking in a study was a dingy sort of thing that Coker despised, and Coker was never at the trouble of concealing his opinion.

He sniffed emphatically to let those Sixth Form sportsmen know what he thought of them—nothing at all flattering. He marched in with his elephantine tread.

"Oh, here you are, Carne!" he said.

Loder and Walker eyed him inimically. They did not like the great Horace—who, though nobody at all in the opinion of a Sixth Form prefect, laboured under the delusion that he was a very important person indeed. Neither did they like his disdainful sniff.

"What the thump do you want here, Coker?" snapped Loder.

Coker glanced at him carelessly.

"Not you," he answered. "Get on with your filthy fag smoking if you like—I shan't tell the beak. I came here to speak to you, Carne."

"Well, don't!" growled Carne. "I've got a thundering headache, and your voice is like a megaphone. Take it away."

"You look a bit crooked, old bean," said Coker, eyeing the damaged prefect with a grin. "I hear that some fag buzzed a ball at your nut. Blessed if I know what this school is coming to! I fancy the fags wouldn't get out of hand like this if the Head appointed prefects from the Fifth."

"There's the door!" said Walker.

"Don't jaw, Walker," said Coker. "Look here, Carne, I hear that you dabble in photography. You've got a camera, I believe—I've seen you with it."

"I'm not lending it to you, if that's what you mean," grunted Carne. "Shut the door after you."

"That isn't what I mean. You develop your own photographs and all that," said Coker. "Well, I've got a camera now, and I've taken a roll of films—views of the House, and so on. I took them this afternoon. I want them developed. Will you do it for me, like a good chap?"

Carne looked faintly interested. He dabbled in photography as a hobby—and dabbled in backing horses as another hobby. He found photography the less costly hobby of the two.

"I'll let you have a set of the pictures when they're printed out if you like," added Coker. "They're a fine set—ripping pictures."

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,270.



Siddling Dr. B.

By DICKY NUGENT

I.
"CAVE! The Head!"
"Oh crums!"

There was a mermer of dismay and a skurrying back to desks in the Fourth Form Room at St. Sam's.

Mr. I. Jolliwell Lickham, the master of the Fourth, was out having a glass of jinger-pop at the tuckshop. During his absence the Fourth had been up to their usual larx.

Mr. Lickham had given them fly-wisks, and told them to swot; but the Fourth had decided that they preferred leap-frog to swotting, so they leaped instead.

At the sound of the Head's hevvy, hob-nailed boots outside, they hurriedly leaped back to their desks. With an agillity born of long practiss, all of them were back in their places by the time Dr. Birchmall came in.

It was lucky for them they were, for the revered old gentleman seemed to be in one of his worst moods. His brows were thunderous, his eyes flashed listening, and his steps made the earth quake as he made a whirlwind entrance into the Form-room.

"Where's Mr. Lickham?" he stormed.
"Please, sir, he's gone out!" answered the Fourth, in fear and trembling.

Dr. Birchmall snorted.
"Fatheads! I can see that for myself—I'm not deff! But we won't wait for Mr. Lickham. What I want to say can be said now. I am going to read you an eggstract from the current issue of the 'Muggleton Mail.' Lissen!"

The Fourth lissened. In a deth-like silence broken only by the shuffling of feet and the sound of Tubby Barrell chewing a lump of toffy, the Head proceeded to read from the "Muggleton Mail."

"Serprizing Ignorance at Publick Skool."

HEADMASTER BLAMED.

Arsked by our reporter to-day weather publick skools are as good as they were, Sir Frederick Funguss, who is Chairman of the Board of Guvverners of St. Sam's Skool, said that they are not—not by a long chalk. He added that on a recent visit to St. Sam's he had been shocked by the ignorance prevailing in the Fourth Form. The boys seemed to have no idea of history, joggrafy,

arithmetick, or speling. Personally, Sir Frederick said, he was inclined to blame the headmaster, Dr. Alfred Birchmall, who was unfit to mannidge a' coffy-stall, let alone a grate skool."

"Few!" gasped the Fourth, as the Head replaced the news cutting in his trowsis pocket.

"You may well wissle!" said Dr. Birchmall sternly. "Apparently you,

the Fourth Form, have given our distingwished Chairman such a bad impression of the Skool that he has lost his sense of logic and blamed me for it!"

"We—we're sorry, sir!"

"Fat lot of good that is when all Muggleton is larfing at my eggspense!" said the Head bitterly. "Look at what he says—'Unfit to mannidge a coffy-stall'—me, that ran a coffy-stall for years before I came to St. Sam's! It's all your blessed fault!"

"Oh, sir!"

"And I'm not going to stand for it!" added the Head, sitting down on Mr. Lickham's stool. "I am going to test your nollidge here and now. If you sattisfy me, I shall beard Sir Frederick in his den and herl back the lie in his teeth!"

"By gum!" mermered Jack Jolly; and there was a subdewed larf from the Fourth.

"If, on the other hand, you fail," said Dr. Birchmall, with a warning frown at Jack Jolly, "then I intend to cancel all your half-hollerdays and dubble your skool hours for the rest of the term!"

"M-m-my hat!"

"You—you can't do that, sir!" gasped Jack Jolly, in dismay. "If you cancel our half-hollerdays, you'll sound the deth-Nell of our hopes of a suxxessful kricket-season!"

Somewhat to the serprize of the Fourth, the Head replied to that speech by uttering a weerd cry like that of an owl.

"Beg your pardon, sir?" eggscclaimed Jack Jolly.

The Head larfed sinnically.

"I just gave a single hoot, Jolly. That was to show that I don't care two hoots about your kricket prospects! And now for the test! Merry!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" phaltered Merry.

"I will test your nollidge of joggrafy. How many wives did Henery the Eighth have?"

"But that's history, sir!"

The Head frowned.

"It was always joggrafy in my skool-days; but if it's history now, so be it. What's the answer, anyway?"

"Ten, sir!" said Merry, making a wild gess.

The Head gave a hopeless shrugg.

"No wonder Sir Frederick found you ignorant! Even a Second-Former should know that Henery the Eighth's wives numbered fifteen! Fearless!"

"Yes, sir!" said Frank Fearless fearlessly.

"I am going to test your nollidge of speling. What are three twos?"

"Seven, sir!"

"Wrong!" snorted the Head. "The correct answer is eight! Now for arithmetick! How do you spel 'honner,' Loyle?"

"O-dubble-n-e-r, sir," responded Loyle.

The Head shuddered.

"Really, boys, your ignorance is disgraceful! Anyone should know that 'honner' is spelt h-o-dubble-n-e-r! I have learnt enuff now, I think—more than enuff, in fact! Sir Frederick was right—you are ignerant!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I intend to keep to my promiss!" said the Head severely. "For the rest of the term the hole Form will go without half-hollerdays; and, ferthermore, your skool hours are dubbed as from to-day. Arsk Mr. Lickham to call and see me immejately he comes in!"

The Head flung the Fourth a stern look, then stalked out, leaving them farely stunned by the blow.

II.

"FOLLOW me, my boys! There's going to be no half-hollerday for you!" remarked Mr. Lickham grimly after dinner that day.

The Fourth groaned as they followed the master of the Fourth out of the dining-hawl. It was rotten having to go back to class when everybody else was larfing and charfing on the way to kricket.

Somewhat to the serprize of the Fourth, Mr. Lickham did not lead them straight to the Form-room. He led them out of the House and down to the woodshed instead.

Fossil, the porter, was standing in the doorway of the woodshed. Mr. Lickham gave him a kert nod.

"Good-afternoon, Fossil! Have you such a thing as a grindstone nocking about?"

"Certainly, sir!" responded Fossil, with a touch of his fourlock. "Would you like me to sharpen your pockit-nife, sir, by any charnse?"

"No; I want it for quite another purpose, as a matter of fact," said Mr. Lickham. "Trot it out, Fossil, there's a good chap!"

Fossil brought out the grindstone, and Mr. Lickham nodded.

"That will do. Now, Jolly, I want you to step forward and put your nose on the stone!"

"What?" cride Jack Jolly, in amazement.

"You herd what I said; put your nose to the stone before I give you a clip across the ear," said Mr. Lickham, with quiet dignity. "At once, Jolly!"

"But, sir—"

Mr. Lickham, who was evvidently not in the best of tempers, uttered an eggscclamation of annoyance, grabbed Jack Jolly by the scruff of the neck, and applied his nose to the grindstone.

chemall!



"Kindly turn the handle, Fossil!" he ordered.

"My heye!"

The skool porter was surprized; but he had no option but to obey. He grasped the handle in his horny hand and started twisting it as though for a wager. The result was that the stone whirled round at a fearful speed, with Jack Jolly's nose pressed firmly against it.

"Woooooop!" roared Jack. And after that, "Yarooooooo! Yooooop! Wow!"

"Go it, Fossil!" commanded Mr. Lickham.

"Fossil" went it, and it began to look as though Jack Jolly's classical nose would be completely worn away. Before that could happen, however, the russling sound of a skolastick gown was herd, and Dr. Birchmall strolled upon the seen.

The Head gave one look. Then he gave a yell.

"Lickham, Lickham! What ever are you doing of?"

"Putting Jolly's nose to the grindstone, sir," replied Mr. Lickham, pawsing in his task. "That was what you told me to do, wasn't it?"

"What?"

"In the corse of our interview before dinner, sir," said Mr. Lickham, "you told me to take the Fourth in hand and keep their noses to the grindstone. Well, I've started on Jolly first, as he's Form Kaptin. Haven't I dun right, sir?"

Dr. Birchmall stared from Mr. Lickham to Jack Jolly. Then he suddenly slapped his sides and let out a howl of larfter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Well, if you don't take the hole biskit factory, Lickham!" he roared. "When I used that eggsspression, I was meerly using a figger of speech. What I meant was, see that they jolly well work—not actually put their bokos to a giddy grindstone! Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lickham's face had never previously resembled a room; but now it was a study.

"It looks as if I've made a slite mistake, then!" he gasped at last. "But never mind; there's no dammdige dun eggsept to Jolly's nose. Sorry and all that, Jolly!"

"Ow-wow!" was all Jack Jolly could reply.

The Head dried his tears of mirth on the tail of his gown.

"Well, well, these little mistakes will occur," he remarked philosophically. "Don't let it worry you, Lickham. Jolly has plenty of cheek, so he can afford to lose a bit of his nose! Take the Fourth back to their Form-room now and try to distill some nollidge into their wooden noddles. You have my uthority to wallop them on the slitest provocation—or without it, if you feel like it!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" grinned Mr. Lickham.

"Keep them at it for the rest of the term, Lickham, and I will see that you

get your reward!" conclooded the Head. "Cheerioski!"

And Dr. Birchmall strolled off to play a game of croaky with his dawter Molly, leaving the Fourth to go and grind at Lattin in a stuffy Form-room for the rest of the afternoon!

III.

THERE was a weeping and a whaling and a nashing of teeth in the Fourth passidge that evening. The Fourth were fed-up. And no wonder. Mr. Lickham had kept them at Lattin for five sollid hours without even an interval for tea. The only change they got from the monotony was when Mr. Lickham pawsed to administer lickings—which happened pretty frekwently.

And they had nothing to look forward to for the rest of the term, but a repetition of the same programme! The outlook was desprit in the eggstreme.

But the darkest hour is before the silver lining, as the old proverb says, and that proved true in this case.

Just before bed-time, Jack Jolly, who was discussing matters with a crowd of his pals in the Common-room, let out a yell.

"Got it!"

"What, a wheeze?" arsked Merry and Bright, looking much merrier and brighter. "Oh, good!"

"The very idea!" said Jack Jolly enthusiastically. "It's a wonder I didn't think of it before! Anybody got a pair of stilts?"

Jack Jolly's pals stared at him wonderingly.

"Stilts?" they eggscclaimed. "What do you want stilts for?"

"To make myself tall, so that I can dress up as Sir Frederick Funguss and interview the Head!" was Jack Jolly's calm reply.

The Fourth were staggered; but they soon became enthusiastic when they thought it over. Everybody knew how clever Jack Jolly was at disguising himself, and none doubted that he could hoodwink the Head.

Within a few minnits a pair of stilts was brought to light in Legge's study. Jack Jolly then set to work to disguise himself as Sir Frederick Funguss, and with the aid of a pair of false wiskers

and long trowsia belonging to the Junior Dramattick Society, rapidly became transformed.

"Think I'll do?" he arsked at last.

The Fourth gasped. Jack Jolly's disguise could only be described as amazing. If you had seen Jack Jolly and Sir Frederick Funguss side by side at that moment, you would have sworn they were twin brothers!

"My hat! The Head'll need keen eyesight to detect the difference!" grinned Frank Fearless. "Mind you tell the old buffer the tale, Jack!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Leave it to me!" chuckled Jack Jolly. "I'll go and see the Head right away! Ta-ta!"

"Ta-ta, Jack, and good luck!"

Without wasting another minnit, Jack Jolly quitted the Common-room and went straight to Dr. Birchmall's study. The Head, remembering that interview in the "Muggleton Mail," eyed him somewhat unpleasantly as he walked in. But the disguised junior pretended not to notiss it, and gave the Head a beaming smile.

"Hah! Good-evening, Dr. Birchmall!" remarked Jack Jolly, in a voice that was marvellously like Sir Frederick's. "How are you? Well, I trusted?"

"Not so dusty, Sir Frederick!" growled the Head, who was natcherally afraid to say anything offensive to the Chairman of the Guvverners. "I didn't eggspect to see you, though, after that beastly interview you gave to the local paper."

The disguised kaptin of the Fourth coffered.

"That was eggssactly what I came to see you about. I hope you don't think I said what the paper says I said. Becawse if you do, you're jolly well mistaken. I didn't!"

"You—you didn't?" gasped the Head. "Then in that case why the thump did they put it in?"

"I will tell you," answered the false Sir Frederick, dropping his voice to a confidenshal wisper. "The fact is, Birchmall, this paper, the 'Muggleton Mail,' is simply a skandal sheet that thrives by printing skandalous suggestions about sellybrated public men."

"My hat! That's why they picked me out, then!" eggscclaimed Dr. Birchmall. "I was chosen becawse I am a sellybrated public figger—is that it?"

"That's just it!" grinned Jack Jolly. "The best thing to do is to ignore it. In a way, you see, it's quite an bonner!"

"I see!" grinned the Head. "Funsy me not tumbling to that before! I'm glad you came along to point it out, Sir Frederick. I don't mind admitting now that I felt frightfully aggranoyed when I read it first."

The false Sir Frederick nodded.

"So I understand. In fact, I hear that you actually sentenced the Fourth Form to perform increased duties for the rest of the term. Natcherally, you will cancel that now."

"Oh, natcherally, Sir Frederick—espeshally if you wish it!" said the Head, who was farelly bubbling over again now. "I will send for Lickham and give the necessary orders immediately you have gone. Will you stay for supper, Sir Frederick?"

Sir Frederick shook his head.

"I should love to, Birchmall. But I've ordered some hot pies to be sent up to the Hall for me, and it would be a pity to waste them. You won't forget about the Fourth?"

"Rely on me, sir!" promised the

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"How do you know, if they're not developed yet?"

"I took them!" explained Coker.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You'd be glad to have some decent pictures of the school to send to your people, what?" asked Coker. "I fancy they'll be rather better than anything you've taken yourself, you know. But I want them developed. I've had no practice so far. Of course, I know you shove 'em into a dish, or something, and cover 'em with something or other, and wait till they come out, and then do something or other, and—and—and something or other. But it needs practice, I believe. Come along to the dark-room and do it for me, will you?"

Coker was putting it uncommonly civilly. Coker, as he often declared, did not think much of the Sixth. Still, he did not think of dealing with Carne as he had dealt with Penfold of the Remove.

"Can't come now," growled Carne. "I've got a fearful headache. Might do it for you to-morrow."

"You see, I want to get it done," explained Coker. "No time like the present, you know. You're not doing anything now."

"I've got a fearful headache, I tell you."

"I shouldn't make such a fuss about a crack on the nut if I were you," advised Coker calmly. "It's a bit ridiculous, isn't it?"

"What?"

"You're not made of putty, I suppose? A lot of fags have been laughing over the fuss you're making," said Coker. "I'd advise you to grin and bear it like a man, you know. What's the good of snivelling?"

Carne looked at him. If Coker expected this sort of persuasiveness to have a persuasive effect on Arthur Carne, Coker was booked for a disappointment. For reasons unknown to the happy Horace, Carne looked as if he was getting into an extremely bad temper.

"You burbling, blithering idiot!" said Carne. "Get out of my study before you're thrown out!"

"I'd like to see anybody throw me out of a study!" said Coker, looking warlike at once. "Don't be an ass, Carne!"

Carne looked at Loder and Walker, who were grinning.

"Will you chuck that fool into the passage?" he asked.

"Pleased!" grinned Loder.

"What-ho!" said Walker.

"I'd like to see them do it!" said Coker. "Look here, Carne, what are you playing the goat for when a man comes in to ask you a civil question? For goodness' sake, chuck up whining over that tap on your napper and—Here, hands off, you silly asses! By gum, if you think you can handle me because you're prefects, I can jolly well say—Whoop! Oh, my hat!"

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Coker had said that he would like to see Loder and Walker chuck him out of the study!

Now he saw it!

But he did not seem, after all, to like it!

He gave a roar like the Bull of Bashan, as he landed in the passage on the back of his neck.

Loder and Walker stood grinning in the study doorway, while Horace Coker sorted himself out.

"Ow! Wow!" gasped Coker. "Wow! I'll jolly well—Wow!"

Wingate of the Sixth stared out of his study along the passage.

"What's that thumping row? Coker, you silly ass, what are you doing here? What the thump is that man sprawling in the passage for? Get out of it, Coker!"

"Oh! Ooooh! Wooooh!"

Coker scrambled up breathlessly. Four or five more Sixth Form men came out of the studies, staring at Coker.

Coker turned on Walker and Loder. Apparently he meditated assault and battery, regardless of the awful seriousness of punching a prefect. But Coker did not have a chance.

Half a dozen Sixth Form men gathered round Horace Coker, grabbed him, and walked him out of the passage. Coker did not want to go—but he went. At the end of the passage they tapped his head on the wall—hard—and left him.

And Coker of the Fifth, like the ploughman in the poem, homeward plodded his weary way—rubbing his head as he went.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Tip from Smithy!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"The poorfulness of the esteemed old Bunter is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, I never did it!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I never did, you know—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter. "Rot-ter! Don't you know that it's frightfully low to doubt a fellow's word?"

"Must be a low lot at Greyfriars, then!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I fancy every man in the school doubts your jolly old word, Bunt."

"The doubtfulness is preposterous!"

Billy Bunter blinked lugubriously into Study No. 1.

The Famous Five had gathered there after prep. They were sympathetic. Any properly constituted fellow was bound to sympathise with a man who was up for a flogging. But they were not prepared to take Bunter's word. Bunter's word was not as good as gold. It was hardly as good as Russian paper money! Everybody knew—or, at least, felt sure—that Billy Bunter had cracked Carne's nut with the cricket ball. And Bunter, being such a well-known fibber, the fact that he said he hadn't, was really proof presumptive that he had! The Famous Five were prepared to sympathise, but not to believe!

"You see, I'm perfectly innocent!" groaned Bunter.

"If you're innocent, old fat bean, you've taken a frightful lot of trouble to make out you're guilty," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What's the good of gammoning?" asked Johnny Bull. "You did it, and you're going to get a beak's flogging for it! Serve you right!"

"Beast!"

"Rotten trick bunging a cricket ball at a man's napper," said Johnny. "I suppose you haven't sense enough to understand that; but the beak's birch may knock a little sense into you!"

"I never did it!" yelled Bunter. "I was going to, but you beasts stopped me. 'Tain't fair to whop a chap for that! I might have changed my mind, anyhow. In fact, very likely I should have. Anyhow, I never did it. Why, I couldn't have hit Carne's head with a cricket ball at the distance!"

"Accidents will happen!" grinned Nugent.

"And I shouldn't have been ass enough to buzz the ball from my own study window! It was some other chap!"

"Rats!"

"I was going to buzz it from Smithy's window," said Bunter, with almost tearful earnestness. "Then I laid it on the table and forgot it. I—I don't mind telling you fellows that I found some tarts in the study cupboard. You needn't mention that to Smithy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then when that dummy Wingate came rooting in, I thought it was Smithy, and got out of sight! I forgot all about the ball, and all about Carne. I suppose I shouldn't be thinking of Carne when there were jam-tarts going! Have a little sense!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! My belief is that it was one of you fellows buzzed that ball at Carne."

"What?" roared the Famous Five, with one voice.

"Well, it was somebody," said Bunter. "It seems to have been Skinner's ball that was used; somebody must have sneaked in while I was standing at Smithy's cupboard, and bagged it, without my seeing him. A rotten syphistitious sort of thing, I can tell you! If it was you, Wharton—"

"You howling ass!"

"Well, I think the fellow ought to own up," said Bunter. "If it was you, Bob—"

"You pernicious porpoise!"

"It's pretty thick, putting it on me! If it was you, Nugent—"

"Fathead!"

"Well, who was it?" snorted Bunter. "You, you fat dummy!" said Johnny Bull.

"I've told you it wasn't!" shrieked Bunter.

"That proves that it was!"

"Beast! If it was you, Bull—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Was it you, Inky?"

"The answer is in the esteemed negative, my ridiculous Bunter!"

"Well, it was somebody!" groaned Bunter. "I wish I hadn't thought of it now. Quelch makes out I did it, because he thinks I was going to do it. I—I fancy the Head will believe Quelch and not me."

"Go hon!"

"Quelch says it happened at six o'clock! Well, I was eating tarts when six was striking—I heard it strike. I remember it was the tenth tart."

"So that's where my jam-tarts have gone?" said a voice behind Bunter.

The fat Owl spun round and blinked in alarm at Herbert Vernon-Smith. He had not heard the Bounder come along.

"Oh, really, Smithy! I—I never had your tarts! I—I haven't been in your study at all, old chap!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "And that's the chap who expects his word to be taken!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, I—I—"

"All serene, you fat owl!" said the

Bounder, laughing. "I'm not goin' to kick you, when you're up for a floggin'." "Oh, good!" gasped Bunter. "I never had the tarts, old chap. Besides, I'm going to get you a fresh lot when my postal order comes. I'm expecting a postal order to-morrow, Smithy. Look here, you fellows, I couldn't have buzzed that ball at Carne's nut while I was eating tarts, could I? I tell you I forgot about Carne when I saw the tarts."

"That sounds a bit like the truth!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, what's going to be done?" groaned Bunter.

"You are, old fat bean—brown!"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

The fat junior rolled dismally away—leaving unbelievers in Study No. 1. The evidence against Bunter was rather too overwhelming to be doubted. If he was innocent he had, as Bob said, taken a lot of trouble to make himself look guilty.

The Bounder cast a curious glance after him, and then looked in at the Famous Five. There was a rather sarcastic expression on Smithy's face.

"Wharton, old bean," he said, "you're captain of the Remove again now—in place of my unworthy self, recently chucked out."

"What about it?" asked Harry.

"Well, if I were still captain of the Remove, I should think it up to me to see that that fat idiot got justice," drawled the Bounder.

Wharton stared at him.

"That's what he's getting," he answered. "What the dickens do you mean, Smithy? There's no doubt that he buzzed that ball at Carne."

"I think there's a lot of doubt," answered the Bounder coolly. "Bunter couldn't hit a haystack at ten yards! You've seen him bowl."

"Well, this wasn't bowling—it was shying a ball at a man's head under a window," said Harry. "I suppose it was rather a chance that Bunter hit the mark—but he did."

"Did he?" drawled Smithy.

"Of course he did, you ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry warmly. "Why, he came into this study first to do it, and we stopped him. Isn't that proof?"

"Yes, that's proof that he intended to do it—but the law doesn't punish people for their intentions—only for their jolly old actions. And it's proof that he had sense enough not to buzz the ball from his own study window."

"Um!" said Wharton slowly.

"They spotted the window—it was Bunter's window," said Vernon-Smith. "That looks as if it wasn't Bunter. If he had meant to play the goat at his own window, he would never have come to this study in the first place."

"Um!"

"He borrowed a ball at ten to six. He went to my study to buzz it from my window. He spotted the tarts, and forgot time and space. Wingate, I gather, was on the spot a minute or two after six. Bunter was there then—parked in my cupboard."

"But he had the ball—it was the same ball—"

"He says he laid it on the table while he scoffed the tarts. He stood at the cupboard to scoff them—there's jam and crumbs all over the shop! He had his back to the door while he was standin' at the cupboard."

"Smithy, you can't think any fellow would be such a skunk as to sneak the ball without Bunter seeing him, and—and—leave it to be landed on Bunter—"

"It's a wicked world, my beloved 'earers!" said the Bounder, shaking his head. "It's hard for nice fellows like us to believe that there are people less nice than ourselves. But, alas! There are!"

"Oh, don't be a goat!" said Johnny Bull gruffly. "If you think that is what happened, who do you think—"

"Somebody who knew Bunter's wheeze, of course," said Smithy.

"If you mean one of us, you silly idiot—"

"He borrowed the ball from Skinner," yawned the Bounder. "Skinner seems to have tasted Carne's ashplant, as well as Bunter. He told Skinner he had to fag at bowlin'. Skinner believed that—I don't think!"

Wharton's face was very grave.

"I can't think—" he said slowly.

"Of course you can't!" agreed the Bounder amicably. "Never imagined you could, old bean. But if I were captain of the Remove, and it was my giddy duty to see that a man had fair play, I should ask Skinner why he lent Bunter that cricket ball—and what he did afterwards."

And the Bounder, laughing, walked away down the passage, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. looking at one another, with grave and startled faces.

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull.

"Smithy's jolly keen," said Harry Wharton slowly. "A good deal keener than we are, in some things. I—I suppose it's barely possible—Look here, let's go and see Skinner."

"Nothing in it," said Bob Cherry. "But let's."

And the Famous Five left Study No. 1 and went along to Study No. 11 to see Skinner.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion!

HAROLD SKINNER was in his study. Snoop and Stott, his study-mates, had gone down to the Rag after prep. Skinner was moving rather restlessly about the study. He was a little troubled. Like other transgressors, Skinner had made the discovery that he was not quite so unscrupulous as he had fancied; and he did not like to think of Bunter getting that flogging on the morrow.

It was the fat duffer's own fault, he told himself savagely. Skinner had not exactly intended the consequences of his act to fall on Bunter. He had hoped that nobody would be spotted; only feeling additionally secure in the certainty that if anyone was spotted it would be Bunter. Bunter had babbled the whole thing out to Quelch, and there was an end. It was the fat fool's own fault! So Skinner told himself; but he could not feel easy in his mind.

Skinner's conscience was fairly tough, but it was worrying him a little. But if Bunter did not take the beak's flogging, obviously Skinner had to take it; and that was not good enough. Not for a single moment did Skinner think of owning up. His conscience troubled him, but not to that extent.

He swung round towards the door as it was thumped on, and scowled at the sight of the Famous Five.

"What the thump do you want?" he growled.

"Only a word or two, Skinner," answered Harry Wharton. "When you lent Bunter that ball what did you fancy he wanted it for?"

"He told me he had to fag at bowling."

"You didn't believe that."

Skinner gave the captain of the Remove a quick, searching, suspicious look. He was quick on the uptake, and he realised at once that suspicion was awakened. He paused a moment before he answered.

"Well, if I'd thought about it I suppose I should have known that it was gammon," he said. "But I was busy with lines—I'd left them rather late—I never gave it a thought." He bit his lip. "I couldn't help owning up that it was my ball after Bunter let it out to Quelch that he'd borrowed one from me. You know that."

"I know that! But Bunter says he went to Smithy's study and scoffed Smithy's tarts, and never buzzed the ball at Carne at all."

"Somebody did!" said Skinner. "I shouldn't wonder if he's right. I think it's rather thick for him to be flogged without proof."

"Quelch thinks there is proof—Bunter's admitted that he intended to do it. It looks as if he did it. But Bunter makes out that some fellow must have pinched the ball from Smithy's table while his back was turned."

"Shouldn't wonder!" agreed Skinner. "Any idea who might have done that?"

"I hear that Bunter thinks that it was one of you fellows!" answered Skinner blandly.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bob Cherry gruffly.

"My dear man, I'm not saying that I agree with Bunter. You fellows know best whether you had a hand in it."

"You know we hadn't, Skinner," said Harry Wharton quietly. "It was not the sort of thing a decent fellow would do—except a born idiot like Bunter. If it wasn't Bunter, it was some out-and-out rotter."

"Oh, quite!" agreed Skinner. "So if one of you chaps is an out-and-out rotter, why, there you are!"

Wharton breathed rather hard.

He had not come there to punch Skinner, but he was powerfully tempted to do so.

"Look here, Skinner, I'll put it plain," he said. "Bunter's such a frightful fibber that there's no believing a word he says—but that's no reason why he should be flogged for what he hasn't done—if he hasn't! Did you pinch that ball while he wasn't looking, and go to his study and buzz it at Carne's napper?"

Skinner smiled.

"Did you?" he counter-questioned.

"You know I did not!" snapped Wharton.

"Well, I might say just the same—you know I did not!"

"There is an esteemed difference, my absurd Skinner," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gently. "You are terrifically capable of such preposterous conduct, and the ridiculous Wharton is not."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Skinner.

"Is that all you've got to say?" asked Wharton.

"That's all—except that if one of you fellows did it, I think it's pretty rotten to let Bunter get the whopping. In the circumstances a fellow ought to own up!" said Skinner, shaking his head.

The Famous Five looked at Skinner hard. Somehow that interview was causing the Bounder's "tip" to take deeper root in their minds.

"Certainly, if it was not Bunter, the fellow ought to own up," said Harry Wharton; "but—"

"If it was not Bunter, it was you, Skinner," said Bob Cherry.

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"Now, I was just thinking that if it wasn't Bunter it was you," said Skinner cheerfully. "And if I were captain of the Form I should go to Quelch and point out that there's a doubt in the matter."

"And why me specially?" asked Bob, with a glare.

"Well, you know what happened a week or two ago—you buzzed an orange at Loder over the banisters, and Bunter got whopped for it!" said Skinner. "What's happened once might happen twice."

"Why, you you—you—" gasped Bob Cherry, crimson with wrath. "You sneaking worm, buzzing an orange at a man is very different from buzzing a cricket ball at him! And I never knew Bunter had been licked till afterwards—and he was only licked because he made out that it was his orange because he wanted to scoff it, and—"

"Oh, I dare say!" said Skinner airily. "I don't know the details, and don't want to. I only know what happened—and if it's happened again—if you're making a scapegoat of Bunter as you seem to have done before—Here, keep off, you ruffian!" yelled Skinner, as Bob Cherry grasped him by the collar.

"Hold on, Bob!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I'm holding on—to Skinner!" snorted Bob. "Skinner thinks I may have played a dirty trick, and put the blame on another chap! I'm going to convince him that he's got it wrong."

Bang!

"Yaroooh!" yelled Skinner, as his head rapped on his study table. "Oh, my hat! Oh, my head! Wow!"

He struggled frantically in Bob's hefty grasp.

"Think you've got it wrong?" demanded Bob.

"No!" howled Skinner. "I believe you did it! Yaroooh!"

Bang!

"Whoooop!"

"Bob, old chap—" gasped Nugent.

"Think yet that you've got it wrong, Skinner?" bellowed Bob.

"Ow! No! Yooop!"

Bang!

"I'll keep this up as long as you do, Skinner," said Bob grimly. "Your napper's tapping that table till you own up that you've got it wrong."

"Oh, you rotter! Leggo!" yelled Skinner.

Bang!

"Think you've got it wrong, you worm?"

"Ow! Yes! Anything you like!" howled Skinner. "Leggo! Yes—yes—yes! Only a joke! Yaroooh!"

"Well, that's all right," said Bob, releasing Skinner's crumpled collar. "But if it was a joke, don't make any more jokes like that."

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

"Let's get out of this, you men," said Bob. "I jolly well believe it was Skinner, and not Bunter at all. But he's too much of a worm to own up. Come away."

The chums of the Remove left the study. Bob was still red and ruffled, and the other fellows very thoughtful. A faint suspicion had become a strong suspicion, yet so far as they could see, there was nothing wrong. If Skinner was in truth the guilty party, as they could not help suspecting, there was not a jot or tittle of evidence against him. And he was not the man to own up and take his gruel. Guilty or not guilty, it seemed that the fatuous Owl of the Remove was "for it."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Respite for Bunter!

THE following morning there was a face in the Remove Form-room that was the picture of dismal woe. Judging by his expression, the sorrows of a sorrowful universe had accumulated, at one fell swoop, on the fat shoulders of William George Bunter. Niobe, dissolving in tears, could not have looked much more woeful than Billy Bunter. The ancient Rachael, mourning uncomfited, could not have been more dismal. Even sad Calypso wailing, when Ulysses went a-sailing, would have looked merry and bright beside Bunter.

The flogging that was to follow third school hung over Billy Bunter like the sword of Damocles. He could think of nothing else. Even had Mr. Quelch that morning provided him with jam tarts instead of Latin prose, Bunter would still have thought about that flogging. Distance is said to lend enchantment to the view. And it was certain that the nearer that flogging came, the less Bunter liked the prospect.

Bunter's face and woeful countenance might have moved a heart of stone. But his Form master's heart seemed tougher than stone, for he only glanced with great severity at Bunter, when he noticed him at all. Still, even Quelch, it seemed, was human, for he did not call on Bunter to display his extensive lack of knowledge that morning, which was well for Bunter, for he had been too worried even to look at his prep the evening before.

The fat junior was passed over in class, and he was at liberty to devote his whole thoughts to what was to follow third lesson. And the more he thought about the Head's birch, the more dismal his fat face grew.

Skinner was not feeling comfortable. He did not quite like the idea of another fellow taking his gruel. But as he liked still less the idea of taking it himself, he sat tight and said nothing.

When the Remove were dismissed for break, Harry Wharton stopped behind to speak to his Form master, while the rest went out. Having thought it over, and consulted with his friends, the captain of the Remove had decided to put it to Quelch, though with great doubt as to the result.

"What is it, Wharton?" asked the Remove master, with a kind glance at his head boy as Wharton stopped at his desk.

"If you'll allow me, sir, I should like to speak about Bunter," said Harry, colouring a little.

Mr. Quelch's jaw set grimly.

"It is quite useless to make any intercession for Bunter, Wharton. I am surprised that you should think of such a thing."

"I wasn't thinking of that, sir. If he did it, he ought to be flogged," said Wharton. "But I'm bound to speak, as head of the Form, sir. I believe there is a doubt in the matter, and I think I ought to say so, sir."

"Certainly you ought to say so, if you think so, Wharton. I should expect it of you as a dutiful head boy," said Mr. Quelch, quite graciously. "I see no room for doubt myself. But you may speak."

"I know that Bunter meant to chuck that ball at Carne's head, sir. He's admitted that to you," said Harry. "There's no doubt that after the ball was taken from him he borrowed

another with the same intention. I know that makes it look certain."

"Undoubtedly."

"But—but whatever he may have intended, sir, if he did not actually do it—"

"It appears that he did, Wharton. Do you mean to imply that you have a suspicion of another person?"

"Well, yes, sir," admitted Wharton. "I can't possibly mention names, but it does look to me as if some other fellow may have got hold of that ball while Bunter wasn't looking. Bunter says so, at least."

"Bunter is too untruthful for his word to be taken, Wharton."

"Yes, sir, I know that; but—but I can't help thinking that Bunter may be victimised in this case, sir. I'm not suggesting, of course, that he should be let off, but if it should come out that he never did it after he was flogged for it—"

Mr. Quelch looked sharply at his head boy.

"I rely very much on your judgment, Wharton, as you know," he said. "If you tell me plainly that you have reason to suppose that an error has been made, I shall postpone Bunter's punishment for further inquiry. Have you any such reason?"

"I think so, sir."

There was a long pause.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, at last. "I should, of course, be unwilling to run the slightest risk of committing an act of injustice. Nothing could be clearer than Bunter's guilt, on his own admissions, so far as I can see. I am sure you are not speaking idly, Wharton—I trust you. I will request the Head to leave the matter over till Saturday, in order that fresh facts—if any—may come to light."

"Thank you, sir!" said Harry. "May I tell Bunter so?"

"Certainly!"

Wharton left the Form-room feeling relieved. He joined his friends in the quad, and they looked for Bunter. They found the fat Owl leaning dismally on an elm, still understudying Niobe in his looks. He blinked at them with lack-lustre eyes.

"I say, you fellows, ain't it awful?" groaned Bunter. "I say, it's rather rotten of you not to own up, Cherry."

"You potty Owl!" growled Bob.

"Well, Skinner thinks it was you. He's been telling all the fellows," said Bunter. "If it was you—"

"Fathead!"

"It's put off, Bunter," said Harry. "I've spoken to Quelch, and it's put off till Saturday to give you a chance."

"What's the good of that, if Cherry ain't going to own up?" grunted Bunter. "If I've got to have it, I'd rather get it over."

"You fat chump—"

"Just like you to butt in and make it worse for a chap," said Bunter. "That's you all over."

"Ain't he nice?" grinned Bob. "Doesn't he make a fellow frightfully keen to do him a good turn?"

"If you'd rather get it over, Bunter, you've only got to tell Quelch so," said Harry. "Go to him now—"

"Beast!"

Apparently Bunter was not, after all, keen to get it over.

"Well, that's that," said Wharton. "If it was some other fellow, he may have the decency to own up before Saturday."

"Catch Skinner owning up!" growled Johnny Bull.



"I haven't anything concealed under my jacket, sir," said Bunter. "I never——" Clatter, clatter, clatter! "Goodness gracious! What——" Mr. Quelch started to his feet in amazement, as one printing-frame after another slipped from under Bunter's jacket and dropped at the fat junior's feet. "Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, I don't think you ought to make out that it was Skinner, because he says it was Cherry. I must say that I think Bob ought to own up."

"Idiot!"

"Dash it all, be a man!" urged Bunter. "It's up to you, old chap. Look here, you do the decent thing, and I'll tell you what—I'll ask you home to Bunter Court for the summer holidays."

"You howling ass——"

"I mean it, old chap," said Bunter. "You're not the sort of fellow I can ask to Bunter Court, I know, but I'll stretch a point. There!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co., while Bob Cherry glared at the fat Owl as if he could have eaten him.

"Is it a go?" asked Bunter. "Look here, Cherry, what are you going to do?"

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do!" gasped Bob. "I'm going to kick you across the quad——"

"Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter dodged the biggest foot in the Remove, and fled.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Skinner!

DICK PENFOLD tapped at the door of Skinner's study, and entered. Skinner, Snoop, and Stott were at tea, and they stared round at him, with an unwelcoming stare. Pen was a very unaccustomed caller at that study.

"Want anything?" asked Skinner.

"I want to speak to you——"

"Nothing doing," said Skinner, with a wink to his friends. "No boots or shoes to be mended to-day."

Whereat Snoop and Stott giggled. Penfold was the son of the village cobbler at Friardale, and he was in the Remove on a Founder's Scholarship. Skinner liked to remind him of it, being quite unconscious of the fact that Pen had no desire to forget it.

"Oh, don't be a cheeky ass!" said Penfold sharply.

"Try Study No. 1," suggested Skinner blandly. "I've heard that Wharton was hard up last term—he may want his boots soled and heeled."

"He, he, he!" sniggered Snoop.

"I've got something to say to you, Skinner," said Pen. "And I'd rather say it to you alone. Will you come along to my study?"

"No, I won't!" answered Skinner coolly. "I'm not on visiting terms with cobblers, thanks."

"I'll say it here, then, if these fellows will clear for a few minutes. It's something you'd rather hear alone."

Snoop and Stott looked at him curiously, and looked at Skinner. The latter gave a scoffing laugh.

He had not the faintest idea what Penfold could possibly have to say to him, he did not want particularly to hear it, and it pleased him to treat the scholarship junior with lofty disdain.

"If you've got anything to say, you can cough it up before my friends," he said. "Keep where you are, you fellows."

Penfold hesitated.

"You'd rather hear it alone, Skinner," he said.

"What utter rot! What the deuce are you so jolly mysterious about?" sneered Skinner. "Are you goin' to tell me that my shoes want soling? I'm not goin' to give you the job, if they do."

Penfold compressed his lips.

"Well, if you want it before the other fellows, here it is," he said. "I've been developing some photographs for Coker of the Fifth. I've just come away from the dark-room——"

"What the thump has that got to do with me?" asked Skinner, in sheer astonishment. "Wandering in your mind?"

"It may have nothing to do with you. Or it may have a lot," answered Pen quietly. "Coker took those photographs yesterday—he was taking them at the very time that somebody cracked Carne's nut with a cricket ball. Among them is a photograph showing the Remove study windows."

Skinner started.

"The Remove study windows!" he repeated mechanically.

"Yes. Taken at exactly six o'clock yesterday," said Penfold. "That picture shows a fellow at the window of Study No. 7."

Skinner's heart stood still.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Snoop. "Jolly old Bunter taken in the giddy act, what?"

Penfold shook his head.

"I suppose you know that in a negative, the darks are light, and the lights dark," he said. "Until the picture is printed out, it's quite impossible to recognise the fellow at the window."

Skinner breathed again.

"But it's easy to make out that the fellow, whoever he is, is holding a cricket ball in his hand, in the very act of throwing it down," said Pen.

"Then it's Bunter!" said Stott. "It was Bunter threw the ball at Carne."

"I think it isn't Bunter," answered Penfold. "In fact, I'm practically certain of it. The face can't possibly be recognised in the negative; but one

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thing is plain—there are no spectacles on it. Bunter wouldn't have taken off his specs before chucking the ball—that's rot. He doesn't see a lot with them, and he wouldn't even have seen Carne without them. It's practically a cert that the fellow at the window wasn't Bunter."

"Good news for Bunt—if it's true!" said Snoop. "I suppose it was Bob Cherry after all, as Skinner's been saying."

"Was it Bob Cherry?" asked Stott.

"I've told you that the face can't be recognised; but I'm certain, of course, that it was not Bob Cherry," answered Pen. "Anyhow, Coker's going to get the negatives printed out presently, and then the facts will come out—whatever they are. It's a rather cock-eyed picture, but it's quite plain, and shows the fellow at the window distinctly."

"Hard luck for Cherry!" said Snoop. "But what have you come to tell us for? You'd better go and tell Cherry, so that he can put some exercise books in his bags ready for the whopping."

"I've come to tell you, Skinner," said Penfold, looking directly at the cad of the Remove, "that in an hour or two, there will be no further doubt about the matter. There's still time for the fellow concerned to own up—and it will be better for him to own up before he's found out."

Skinner licked his dry lips.

"What's that got to do with me?" he muttered huskily.

"If it's got nothing to do with you, I've wasted my time coming here," said Pen. "But if it's got anything to do with you, I'm giving you a tip in time. There isn't the slightest doubt in my mind that when that negative is printed out, the picture will show that the fellow chucking the ball from Study No. 7 was not Bunter."

"I—I don't believe it," muttered Skinner.

"If Wharton hadn't chipped in Bunter would have been flogged after third school to-day," said Pen. "Luckily, Quelch agreed to postpone the flogging till to-morrow. If it came out afterwards that another fellow had done what a chap was flogged for,

that fellow would be sacked. If it was you, you've had a narrow escape of the long jump."

Skinner gave him a savage look.

"You cheeky rotter, how dare you say it was me?" he snarled. "You say yourself you can't recognise the face in the negative."

"I'm not saying it was you," answered Pen mildly. "Some of the fellows seem to think it was, that's all. I'm giving you this tip, so that if it was you, you can own up before you're spotted. Whoever it was, he will be spotted for a dead certainty as soon as Coker gets those prints."

"Thank you for nothing," said Skinner, with a sneer; but his lips were trembling.

"That's all," said Penfold, and he left the study and shut the door after him.

Skinner sat breathing hard. Snoop and Stott looked at him, and looked at one another. Like most of the fellows, they had had no doubt that the delinquent was Billy Bunter. But they had deep doubts now. The scared look on Skinner's face was hardly to be mistaken.

Skinner's brain was almost in a whirl.

He was a wary and cunning fellow, and he had laid his little scheme with his usual astuteness. More than once, his cunning had over-reached itself, and now it happened again. It had seemed to him unlikely that anyone would be spotted, and absolutely certain that if anyone was spotted, it would be the fat and fatuous Owl. And all the time that ass, that fathead, that chump, Coker of the Fifth, had been taking potshots at the Remove study windows, and had snapped him in the very act. It was a thing that the most wary schemer could not have foreseen; though he might have foreseen that something generally happens to frustrate knavish tricks. It was said of old that great is truth, and it must prevail.

"My only hat!" murmured Snoop. "I saw that idiot Coker cavorting around with his camera, but I never thought—"

"Dash it all, it's pretty thick, Skinner, if it was you!" growled Stott.

"Letting another man take your whopping—pah!"

Skinner pulled himself together.

"Don't be a goat!" he snarled. "I've said all along I never thought it was Bunter—more likely Bob Cherry!"

"Then it wasn't you?" asked Stott, with a stare.

"No, you gabbling ass!"

"What are you looking knocked into a cocked hat about, then?"

"Oh, go and eat coke, you dummy!"

Skinner rose and left the study. He wished, from the bottom of his heart, that he had let Penfold tell him this in private. But he had not, of course, had the remotest idea of what was coming.

Snoop grinned, and Stott grunted, as Harold Skinner departed, and slammed the door after him.

"Looks as if those fellows in Study No. 1 were right, after all, and it was Skinner cracked Carne's nut," remarked Snoop.

"Looks like it," grunted Stott. "He's jolly well scared, anyhow—and what else is there to be scared about?"

"My hat! It would be the sack for him if they'd flogged Bunter by mistake! Lucky for him Wharton barged in," grinned Snoop. "Well, if it was dear old Harold, he's got time to go to Quelch and own up before it all comes out. Decent of Penfold to give him the tip. I wonder if he's gone to Quelch?"

Skinner was not gone to Quelch. Skinner was tramping up and down the path under the Remove study windows, with a corrugated brow, trying desperately to think of a way out of the net that seemed to be closing round him.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Getting on with It!

"YOU won't want that bat, Potter."

"Eh?"

After tea in Coker's study, Potter of the Fifth picked up his bat, and moved to the door. Sykes of the Sixth had promised to send him down a few, and Potter was anxious to get along to Big Side, and the nets. Greene was already gone. But the voice of Horace Coker stopped Potter half-way to the door.

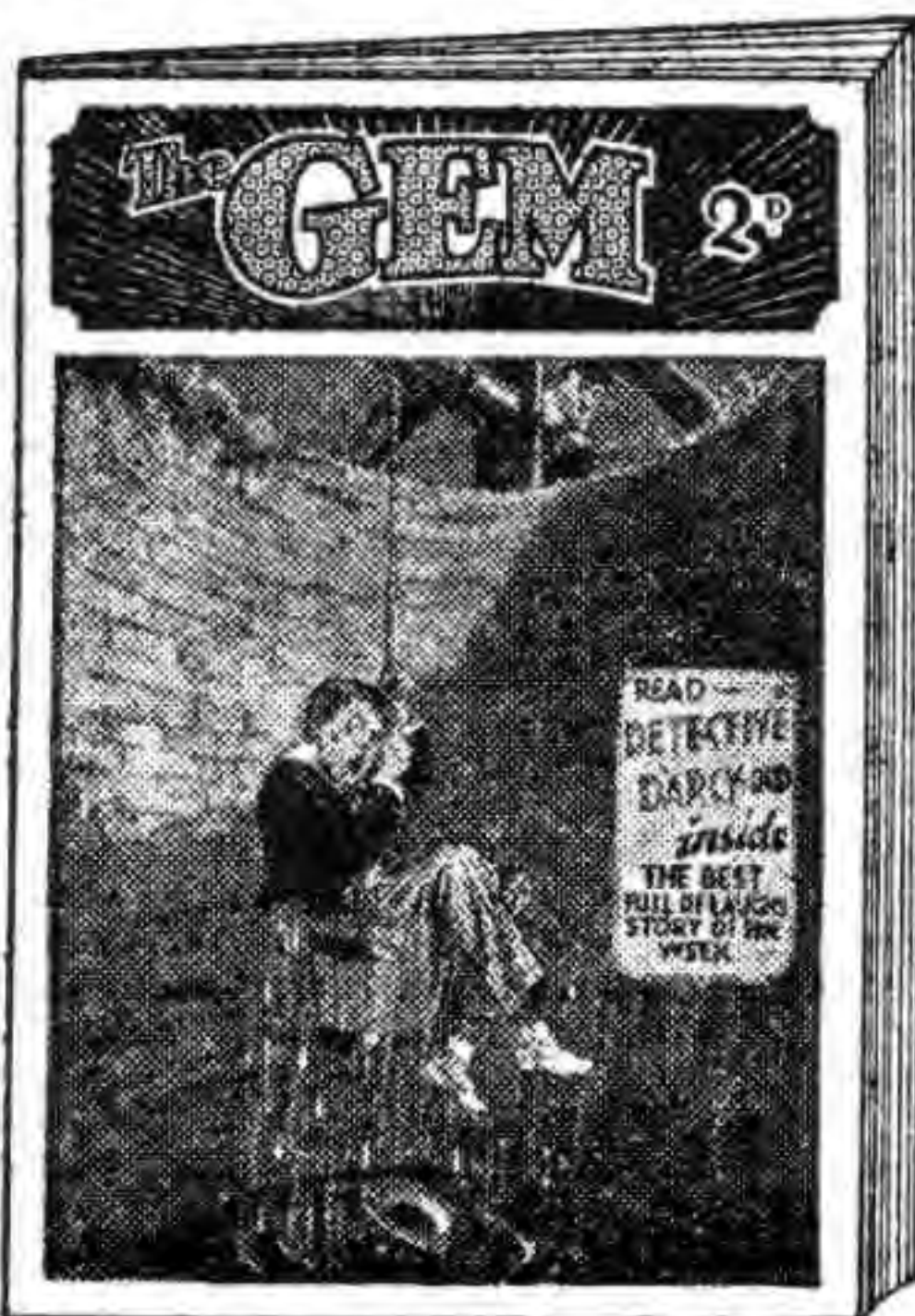
Coker pointed to a little heap of cut films on the table. They were the finished negatives, turned out skilfully by Pen of the Remove. Some of Coker's snaps had proved to be mere blotches and blurs—which Coker attributed to the way Pen had developed them, and not at all to his own manners and customs as a photographer. But there were six that made pictures, of sorts, among them a view of the Remove study windows. They were all a little askew—Coker had his own way of holding the camera when he was taking potshots. Still, there they were, and though Coker was not wholly satisfied with them, he was anxious to see the prints. This matter, being Coker's affair, was of more importance than any other affair going on in the universe—and Potter's cricket practice, of course, was a mere "also ran" in comparison.

Potter did not seem to realise this, obvious as it was. Still, Coker was ready to point it out to him.

"I'm going to print out these pictures," explained Coker. "I've got the printing frames here. Shove them in for me."

"Well, Sykes may be waiting—"

ON THE LAUGHTER TRAIL!



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tries his hand at being a detective this week, but no doubt you'll agree that he looks more like needing a detective to take care of him, when you look at the small picture of the GEM cover shown here. D'Arcy as a would-be Nelson Lee is the funniest thing on earth. If you want the laugh of a life-time get a copy of this week's GEM and read

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"Let him wait!" said Coker indifferently. "I'm not bothering about Sykes."

"I am!" Potter pointed out.

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

George Potter breathed rather hard. But he laid his bat on the table, and proceeded rather hurriedly to fix up Coker's negatives for printing.

"Careful, you know," said Coker watching. "I haven't done this sort of thing before, or I shouldn't need the assistance of a fumbling fathead like you, Potter, old fellow. You needn't hurry over it. I've got lots of time. There'll be hours of sunshine yet."

Potter hadn't lots of time, as Sykes was ready for him on the cricket ground. But that was a trifle light as air.

"I shan't get more than six pictures," went on Coker. "Owing to your beastly selfishness, Potter, playing the silly goat at cricket yesterday when I wanted you to develop these films, some of them have been spoiled. I got a Remove kid to develop them for me. He's mucked up six of them. There they are—look at them!"

"They're developed all right," grunted Potter. "They were over-exposed in taking the shots."

"Don't be an ass, Potter! I've told you they were spoiled in the developing, or fixing, or something—you could see that for yourself if you weren't a silly ass, old chap. Mere blotches! The kid meant well—he came along and offered to do it for me, and I let him. I whopped him yesterday for not doing it then, and I dare say it did him good—those fags are all the better for a whopping now and then. I looked for you after class, but couldn't find you—and I let young Penfold do it. That's the result."

"Penfold's done it as well as I could have done it," grunted Potter. He did not explain that he had been very careful to be missed after class. It never dawned on Horace Coker that his society palled at times on his chums, and he often wondered how he unaccountably missed them.

"Oh, I dare say!" assented Coker. "Likely as not you'd have mucked them up like that Remove kid. You're rather a clumsy ass, I know. Still, as you know a little—though only a precious little, I think—about photography, I want your help now. You needn't bother about cricket."

Potter looked at him.

"I can't keep Sykes of the Sixth waiting," he said.

"Can't you?" asked Coker. "Why not? I don't suppose he'll wait long, anyhow, these Sixth Form men are too swanky to wait about for a chap. Never mind about Sykes. Now, I understand that we've got to find a sunny spot, and stick these things out in the sun—is that it?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, come along then," said Coker cheerfully. "We'll see it through, and then you can take them out and stick them, or fix them, or whatever you call it, see? I've promised my Aunt Judy a set of Greyfriars pictures, and I want to get it done. No good wasting time."

"Sykes—"

"Don't keep talking about Sykes, Potter. I don't think much of the chap—nor of his bowling, either! If you want some really good bowling, I'll come along and give you a few after we've finished with these photographs, see?"

"What I want," said Potter, with a goaded look, "is bowling! I don't want to be brained, or to see anybody else

brained. I'm going down to the net now, Coker, and you can be blowed!"

Coker's chums generally had to exercise patience; but there was a limit. Even the patient Job would probably have reached a fed-up state, in the long run, had he been a pal of Horace Coker's. It was a good-natured concession on the part of Sykes, the champion bowler of the Sixth, to send down a few to Potter of the Fifth; and Potter was not missing the chance. He was simply driven to telling Coker that he could be "blowed."

Having told him so, Potter picked up his bat again, and marched to the door. Coker stared after him in surprise and wrath.

"You silly owl!" he exclaimed. "I want to get these things printed out. I've told you so! Haven't you any sense?"

There was no reply, from Potter. He disappeared from the study, and his hurrying footsteps died away down the passage to the stairs.

"Well," ejaculated Coker, "I'm blowed!"

He jumped to the door.

"Potter! You silly fathead! How

ONE OF THIS WEEK'S LEATHER POCKET WALLETS

goes to: S. Britnell, of 80, Abbotsbury Road, St. Helier Estate, Morden, Surrey, who sent in the following Greyfriars limerick

Horace Coker's a "high" man,
you know,
In his own estimation, and so
it brings him surprise
When he's told that he lies
In the thoughts of his Form men,
as "low."

Don't wait for others to carry off
these useful prizes; win one
yourself!

long do I leave these blessed things in the frames, what?" he roared.

"Oh, say an hour!" shouted back Potter, over his shoulder, and vanished. Coker grunted.

Fortunately, he was not a suspicious fellow, or he might have suspected that an hour was rather a long time to leave the printing-frames exposed to the action of the solar luminary. He might have suspected that Potter was going to put in an hour at the nets, and wanted to be clear of Coker and all his works for that period of time. Not being a suspicious fellow, Coker suspected neither of these things.

Satisfied that he knew what to do, Coker collected the frames in which Potter had fastened the negatives and sensitised paper, and left the study with them. Really, he had no further need of Potter—now that he knew! Potter, after all, was rather an ass; and it was very disagreeable for a fellow like Coker—a brainy fellow—to have to ask the aid of an ass. Now that Coker knew what to do, Potter could go and fizzle at cricket, and be blowed to him.

Coker marched out of the House with his printing-frames, seeking a sunny spot, where he was going to leave them exposed to the June sun for an hour! The result of that exposure was not likely to be a successful series of views of the school for Aunt Judy; but Coker was not going to discover that till Potter had finished at cricket.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Getting on with it, Coker?" asked Bob Cherry, as Horace came on the Famous Five in the quad. Coker and his camera were already becoming known at Greyfriars.

"I'm taking a few prints," said Coker loftily. "Rather a good lot—though that young ass Penfold mucked up half of them in the developing."

"Not taken your own photograph yet?" asked Bob.

"Eh? No!"

"I shouldn't," said Bob gravely.

"Eh? Why not?"

"Might crack the camera, old bean! Think of your features!"

And the chums of the Remove walked off, chuckling, before Coker could think of a sufficiently crushing reply.

Coker frowned, and marched on. He selected a bench under one of the old elms, where the sunlight fell in a brilliant flood. Billy Bunter was seated on the bench, with a fat lugubrious face. Bunter was thinking of the postponed flogging; it haunted his fat thoughts, even at meal-times. It was due on the morrow; and the nearer it came, the less enchantment there was in the view. Bunter reflected bitterly that if that silly ass Wharton hadn't butted in, it would be over and done with now. Deep in gloomy meditations, the fat Owl of the Remove did not even observe Coker, till a heavy hand dropped on his shoulder and jerked him off the bench.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Wow! What—"

"Clear off!" said Coker. "I want this bench."

"I'm sitting here!" roared Bunter indignantly.

"I fancy not!" grinned Coker. "You're sitting there." And Bunter sat "there," as Coker grasped the bench and up-ended it. He bumped on the hard, unsympathetic earth with a heavy bump.

"Yooooop!"

"Don't make that row!" said Coker. "Just clear off!"

"You cheeky beast— Whooooop!"

It was a little high-handed, perhaps, to shift Bunter off the bench, as he was in possession; but as Coker wanted the bench, there was evidently nothing else to be done. Bunter's objections, considering that he was dealing with so great a man as Coker of the Fifth, were mere cheek. So Coker kicked him, and he departed yelling.

Heedless of Bunter's yells, Coker proceeded to arrange his row of printing-frames to catch the brightest glare of the sun. From a little distance, under the elms, a Remove junior watched him, with sidelong eyes. It seemed to Skinner that this looked like a chance for him.

Skinner's eye had been on Coker, immediately he emerged from the House. These evidently were the photographs, among which was that view of Study No. 7, showing Skinner in the act of hurling the cricket ball. Pen had given Skinner the tip, with the idea that the young rascal would be in time to own up before he was found out. But quite other ideas were in Skinner's cunning mind.

Coker did not even see Skinner lurking under the elms. Having arranged his frames to his satisfaction, he regarded them for a few minutes, and then looked at his watch. An hour was a long time to stand watching those negatives, and Coker had no idea of wasting his time like that. He walked away, leaving the sun to do its work, happily unconscious of the fact that, even before he left the spot, the sun

had not only done its work, but overdone it! And as Horace Coker's broad back faded away, Skinner of the Remove, with a slinking step and a furtive eye, approached the spot.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Catspaw!

"BEAST!" Billy Bunter made that remark as Coker's long legs whisked past him as Horace strode away. Cautiously, however, he made it not loud enough for Coker to hear. He did not want one of those long legs to reach in his direction. Bunter did not always know when he had had enough; but he had had one kick from Coker, and he did not want any more. So he told Coker what he thought of him, under his breath, and the great Horace strode on unhearing.

Bunter gave a ferocious blink at the back of his head, and then rolled back to the bench under the elms.

Coker had turned him off that bench to set out his photographs there. He had kicked him for objecting. That, to Coker's lofty mind, ended the matter. To Bunter's mind it did not. Now that Coker was out of sight, Bunter's idea was that he was going to show that Fifth Form beast that he couldn't kick a Remove man with impunity.

Kicking Coker was what Bunter would have liked; but that was not practical politics. Kicking his photographs off the bench while he was not there seemed more feasible. Bunter did not know much about photography, but he knew that kicking the negatives about under the elms could not possibly do Coker's pictures any good. When Coker came back for them, he could have the pleasure, or otherwise, of sorting them out and picking them up.

Billy Bunter arrived from one direction, as Skinner, slinking among the old trees, arrived from the other.

Skinner reached the bench first, and gave a cautious, furtive glance round, to make sure that he was unobserved, and started at the sight of a fat face and a large pair of spectacles only a few yards away.

He set his thin lips.

His hand, already outstretched towards Coker's printing-frames, was hastily withdrawn. His greenish eyes glittered at the fat Owl. He was anxious to make an end of those negatives, but not under the eyes of the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

He was, as a matter of fact, in the same boat as Skinner. He also had nefarious designs on those negatives, and did not want a witness.

"I—I say, Skinner, Snoop's looking for you!" said Bunter casually.

"Is he?" muttered Skinner.

"Yes. I'd cut off if I were you, old fellow!"

Skinner stared at him.

Then he grinned.

It dawned upon him what Bunter wanted. He had seen Coker turn Bunter off the bench and hasten his departure with a hefty kick. Bunter's anxiety to get him off the spot showed that he had some design for which witnesses were not required. Skinner could guess what it was.

"Stott asked me to tell you, if I saw you," added Bunter.

"Stott did?" grinned Skinner.

"I—I mean Snoop! I wouldn't keep the chap waiting, old fellow. I think he's got a cake!" said Bunter astutely.

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"What are you going to do to Coker's photographs?" inquired Skinner.

"Eh? Nothing—nothing, old chap! I wasn't going to kick them around under the trees," said Bunter. "Never thought of such a thing. In fact, I never noticed him putting them under there. Besides, it would serve him jolly well right—turning a chap off the bench, you know, and kicking him! Not that I'm going to touch them, you know. I didn't even know they were Coker's."

"It would serve him right if you walked them off, and hid them somewhere, and gave him a jolly long hunt for them," said Skinner.

"He, he, he!"

"I saw him kick you, old chap, and I can tell you I was jolly indignant," said Skinner. "These senior men think they can do as they like. I'd jolly well hide that rubbish somewhere, if I were you. I know I jolly well would if he kicked me."

Bunter chuckled.

"I say, old chap, that's a jolly good idea," he remarked. "Where would you hide them? Fancy that silly ass hunting all over the shop for them! He, he, he!"

"What about the Remove box-room? Coker would never think of looking for them there."

"He, he, he!"

Bunter chortled.

This was a much better idea than scattering the photographs under the elms. Coker of the Fifth could hunt for them, and keep on hunting; and perhaps, by the time he had found them, he would be sorry that he had kicked a Remove man!

"Keep it dark, old chap!" said Bunter.

"Rely on me," said Skinner, with unusual sincerity. "Look here, I'll stand in front of you while you bag them, in case anybody squints this way. Look sharp!"

"You're a good chap, Skinner! You see, the beast kicked me—"

"Yes; buck up—"

"He kicked me jolly hard—"

"Yes, yes; go it!" breathed Skinner.

"Like his thumping cheek to kick a Remove man," went on Bunter. "I'd jolly well have kicked him, too, only—"

"Buck up!" hissed Skinner. "Suppose he comes back!" Harold Skinner was on tenterhooks.

"Oh, all right! I'll shove them into Mauly's big trunk in the box-room," said Bunter. "I fancy Coker won't think of looking there! He, he, he! I'll let him have them back to-morrow—or next week! He, he, he!"

"Yes, yes, yes! Get a move on, for goodness' sake! I can see Wingate coming this way."

Billy Bunter got a move on at last. Each of the six photographs was in a separate printing-frame, and the fat junior collected up one after another and concealed them under his jacket. It was rather a cargo for Bunter to carry, and he had rather a bulging look when he had parked them all.

Skinner breathed more freely when they were out of sight, and Bunter was rolling away towards the House.

He strolled away with a sour grin on his face in another direction. He was not aware that the great Horace had gone away for a whole hour, and he dreaded to see him appear in the offing every moment. He was glad to be clear of the spot.

Matters, after all, were going well for Skinner. The fatuous Owl was playing a trick on Coker of the Fifth, in

return for a kicking; but he had no intention of destroying the photographs, though he little dreamed of their importance to him. But after Bunter had hidden them in the Remove box-room, they were not likely to remain long in their hiding-place. When Bunter was safe off the scene, Skinner was going to drop into the box-room, and the tell-tale negatives would vanish promptly from existence.

After which Skinner would feel safe.

Really, it looked as if the way of the transgressor was not hard, as the proverb declares, but remarkably easy. Skinner had not even had to take the risk of bagging the photographs—Bunter had done that—and all Skinner had to do was to destroy them later in a perfectly safe place without the slightest danger of being spotted. So it was no wonder that Skinner smiled as he strolled away. He decided to give Bunter a quarter of an hour to get through, after which all would be plain sailing.

"Oh, here you are!" Snoop and Stott joined him on the path under the elms.

"Been to Quelch?"

Skinner stared.

"What should I have been to Quelch for?" he asked. "Is that a joke, Snoopey?"

"Aren't you going to own up?" asked Stott.

"Own up to what?"

"Eh! About cracking Carne's nut," said Stott. "According to what Penfold said, you've not got a lot of time. When Coker gets going with that photograph it will all come out."

"Don't be an ass!" said Skinner. "I fancy Pen was talking out of his neck; anyhow, it doesn't concern me. If there's really a photograph of the fellow at the study window, and it's not Bunter, I fancy it's Bob Cherry."

"Oh, what were you scared about in the study, then, when Pen gave you the tip?" asked Snoop.

"I wasn't scared, you silly ass."

"You looked jolly worried, anyhow," said Stott.

"Your face, perhaps," said Skinner. "It's enough to worry any fellow, at close quarters, isn't it?"

And Skinner walked away, whistling, leaving his perplexed friends staring after him.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not as per Programme!

"BUNTER!" "Oh lor'!" "Follow me to my study, Bunter."

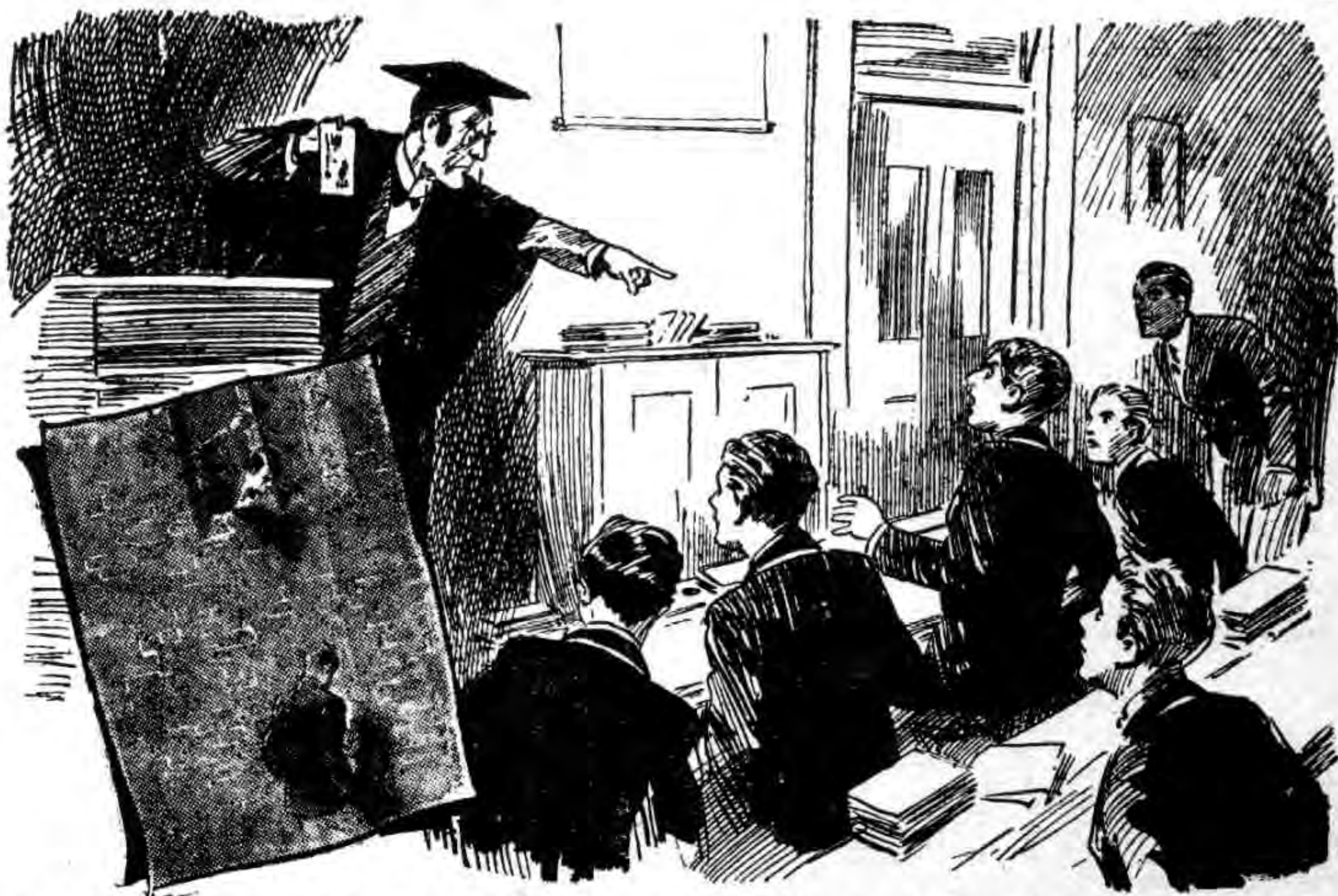
"Oh!"

Billy Bunter fairly gasped.

Mr. Quelch, of course, was not to be argued with. When he bade a Remove man follow him to his study that Remove man had to follow on, with promptness and dispatch.

But it was utterly dismaying to the fat Owl.

With Coker's half-dozen printing-frames, containing Coker's negatives, parked under his rather tight jacket, Bunter had rolled into the House, several times barely avoiding dropping one or another portion of his loot. Bunter did not want to reveal that outfit in transit, and several times only a hurried clutch prevented a revelation. He was anxious to get to the Remove box-room and unload cargo. It was just his luck, he reflected bitterly, that Quelch should drop on him at that moment and order him to his study. He had to go—and he had to go with



Mr. Quelch held the photograph up for inspection. "This photograph," he said, "shows Skinner in the act of hurling a cricket ball at Carne of the Sixth. Skinner, do you venture to make any further denial?" "Oh, no, sir!" mumbled Skinner. "I—I—it was really a lark, sir. I—I was going to—to own up!"

Coker's printing outfits hidden under his jacket, only hoping that the beak would not keep him long.

Mr. Quelch sat down at his table, and Bunter stood before him, quaking. He was in terror every moment of one of those printing-frames slipping down and dropping with a crash on the Form-master's study floor.

Really, Bunter seemed to have no luck on the trail of vengeance. His essay in that line, with Carne and a cricket ball, had booked him for a flogging; now his vengeance on Coker of the Fifth looked like landing him in more trouble. Bunter knew that it was right to forgive offences, and he began to wonder whether it might not also be judicious.

Mr. Quelch, unconscious of the cause of Bunter's uneasiness, gazed at him thoughtfully.

After that talk with his head boy, the Remove master had postponed Bunter's flogging, and since then he had given the matter a great deal of thought. Finally, he had resolved on a heart-to-heart talk with Bunter, with the idea of elucidating the truth—if any—from the innumerable unveracities of the Fat Owl. Unless Bunter was able to satisfy him, Bunter was to be flogged the following morning—there could be no further postponement. But Mr. Quelch would not leave a stone unturned to make sure that justice was done.

Nobody would have supposed that Billy Bunter's conscience was clear, to look at him now. Guilt was written all over his fat face. A much less downy bird than Henry Samuel Quelch would have seen at a glance that the fat junior had recently been up to something, and that he was in a state of quaking trepidation.

"Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, after a long silence—which seemed ages long to Billy Bunter, "I shall give you an

opportunity of making a full and frank explanation."

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter. "M-m-m-may I go now?"

"You will tell me the truth, Bunter. I warn you," said Mr. Quelch sternly, "to conceal nothing from me. If you are concealing anything—"

Billy Bunter started so suddenly that he very nearly dropped the printing-frames.

"Oh, no, sir!" he gurgled. "I—I'm not concealing anything, sir! I—I've not got anything under my jacket, sir."

"W-what?" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

He had been alluding, of course, to the affair of Carne. But in Bunter's fat brain there was room for only one idea at a time. Bunter was thinking of the photographs concealed under his jacket, and it seemed to him, from Quelch's words, that Quelch had spotted them.

"You have something concealed under your jacket, Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean, Bunter?"

"Nothing, sir! I—I haven't anything," groaned Bunter. "I—I never touched them, sir! You can ask Skinner, sir—he saw me! I never— Oh lor'!"

Clatter!

One of the frames slipped out and dropped at Bunter's feet. The fat Owl made a frantic clutch after it, and dropped another and another.

Mr. Quelch started to his feet, in amazement.

"Goodness gracious! What—" he ejaculated.

"Oh crikey!"

"What is all this, Bunter? For what absurd reason are you hiding these articles under your jacket? Place them on my table at once."

"Oh scissors!"

In the lowest of spirits, Billy Bunter picked up the three fallen photographs, and placed them on the table. Under Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye he groped under

his jacket and produced the three others. Mr. Quelch stared at them, and stared at Bunter.

"What does this mean, Bunter?"

"Oh, nothing, sir! I—I wasn't going to hide them, sir, because Coker kicked me! I—I never thought of such a thing."

Mr. Quelch frowned portentously. "Do these photographs belong to Coker, of the Fifth Form, Bunter?"

"I—I—I think so, sir," gasped Bunter. "Where did you obtain them, Bunter?"

"I—I found them, sir—"

"Presumably, Coker must have placed these negatives out to print, and you have removed them!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "How dare you play such a trick on a senior boy, Bunter?"

"I—I didn't—I—I mean—"

"The prints will be spoiled by over-exposure," said Mr. Quelch, who dabbled in photography himself. "You have played a very foolish and unfeeling trick, Bunter, though no doubt you are too stupid to understand the damage you have done. How long ago did you take these photographs?"

"I never took them, sir—"

"What?"

"Coker took them, sir!" gasped Bunter. "He took them yesterday—"

"You obtuse boy!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I mean, how long ago did you take them from the place where Coker left them?"

"Oh! About ten minutes, sir—"

"And they have been in your hands for ten minutes!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! They've been under my jacket."

"Bless my soul! Bunter, are you utterly and incorrigibly stupid?"

"Yes, sir—I mean no, sir! C-can I go now, sir?"

"The prints may be entirely spoiled!"

exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, I shall cane you for this foolish action! You deserve to be sent to your headmaster."

"Oh lor'! He—he kicked me, sir——" Mr. Quelch jumped.

"Are you out of your senses, Bunter? How dare you say that your headmaster kicked you? How——"

"Oh lor'! N-n-not the Head, sir," spluttered Bunter—"Coker, sir! He kicked me hard, sir! I shan't be able to sit down——"

"Oh, that will do! Bunter, I will speak to you later concerning the matter about which I called you into my study. Go at once and tell Coker that his property is here."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study, glad to escape. But he did not go in search of Coker of the Fifth. Mr. Quelch's message had to be delivered—but the fat Owl did not want to see Coker personally. The beast was quite likely to suspect him of having meddled with his photographs, and Bunter had had enough of Coker's heavy foot. He found Bob Cherry outside the House, and squeaked to him.

"I say, Cherry! Old Quelch wants that beast Coker—you're to go and tell him!"

Without waiting for a reply, Billy Bunter rolled away, seeking seclusion. He had a strong suspicion that Coker of the Fifth might be looking for him soon, and he did not want to be found.

A little later, Skinner strolled into the Remove box-room, shut the door after him, and lifted the lid of the big trunk that belonged to Lord Mauleverer. He expected to find Coker's photographs therein, according to programme, and a very few minutes would have sufficed to make an end of them in the box-room grate. But the trunk was empty.

"The fat idiot!" hissed Skinner.

He concluded that Bunter had hidden the loot somewhere else, and proceeded to look through the empty boxes, and up and down and round about the room. But he had no luck. Nothing in the nature of a negative in a printing-frame came to light.

Skinner clenched his hands.

Apparently Bunter, for some unknown reason, had changed his mind about hiding Coker's photographs in that box-room. If he had hidden them in some other spot, Skinner had to find Bunter before he found them. He left the box-room at last, and started to look for Bunter.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bagged at Last!

"B LESS my soul!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master could hardly believe his own eyes, though they were justly compared, by his pupils, to gunlets, for their penetrating qualities.

He held a printing-frame in his hand, gazing almost spell-bound at the negative therein.

He had looked at Coker's photographs merely to ascertain whether the prints had been spoiled by Bunter's prank. On one of them, however, his eyes fixed with a startled and intense gaze.

"Bless my soul!" he repeated.

In that negative, the range of windows of the Remove studies, taken from a distance, was easily recognised, in spite of the darks being light, and the lights dark.

From one of the windows—easily

ascertained to be that of Study No. 7—a figure was leaning, with a hand grasping something which was apparently a cricket ball, in the act of hurling it down.

Mr. Quelch gazed at it, and gazed and gazed again.

He was so engrossed in gazing that he did not hear a tap at his door, or the door open. But he looked round at the heavy tread of Coker of the Fifth.

"Ah! Come in, Coker!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Cherry told me you wished to see me, sir," said Coker. Then he gave a jump at the sight of his photographic property.

He had wondered what on earth the master of the Lower Fourth could want him for. He wondered still more what in the solar system old Quelch was doing with his photographs.

"These are your photographs, I understand, Coker?"

"Yes, sir, they're mine."

"A foolish boy in my Form removed them, Coker, and brought them into the House," said Mr. Quelch.

"I'll jolly well——"

"What?"

"Hem! I mean n-n-nothing, sir!" stammered Coker. It was not judicious to tell a Form master what he was "jolly well" going to do to that foolish boy who had shifted his works of art.

"I am afraid the prints have been spoiled, Coker; they have been too long exposed," said Mr. Quelch. "I should like to know, Coker, just when you took these photographs?"

"Yesterday afternoon, sir."

"At what time, Coker?"

"Let's see—it was after tea—I think about six o'clock, sir."

"I should like you to answer me as accurately as possible, Coker. It was precisely at six o'clock, yesterday that Carne of the Sixth Form was struck by a cricket ball from a Remove study window. Were you taking these photographs at that time?"

"Yes, now I think of it, I remember hearing six strike while I was at it," answered Coker, wondering what the thump old Quelch was so inquisitive for. "I remember I heard about Carne when I came in after taking them."

"Then this picture of the Remove study windows was taken at six o'clock yesterday, the very moment of the assault on a Sixth Form prefect?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"I should be obliged, Coker, if you would leave these negatives in my hands for a short time," said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir, if you like," said Coker, in wonder.

"Very well, Coker. I will return the negatives to you later."

"Thank you, sir!"

Coker of the Fifth left the study, feeling rather bucked by Mr. Quelch's interest in his photographic stunts. He was not aware of the nature of that interest. Mr. Quelch's face was grim as he proceeded to take a fresh set of prints from those negatives.

He was not yet aware of the identity of the junior who had been photographed in the act of hurling a cricket ball from the window of Study No. 7—only it was fairly certain that it was not, after all, Bunter. But he was soon going to be aware of it. As soon as he saw the finished print, the identity of that member of his Form would be perfectly clear. And Mr. Quelch was glad, from the bottom of his heart, that he had given heed to his head boy and postponed the flogging.

It was about an hour later that his

head boy received a message to assemble the Remove in the Form-room.

Skinner was still hunting Billy Bunter when he was told. He had not found him yet. Neither did Wharton succeed in finding him, and when the Remove assembled in the Form-room the fat Owl was absent.

The juniors gathered in their places wondering what was "up." Mr. Quelch, standing by his desk, had an expression of portentous sternness on his severe countenance. His eyes gleamed for a moment at Skinner, as that youth came in among the others. Skinner was not feeling uneasy. Wherever Bunter was, Skinner supposed that Coker's photographs were with him, and he had not the slightest suspicion of the thunderbolt that was about to fall on his unscrupulous head.

"Are all here, Wharton?"

"All except Bunter, sir," answered Harry. "I haven't been able to find him."

"Very well. That is immaterial."

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes on a silent, wondering Form.

"Yesterday," said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice, "a prefect of the Sixth Form was assaulted by a Remove boy."

"Ancient history!" murmured the Bounder to Redwing, fortunately without being overheard by his Form master.

"A cricket ball was hurled from the window of Study No. 7 in the Remove, which struck Carne of the Sixth Form on the head!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Tell us somethin' we don't know, old bean!" murmured the Bounder, unheard by the Remove master.

"It was supposed that Bunter was guilty of this cowardly, this malicious action," pursued Mr. Quelch. "The evidence against him appeared to be conclusive, chiefly owing to his own folly and untruthfulness. My head boy, however, had doubts on the subject, which he communicated to me, and, as a result, the punishment was postponed for further inquiry."

"I've heard that one before!" murmured the Bounder, and there was a faint snigger in the Form, instantly suppressed as a gimlet eye glittered round.

"It now appears," continued Mr. Quelch, "that Bunter was not guilty of the act attributed to him."

"Oh!" murmured the Removites. Skinner turned almost green.

"It was the act of another member of my Form," said Mr. Quelch, "and I now command that boy to stand forward."

No one stirred.

Skinner was quaking inwardly. He wondered desperately whether Quelch really knew anything, or whether this was "bluff." How could he possibly know? Skinner was too wary a bird to be caught by chaff.

"I am waiting!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice. "I give that boy an opportunity to stand forward and confess."

"No takers!" murmured the Bounder. There was a long pause. Skinner licked his dry lips; but he did not stir.

"Skinner!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" gasped Skinner. "Yes, sir!"

"Stand out before the Form."

Skinner dragged himself out, with his knees knocking together. All eyes were upon him.

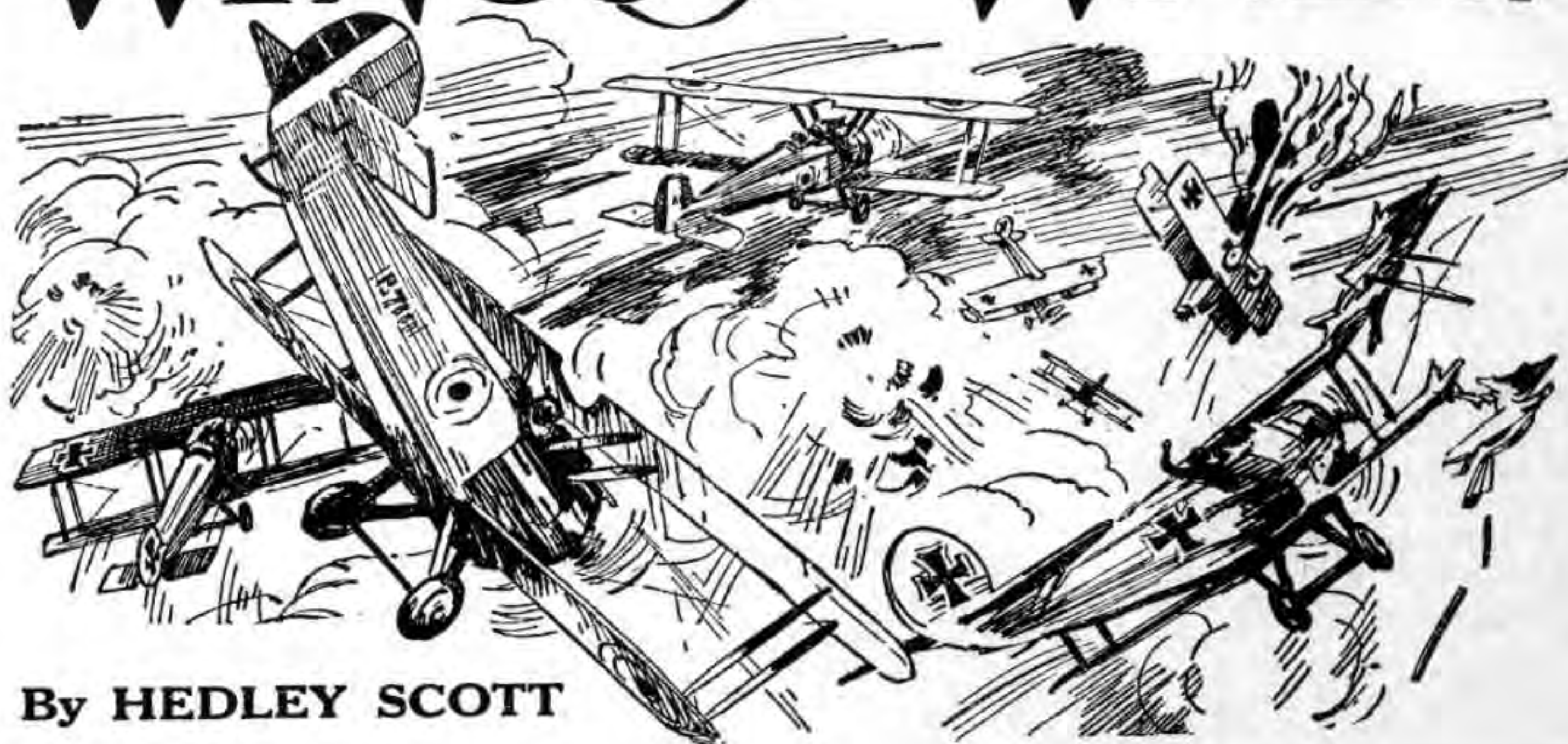
"Skinner! It was by your hand that the cricket ball was hurled at a Sixth Form prefect from a Remove study."

"It—it wasn't, sir!" gasped Skinner.

(Continued on page 28.)

A GRIPPING YARN OF DANGEROUS SPY WORK!

WINGS OF WAR!



By HEDLEY SCOTT

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

MAJOR FERRERS LOCKE—A BRITISH SECRET SERVICE AGENT—IS PUT IN CHARGE OF 256 SQUADRON, R.F.C., STATIONED "SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE." JIM DANIELS, RON GLYNN, AND BRUCE THORBURN, THREE STAUNCH CHUMS, ARE FLYING OFFICERS. A PLOT ON THE PART OF SERGEANT WILKINS, ALIAS "R. ONE," A GERMAN SPY, TO BLOW UP THE SQUADRON IS FRUSTRATED BY LOCKE. IN THE ENSUING CHASE THE MAJOR IS OVERPOWERED BY "R. ONE" AND CONVEYED BY PLANE TO A GERMAN PRISON CAMP WHEREIN IS COLONEL MORTIMER, A BRITISH OFFICER WHO HOLDS A SECRET THE GERMAN AUTHORITIES ARE ANXIOUS TO GAIN POSSESSION OF. RON AND JIM ARE PRISONERS AT THE SAME CAMP, WHICH IS UNDER THE COMMAND OF "R. ONE"—NOW PROMOTED TO COLONEL IN RECOGNITION OF HIS MERITORIOUS SERVICES. LEARNING OF HIS CHUMS' WHEREABOUTS, THORBURN BOARDS A CAPTURED GOTHA PLANE AND HEADS FOR THE GERMAN LINES IN A WILD EFFORT TO RESCUE THEM!

A Precious Document!

"**B**RING the pig-dog Mortimer hither—and at once!"

Colonel von Wolfen was in an evil temper. His face was set in a ferocious scowl; his eyes, blood-shot with excessive drinking, were narrowed to points of cruelty. The orderly to whom he spoke jumped like a startled rabbit, saluted like an automaton, and hustled from the kommandant's office.

"Ach!" Von Wolfen emptied a liberal portion of liquor from the black bottle at his elbow into a tumbler and drained it at a gulp. "These accursed English are stubborn! But Colonel von Wolfen"—he drummed his massive chest with doubled fists—"is the one to make the pig-dogs talk!"

Which was not exactly the truth. For two weeks or more Wolfen had been in charge of Holzminden Prison Camp, and well his prisoners knew it. But the one man he had expected to talk—namely, Colonel Mortimer—had not talked.

By every known means of subtlety Von Wolfen had tried to extract the information he needed, but the colonel had refused to be drawn. Around Mortimer, garbed like himself in British uniform, two specially selected men from the Fatherland's Secret Service had attempted to gain his confidence. Both of them spoke perfect English; both had fool-proof tales to tell of their capture, of their respective regiments, and of the hope that the Allied cause would speedily triumph. To all of which Colonel Mortimer, a

veteran in these matters, paid merely a passing interest. Of himself he refused to speak—of the information he possessed not one single word passed his lips.

In Holzminden camp the very walls seemed to have ears. Full well did the old colonel know that the two British-looking officers who more or less shadowed him were, in reality, spies. He smiled wanly at their abortive efforts to gain his confidence, but suffered them. He knew that nothing would please the tyrannical kommandant of Holzminden better than to be able to put him against a wall to face a firing-party. That, of a certainty, would be his fate when Colonel von Wolfen learned the whereabouts of the precious document which meant so much to Germany.

Colonel Mortimer's eyes had lit up with hope upon his first encounter with Major Locke. Here was a possible chance of defeating the cunning Von Wolfen. The major was young and in good health. Given the opportunity to escape, he would stand a much better chance of regaining the Allied lines than himself. Already Colonel Mortimer had decided to pass on the great knowledge he possessed to Major Locke, but he bided his time. When they met in the main compound they merely exchanged greetings like any other prisoners; yet a secret code signal had passed between them.

A full four score of prisoners, of mixed nationalities, mingled together in that compound under the eyes of vigilant guards. But it was dangerous to trust

any of them. Deliberately Colonel Mortimer avoided Locke, and the two youngsters from 256 squadron, for he knew that his every movement was watched and reported. He also knew that the time was coming when he would have to take the major into his full confidence.

Ron and Jim were now but shadows of their former selves. Uncommonly short rations, much hard work, and ill-usage, had left ugly marks and shadows on their youthful faces. Day after day they toiled at the most menial and degrading tasks Colonel von Wolfen specially selected for them.

On innumerable occasions they had been tempted to fling discretion to the winds and fall upon the tyrant. Fortunately, those impulses had been restrained, for the heinous offence of striking such an all-powerful personage as the camp kommandant could only end in death. Yet it pleased Von Wolfen to taunt them—and he made the most of his opportunity.

Major Locke caught Mortimer's eye as he tramped round the compound for exercise. Without undue haste, he joined him and motioned to Ron and Jim to follow at a distance behind.

"Major," whispered Mortimer, "it is time I passed on to you certain information which it will be your duty to smuggle back to H.Q."

Locke made some reply—for the benefit of a passing prisoner—which had nothing to do with what the colonel had said, and waited. From their first meeting in the compound Ferrers Locke had

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recognised Colonel Mortimer as one of the leading British Secret Service agents, so he was not unduly astonished at the colonel's words.

"The dogs have tried everything in their power to make me talk, Locke!" whispered Mortimer. "Everything—torture, starvation, solitary confinement. Up to now it has pleased them to keep me alive, yet I feel sometimes that my hours are numbered."

Once again Locke made a reply which had no bearing upon what had been said, just for the benefit of two British officers who sauntered within earshot, and deliberately turned in his tracks.

Without question Colonel Mortimer followed suit.

"I carry evidence of the identity of every German spy working in the British Forces," went on the colonel when opportunity occurred. "That evidence, major, must be taken back to the Allied headquarters."

"I understand, colonel," said Locke quietly. "Even in the fortnight I have been here my time has not been wasted. More than one sentry is amenable to reason—and a little money. Despite the iron system of discipline that Von Wolfen imagines he maintains here, it should not be a matter of impossibility to escape."

The colonel, seeing the approach of the two British officers who had tried so hard to make his acquaintance, remained silent. It was quite five minutes before they were shaken off.

"Von Wolfen has tried different methods from his predecessor," the colonel resumed, "but his patience is exhausted. I shall be lucky indeed to see another twenty-four hours of life."

He shrugged his shoulders philosophically. He was an old campaigner who had seen service in the South African war, and had served his country well in the present world upheaval. He was a sick man, doomed anyway now to an early end. A tubercular cough had seized hold of his ill-nourished and war-scarred frame, and without expert medical treatment there was not a chance in a hundred of outliving the disease. What mattered it when he passed into the Great Beyond, providing he served his country as thousands of others had done before him?

Locke guessed what was passing in the older man's mind, and refrained from making unnecessary comment.

And it was at that moment Colonel von Wolfen's orderly made his appearance.

"Colonel Mortimer. His Excellency the Herr Kommandant demands your immediate presence."

A slight, almost imperceptible, signal passed between Mortimer and Ferrers Locke before the former accompanied the orderly to the kommandant's office.

"Who's your friend, major?" asked Ron, drawing near.

"Oh, just a British colonel of cavalry—a prisoner like yourself," replied Locke, lying deliberately. "Never run across him before, though. For all I know to the contrary, he may be a German, in British uniform, trying to pump me."

"The dirty dog!" exclaimed Jim Daniels. "These sausage-eaters are great believers in hitting below the belt, aren't they?"

"War is war, young 'un," said Locke, with a smile, and noticed out of the corner of his eye that the two British officers, before mentioned, moved off, apparently satisfied with what they had heard.

"But this isn't war!" growled Ron. "I'm fed to the teeth hanging about here, working like a blessed navvy and living on starvation diet."

"Starvation's right," nodded Jim. "Why, that rotter Wilkins"—both the youngsters invariably referred to the kommandant by that name—"actually ruined the fellows' parcels from home that arrived to-day."

"Jumped on the food, and chucked it about under the pretence of inspecting it!" added Ron bitterly. "Anyone could see that the rotter didn't intend any of these poor chaps here to get a titbit from home."

Locke nodded.

"That's an old trick, young 'un," he replied. "You see, the Prisoners of War Society, drawn from neutral countries, make a regular beating if they learn that Jerry stops his prisoners' parcels. So your clever German mucks up the parcels first. Which amounts to the same thing, for the food isn't fit for human consumption after they've 'inspected' it."

"How long have we been in this dump?" asked Ron moodily.

"Two weeks and three days," returned Major Locke. "But don't get downhearted; it might be worse."

"Yes; but not much!" grunted Ron. "Hallo, there goes roll-call!"

A bugle rang out across the compound, and the prisoners hastened to take up their positions. Six times a day this roll-call took place, and invariably it was followed by a search, to discover whether the prisoners had secured possession of any sort of weapon.

And while this disciplinary measure was being carried out a piercing scream rang across the parade ground. Locke's eyes turned towards the kommandant's office, and his face blanched. Mortimer, poor devil, was obviously suffering further tortures at the hands of the tyrant.

A Unique Hiding-Place!

COLONEL VON WOLFEN'S coarse features were black with rage and fury.

Before him, lying in a still, huddled heap, was Colonel Mortimer.

In Von Wolfen's knotted fist was a long whip of fine steel, covered by a superfluous coating of leather. And that terrible weapon had beaten the stubborn British colonel into unconsciousness.

Despite Von Wolfen's demands and blood-curdling threats, Colonel Mortimer had refused to divulge the hiding-place of the precious document he had stolen. Nothing beyond that one scream, when human courage and fortitude could hold out no longer, had passed between the prisoner's lips.

Von Wolfen spurned the unconscious heap of humanity with a savage kick and faced his somewhat horrified subordinate officers, still with the whip in his hand.

"Under-officer Blatz!" he snarled. "You will do me the favour of describing what has just happened in this room."

The under-officer licked his lips and saluted smartly.

"Herr Excellency, I did but see a stubborn pig Englander officer refuse to answer the question you repeatedly put to him. I did but see your Excellency thrash him like the dog he is until he fainted."

Swish!

The whiplash flicked through the air and sliced across Under-officer Blatz's cheek, leaving a weal that would in all probability remain there as long as he lived. Blood spurted along it in a crimson line, in violent contrast to the paleness of the rest of the unfortunate man's face.

"Dolt! Idiot! Imbecile!" raved the kommandant. "You saw nothing of the kind! Under-officer Shermann, perhaps"—he leered unpleasantly—"perhaps your memory is better?"

"Herr Kommandant," gasped Under-officer Shermann, "I did but see a pig Englander strike your Excellency. For such a monstrous offence the penalty is death. Herr Kommandant, your humble under-officer Shermann thinks you have shown the pig Englander extreme mercy."

"Ach!" grinned Von Wolfen sourly. "That is better. If inquiries are made you would do well to remember that story. Ja! That is good! Now, my pretty Blatz, do you think you could tell the meddling Dutch minister, should he visit us to-morrow, that same story?"

"Most assuredly, Herr Kommandant!" said the under-officer. "A thousand apologies, your Excellency, for not having—for not having told the truth first time!"

"It is well! Take the dog away! If he lives until the morning I shall be much surprised. Stay!" he added as an afterthought. "Put him in Major Locke's cell, and see to it that the hidden microphone does its work."

"Ja, Herr Kommandant!"

The unconscious colonel was carted out of the room and taken to a stone cell, during which time the prisoners were kept on the parade ground.

Dumping their limp burden on to one of the trestle beds unceremoniously, under-officer Shermann himself saw to the fixing of a small microphone, cunningly hidden in the brickwork at that point where the wall and the ceiling met. When he had completed his task, not the keenest eye among the prisoners would have spotted that device for picking up and relaying all conversations direct to the kommandant's office.

Five minutes later, Major Locke was marched into his cell for the night, in common with the rest of the prisoners. The sheet-metal door slammed home, the key grated in the lock, and practically all light was blotted out.

Even so, the major made out that huddled, still shape on the trestle bed, and knew instinctively that it was Colonel Mortimer.

"Poor devil!" muttered Locke; and the words carried sharp and clear to the listening ears of Colonel von Wolfen, forty yards away. "By heavens, Wilkins shall suffer for this one day!"

The listener-in chuckled hoarsely to himself. That a day of retribution would ever dawn he never took into account, yet he was destined to be reminded of Locke's words in the near future.

He listened in to that hidden microphone for an hour or more, by which time much of his store of patience was evaporated. For, save occasional moans from the man he had beaten so mercilessly, his eager ears heard nothing.

Meanwhile, in the stone cell, Locke was bending over the stricken colonel, doing his utmost to keep him comfortable. The stubborn old man was as pale as death. His eyes glowed with an unnatural light, and two high specks of feverish colour mounted his cheeks; but

the active brain which had served Britain and the Allies so faithfully did not desert him in his hour of suffering.

By gestures he announced to Ferrers Locke that it was not safe to talk aloud in this stone cell, and the major, who knew the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, quickly grasped the significance of those gestures.

Without a sound thereafter the two held conversation, at the end of which Colonel Mortimer passed his trembling hand across his mouth, jerked at something therein, and passed it to his companion.

Major Locke was not surprised at the unusual nature of the hiding-place the brave old colonel had adopted. In war, spies with documents of worth about them, outwitted their searchers in a score of different ways. Yet perhaps Colonel Mortimer's secret hiding-place was the most unique in Locke's experience, for it was a shallow cavity but three-eighths of an inch in depth, and three inches in length that was fitted to the top plate of his false teeth.

This additional "roof" to his mouth had given the old colonel but little discomfort, and its very ingenuity had survived search after search, by those who made it their business to study hiding-places in unexpected forms.

Gently Locke withdrew from the shallow cavity a thin, compressed wad of paper. Upon it, he knew from Mortimer's deaf-and-dumb conversation, were inscribed the names and rank of all German spies serving under the British flag.

Colonel Mortimer, moaning slightly, for he was near unto death, summoned a grim smile of approval at Locke's ready grasping of matters. Then he sank back on the blankets, breathing stertorously.

Quietly, quickly, Major Locke took off his belt—a quite ordinary piece of British leather to look at, but for all that containing a receptacle that would pass inspection of all but the keenest eyes—and secreted therein the precious document for which Mortimer had braved so much. Then he refastened the belt about his middle and turned to the stricken colonel.

What he saw set him beating a thunderous tattoo on the steel door of the cell, calling in German for the sentry to fetch a medical officer.

Instead of a doctor, the bloated face of the kommandant peered in at the open door five minutes later. He snarled as he saw the lifeless form on the trestle bed, and turned savagely upon Major Locke.

"The accursed pig-dog did not speak? Ach! Stubborn to the end, the fool!"

Locke said nothing, but his lips set in a grim line, and he promised Colonel von Wolfen a complete reckoning when the opportunity came his way.

"Away with him!" roared the kommandant. "Why the Fatherland should be burdened with such pig-dogs is beyond my comprehension. If I had my way I would shoot the lot!"

He shook a fist in Ferrers Locke's face, then turned sharply and strode away.

The cell door clanged to, and silence once again settled over that grim, grey building called Holzminden Prison Camp.

Faintly, from the distance, the clanging of spades reached Locke's ears. Colonel Mortimer had served his country to the bitter end, and his remains were being laid to rest in German soil.

The metallic ring of the spades ceased at last.

Heavy, oppressive silence once more reigned in that place of misery and despair.

Amazing Audacity!

THE whirring music of the twin engines carrying the giant Gotha deeper and deeper into German territory, kept up a pleasing rhythm with the thoughts of the youngster at the controls.

Thorburn was singing. That the words of the song ran on the lines of "Take me back to dear old Blighty, take me back to dear old London Town," and were anything but appropriate to the journey he was now making, made no difference.

A born optimist, Thorburn had great hopes of bringing his wild and reckless venture to a successful conclusion.

Machine after machine, bearing the black symbol of Germany in the form of a cross, passed him as he whirled deeper and deeper into enemy country. Some of the pilots threw him a greeting, and to all of them in return Thorburn extended his thumb and fingers to his nose in such fashion as to set those German pilots wondering.

"Take me back to dear old London Town!" bawled Thorburn. "Take me over there, take me anywhere—Piccadilly, Leicester Square, and I don't care—'Whoop!'"

That last ejaculation was not in keeping with the lilt and general abandon of the famous war song. A glance at the petrol gauge, which followed automatically as the engines began to splutter and cough, told the youngster that his petrol or benzine was finished.

"Confound the luck!" muttered Thorburn. "Just when everything was going first class. This is where yours truly does a bit of thinking."

"Yours truly" did quite a lot of thinking, and the outcome of it all was a daring plan.

The giant Gotha was cruising at an altitude of ten thousand feet. According to Thorburn's reckoning, Cologne lay three miles distant on his port wing. And outside Cologne, small, but distinct in the last hour of the setting sun, showed a number of hangars.

"A Hun aerodrome!" whooped Thorburn. "I wonder whether they'll be pleased to see me."

That he had to land somewhere was a matter over which he had no choice. The engines had "given up the ghost" completely now, and the propellers were spinning round only by reason of the gliding angle at which the youngster was forced to set the plane.

"I'll have to chance it," chuckled Thorburn. "It'll be a rare jest if I get away with it. But thank goodness I paid enough attention to Herr Schneider at Millborough to learn something of his jaw-breaking language. Never thought then it would come in useful."

By the time he was circling over the drome he had formed a set plan of campaign. At this hour it was likely that the officer personnel at the drome would be changing for dinner. Thus the arrival of a Gotha would not excite unnecessary attention from them. That mechanics would of a certainty be on duty became a comforting fact as, peering over the huge wing spread of the Gotha, Thorburn saw two of them racing across the drome in the direction he intended to land.

Thorburn landed his first German machine—a twin-engined bomber, without engine power at that moment—with

considerable credit to himself. It landed, he told himself, like an omnibus with wings. A few sharp bumps, and then the undercarriage wheels gripped the short-cropped turf and scudded merrily along towards the waiting mechanics.

Thorburn paid no heed to their salute. He appeared to be in a right royal rage.

"Benzine! Quickly, you thickheads!" he roared in German. "Special mission! Must be in Potsdam before midnight. Hurry! Hurry, you sluggards! The All-Highest brooks no delay for those who perform his private missions!"

"Ja! Herr Excellency!" replied the senior mechanic, hardly knowing whether he spoke to a colonel or the All-Highest himself. "It shall be brought you and at once!"

"Hurry!"

The junior mechanic raced off to the nearest hangar, what time his companion made ready to pump in the required fuel.

Thorburn, his heart beating furiously, kept an anxious eye on the little group of buildings which he reckoned to be the officers' quarters. His landing had been noticed by one officer at least, for he was leisurely making his way towards the Gotha!

Meantime, the mechanic was returning with the precious fuel, in a motor-driven benzine tank kept specially for the purpose.

Impatiently Thorburn bellowed to the man to put some life into his movements.

The nozzle of the feeder was thrust into the Gotha's tank at last, and the automatic pump began to transfer the spirit to the empty tank.

Nearer and nearer came the interested officer, Thorburn eyeing him with misgiving. It was one thing playing the "heavy" with the well-drilled mechanics, it was hoping for too much to expect the same result if he tried it on with the approaching officer.

"Hurry! Fools! Blockheads! Oh, but you will be reported for this slothfulness!" roared Thorburn.

"Herr Excellency," pleaded the mechanic, "the pump is working at full pressure! Your tank is nearly full!"

The seconds went by.

The strolling officer was no more than fifty yards away. Suddenly he broke into a run, and Thorburn, seeing that something had excited his suspicions, ordered the mechanics to take their tank away and to swing the propellers.

Trained to do what they were told without question, the mechanics bustled to carry out those orders at full speed.

"Stop!" In German came the command from the approaching officer now no more than twenty yards away. "Stop!"

Yet even as the yells rang out the first engine roared into life in a multitudinous throb that drowned them completely.

"Atta boy!" whooped Thorburn.

The second engine, still warm, was just as quick to respond. Then, under full throttle, Thorburn roared the Gotha into a cross wind take-off, which nearly resulted in disaster, and zoomed over the head of the panting German officer, causing that very surprised young man to throw himself flat on his face to avoid decapitation.

(Thorburn's luck certainly held good that time, but his mission's not ended yet! Look out for another feast of thrills in next week's concluding chapters.)

COKER'S CAMERA 'CLICKS'!

(Continued from page 24.)

"I know that Wharton would like to make out that it was, but if he says—"

"Wharton has not mentioned your name to me, Skinner. I should not have allowed him to do so, had he desired; I do not encourage tale-bearing in this Form! No one has mentioned your name to me."

"Then—then, sir—I don't see why you should think—"

"The 'proof of your guilt, Skinner, has come from an entirely unlooked-for source. A Fifth Form boy was taking photographs at the time, and these photographs have come into my hands. One of them shows you, in the very act of hurling the cricket ball from a study window."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Jolly old Coker—"

Mr. Quelch took a photograph from his desk; a finished print. He held it up for all the Remove to see. Skinner stared at it with bulging eyes. Evidently Bunter had not hidden away those negatives after all. The wretched schemer of the Remove realised that the game was up. He stared at the photographed representation of himself at the window of Study No. 7, cricket ball in hand, with Carne's head visible below. He groaned.

"This photograph," said Mr. Quelch, "was taken at six o'clock yesterday afternoon; and it shows Skinner in the act of hurling the cricket ball at Carne of the Sixth. Skinner, do you venture to make any further denial?"

"Oh, no, sir!" mumbled Skinner. "I—I—it was really a lark, sir—I—I never meant to hurt Carne really, sir—I—I was going to—to own up, sir, if Bunter was up for a flogging—"

"I am afraid that I cannot believe that statement, Skinner, after this lapse of time. Wharton, you may tell Bunter that the matter is at an end, so far as he is concerned. Skinner, I shall now take you to your headmaster, and request him to administer a flogging of the utmost severity. The Form is dismissed! Skinner, follow me!"

Skinner almost crawled from the

Form-room in the wake of his Form master. The way of the transgressor was hard!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter turned up in time for prep.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, where have you been all this time, you frabjous owl?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Well, I've been keeping out of that beast Coker's way," said Bunter. "I believe he suspects me of shifting his silly photographs—as if I'd touch his rubbish, you know! I say, you fellows, what's the matter with Skinner? He's leaning on the banisters, groaning like billy-o."

"Beak's flogging!" said Harry Wharton. "And you're not getting it tomorrow, Bunter! Official, from Queleh."

"Oh, good! Have you owned up, Bob, old chap?"

"You silly owl!" roared Bob Cherry. "It was Skinner, and he's been found out and flogged."

"Oh erikay! Why, Skinner thought it was you—how could he have thought it was you if it was him?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose he was telling whoppers," said Bunter, after some thought. "Serve him jolly well right to get a beak's licking. If there's one thing I despise, it's telling whoppers."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Well, I'm jolly glad it's come out," said Bunter. "It's really turned out fine! I almost wished that Carne's nut hadn't been cracked, you know, when they thought it was me. Now it's all right! Splendid, in fact! Carne's nut cracked—and nothing to come to me! Couldn't have turned out better, could it?"

And Bunter rolled away to prep in a state of happy satisfaction, leaving the Removites chuckling.

THE END.

(Be sure you get a copy of next week's MAGNET, chums! It will contain another Frank Richards' "special," entitled: "THE MYSTERY OF NUMBER ONE STUDY!" and another coupon for 50 points to add to your collection!)

DIDDLING DR. BIRCHEMALL!

(Continued from page 15.)

Head, almost fawning and grovelling at Sir Frederick's feet. "Shall I see you down to the door, Sir Frederick?"

"Pray don't trouble, Birchemall—I know you are a busy man," said the bogus barronet, with a glance at the comic paper that lay on the Head's desk. "Good-bye, my dear sir—and forget all about that interview!"

"I certainly will, Sir Frederick. Good-night, sir!"

"Sir Frederick" stalked out into the passageway on his stilts, then quickly rolled up his long trowsis, shed his stilts, pocketed his false whiskers, and rushed back to the Common-room, larfing fit to bust.

There was a yell from the Fourth as he entered.

"Do the trick, old bean?"

"How did it work?"

"Like a giddy charm," replied Jack Jolly, between his spasms of larfter. "All extra lessons are cancelled from now on!"

"Hooray!"

"And I've left the Head looking like a dog with two tails!" added the kaptin of the Fourth. "All's well that ends well, what?"

And the Fourth, between their cheers, had to agree that it was so!

There were no more extra lessons for the Fourth, and half-holidays as usual was the order of the day once more.

The only thing that troubled Jack Jolly was the possibility that the real Sir Frederick might turn up and spoil things. He did turn up on the following day—but, by a strange mischance, Frank Fearless ran over him on his bike before he reached the Skool House. By the time he came out of hospital, everything about the "Muggleton Mail" interview had been forgotten. So Jack Jolly's little ruse proved successful.

THE END.

(Be sure and read: "NITE HAWKS AT ST. SAM'S!" the next amusing yarn of Jack Jolly & Co. It'll appear in the MAGNET in a fortnight's time!)

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