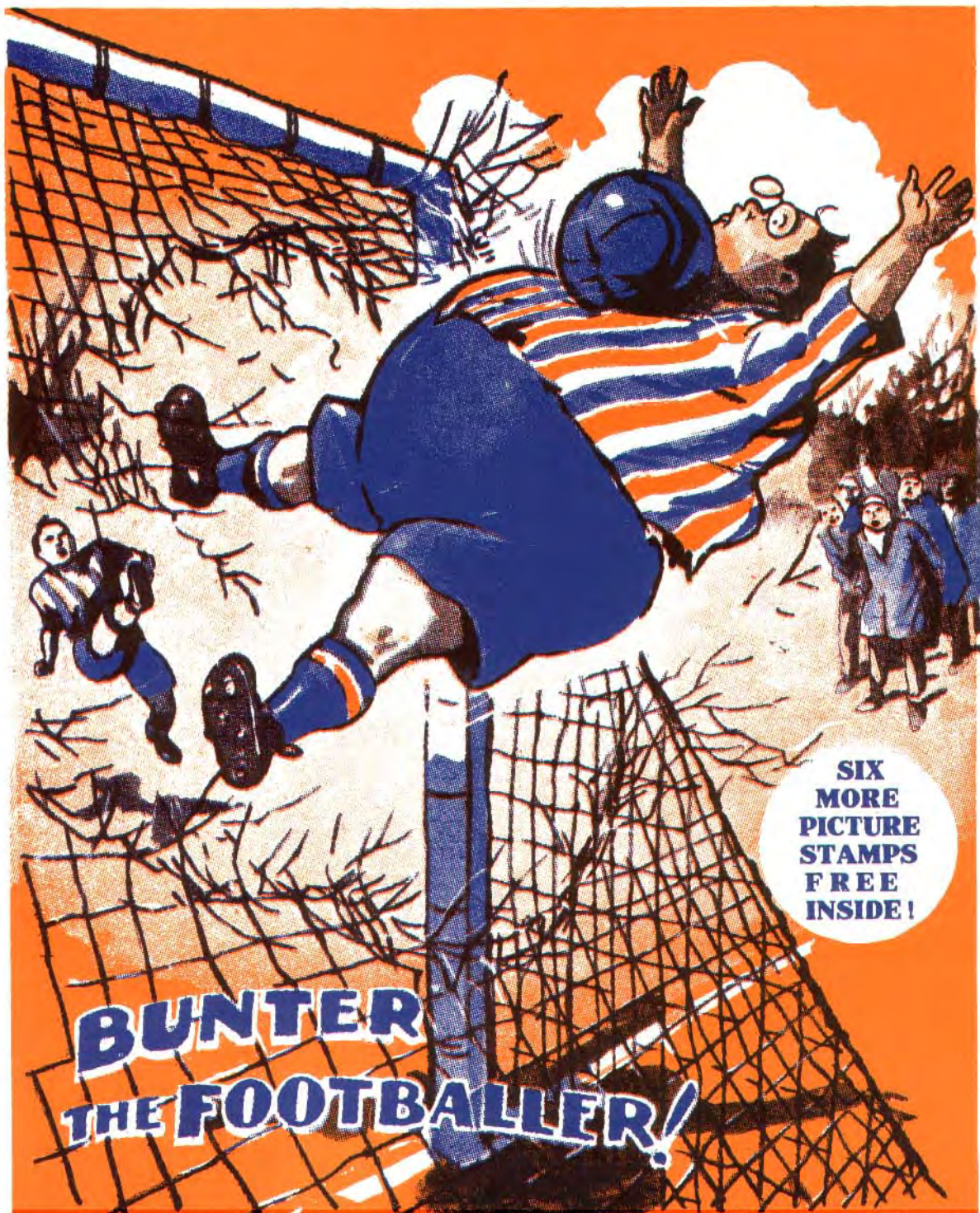


"BUNTER, the Footballer!" An amazing story of the Chums of Greyfriars Inside!

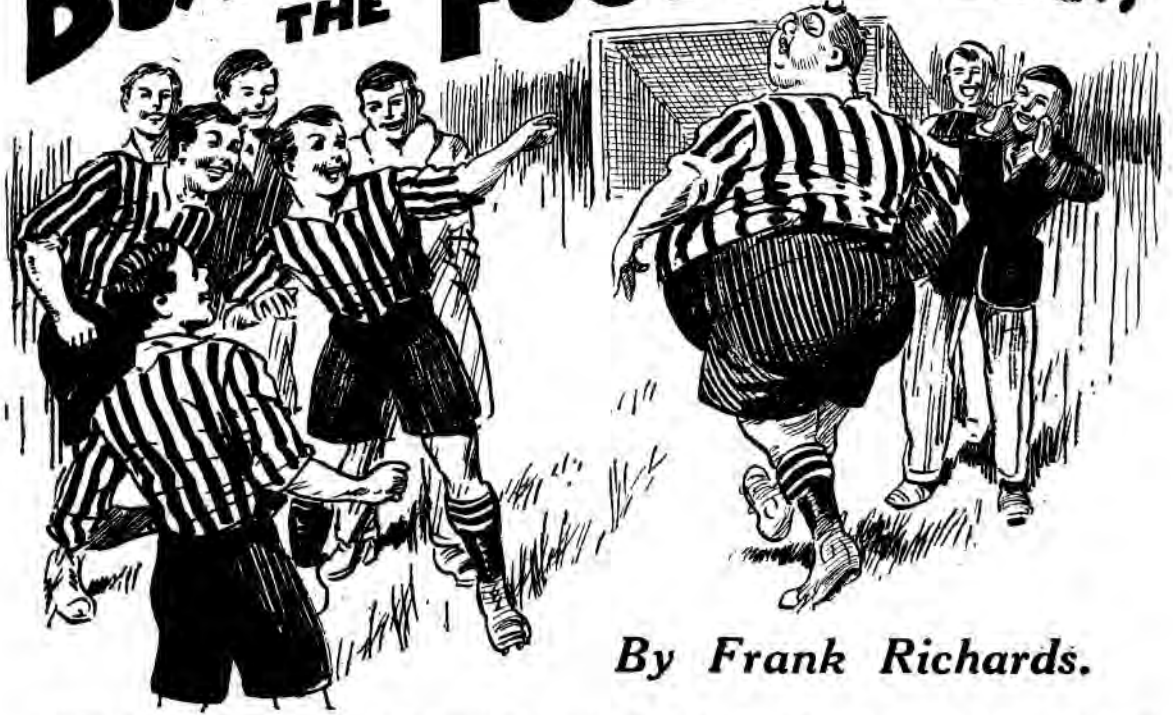
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**BUNTER
THE FOOTBALLER!**

BUNTER THE FOOTBALLER!



By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Swank!

"WHAT—"

"Eh?"

"What—"

"Go it!"

"What about Bunter?"

Bob Cherry got it out.

Five fellows, in Study No. 1 of the Remove, stared blankly at Bob.

"Bunter!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Bunter!" said Frank Nugent.

"Potty?" asked Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed idiotic Bob—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Is that a joke?" asked Jim Valentine.

Bob Cherry's visage, always ruddy, was quite red. Bob had strolled into the study, where the juniors were talking football. For a few minutes he had roved about the study, plainly with something to say, but not saying it. Now he had got it off his chest.

His friends gazed at him.

It was not an important football match under discussion. On the morrow, which was Wednesday, a half-holiday, the Remove had to play the Upper Fourth.

The heroes of the Remove were accustomed to mop up the Fourth at Soccer. They were accustomed to treat Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth rather as skittles than as footballers. Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, gave that match some thought—not so much thinking whom he should put in as whom he should leave out.

That easy game did not need the mighty men of the Remove. It was a chance to give the second and third-rate men a show. Still, there was a limit. The Fourth had to be beaten as usual. It would never do to allow Cecil

Reginald Temple of the Fourth to get up on his hind legs, so to speak, and tell the world that he had beaten the Remove.

So when Bob Cherry suggested Bunter as a man for the Eleven, his friends naturally supposed that he was wandering in his mind.

Billy Bunter was a good man at some things. He could scoff more tuck at a single sitting than any three other fellows at Greyfriars. When it came to sleeping, he could beat Rip Van Winkle at his own game. When it came to talking, he was as good a man as any member of the House of Commons, both in the extent of his chin-wag and in the fatuousness thereof.

All these things Bunter could do better than any other fellow in the Greyfriars Remove. But he couldn't play football.

"You see—" Bob Cherry stammered a little. "Bunter— Of course, I know he's a silly ass! And a blind owl! And a dummy! And a fathead! But—"

Bob broke off, reddening more deeply under the combined and concentrated gaze of the five fellows in Study No. 1.

"It's not a hard game," remarked Harry Wharton. "But if we picked a team of silly asses, blind owls, dummies and fatheads, I fancy Temple might pull it off, for once. We've got one fathead in the team already—you'll be playing half, Bob—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bob. "The fact is—"

"I'm putting in Valentine, to give the new kid a chance," said Wharton. "Smithy and Toddy, Brown and Squiff and Johnny here are standing out, to give the small fry a show. But—"

"What about Bunter in goal?"

"Bunter in goal!" repeated the captain of the Remove. "It's usual to play a man between the posts who knows the

difference between a goal and a gonzola cheese. Does Bunter?"

"The fact is—"

"The fact is," said Wharton, "that you're talking out of the back of your neck! Chuck it!"

"Goalie won't have a lot to do playing the Fourth!" argued Bob. "What's their shooting like?"

"You silly ass! Bunter couldn't stop a ball if it was handed to him on a silver salver! What the dickens are you getting at?" demanded Wharton.

"Has Bunter been bribing you with his next postal order?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you've got to back me up!" said Bob. "We can beat the Fourth standing on our heads! Marbles is their game! We could beat them with nobody in goal, if it came to that! So we can beat them with Bunter in goal! You've jolly well got to back me up—see?"

"I suppose you mean something!" remarked the captain of the Remove thoughtfully. "But if you mean anything, old chap, what is it?"

"I've been talking to Temple, in the Rag—"

"I see! That's why you're talking such rot! You've caught it from Temple?"

"Temple was making out that they're going to beat us to-morrow—"

"That's all right; he will wake up after the match!"

"And I said—" Bob paused. "I said—you see, the cheeky ass rather got my rag out—and I said— I—I said we'd beat them if they liked with Bunter keeping goal!"

"Fathead!" said Harry Wharton.

"Shouldn't swank!" said Johnny Bull, shaking his head. "Might get nailed down to it! 'Taint a safe game!"

"Well, of course, I rather spoke without thinking," admitted Bob.

"Bad habit you've got, old man!" said Johnny.

"But that supercilious ass jumped at it," continued Bob. "Pretended to take it as an offer for the game to-morrow!"

"What rot!"

"Well, he did!" growled Bob. "And I wasn't going to back down before a lot of grinning ticks in the Fourth! So I stuck to it. And you've got to back me up! You jolly well can't let me down—and let the Remove down! See?"

"Well, you priceless idiot!" said Harry Wharton.

"The pricelessness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You benighted ass!" said Nugent. "You've let us in for a match with the Fourth, with that piffing, pie-faced, pernicious porker in goal!"

"They'd beat us!" roared Johnny Bull. "Precious lot of asses we shall look if a lot of fumbling, fooling frumps like that lot walk over us at Soccer!"

"Rot! They couldn't beat a carpet!" said Bob. "They couldn't beat a toy drum! We'll mop them up all right! All we've got to do is to keep them away from our goal! If they get near it, of course—"

"If they get within a mile of it they'll pile up a score of ninety-nine to nil!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"There may be a risk—"

"It isn't a risk—it's a cert! Go back to Temple, and tell him you were talking out of your hat!" snorted Johnny.

"You were, weren't you?"

Bob Cherry grunted.

"I may have put my foot in it," he said. "But a fellow expects his pals to back him up. Chance it!"

The other four members of the Co. were silent. The Famous Five of Greyfriars always backed one another up. It was the rule of that cheery Co. to sink or swim together. But, really, there had to be a limit. Soccer was a serious matter.

"What do you say, Valentine?" asked Bob, addressing the new fellow, who had not spoken. "What do you think?"

Jim Valentine smiled.

"Well, I think you ought to think twice before you speak once," he said. "But what you've said, you've said. I'd back you up if it rested with me. But—"

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"We're going to back the silly idiot up," he said. "We shall have to beat the Fourth somehow without a goal-keeper, for that's what it amounts to. We can't let Bob down to those Fourth Form ticks! The Remove never backs down! That howling ass has swanked, and we've got to make it good! Bump him!"

"Here— I say—" roared Bob. "You silly chumps— Oh, my hat! Leggo— Whoooooop!"

"Bump him!"

Four pairs of hands collared Bob Cherry. The Co. were going to back him up, and chance it! At the same time they were going to let him know unmistakably, what they thought of him. Which they proceeded to do— emphatically.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Oh crumbs! Oh crikey! I'll jolly well— Yaroooooop!"

Thrice Bob Cherry smote the carpet in Study No. 1. Dust rose from the carpet, and loud yells from Bob.

Then the juniors strolled out of Study

No. 1, leaving Bob Cherry sitting on the carpet, gasping and gasping as if he would never leave off gasping.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tribulations of a Football Captain!

W. G. BUNTER!"
"Oh, my hat!"
"What rot!"
"Tosh!"

Harry Wharton came into the Rag with a paper in his hand. That paper he proceeded to pin up. Remove fellows who were in the room gave it rather casual attention. It was the list of the team for the Form match on the morrow; and that was not a matter of thrilling interest to the Lower Fourth. Had it been a School match, with Rookwood, or St. Jim's, or Highcliffe, the Removes would have sat up and taken notice with the greatest keenness. But a game with Temple, Dabney & Co., did not thrill them.

Fellows glanced at the paper quite carelessly. But when they saw the name of W. G. Bunter thereon, they sat up and took notice with a vengeance. They stared—they gazed—they almost goggled. It was difficult to believe their eyes. Had the Remove been playing the fags of the Second Form, Billy Bunter's name would have been out of place in the list; for, after all, the fags would have had to be beaten.

Billy Bunter is a Dixie Dean, Hugh Gallacher, and Alex James rolled into one—in Billy Bunter's opinion. But in the opinion of the Greyfriars fellows he's the world's worst footballer—bar none!

"You're putting Bunter in goal, Wharton!" roared Squiff.

"Bunter in goal!" shrieked Hazeldene.

"Bunter to keep goal!" roared Bolsover major. "Bunter keep goal! Bunter couldn't keep white mice!"

"Is it a joke?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Harry Wharton coloured a little. He had expected that name in the list to cause surprise. It did!

"It's only the Fourth, you know," said the captain of the Remove. "We're giving Bunter a chance this time."

"Giving the Fourth a chance, you mean!" said Smithy.

"I suppose we can beat Temple, even without a man in goal," said Squiff. "But what's the big idea?"

"Well, you see—" Wharton hesitated. "The fact is, we've told Temple we'll beat him with Bunter in goal, and we're going to do it!"

"Rot!" said the Bounder. "If you've been bragging, old bean, the sooner you call it off, the better. You can't play Bunter!"

"Bunter won't have a lot to do," said Harry. "I shall play some good men, and they'll keep the Fourth well away from Bunter. I've put your name down after all, Smithy—you'll be wanted."

"You can cut that out," answered Vernon-Smith coolly. "You told me plainly that I shouldn't be wanted, and I've fixed to go home, and my pater will be expectin' me to-morrow afternoon. I can't wash that out simply because you're playin' the giddy ox!"

"Oh, rats!" grunted Wharton crossly. Having decided—to make poor Bob's

hasty words good—to play Bunter, the captain of the Remove had rather revised his team. Instead of giving the lesser lights a show, as he had intended, his idea was to play as strong a team as the Remove could put into the field—excepting, of course, in goal, where Billy Bunter was to distinguish himself—or extinguish himself, as the case might be.

Now it dawned on him that there were difficulties in the way. Taking a pencil from his pocket, he crossed out the Bounder's name, and wrote that of Monty Newland under it.

"Look here," said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "You've got me down as centre-half, Wharton."

"Well, aren't you centre-half, fat-head?"

"But you told me Russell was going in, and I've arranged—"

"Oh, my hat! You, too!" exclaimed the unhappy captain of the Remove. "Look here, whatever you've arranged, you can wash it out, see?"

"But I can't!" said Tom Brown, shaking his head. "I've got tickets for the matinee at Lantham, and I'm going with Toddy—"

"Toddy!" yelled Wharton. "I've got Toddy down for inside-left!"

"But you told him—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Dash it all, Wharton," exclaimed Peter Todd warmly. "You told me Nugent was playing inside-left, and I've blued half-a-crown on a ticket for Lantham. Think I'm going to chuck it away because you've got a funny idea of playing that frabjous owl Bunter?"

"You can go to the matinee, or go to Jericho!" growled Wharton, and he crossed out two more names in his revised list, which was beginning to look like the first edition again. "Any other silly ass got any rot to get off his chest?"

"You won't want me—" said Dick Penfold.

"I shall want you!" roared Wharton.

"But you told me—"

"Never mind what I told you! Forget all about it!"

"I can't!" said Pen, shaking his head. "I've promised my father to go home and help him with a job, as you said you wouldn't want me."

Penfold was the son of the village cobbler at Friardale. Often, on half-holidays, he walked home to lend his father a hand. That was certainly an engagement that could not be washed out.

"You see, you told me you were putting in Micky Desmond," urged Pen.

"Oh, pile it on!" said Wharton resignedly, and he crossed out Pen's name. "I hope that's the lot!"

"Well, you see—" began Mark Linley.

"Shut up, you!" roared Wharton. "Don't tell me you can't play back to-morrow, you fathead! You've got to play back! You got to keep those Fourth Form ticks from getting anywhere near Bunter in goal!"

"If I'd known—" said Mark.

"Well, you know now."

"But it's really impossible, old chap! Quelch has offered to give me two hours with Thueydides—he's set the time apart for me—I simply couldn't go and tell him I'm playing football instead."

"You piffing ass, what do you want to mug up Thueydides for? Nobody else in the Remove could construe a word of Thueydides! Blow Thueydides!"

"I'd blow Thueydides, if that was all, but I can't blow Quelch—"

Another name was crossed out of the hapless list, and another written in.

Some of the Removites were chuckling now. The expression on the face of their football captain seemed to entertain them.

"Is Ogilvy here?" snapped Wharton. "You got something special on to-morrow, Oggy? Going to a funeral you can't possibly miss, or something of that sort?"

The Scottish junior chuckled.

"Well, I was going out on my bike, as you told me I shouldn't be wanted—"

"Blow your bike!" roared the captain of the Remove.

"Blow it by all means—I'll play, of course," said Ogilvy, laughing. "But if you think that team will beat Temple, with Bunter in goal, you're dreaming dreams!"

"Leave Bunter out, and don't be a goat!" suggested Vernon-Smith.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Well, if you ask for it, you'll get it!" said the Bounder, shrugging his shoulders. "You've got four good men—and Nugent's not bad—and that kid Valentine's not a bad half. But you can't beat the Fourth with that lot, with a pie-faced, piffing owl in goal."

Harry Wharton grunted. With a strong team to keep the enemy away from goal, prospects were good. But with a second-rate team, prospects were far from bright. He knew what would happen if the enemy got anywhere near the goal, with William George Bunter as custodian.

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag. He blinked at the crowd of Removites through his big spectacles, and rolled over to them.

"What's on?" asked Bunter. The Owl of the Remove could see that something unusual was on. "Oh! Is that the footer list? Same lot of duds as usual, what?"

"Worse than usual!" grinned the Bounder.

"Couldn't be much worse," said Bunter. "Best man in the form left out. I've no doubt. It's a bit sickening, the way a really good man never gets a chance in Remove games. Rotten jealousy all round."

Bunter evidently did not yet know that his name was in the list. Billy Bunter loathed games practice, and on compulsory days his excuses for keeping away were many and various and unnumbered. And when a practice was not compulsory, wild horses would not have dragged Bunter to Little Side. At the same time, the fat Owl fancied him self as a footballer. Bunter was always prepared to play in a match—if asked. It was not, so far, on record that he had ever been asked.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter, as the Removites chorused. "Do I ever get a chance in a game? I ask you."

"You're getting a chance in this game!" chuckled the Bounder. "You're down to keep goal!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Billy Bunter made a jump at the list, and fixed his little round eyes and his big round spectacles on it. His eyes widened behind his spectacles as he read the surprising name "W. G. Bunter" there.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

"You'll have to pull up your socks to-morrow, Bunter!" said Redwing, laughing.

Billy Bunter blinked at his name in the list. Then he turned round and blinked at the captain of the Remove.

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"You've got me down?" he said.

"Yes, ass!" growled Wharton. "And don't be a bigger idiot than you can help in goal to-morrow!"

"That's all very well," said Bunter.

"But this won't do."

"What?"

"It won't do," said Bunter calmly.

"You've found out at last that you want me in the footer. Well, that's all right. I'm glad to see that you've got a little sense, as far as that goes. It's a bit thick, bunging a thing at a fellow at the last minute like this—I'd got some engagements for to-morrow afternoon. I hardly see how I can play."

That was Billy Bunter all over! If Billy Bunter found himself important, for once, Billy Bunter was the man to make the most of his importance.

"You silly ass!" roared Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I don't say that I shall refuse to play," said Bunter graciously. "I'm not the man to let the form down—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! If the fellows have found out my value as a footballer, I'm glad of it! If you've got it into your silly head, Wharton, that you can't really do without me, that's all right—I'm glad of it! But I'm not at all sure that I shall be able to play to-morrow. Later, perhaps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll think it over," said Bunter generously. "If I find that I can put off my engagements, Wharton, I'll see you through. But I can't give you a positive answer on the spot. You can't expect it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites.

They found the expression on Harry Wharton's face more entertaining than ever.

"I'll let you know later," said Bunter, with a wave of a fat hand. "I'll think it over, Wharton, and let you know. That's all I can say at present. Ask me again in the morning, and I'll say—Yaroooooh! Leggo, you beast! Oh, whooooo!"

For some reason—unknown to Bunter—the captain of the Remove interrupted him by grabbing the back of his fat neck and banging his head on the wall of the Rag.

Bang, bang, bang!

Really, it was the last straw! The football captain of the Remove had enough worries on hand, at the moment, without fatuous swank from Billy Bunter. Banging Bunter's head was a relief to his feelings.

He found it a solace. Bunter didn't! Bunter roared frantically.

"Ow! Wow! Leggo! Leave off! Oh, my napper! Whoop! I—I say, old chap, I'll play to-morrow—I'll play in every match this season if you like—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! I mean it!" howled Bunter. "Leggo! I'll back you up all along the—whoop!—line! I'll play for you against St. Jim's and Rookwood, old fellow—yaroooh!—honest! Injun! Rely on me! Whooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

"Yaroooooh!"

Harry Wharton dropped Bunter on the floor, and walked wrathfully out of the Rag. He left the Removites roaring with laughter—and Billy Bunter roaring still more loudly, though not with laughter.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Business Transaction!

"WELL, beat them!"

Bob Cherry spoke confidently—perhaps more confidently than he felt.

"We'll try!" said Harry Wharton. "The tryfulness," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, "will be preposterous!"

"Of all the silly asses—" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Give us a rest!" suggested Bob.

"Well, I jolly well think—"

"You don't!" contradicted Bob.

"You never have, and I'm not going to believe that you're beginning now."

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

The Famous Five and Jim Valentine were at tea in Study No. 1. It had dawned on Bob, by this time, that he had rather landed his friends in the soup. Still, he had been bumped for it, and the Co. let it go at that! Johnny might really have let the topic drop! But Johnny did not always let a topic drop at the most judicious moment. A fat face blinked in at the door.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Get out!" roared Wharton.

He was not in the very best of tempers—and he was fed-up with William George Bunter!

"Oh, really, Wharton?" Bunter blinked at the tea-table. "I say, I've decided to play for you to-morrow. Let's talk it over, over tea, shall we?"

Harry Wharton picked up the loaf. Apparently he was not disposed to talk football with Bunter over tea.

"Where will you have it, you fat freak?" he grunted.

Bunter eyed the loaf warily. Bunter was accustomed to being wary when he looked into a study at tea-time.

"Now, look here, Wharton! I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"I give you one second!"

"From my titled relations. If you ask a fellow to give up a lot of pressing engagements to play football for you, I think the least you can do is to ask a fellow to tea. I think—Ow!"

Bunter dodged the loaf just in time. It missed him by inches and rolled on the floor.

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "If you think I want any of your measly sardines, you're jolly well mistaken! I came here to borrow a book—just a book. Valentine, old chap, lend me your 'Hobby Annual,' will you? You've done with it."

"You can't eat a 'Hobby Annual'!" said Valentine.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass! You see, it's a book full of knowledge and things," explained Bunter. "It tells you how to make a 'thingummy,' and all about the inside of a 'what-do-you-call-it.' Can I have it?"

"Take it and go," said Jim Valentine.

"Don't make it all jammy!"

"I haven't any jam," said Bunter sorrowfully. "You'd hardly believe it, but Toddy finished up the jam in my study. He made out that it was his, you know, because he bought it—I say—if you chuck that cushion at me, Wharton, you beast—"

Billy Bunter grabbed the "Hobby Annual" from the bookshelf and bolted. He slammed the study door as he went.

In the passage Bunter grinned.

He rolled up the Remove passage, with the "Hobby Annual" under his

arm. That entrancing volume was, as Bunter had said, full of knowledge of various kinds. But Billy Bunter was not intending to absorb any of that knowledge. Billy Bunter had quite another use for Jim Valentine's "Hobby Annual."

He rolled along to Study No. 14 in the Remove passage.

That study belonged to Johnny Bull, Squiff, and Fisher T. Fish. Johnny was now teeing in Harrow Wharton's study, and Squiff was teeing in Hall, and the American junior was alone in Study No. 14. Fisher T. Fish was not teeing there. Unless Fish was asked out to tea—which seldom happened—or unless he contrived to ask himself out to tea—which sometimes happened—it was his custom to tea in Hall. Spending his own money on tea, when tea was provided by the school, would have seemed

statesmen of Europe. A Small American Debt was worrying Fisher Tarleton Fish, of the Remove.

Fishy had lent half-a-crown last term to Tubb of the Third. Tubb had only paid him three shillings and sixpence, so far, in interest, leaving the principal of the debt still unliquidated. Tubb still owed him the original half-crown, and another half-crown for interest!

And Tubb of the Third, to Fishy's unspeakable indignation, had refused to pay him any more!

Tubb, with an obstinate stupidity that made the American junior tired, declared that he didn't owe Fishy anything, having returned him three-and-six for two-and-six! He declared that Fishy, having made a bob by the transaction, ought to be satisfied. For a citizen of the great United States to feel satisfied before he had skinned his

Naturally, in these painful circumstances, he did not want to be bothered by Billy Bunter. He would have thrown the ink at him; but ink cost money. So he glared at him instead. Glares, fortunately, were inexpensive, and the American junior could indulge in them without feeling a pain afterwards.

"If you don't bent it," said Fisher T. Fish, "I'll get on my hind legs and take the poker to you! Absquatulate, you pie-faced jay! Vamoose the ranch, you all-fired boob! Git!"

"Oh, really, Fishy! What are you up to?" asked Bunter. "Swindling somebody?"

For some reason that Fishy never could understand, Remove fellows persisted in regarding his cute business transactions as swindling.

"Will you git?" roared Fishy.



"If you really want me to play in the match to-morrow, Wharton, I'll think it over," said Bunter generously. "If I find that I can put off my engagements, I'll see you through. But I can't give you a positive answer on the spot." "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites. They found the expression on Wharton's face entertaining!

to Fishy a proceeding worthy only of a "simp"—indeed, of a "dog-goned boob!"

Having tea'd in Hall, and eaten as much as he possibly could, on the principle of gettin' his money's worth and a little over, Fisher T. Fish was now busy in his study, bending his sharp Transatlantic features over a paper covered with figures.

He waved an impatient bony hand at Bunter in the doorway.

"Git!" he snapped.

"I say, Fishy—"

"Absquatulate!" snapped Fishy.

There were lines of deep thought on Fishy's bony brow. Trouble was heavy on his mind and his heart.

It was the question of the American Debt, on a small scale! The Big American Debt was worrying all the

debtor right down to the bone, was, of course, impossible. Fishy was far from satisfied.

But there it was. Tubb had not only refused to pay him any more, but threatened to hit him in the eye if he asked for any more!

It was enough to keep Fishy awake o' nights! He mourned for that which was lost, and could not be comforted! Losing money hurt Fishy. If he had lost his reputation, or his nearest and dearest relative, he could have borne it. But losing money hit him where he lived!

With an anxious mind and a saddened heart, Fishy was going over his accounts, marking off the five shillings that Tubb still owed him as a bad debt. It was like having a tooth out. If Fishy had had tears he would have been prepared to shed them now! Really, he could have cried.

"I've got something to sell, old chap," urged Bunter.

"Aw! Take it away and can it!" growled Fisher T. Fish; but he calmed down.

Fishy carried on quite an extensive business in the Lower School in buying and selling. He bought cheap and he sold dear. A hard-up fellow who parted with his Latin dictionary for sixpence found that the price had increased to five shillings if he wanted to repurchase it. Such a fellow was liable to call Fishy all sorts of uncomplimentary names. It was fortunate for Fishy that he was not thin skinned.

"Look here, my 'Hobby Annual,'" said Bunter, showing the volume. "It cost six shillings, and it's easily worth double. It tells you how to make a what-do-you-call-it out of a what's-its-name, and all that."

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"Tuppence!" said Fisher T. Fish briefly.

"What?" yelled Bunter.

"Tuppence—and take it or leave it!"

"Why, you beast, it cost Val—I mean, it cost six shillings!" howled Bunter.

"Make it two bob, you mingy miser!"

"Take it away!"

"What about a bob, then?"

"Nix about a bob! Travel!"

"Sixpence—"

"When I say tuppence what I mean is tuppence!" said Fisher T. Fish inexorably. "I might have that book on my hands for weeks! Books are a drug in the market, anyhow. Mightn't get more'n two bob for it myself. Take it or leave it!"

Billy Bunter laid the volume on the table.

"Look here, Fishy! I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Aw! Can it!"

"What I mean is I shall want to buy that book back later," said Bunter. "I—I want to give it to a fellow. He—he rather expects me to—to give him a 'Hobby Annual.' I'm expecting a postal order to-morrow, Fishy—I'll see you about it then—see?"

Fishy grinned. If he kept that book in his possession till Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order arrived, it was not likely to be reclaimed in a hurry.

"And now hand over the twopenno, you stingy Shylock!" said Bunter.

Two pennies were tossed on the table. Bunter picked them up and rolled away, leaving the "Hobby Annual" on the table in Study No. 14.

Twopenno was not much, but he could buy a tart for twopenno in the school shop—and all was grist that came to Bunter's mill. As for the honesty of the transaction, Bunter was not worrying

about that. He was going to buy the book back when his postal order came and return it to Jim Valentine. Valentine was not in a hurry for it—he had finished reading it. So that was all right so far as the fat and fatuous owl could see. Bunter would have been surprised and hurt had anyone told him that he was a dishonest young rascal. Bunter's fat brain had its own mysterious ways of functioning.

Left alone again in Study No. 14, Fishy smiled as he glanced at the volume on the table. It was quite clean—not having been long in Bunter's hands—and looked as good as new. He remembered that he had heard the new fellow, Valentine, say at the beginning of the term that he was thinking of buying the "Hobby Annual." Fishy hoped that he had not bought one yet. If not, he would be able to sell this one to Valentine at a price which would show a really handsome profit on the transaction! Fishy smiled.

But as his keen, cute eyes turned back to his business papers the smile vanished and a haggard expression of black care came over his bony face. That bad debt of Tubb's gave him deep pangs of pain. Losing money was a thing to make the toughest guy yaup. Fishy almost broke down. He groaned as he drew his pen through Tubb's account, and the anguish in his bony face might have moved a heart of stone.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Shadowed!

JIM VALENTINE started a little, and a hard, dark look came over his handsome face.

The early winter dusk had fallen, and the school gates were closed.

All Greyfriars fellows were supposed to be within gates; but Valentine, the new fellow in the Remove, was tramping along the shadowy lane towards Friar-dale, with his hands in his pockets and his coat collar turned up against the bitter wind.

Twice it had seemed to Jim that he heard a faint sound of footfalls behind him, and he had glanced round and seen nobody. Again the faint sound reached him, and he knew that he was not mistaken. Deliberately he slowed down so that anyone coming along the lane behind him would overtake and pass him. But no one overtook him—no one passed him.

He was followed, and that meant, shadowed. Valentine was out of gates after lock-up for a simple reason. His Form master, Mr. Quelch, had asked him to walk down to the village to register a letter at the post office. Jim had been only too glad to oblige the man who was a kind friend and protector to him. Also, it had been pleasant to know that Mr. Quelch trusted him so completely. The "boy with a past" valued Mr. Quelch's trust and good opinion very highly.

Now he was followed as he walked down the shadowy lane—by whom? It was long since he had seen anything of Nosey Clark and the gang. But he knew that they were not finished with him.

No one at Greyfriars knew that Jim Valentine, in the hands of the gang of crooks, had been Dick the Penman—the imitator of hands, wanted for over a year by the police, hunted but never traced by the keenest men at Scotland Yard. He fancied that Wharton and Nugent more than suspected it, but if so they were not likely to speak. The Famous Five of Greyfriars knew a good deal about the boy who had fled from the gang of crooks, and they believed in him and stood by him. His secret was safe unless Nosey Clark betrayed him—and that the master crook dared not do.

Neither did he dare attempt to seize the boy by force, since Jim had warned him that he had written out a paper to fall into the hands of the police if he was missing. What Nosey could do to harm him Jim could not tell, yet he knew that he was not done with the man with the vulture's beak. He knew that some scheme for forcing him back into crime was working in Clark's cunning brain.

Faintly he caught a footfall again.

Who could it be cautiously shadowing him along the dark lane—if not Nosey Clark or the cracksman, Nutty Nixon or Barney, or some other of the gang? His teeth set and his eyes glinted.

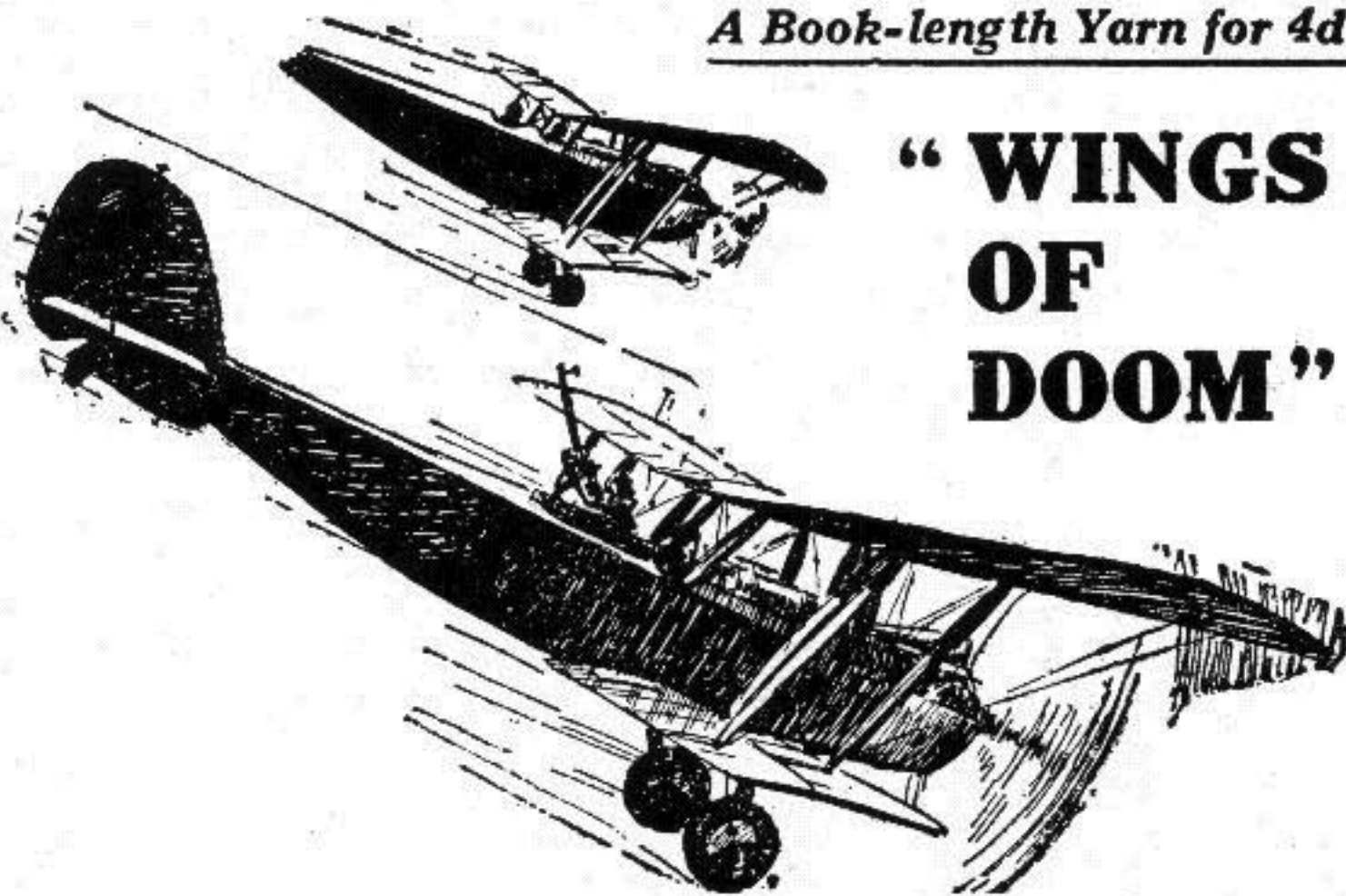
Yet what did they want? They dared not kidnap him, and they had learned by this time that it was futile to urge him to come back to them.

Jim Valentine trod on his way with deep anger in his heart. He longed passionately to have done with the gang—to forget that dismal and disastrous passage in his life, to live carefree like any other Greyfriars fellow.

That was what he had hoped for when Mr. Quelch befriended him and placed him in the school. But it had not come to pass. Nosey Clark had found him out—and would never leave him in peace. And Mr. Grimes, the inspector at Courtfield, suspected him, doubted him, and Jim was well aware that Inspector Grimes was keeping Greyfriars under observation on his account. Mr. Grimes believed that he was still acting in collusion with the gang—that his parting with them was only a pretence. Probably he was confirmed in that

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belief by the fact that several robberies had happened in the vicinity since Valentine had been at Greyfriars. And Jim knew—or at, least, he did not doubt—that those robberies had been the work of his old gang—and were somehow a part of the scheme Nosey Clark had formed to drive him from the school.

Again that stealthy footfall. He did not look back again—he would have seen nothing had he looked in the deep gloom. Whoever was shadowing him was keeping out of his sight. He wondered for a moment if it was some footpad. But if it had been that the shadower would have closed in on him in the darkest and loneliest part of the lane—which he had already passed. It was not that. He did not doubt that it was one of the gang watching him and following him—though for what reason he could not guess.

Harder and grimmer grew the expression on his face. Certainly he did not care if anyone followed him to the village post office and saw him register Mr. Quelch's letter there! But the persecution at the hands of Nosey Clark & Co. roused his bitterest resentment. Why could they not leave him alone?

He halted as he reached the opening of the dark footpath that led through Friardale Wood. He laid his hand on the stile and vaulted over.

But he did not keep on up the footpath, which lay like a black tunnel before him. He stooped and detached a heavy turf from the ground. With the turf in his grasp he stood in the black shadow of a tree and waited.

There was a patter of swift feet in the lane. He smiled grimly. The shadower had evidently been listening to his footsteps ahead and had noted that they had ceased, and no doubt guessed that he had turned into the wood. Now he was running on, fearful of losing him.

Jim saw a dark figure stop at the stile, and heard a panting breath. He could not make out who it was—only that it was a burly man. He saw the head bent to listen, and was careful to make no sound, stilling even his breathing.

The burly figure clambered over the stile, and started up the footpath into the wood. It passed within six feet of the schoolboy pressed close to the trunk of a tree in the darkness.

Jim made no sound.

But when the figure was well past, he stepped out from his cover, into the middle of the path. His arm swung up, the heavy clod of turf in his hand.

Whiz!

Crash!

There was a sudden, startled yell, and the sound of a heavy man pitching forward on his hands and knees. The clod had landed fairly on the back of the head of the man who had gone up the path.

"Oooooooh!" came a spluttering howl, as the unseen man sprawled.

Jim Valentine gave a breathless chuckle. But he did not stay to listen. He leaped back over the stile, and raced up the lane towards Friardale. There was no further sound of footsteps behind him. In five minutes he reached the village post office. Five minutes later, having registered the letter, he left the post office, and took a roundabout way back to Greyfriars, following field-paths, and keeping clear of Friardale Lane.

There was a grin on his face as he trotted back to the school. Who the man was who had shadowed him, and whom he had floored with the turf, he did not know—though he had no doubt that it was one of Nosey Clark's gang.

But Inspector Henry Grimes of Courtfield, as he rubbed the back of his head, had no doubt that he knew! Mr. Grimes, as he rubbed his head ruefully, wondered what had become of the young rascal, and certainly did not guess that the suspected boy was on his way back to Greyfriars at a rapid trot.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Sporting Offer from Bunter!

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE, captain of the Greyfriars Fourth, smiled.

Temple of the Fourth sat in the armchair in his study, with one elegantly trousered leg crossed over the other, taking his ease, but with a due regard to the crease in his beautiful trousers.

Cecil Reginald smiled, and he felt that he had cause to smile. His pals and study-mates, Fry and Dabney, seemed pleased also. The chums of the Fourth had finished tea, and were talking football—discussing the morrow's match with the Remove. They seemed to like the prospect.

Bob Cherry had, in fact, delivered the Remove into the hands of the Philistines, in the opinion of Temple & Co.

"Swank" was not Bob's way, as a rule; but the supercilious and ineffable Temple had irritated him in that little argument in the Rag that day, and in his haste, Bob had stated that the Remove could, and would, beat the Fourth with Bunter keeping goal—which was as good as saying that they could beat the Fourth without a goalkeeper at all.

Bob had only named Bunter because Bunter was the howlingest ass at footer at Greyfriars, with the possible exception of Coker of the Fifth. Bob's statement had been a hasty one, intended really only as a figure of speech; but Temple, with great astuteness, had pinned him down to it on the spot; taken it as a challenge, and closed on it.

If the Remove footballers did not stand for it, Temple was going to have the satisfaction, at least, of gibing at fellows who swanked and backed down when called on to make their words good.

But, to his much greater satisfaction, he found that the Remove did stand for it. He had read the football list pinned up in the Rag, and seldom had Cecil Reginald read anything—even in a journal devoted to tailoring—that gave him greater satisfaction.

"Couldn't have happened better, you men!" drawled Temple. "Of course, we could beat any team the Lower Fourth could put in the field, if we liked to make work of it. But, dash it all, football's a game—I'm not goin' to make work of Soccer!"

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

Edward Fry winked at the teapot on the table. Fry could play Soccer, and his magnificent captain couldn't—at least, he never did! What Temple called Soccer was enough, in Fry's opinion, to make a cat laugh. A good Remove team was fated to walk all over Temple & Co.

Fry would have preferred to see a good Fourth Form team play a good game, and win on their merits. But, with Temple as skipper, that was not within the bounds of practical politics. But if Temple could not play Soccer, at least he could catch an unwary fellow napping; and that he had done successfully, with glorious prospects for the coming Form match.

"The pater's comin' down to Greyfriars to-morrow," went on Temple.

"The pater's frightfully keen on games. He's slanged me sometimes, makin' out that I'm not keen. A fellow's keen enough; but a fellow's not goin' to slave. I'm not goin' to play like a dashed professional!"

"Never!" said Fry, with another wink at the teapot. Whatever Cecil Reginald did, he certainly was not likely to play like a professional, dashed or undashed.

"But I want to please the pater," said Temple. "A man likes to please his pater! The pater's far from bein' a bad old bean! And—to tell you the truth—I was goin' to drive the fellows rather hard this time, with the pater watchin' the game! I was determined to beat the Remove, anyhow! The fact is, if we beat the Remove, with the pater lookin' on, it means somethin' decent in the way of a tip! It may mean a tenner!"

Fry and Dabney looked properly impressed.

Sir Reginald Temple, who had the distinction of being Temple's pater, was a wealthy gentleman, and not uncommonly he stood the dandy of the Fourth a fiver. But a tenner was a little out of the common. It was worth while bucking up a bit at Soccer, almost worth while making work of it, when an old gentleman who was keen on games might exude a tenner if he was pleased.

"If the pater sees me win, he will be no end bucked!" said Temple, rather as if he was going to win that game entirely on his own, the rest of the eleven being merely "also rans." "Last time he saw us play, he snorted afterwards—snorted like a horse! Believe me! He gave me rather a jaw! Seemed to think I was a bit of a slacker! Me, you know!"

Temple shook his head rather sadly over that misjudgment on the part of his pater.

"But this time," went on Temple brightly, "the old bean is goin' to see that I can win football matches if I choose to take the trouble!"

"You ought to stand Cherry something out of the tenner," said Fry.

"Oh, don't rot!" said Temple. "I've no doubt—practically no doubt—that we should beat the Remove, anyhow—as I've said, I was goin' all out to win! But I'm rather glad it's a sure thing without a lot of trouble! You've seen Wharton's list of fozzlin' duds? It seems that he's made up a list of second-class men—dashed cheek, you know—thinkin' they were good enough for us. And he's fool enough to stand for Cherry's swank, and play Bunter in goal—sheer unadulterated cheek!"

"I hear that he rather changed his mind, and asked some of the good men to play, after all, and they told him to go and eat coke! Anyhow, as the matter stands, he's got a rotten team, and the biggest idiot ever in goal—and that tenner's as good as in my desk!"

"Hear, hear!" said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

"We'll spend it," continued Temple, "on a terrific jamboree next Saturday, what? We'll have a car out, and a run to Brighton, a matinee, if there is one, and a dinner at some decent sort of show. We can get leave from Capper! Make the fur fly a bit."

Fry and Dabney regarded Temple with admiration. If he didn't know how to play football, at least he knew how to spend a ten-pound note!

Tap! There was a knock at the door of the study.

"Stagger in!" drawled Temple.

The door opened, and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles dawned on Temple & Co. Billy Bunter rolled in. Cecil Reginald Temple stared at him.

"This isn't the Zoo," he said.

"Eh?"

"Porpoises, I believe, are taken in at the Zoo——"

"Oh, really, Temple! I say, you fellows, I've come here to speak to you about the match to-morrow," said Billy Bunter. "Had your tea?"

"Had yours?" asked Temple.

"No, old chap. I've had nothing but tea in Hall, and a twopenny tart!" said the fat Owl. "You see, I've been disappointed about a postal order——"

"Like to have your tea now?"

"Yes, rather, old fellow."

"Good! Go somewhere an' have it, then! Shut the door after you."

Fry and Dabney chuckled.

Billy Bunter grunted. Apparently he was not going to "tea" with Temple.

"Well, look here!" he said. "About the Form match! I hear that your pater's coming down to-morrow, Temple."

"You hear a lot of things that don't concern you, I believe," drawled Temple. "What about it, fathead?"

"Well, with your pater here," said Bunter, "I dare say you'd like to put up a winning game for once, what? You don't want your pater to see you mopped up, as usual. What?"

Cecil Reginald Temple uncrossed his elegant legs. He was getting ready to rise and kick Billy Bunter out of the study. Happily unaware of that, the fat Remove rattled on cheerily:

"Anyhow, you'd like to have a chance for once, what? As the matter stands, you haven't an earthly. Have you seen the list?"

"I've seen it." Temple stared at the fat Owl. It was because he had seen the Remove list that he felt cheerfully assured of a sweeping victory on the morrow. So he could not quite make Bunter out.

"Well, if you've seen the list, you know you're a gone coon," said Bunter. "I don't mean that you'd have much chance, anyway, of course. But with me in goal, you're done for before you begin—see?"

"Ye gods!" said Fry.

"Suppose you get through," argued Bunter. "Mind, I'm not saying you're likely to get through—duds like you chaps! But suppose you do? Well, with the Remove playing their best man in goal——"

"Great pip!"

"You see, you won't have an earthly," explained the fat Owl. "Wharton's always kept me out of the matches, so far. There's a lot of jealousy in football, as I dare say you know. 'This time he's asked me to play. And if I play, where do you come in? That's how I look at it.'"

"That—that's how you look at it, is it?" gasped Temple.

"That's it. But I believe in giving a man a chance," said Bunter generously. "And, as a matter of fact, I haven't promised Wharton I'll play. I've told him I'll think it over, and let him know. Well, look here, Temple, I'm not specially keen on playing. I don't believe in being hung on a nail for a fellow to take down when he likes, and all that. Wharton's always left me out, and it would serve him right if I stood out now—a lesson to him. From what I can make out a lot of fellows have turned him down, and he thinks the only chance of saving the match is to get me in goal."

"Oh gad!"

"But I don't see it," argued Bunter. "Why shouldn't you have a chance of winning a game for once? I believe in

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giving a man a chance—even a fooling dud like you, old chap. Well, to come to the point, I'm prepared to stand out, and give you a chance."

"Oh crikey!"

"Wharton's not treated me well, and he can't grumble," said Bunter. "And I jolly well don't care if he does. Say the word, and I'll tell him I jolly well won't keep goal to-morrow—and that's that! Of course," added Bunter, "one good turn deserves another! You see that?"

"One good turn—— Oh, my hat!" gurgled Temple.

"Treat me as a pal, and I'll treat you as a pal," declared Bunter. "I don't know whether you've heard me mention that I'm expecting a postal order? Well, it hasn't come! I dare say you could lend me the pound, and take the postal order when—it comes. What about it?"

Billy Bunter blinked hopefully at the speechless captain of the Fourth. Temple seemed to have lost his voice.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" said Cecil Reginald, at last. "I'm to lend you a quid—to—to stand out of the match, and—and give us a chance! Ye gods!"

"Well, I wouldn't put it exactly like that," said Bunter. "Put like that, it sounds a bit sordid. What I mean is, you do me a good turn, and I'll do you one. I feel quite justified in refusing to play, after being kept out in the cold so long."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the three Fourth-Formers.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter, in surprise. "What's the joke, I'd like to know?"

"You are, old fat bean!" grinned Temple. "Now let's have this plain. If I treat you as a pal, you'll stand out of the match and refuse to keep goal for the Remove to-morrow?"

"That's it, old fellow! One good turn——"

"And if I bang your head on the table, and kick you out of the study, you wouldn't regard that as treatin' you as a pal?"

"Eh? No! What——"

"Well, here goes, then!" said Temple. And he jumped at Billy Bunter, caught him by the collar, and banged his head on the study table.

A terrific yell rang the length of the Fourth Form passage.

"Yooop!"

Temple swung the fat junior into the doorway.

"Now, you men, all together!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Three boots landed on Billy Bunter's tight trousers with three crashes in unison. Billy Bunter shot out of the doorway like a stone from a catapult. There was a heavy bump, and a wild yell in the passage.

"Ow! Wow! Beast! Yaroooh! Help! Yarooooop!"

"Kick him as far as the Remove landing!" said Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey! Oh crumbs! Oh scissors! Leave off!" shrieked Bunter, as he scrambled up and fled for his fat life.

Behind him rushed the three, dribbling him along the passage. How many times he was kicked before he escaped across the Remove landing, Billy Bunter never knew. But he escaped at last, and his frantic yells died away up the Remove passage, and Temple & Co. walked back to their study, chuckling.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Facer for Mr. Grimes!

INSPECTOR GRIMES, sir!" "Please show Inspector Grimes in, Trotter!" "Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, did not seem pleased. But his manner was very polite and civil as Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, was shown into his study. Mr. Grimes, portly and solid, sat down with a weight that made the chair creak, and breathed hard.

"I have called, sir, with reference to the boy Valentine," said Mr. Grimes.

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows. "I will be frank, sir," said the inspector. "I had an impression when I questioned this boy some time ago, that he could have told me a great deal, had he liked. He did not choose to do so."

"I hardly think——"

"Nothing appears to be known definitely of the boy, except that he was once in association with certain lawless characters," said the inspector. "But I have every reason to believe that he knows a great deal, sir, of the gang of crooks that includes, among its members, the unknown forger called Dick the Penman. I have told you so before."

"Quite so!" assented Mr. Quelch, his manner hinting that there was really no need for the inspector to tell him again.

"Whether this boy is still in collusion with his former associates——"

"I am convinced not," said Mr. Quelch sharply.

"No doubt, sir; but a man accustomed to looking on the seamy side of human nature is not so easily convinced," said the inspector a little tartly. "If the boy is in earnest in his desire to keep clear of bad characters, he deserves every encouragement. But it——"

"I am assured of it."

"Since this boy has been here, sir, there have been certain occurrences in the neighbourhood—in short, burglaries. In one of them it appears that a boy was concerned."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, almost jumping. "You cannot imagine, for one moment——"

"It is my duty, sir, to ascertain the facts," said Mr. Grimes stolidly. "I have felt it my duty to keep the boy under observation."

"I was not aware of that!" snapped the Remove master.

"Neither should I have informed you of it, sir, but for what has occurred to-day—during the last hour. I have been prepared to find that the boy, Valentine, left the school secretly, in order to communicate with his associates. Watch has been kept, sometimes by myself personally, sometimes by others."

Mr. Quelch's lips compressed in a tight line.

He did not regret, and never had regretted, having befriended a friendless boy, whom he liked and trusted. But this was an unexpected and extremely disagreeable outcome of Jim Valentine's presence at Greyfriars School.

"This evening," continued the inspector. "I saw the boy outside the gates after lock-up. He went in the direction of the village."

Mr. Quelch stared for a moment, and then, to the surprise of the Courtfield inspector, smiled.

"I followed him," said Mr. Grimes, rather acidly. "Finding the boy out of school after dark, at an hour when all Greyfriars boys are within gates, I felt that my suspicions were confirmed, and I shadowed him, sir."

"In that case," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "no doubt you observed him



"You want to clinch that book for three-and-six, bo!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Save you two-and-six at the shops." "Well, my only hat!" gasped the astonished Valentine. "Are you off your rocker, or what? Why should I give you three-and-six for my own book?" Fisher T. Fish jumped. "What?" he yelled.

walk to Friardale Post Office. And if you pursued your investigations farther, I have no doubt that you saw him register a letter there."

Mr. Grimes stared.

"I hardly follow you, sir. What—"

"I had occasion to send a registered letter by post, sir, and for that reason requested Valentine to take it to Friardale, and gave him leave out of gates for the purpose."

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Grimes, taken aback. "Then—the boy had not left the school surreptitiously?"

"Not in the least."

Mr. Grimes reddened a little. He did not like the glimmer in the eye of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"The boy may have taken the opportunity. At all events, I conclude that he is not now in the school?"

"Quite an unfounded conclusion, sir! Valentine returned to the school half an hour ago, and handed me the post office receipt for the registered letter."

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Grimes, again taken aback.

"If that is all, sir—" said Mr. Quelch.

"That is not all!" rapped Mr. Grimes, very much annoyed. "The boy found out somehow that I was shadowing him, and he assaulted me!"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"He turned into the footpath, sir, which certainly does not lead to the village post office, laid in wait for me there, and knocked me over—knocked me over, sir—by flinging a clod at the back of my head!" said Inspector Grimes warmly. "May I ask, sir, how

you explain the boy's taking such measures to elude me if he was occupied only in the mission you entrusted to him?"

Mr. Quelch's face became very grave.

"I was quite unaware of this," he said. "If Valentine has acted as you suppose, Mr. Grimes, the matter is serious enough. You are sure—"

"I am quite sure of what I say, sir."

"I can imagine no reason why the boy should desire to elude you, even if he knew you were watching him," said Mr. Quelch. "I cannot believe that he was taking the opportunity to communicate with his former associates. But certainly I shall send for the boy at once and question him in your presence."

Mr. Quelch rang for Trotter and directed him to send Valentine of the Remove to the study at once.

Jim Valentine arrived in a couple of minutes.

He came in, with his usual cheery expression on his handsome face. That expression changed a little at the sight of the Courtfield inspector. Jim Valentine was a Greffrriers fellow now; but Dick the Penman could not feel quite easy in the presence of a police officer.

"Valentine," said Mr. Quelch quietly, "Mr. Grimes informs me that you have assaulted—attacked him while you were on your way to Friardale."

Jim Valentine's eyes opened wide.

"You do not dare to deny it, I presume?" grunted the inspector.

"Certainly I deny it!" exclaimed

Valentine hotly. "Mr. Grimes is mistaken, sir. I have done nothing of the sort."

"Think before you answer, Valentine!"

"I have not seen Mr. Grimes to-day, sir. I have not seen him this week at all. I have not seen him since he was here on the night of the burglary."

Grunt! from Mr. Grimes.

"Perhaps—in the dark—an error—" suggested Mr. Quelch, looking at the inspector. "Some other person—"

"There was no error, sir!" said Mr. Grimes. "The boy knew I was behind him, he deliberately waited for me on the footpath and knocked me over with a clod! Afterwards he escaped me in the darkness. That, of course, was his object."

Valentine jumped. "Oh crikey!" he gasped.

He understood now.

"Valentine, what—"

"Oh, sir, I never knew it was Mr. Grimes!" exclaimed Valentine. "I never dreamed—I can't see in the dark, sir!"

"You admit the action?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. But—but I—I thought—" Valentine stammered. "I had no idea it was Mr. Grimes, sir! I—I thought—oh, sir, I fancied it was Nosey Clark or one of his gang who was following me!"

"Good gad!" ejaculated the inspector.

"What was I to think?" exclaimed

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Valentine. "I knew someone was following me in the dark—he followed me quite a distance, sir—and I thought it was one of those rotters! I never dreamed that it was Mr. Grimes—never thought of him! I shouldn't have cared if I had known that it was Mr. Grimes. Why should I?"

The inspector stared, and Mr. Quelch smiled faintly.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Grimes," said Valentine—very sorry indeed! I couldn't see you in the dark—only just a shadow. I thought it was one of those rotters, and knocked him over with a turf as a lesson to him. I wouldn't have dreamed of doing it if I'd known it was you."

Inspector Grimes' face was a study.

"Where did you go after—after what happened?" he jerked out.

"To the village post office," answered Valentine. "I came back another way, thinking that the man might be still hanging about."

Mr. Quelch was trying hard to suppress a smile. The inspector's face was scarlet. Doubting and suspicious as he was with regard to Valentine, he could see that the boy was telling the truth.

"I am sure, Mr. Grimes, that in the circumstances, you will excuse Valentine," said the Remove master. "His mistake was a natural one, in the circumstances."

"Oh, quite!" gasped the inspector.

Mr. Quelch made the junior a sign to leave the study. Valentine's face was serious till the door closed on him. But he grinned as he went down the passage. That mistake in the dark had its comic side.

Mr. Grimes left a few minutes later, not at all pleased by the result of his visit. It had seemed to him that he had at last something tangible in his grasp—that the boy he suspected had been caught out at last. Instead of which, he had only furnished himself with evidence that Jim Valentine was, as Mr. Quelch believed, anxious and eager to keep clear of his old associates. It was a puzzled and annoyed inspector who walked back to Courtfield.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fierce for Fishy!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were not looking quite so merry and bright as usual the following morning.

The captain of the Remove was rather worried about the prospects of the football match in the afternoon. Form matches were not matters of great importance, but no football skipper could possibly want to go out and beg for a licking. And there was no doubt that it looked like a licking to come. With a weak team the Remove had to defend an undefended goal, and it was a very doubtful proposition. Even Bob Cherry's ruddy, cheery face was rather glum. He realised that he had landed his comrades in the soup.

But one fellow, at least, was full of confidence. That fellow was William George Bunter.

"I say, you fellows"—Billy Bunter came up to the Famous Five in break—"I say, it's all right about this afternoon. I'll play."

"Fathead!" replied the five, in unison.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You couldn't manage to fall down stairs and break your neck before the match?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, do!" said Nugent imploringly.

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"It would be a boonful blessing!" sighed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, don't be funny asses!" said Bunter. "I'll play! You needn't worry about the game. You've got a rather rotten team, Wharton; but that's much the same as usual, isn't it? With me in goal, it will be all right! If they get the ball past me, you can use my head for a football!"

"Anybody got any use for a wooden football?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, I'm not bothering about the match; that's all right. What I was going to say is, my postal order hasn't come, after all!"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"As I'm going to give up my afternoon, Wharton, to pull the game out of the fire for you, I think you might lend me a bob!" said Bunter. "You know that beastly American—he won't take twopence back for it; he will want at least a bob!"

"What are you blithering about now?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter hastily. Billy Bunter was not a bright youth, but he was bright enough to know that he had better say nothing about his business transaction with Fisher T. Fish. Fellows always misunderstood Bunter, and they were sure to misunderstand him again if they learned that he had sold the book he had borrowed from Valentine. "I—I mean, I—I want a bob—to give to a poor blind man—a poor old blind man—"

"Trot out your blind man, and I'll give him a bob!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I—I mean, I—I owe Toddy a bob. He's dunning me for it. You know what a mean beast Toddy is—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Toddy!" roared Bob Cherry. "What do you mean by dunning Bunter for a Bob?"

"What?" yelled Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Cherry, you beast! I didn't mean Toddy! I—I meant—Ow! Keep off, Toddy, you beast! If you kick me again, I'll—Yaroooooh!"

"Who's dunning you for a bob?" demanded Peter Todd, delivering another kick.

"Ow! Nobody! What I mean is—Keep off, you beast! What I meant to say was—Wow, wow, wow! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled away—minus the necessary bob.

In third school that morning Bunter was a little worried.

He was not worrying about the football match—that was all right. But he could not help feeling worried about Valentine's "Hobby Annual."

His postal order had not come, and so he had been quite unable to repurchase that volume from the business man of the Remove. Even Bunter realised that it would look—not exactly dishonest, but perhaps a little dubious and questionable—if it came out that he had borrowed a book from one fellow and sold that book to another fellow. Fellows would make out that he was a shady young scoundrel—they were always making out something of that kind!

After class Bunter hooked on to Lord Mauleverer. He was in luck. His long-suffering lordship parted with a bob in order to part with Bunter.

Bob in hand, the fat junior rushed away in search of Fisher T. Fish. With a self-abnegation that was almost heroic, Bunter turned his back on the tuckshop. He had raised that bob to redeem the "Hobby Annual," and he was going to redeem it, and with a heroism worthy of the highest praise, he

put the thought of jam tarts away from his fat mind.

"I say, Fishy!"

He ran Fisher T. Fish down in the quad. Fishy was walking there with a glum and moody brow, thinking of the Small American Debt. It was sheer misery to Fishy to reflect that he had had only three shillings and sixpence back for his half-crown.

"Aw! Give a galoot a rest!" grunted Fishy.

"I want that book back," said Bunter. "You gave me twopence for it, Fishy. I'll give you fourpence, what?"

"Think again!" suggested Fisher T. Fish.

"Well, what about sixpence?" asked Bunter.

"Nix about sixpence."

"Beast! Take the bob, then, and be blowed to you!" said Bunter, holding out the coin. "Where's the book?"

But Fisher T. Fish did not take the bob.

"You want to buy a 'Hobby Annual' second hand?" he asked. "I guess I can do business. The price is four shillings."

"What?" shrieked Bunter.

"And cheap at the price!" said Fisher T. Fish warmly. "Why, that 'Hobby Annual' of mine is as good as new—hardly a mark on it. It's six shillings at the shops. I'm giving that book away at four shillings."

"Why, you—you—your awful Shylock!" gasped Bunter. "You only gave me twopence for it."

"Buying and selling is different propositions," said Fisher T. Fish. "You guys don't understand business on this side of the pond. Nopel! You can take your bob away and bury it. You can't put it across a guy that was raised in Noo Yark! No, sir! I got a customer in my eye already for that book; galoot that was going to give six bob for a noo one. I guess he'll jump at getting it cheap. Four bob or nix."

"Beast!"

"Aw, can it!"

Fisher T. Fish stalked away indignantly. Bunter's offer was nothing short of an insult to the intelligence of a cute guy who had been raised in Noo Yark. Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles. Evidently there was nothing doing. He could not redeem Valentine's "Hobby Annual" with Lord Mauleverer's shilling!

But there was still balm in Gilead, so to speak. A bob that would not purchase the "Hobby Annual" would purchase jam tarts! Bunter rolled away to the tuckshop. He felt that he had done all he could. And there was comfort in sticky and jammy tarts!

Jim Valentine was in the quad with the Famous Five when he gave a sudden gasp as he was nearly punctured by a bony knuckle that dug into his ribs.

He turned and beheld Fisher T. Fish with a "Hobby Annual" under his arm.

"Looking for you, bo!" said Fishy affably. "I hear that you're interested in the 'Hobby Annual,' and I'll say it's some book! Ornament to any galoot's bookshelf. And it's worth reading, too, from what I hear. I've got one as good as new. What about four bob? Save you two on the deal."

"Thanks. I don't want—"

"Aw! Think again!" urged Fisher T. Fish. "Take it and look at it. Not a mark on it. Good as new! I might make it three-and-six to a friend."

Valentine took the book, staring at it. It was a carefully kept volume, like all Valentine's books, but there were one or two marks on the cover which gave

it a rather familiar look. He opened it and glanced at the name written on the title-page, and then stared blankly at Fisher T. Fish.

"Chockful of useful and interesting information, that book is," said Fishy. "I ain't read it myself. Reading ain't much in my line; too busy, I guess. But a whole lot of guys think a whole lot of that book! Yep I'll say so! You want to cinch that book for three-and-six, bo'! Save you two-and-six at the shops."

"Well, my only hat!" said the astonished Valentine. "Are you off your rocker, or what? Why should I give you three-and-six for my own book?"

Fisher T. Fish jumped.

"What?" he yelled.

"It's my 'Hobby Annual,' that I lent to Bunter," said Valentine. "What the thump do you mean?"

"You—you—you lent that book to Bunter?" articulated Fisher T. Fish.

"Yes; yesterday at tea-time."

"Aw! Carry me home to die! I bought that book from Bunter!" gasped Fishy. "Say, you're pulling my leg! That ain't the same book."

"My name's written in it, fathead! Haven't you looked into it? Look there, ass—look!"

Fisher T. Fish looked. His keen, cute eyes almost bulged at the sight of the name, "J. Valentine," written on the title-page. Fishy had never even thought of looking in the book. The insides of books did not interest Fishy. A book, to Fishy, was simply an article that represented so much money-value. He had neither the time nor the inclination to bother about what might be inside them.

"Aw, wako snakes and walk chalks!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "Done! Diddled! Dished! That fat guy has put it over on me! This sure is the elephant's hind leg! It surely is the grasshopper's whiskers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Say, you gimme my book!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "I bought that book from Bunter. You ain't cinching my book for nix—"

"It's my book!" roared Valentine. "I only lent it to Bunter."

"I guess that jay made out it was his'n. Look here, I'll let you have the book for two shillings!"

"I can see myself giving two shillings for my own 'Hobby Annual'!" chuckled Valentine.

"Make it a bob, then!" gasped Fishy.

"Look here, gimme back that book, and I'll let Bunter have it back for a bob. The all-fired hoodlum offered me a bob back for it—"

"I'm keeping my book, thanks," said Valentine. "You can settle the matter with Bunter."

Fisher T. Fish groaned.

"What about a tanner?" he asked. "You don't want to see a guy robbed? Make it sixpence, and keep the book."

"I can keep my own book without making it sixpence."

"Tuppence, then!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "Honest-to-goodness, I gave Bunter tuppence for it! Give me the tuppence and call it a go."

Valentine looked at him.

"You gave Bunter twopence, and asked me four shillings!" he said. "What sort of a stingy worm do you call yourself? Hold the book for me, Bob!"

Bob Cherry took the book, and Valentine gave his attention to Fisher T. Fish. He grabbed that bony and businesslike youth by the back of the collar and spun him round.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Fisher T. Fish

in horrid anticipation. "Say, you leggo! You kick me and I'll make potato-scrappings of you! I'll sufely—Whooooop!"

Thud!

Fisher T. Fish flew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jim Valentine walked away with his friends, and Fisher T. Fish sat up and blinked after them. His feelings were too deep for words. His prospect of profit was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. Instead of a profit of three-and-tenpence, he had bagged a net loss of twopence! He groaned. He had been kicked rather hard, but that did not matter so much. He was twopence to the bad on the transaction! That was, as Fishy would have expressed it in his own language, fierce!

He picked himself up. He remembered that Bunter had a bob, and he rushed away in search of Bunter. He knew where to rush when Bunter had a bob; he only feared that he might be too late!

His fears were well-founded. He arrived at the tuckshop in time to see Billy Bunter leaving that establishment, jammy and sticky.

Fisher T. Fish grabbed the fat junior by the shoulder.

"You pie-faced piecan!" he gasped.

A USEFUL LEATHER POCKET WALLET

goes to Miss B. Millard, of 80, St. John's Park, Blackheath, S.E.3, who submitted the following Greyfriars limerick:

**Billy Bunter, who's known to be greedy,
Is now looking remarkably seedy.
Last night at a party,
With appetite hearty,
He ate enough to feed all the needy!**

"Valentine's cinched that book; says it's his'n! Gimme my tuppence!"

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Tuppence—before I make potato-scrappings of you!" hissed Fisher T. Fish.

"I hope you don't think I would diddle you, Fishy," said Bunter, with dignity. "I wasn't raised in New York, you know! If you've decided to do the fair thing, I'll give you back your twopence with pleasure."

"Spill it, then!"

"I'm expecting a postal order—"

"What?" yelled Fishy.

"At the present moment I happen to be stony. Remind me when my postal order comes, and—Oh crikey! Wow! Yow! Wow! Yaroooooh! Help!"

Billy Bunter fled for his fat life, with Fisher T. Fish in ferocious pursuit.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Form Match!

FRY of the Fourth put up a hand to shade his eyes as if overcome by the view that burst upon him. Dabney followed his example.

Other men in the Fourth Form football team grinned. The whole crowd of them seemed quite struck. And Billy Bunter, resplendent in football rig, nearly bursting out of it at all points, blinked at them through his big spectacles and frowned. The Fourth Form men seemed to find Bunter, the footballer, entertaining; and Billy Bunter reflected, as he had often reflected bitterly before, that a really good-

looking chap had to get used to this sort of jealousy.

Even in his own team they did not seem proud of Bunter. Bunter was conscious of being the best footballer on the field, and looking it. Nobody, however, knew this excepting Bunter.

Bunter's first impression had been that the captain of the Remove, finding himself in difficulties for a good man, had resolved to put jealousy aside and play Bunter! But that first impression had been rather modified, by what he had heard fellows saying to one another. Bunter had had to realise, by this time, just why it was that he was in the Remove Eleven.

But that made no difference to Bunter. Facts were facts! Whether Wharton knew it or not, Bunter was the best man at Soccer in the Form! He was going to prove this by the way he kept goal. He was quite keen to defeat Temple, Dabney & Co. after their ingratitude for the sporting offer he had made; quite keen to show the Remove what a goalkeeper he was—in fact, he was in an unusual state of keenness altogether. He reflected, too, that if he saved the match, as he was going to do, the fellows could scarcely do less than stand him something decent in the way of a spread afterwards.

So the grinning of the Fourth Form men made no difference to Billy Bunter's state of fat satisfaction. Neither did the remarks he heard among the Remove men.

Bob Cherry tapped him on a fat shoulder.

"For goodness' sake, keep your eyes open and try to stop the ball, Bunter," implored Bob. "It's my fault you're in the team, and—"

"You cheeky ass!" said Bunter witheringly. "Don't talk rot! If you knew half as much about Soccer as I do, Bob Cherry, you'd be twice the footballer you are."

"You frabjous owl—"

"That's enough!" said Bunter loftily, and he turned a podgy back on Bob—and Bob manfully restrained his desire to plant a football-boot on the well-packed shorts of the fat Owl.

"Do your best, Bunter—" said Harry Wharton.

"Don't you worry," said Bunter. "Keep that for Nugent and Russell and Bull and Inky, and the other duds! Don't talk that stuff to a man who's forgotten more Soccer than you ever knew."

The captain of the Remove breathed hard.

"I'll tell you what," pursued Bunter.

"I can keep goal! That's all right—none better! But if you want to see the Fourth really mopped up give me a chance where I'm really at my best! That's centre-forward!"

"You benighted ass!"

"Dash it all, do the right thing for once!" urged Bunter. "Put personal jealousy right out of consideration! You're not such a fool that you don't know a good man when you see one. Well, own up to it! See? Get into goal yourself—you'll be as useful there as anywhere else—which isn't saying a lot—*he, he, he!*"

"I'm going to scalp Bob after this game!" said Johnny Bull.

"The scalpfulness really is the proper caper!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry gave a dismal grunt. He was beginning to think himself that he rather deserved scalping.

"Where's that idiot Temple?" growled Harry Wharton.

The footballers were ready; Potter of the Fifth, who had kindly consented to referee, was ready; but Cecil

Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth, was not quite ready. It was one of the great Cecil Reginald's little ways to keep a game waiting.

Temple, with a natty coat over his elegant football outfit, was talking to a tall gentleman with a Roman nose and a long chin, who had walked down to Little Side with Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth.

The Roman-nosed gentleman was Sir Reginald Temple, who had arrived in plenty of time to see his hopeful son perform deeds of derring-do on the Soccer field.

Sir Reginald looked aristocratic, but not frightfully intelligent. He was keen on seeing his son distinguish himself in games; but he did not, perhaps, know an awful lot about those games. The finer points of football were quite lost on Sir Reginald; but he knew that if a team won, it was the winner; and if Temple & Co. won that match, Sir Reginald was prepared to consider Cecil Reginald a great man at games. Mr. Capper was treating Sir Reginald with marked consideration. Mr. Capper liked baronets, especially wealthy ones.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Temple, old bean, are we playing this game by daylight, or after lights out?"

Temple glanced round loftily. "I shall have to get movin', father," he said, and Sir Reginald nodded, and Temple strolled on to the field—not hurrying himself in the least. Cecil Reginald never hurried, any more than he made work of a game!

But he was ready at last, and tossed for ends with Wharton. Kick-off fell to the Remove, and Potter blew the whistle.

Billy Bunter, in goal, watched the game through his big spectacles, with nothing to do for a considerable time.

He stamped his feet and waved his fat arms to keep them warm. It was a cold day, and there was a wind from the sea; and Bunter thought of the fire in the study with deep regret.

Presently, however, he had something to do.

Harry Wharton & Co. were fighting hard to keep the Fourth in their own territory, only too painfully aware of what would happen if they got near the Remove goal. A strong Remove team would have got away with it, without much difficulty. But in the actual team there were too many weak spots; and the Fourth, for once, were putting unusual beef into the game. They had a few good men, such as Fry, in the front line, Wilkinson at back, and Scott at centre-half—Scott being as good a man as any on the field. For a good twenty minutes Bunter stamped and waved; with nothing else to do; and then there came, at long last, an attack on goal.

"Look out, Bunter!"

"Look out in goal!"

"Wake up, Bunter!"

Remove fellows round the field shouted, as Fry of the Fourth shot. Fry went over under Johnny Bull's weight as he kicked, and the ball fluttered at the goal—a shot that, as the fellows round the field said, a baho in arms ought to have stopped. Billy Bunter jumped at it, missed it by a yard, and it rolled in.

"Goal!"

The Fourth Form roared.

"Goal! Goal!"

It was first blood to the Fourth! Cecil Reginald Temple smiled. He glanced at the tall gentleman with the Roman nose, who was looking on, still with the faithful Capper in attendance.

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Sir Reginald beamed. He clapped his aristocratic hands. And Cecil Reginald Temple felt that it was as good as a tanner in his pocket.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Keeps Goal!

"CHUCK out that ball, Bunter!" "I say, you fellows, play up, you know!" said the Remove goalkeeper. "You may call this Soccer, but I don't! Don't let them walk all over you, Wharton."

Harry Wharton made no reply to that.

It was not a suitable proceeding for a football captain to kick his goalkeeper during the progress of a game. And really there was no other reply to be made.

The sides lined up again.

Once more the Remove kicked off.

Once more they strove to pen the Fourth in their own half.

Once more they succeeded, for a time. Then Temple got away with the ball. Temple, in spite of his rooted objection to make work of Soccer, was really going strong. Luck favoured him and he got through. He had to kick hurriedly, and in ordinary circumstances a Remove goalkeeper could have stopped the shot with his eyes shut.

Bunter's eyes were wide open; but he did not stop the shot. Wide open as his eyes were, he did not even see the leather till it smote him under his fat chin.

Biff!

The force of the impact lifted the fat junior off his feet and sent him flying helplessly to the back of the net.

Zi-i-ip!

The next moment there was a rending sound as the rigging, unable to stand the strain of Bunter's weight, gave way. Bunter dropped to earth behind the goal with a bump that almost shook the football field.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Woogoh! Yooogoh! Ow! Wow!" yelled Bunter, clasping his fat chin with both fat hands. "I say, you fellows, somebody chucked something at me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat freak!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Beast! Wow!" Bunter scrambled up breathless and indignant. "Look here, I'm not standing this! Chucking things at a fellow! I'm not here for a cock-shy, I can tell you! Something hit me under the chin—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the spectators.

"Chuck out that ball!" roared Wharton.

"Eh! Where's the ball?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did—did the ball come in—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Something hit me under the chin!"

"It was the ball, you frabjous freak!"

shrieked Bob.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Was it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Same game!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "I'm going to slaughter you after this match, Bob Cherry!"

Billy Bunter blinked round for the ball and found it, and tossed it out. Then he stood rubbing his fat chin, which felt damaged.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter. "What are they all sniggering at. I wonder? Nothing funny in a fellow getting biffed under the chin, that I know of! Wow!"

Once more the Remove kicked off. This time they had a little luck. There

was a fierce attack on the Fourth, and Harry Wharton put the ball into the net with a smashing ground shot.

At half-time the Fourth were leading two to one. Cecil Reginald was still counting with confidence on his tanner.

"We've got 'em!" said Temple to his men at lemon-time. "We've got 'em! They haven't an earthly! Stick to it, and we've got 'em!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

The Remove men were looking rather grim. The Fourth had scored two goals, neither of which would have been let through with any man but Bunter between the posts. Properly speaking, the Remove ought to have been one up.

Really, they could hardly expect to keep the Fourth out of shooting distance of goal, all through the game, from beginning to end. And it was obvious that, whenever a Fourth Form man had a chance at Bunter, there was going to be a goal for the Fourth. Practically, they had an open goal to defend. It was rather a handicap. The best men in the Remove could have done it, but it looked as if the second-rate men couldn't.

"A game isn't lost till it's won!" said Bob Cherry hopefully.

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ass!" said Nugent.

"We'll beat 'em yet—"

"You'll get slaughtered, later on, if we don't!" said Johnny.

The whistle went, and the game restarted. Sir Reginald was still standing and watching, with keen interest in the exploits of Cecil Reginald. Mr. Capper, with cold feet, shuffling them to keep them warm, was still in attendance on the baronet. Sir Reginald's eyeglass never left the game.

The Remove attacked hotly. There was a struggle in front of the Fourth Form goal, and Harry Wharton went over. When he rose he was limping, his face pale. Quite by accident—accidents will happen at Soccer—a boot had crashed on his knee, and he was almost lamed. He staggered, and Jim Valentine caught him.

"All serene!" muttered Wharton.

"I'm going on. It's all right."

He went on; but it was far from all right. From that moment the captain of the Remove, who really ought to have gone off the field, was only a passenger in the game.

It was the last stroke of bad luck. The Remove had had a sporting chance, in spite of Bunter in goal, but that chance had vanished now.

Once more the Fourth got away with the ball, and Temple kicked. Billy Bunter was on the watch this time. Still, he seemed taken by surprise when the leather landed on his fat circumference, and rebounded into the goalmouth.

"Oooooogh!" gurgled Bunter.

He sat down, winded.

"Oooooogh! Gooooogh! Urrrrrrh!"

said Bunter.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrrrrrrgh!"

Billy Bunter was still sitting in goal when the game re-started. He sat with both hands pressed to his extensive equator. For the present, Bunter was not bothering about goal-keeping. He had a pain where he had packed his dinner, and all his attention was concentrated on it.

"Look out, Bunter!" yelled the Remove fellows as Temple & Co. came on again.

"Oooooogh!" moaned Bunter.

"Look out! Save—"

"Wurrrrrgh!"



Nutty's skilful fingers got busy on the desk, and it was soon opened. Then the cracksman's flashlamp gleamed into the interior. There was a glint in his eyes and a grin on his pasty face, as he opened the drawer in which Temple kept his valuables.

The ball shot over Bunter's head as he sat.

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shriek of laughter round the field. A ball shooting over the head of a sitting goalkeeper was an uncommon sight at Greyfriars.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"The gamefulness is up!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Four—one!" said Temple to his men. "I think I told you fellows that this was our win. What?"

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

The Remove fought on to the finish. Jim Valentine landed the ball with a long shot, that luckily came off; and after that Frank Nugent succeeded in putting it in. Temple looked a little less confident. Given time, it looked possible for the Remove still to pull the game out of the fire. But time was short now.

Potter of the Fifth blew the whistle, with the score still four—three, and the game was over.

Bob Cherry quitted the field rather hurriedly, dodging two or three football boots as he went.

Billy Bunter rolled out of goal.

He blinked at Harry Wharton with a scornful and contemptuous blink.

"Licked!" said Bunter. "Licked!"

Well, you asked for it! If you'd played me at centre-forward, as I advised you, we'd have mopped them up. Another time I shall refuse to play, except in the front line. As it stands, I can only say—Keep off, you beast!"

Bunter fled.

It was not a happy Remove team that went off the field. Some of the Fourth did not look specially bucked by their victory. But Cecil Reginald Temple was all smiles. He had beaten the Remove, as he had said that he would

do—and that was that! Temple threw on his natty coat and joined his father. Sir Reginald Temple patted him on the shoulder.

"A good game, what?" said Sir Reginald. "Good—what? What? By Jove, it's cold, but I'm glad I've seen it through. Splendid game—what? Gratters, my boy! A fine win—a very fine win! What?"

And Sir Reginald walked off to the House with his son, very proud indeed of his boy, who was so good at games.

There was tea in Temple's study in the Fourth, and Sir Reginald beamed over the festive board.

He was in high good-humour.

He had doubted—he had had reason to doubt—whether Cecil Reginald was not a bit of a slacker. Now he had watched him win a football match, and he was bucked and pleased.

As a dutiful son, Temple of the Fourth was glad to give his pater satisfaction. Probably he was gladder still at the form that satisfaction took. The only doubt was whether it would be a siver or a tenner. It proved to be a tenner. After the baronet was gone in his car, Temple put that tenner in his desk, feeling that it had been worth while, for once, to make work of Soccer.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Done in the Dark!

BLACK, gloomy, lonely, the wood lay silent, under the midnight sky. A car without lights backed into a rutty lane, shadowed by leafless branches. It stopped, and the engine was silent. Barney Hayes, sitting at the wheel, chewed an unlighted cigarette.

Inside the car, Nosey Clark peered

from the window into the shadows, his black eyes glinting in the gloom. He threw open the door at last, and his companion stepped from the car—Nutty Nixon, the slim, fishy-eyed, pasty-faced cracksman. The silence of the tomb reigned over the frosty woods and the dark, sunken lane where the car was hidden, half a mile from Greyfriars School.

It was more than a week since Nosey Clark had been near Greyfriars. But the master crook had been only biding his time. Once more Nutty was to make the attempt to carry out the cunning scheme the master crook had formed for driving Jim Valentine from his last refuge. Nutty was not keen on the task. Twice he had failed, and the last time he had had a narrow escape. And now that he knew that Inspector Grimes was keeping the school under close observation Nutty would have preferred any other scene for his operations.

"I'll wait for you here, Nutty," muttered Nosey Clark, from the car. "No good both of us going; one's more likely to keep out of sight. Keep your eyes peeled."

"I'll watch it!" grunted Nutty.

There was keen anxiety in the face of the man with the vulture's beak. Twice he had failed—and he could not guess how. To blacken Jim Valentine's name at Greyfriars, to drive him from the school, had seemed easy enough when Nosey planned it. A theft in the school, with a clue leading to the "boy with a past," and no sign left that the House had been entered from without—it had seemed easy enough. Yet he had failed. Now he was doubtful of success, though he was savagely determined that the scheme should be carried

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(Continued from page 13.)

out. The hard, seared mind of the crook did not believe that, in the long run, good must triumph over evil. Yet he was almost driven to believe so by failure after failure.

Nutty Nixon slipped away in the darkness.

By dark ways, fitting like a shadow, he approached the school, and when he was close by the walls of Greyfriars his watchfulness was redoubled.

It suited the plans of the crooks that Jim Valentine should be under the suspicion of the police. But it made the task they had set themselves dangerous. Watching for Valentine, Mr. Grimes had very nearly caught Nutty, only a week ago; and Nutty was aware that peril lurked in every shadow now.

By the old cloister wall he climbed quietly in, and crept on in the gloom. His eyes were about him, like those of a hunted animal. The faintest of sounds, in the stillness of the night, was enough to warn Nutty. Suddenly he stopped and crouched in the dark shadow of an elm, watching.

A burly figure appeared for a moment or two in the glimmer of the stars in the Greyfriars quadrangle.

Nutty's eyes snapped.

Mr. Grimes was not far away! Nutty Nixon's heart beat unpleasantly. The burly figure disappeared again, but it was a good ten minutes before Nutty left his cover and crept towards the House again.

He had to do his work with the keen Courtfield inspector fairly on the spot, and the danger was great. But he was on his guard, and as wary as a fox.

By a back door that opened to a skeleton key, Nutty glided into the House, locking the door after him, in case Mr. Grimes should make investigations.

Once within the House, he breathed more freely.

Inspector Grimes had a key to Master's Gate, and could let himself into the precincts of the school at any hour he liked. But he did not have an entry to the House. Nutty, once within, was safe from him.

Otherwise, he did not feel wholly safe.

On his last visit someone had been up at one in the morning, and had collared Nutty in the dark. There had been an alarm, and the whole school roused. It looked to Nutty as if a watch was kept within the House—improbable as it seemed. Or Jim, perhaps, suspected something, and watched in the dark hours. Nutty wondered if it was that. He could not tell; but he knew, at all events, that he had had a narrow escape last time, and he was doubly on his guard this time. This time he was going nowhere near the dormitories, as he had done before; nowhere near the master's studies.

Little as anyone at Greyfriars suspected it, Nutty knew the interior of the House like a book. He had explored it

thoroughly more than once, in the hours of darkness. There was one part of the building where, even if anyone was awake, no one was likely to be. That was the junior studies. With silent, creeping step, Nutty entered the passage where the Fourth Form had their quarters. All was dark and silent and still.

He entered the first study in the passage, closed the door, drew the curtain across the window, and turned on a flashlight. In a couple of minutes he had examined the room, and drawn it blank. He passed on to the next study and gave it the "once-over" in the same way, again drawing blank. He was looking for some article of value—money preferably—which was certain to be missed by its owner if taken away. In the second study—No. 2 in the Fourth—he had better luck.

As soon as he entered Study No. 2, Nutty's sharp eyes detected at once that it was a room belonging to a wealthy fellow.

A Persian rug, presented to Cecil Reginald Temple by a fond aunt, was worth a good many guineas. A handsome mahogany desk had cost a good sum. Neither, of course, was of any use for Nutty's purpose, but they indicated that he would probably find what he wanted.

The desk was locked, but no lock was safe from the fingers of the skilful crackman. The desk was soon open, and Nutty's flashlight gleamed into the interior.

There were several little drawers inside, and he opened them one after another. And into one of them he looked with glinting eyes and a grin on his pasty face.

It was the drawer where Temple of the Fourth kept his valuables. There was a beautiful tiepin and a ring, several half-crowns, and a banknote for ten pounds.

Nutty's thievish fingers soon cleared the drawer. He left the half-crowns there, unregarded. The tiepin, the ring, and the banknote he picked out, and then shut the drawer. He closed the desk and locked it again.

His next proceeding was rather curious.

Having looked the desk, he proceeded to force it open with a jemmy. The lock cracked sharply.

Nutty grinned.

Anyone looking at that desk in the morning would never have dreamed that it had been under the hands of a skilful crackman. It looked as if it had been forced open by a clumsy hand—the hand of a schoolboy, for instance.

Nutty dropped the ring on Temple's carpet, in the middle of the study. Then he left the study, and closed the door after him.

Silent, stealthily, watchful, he crept out of the Fourth Form passage to the landing at the end. On the landing the Remove passage opened, farther on.

He stepped into the Remove passage and dropped the tiepin on the floor there. When it was found in the morning it would be an infallible clue to the way the thief had gone, and it would be a natural supposition that a frightened, uneasy thief in the night had dropped it on his way to hide his plunder.

Then Nutty entered Study No. 1 with the banknote in his hand.

The curtain was drawn, and he turned on his flashlight.

After a cursory glance round the room he stepped to the bookshelf, where a couple of dozen volumes, mostly school books, lay.

Nutty picked up one—a "Holiday

Annual." The name of H. Wharton was written in it, and he replaced it at once. He picked up another—a Latin dictionary—and read Frank Nugent's name, and laid it down again. The third book he picked up was a "Hobby Annual," and in that he found the name of Jim Valentine.

Carefully Nutty placed the banknote between the leaves, and replaced the volume on the shelf.

His work was done now.

Silently he glided away in the darkness. A few minutes later he was outside the House, stealing away.

If Inspector Grimes was still on the spot, Nutty saw nothing of him, and he saw nothing of Nutty.

The crackman slipped away over a wall, and disappeared into the night. A quarter of an hour afterwards he was back at the spot where the car waited in the darkness of the sunken lane in the wood.

Nosoy Clark peered from the car.

"O.K.," said Nutty briefly.

And the car shot away through the winter night.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry sat up in bed and stared.

The dim winter dawn was glimmering in at the high windows of the Remove dormitory; but the rising-bell had not yet begun to clang.

So it was rather a surprise when the door opened and Mr. Quelch looked in.

Two or three of the Remove fellows awakened, and sat up and looked at the Form master.

Harry Wharton rubbed his eyes.

He wondered for a moment whether he had overslept himself, and failed to hear the rising-bell.

"Has the bell gone, sir?" he asked.

"No, Wharton, the bell has not gone yet," answered Mr. Quelch. "It will ring in a few minutes."

"Oh!" said Wharton blankly.

If the rising-bell had not yet gone, it was a mystery why Mr. Quelch was there. More of the fellows awakened, and all eyes turned on the Remove master. His face was portentously serious in its expression. It dawned on the juniors that something was up, though they could not begin to guess what it was.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Quelch did not answer that question.

His eyes turned on Jim Valentine's bed.

Valentine had not yet awakened; he lay sound asleep. The Remove master's eyes lingered on his unconscious face for a few seconds. Then he turned to the wondering captain of the Remove.

"Wharton, are you aware whether any boy left this dormitory during the night?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered Harry. "I'm pretty sure not."

"Did you awaken in the night?"

"Well, no; but I think I should have if any fellow had got up."

Mr. Quelch's glance passed along the row of beds. The sound of voices awakened the rest of the Remove, with the exception of Billy Bunter. Bunter snored on, regardless.

Jim Valentine sat up like the rest. His eyes turned with a startled look on his Form master. Mr. Quelch avoided his glance.

"My boys," said Mr. Quelch, in a

low, quiet tone, "if anyone was awake during the night, let him speak. Something has occurred and the matter is serious. Any boy who awakened in the night will tell me so at once."

"I woke up, sir," said Bolsover major.

"I remember hearing one strike."

"You did not leave your bed?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Did you hear anyone else do so?"

"No, sir."

"Can anyone else give me any information?" asked Mr. Quelch, looking round again.

There was no answer. Apparently nobody else in the Remove had awakened during the night.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, "I will now ask you whether any boy is prepared to confess that he left this dormitory during the night?"

For an instant his eyes were on Valentine.

Jim felt his heart beat quickly.

Something had happened. What? He could not guess what, but he knew that it was something that caused the shadow of suspicion to fall upon him.

His face paled.

He remembered the incident of Lord Mauleverer's missing notecase, Wharton had found the notecase hidden in the cupboard in his study—Valentine's study. It had been kept secret—and, after a struggle with dark doubts, Wharton had resolved still to trust him, in spite of appearances. Was it something of the same kind again? Was there some secret thief in the school who was base enough to cover up his own tracks by throwing suspicion on the boy with a past? The look on Mr. Quelch's face seemed to say so, and Jim's heart was like lead in his breast.

No one answered the Remove master's question. If any fellow had left the

dormitory in the night, he was not disposed to confess as much.

"Wake Bunter," said Mr. Quelch at last.

Bob Cherry slipped from his bed and shook the fat junior. Billy Bunter's eyes opened with a sleepy blink.

"Beast! 'Tain't rising-bell!" he grunted. "Let a fellow alone!"

"Wake up, Bunter—"

"Shan't! Leave a fellow alone!" grunted Bunter.

"It's Quelch, you fathead—"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" snapped Bunter peevishly. "As if the old donkey would come rooting up here before rising-bell! Look here—"

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. The Owl of the Remove sat up and took notice in a hurry. "Oh, sir! I didn't

(Continued on next page.)

WHO SCORED THAT ONE?

WHEN can it be fairly said that a footballer scores a goal against his own side? This is a question which is raised by an obviously thoughtful MAGNET reader. He says he notices that from time to time the newspapers say that this or that player scored against his own side—put the ball into his own net—and he wants to know just how these things are decided.

The answer to the latter part of the question is, of course, that these things are decided by the newspaper writers themselves. They have to be guided by their own judgment in this matter of recording the goalscorers in any particular match. This question regarding players who score against their own side, however, raises a very interesting general point as to when a forward should be credited with a goal and when a defender shall, as we might say, be "debited" with scoring against his own side.

It is quite frequently stated that a full-back has scored against his own side when the ball has merely hit him and thus been deflected into the net.

Personally, I should say that this is a wrong decision, and the reason why I suggest it is wrong is that it is not carried to its logical conclusion.

Suppose the centre-forward sends in a splendid shot which is going for the top corner of the net. The goalkeeper, with a tremendous leap, manages to get the tips of his fingers to the ball, but does not succeed in preventing it from travelling into the net. It is never suggested, on these occasions, that the goalkeeper scored against his own side. Of course not. Rather is the goalkeeper given the credit for a wonderful effort to save a shot which would have sent the ball into the net, anyhow.

The same ruling should, in fairness, be applied when the full-back, making an attempt to clear a ball in a difficult position, only manages to put it past his own goalkeeper. In these circumstances the player who sent in the shot should be credited with the goal. There are cases, of course, in which it is quite right and fair to debit a player with scoring against his own goalkeeper. Take, for instance, the pass back from the full-back to the goalkeeper. If the full-back misjudges that backward pass; puts it in such a way that the goalkeeper cannot get the ball, and it goes into the net, then the full-back can be said to have scored against his own side.

TRAGIC BLUNDERS!

DURING this present season I have witnessed some tragic cases of players putting the ball past their own goalkeeper. Earlier in the season I happened to be watching

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Arsenal play Derby County. In the course of the match Duncan, the Derby outside-left, put across a low centre. Roberts, the Arsenal centre-half, was in a good position to clear, and the ball went straight to him. He tried to clear, but the ball skidded off his boot and went into his own net. Only two minutes later Duncan again put the ball across in almost exactly the same way. Again Roberts tried to kick clear, and again he turned the ball into his own net. As Roberts remarked somewhat grimly after the game was over, it was the first occasion in his life on which he had scored two goals in a match, and they were both into his own net.

I think these instances were typical of what could be called scoring against his own side. On each occasion the Arsenal centre-half should have cleared, and on neither occasion would the ball have gone into the net if he had not touched it. Hence my opinion that it was correct to say that Roberts scored twice against his own side.

These instances are, of course, always regarded as tragic so far as the player himself is concerned, especially if the side loses the match in consequence of the mishap. I shall never forget Tom Clay, the Tottenham Hotspur full-back, scoring a goal against his own side during a Cup-tie against Aston Villa just after the War. Clay turned a centre past his own goalkeeper. When the match was over and the Spurs had lost the game as the result of that accident, Clay was so upset that he declared he would never kick a football again as long as he lived. He did not carry out that threat, and I think I was partly responsible for him changing his mind.

As it happened I saw Clay soon after

the game was over, and found him heart-broken over the incident. When he insisted that he had lost the match for his side, I pointed out to him that he had no more lost the match by his one mistake than the forwards who had failed to score with the goal open before them had lost the match.

Unfortunately—and in a sense unfairly—we remember the mistakes made by defenders when they happen to score against their own side. We do not remember the mistakes made by forwards who fail to score when all they have to do is to kick the ball into the net. Yet actually there is very little difference in the size of the blunder.

GIVE CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE!

COMING back to the original question, there can be no official decision as to when a player scores against his own side, because the rules of the game make no sort of provision for recording the actual scorers of the goals. So far as the rules go, it doesn't matter who scores, and that is the proper view to take. I sometimes think that the lists of goalscorers which are regularly published are a mistake. They take no sort of count of the player who made the opening.

You can see the point I am making when I mention that Alex James, the inside-left of Arsenal, scored his first goal this season when his side's total was sixty-nine. Yet James himself had been at least partly responsible for a big proportion of those sixty-nine goals. He had not scored himself, but he had made goals for others.

"LINESMAN,"

see you—I mean. I wasn't calling you an old donkey, sir! I—I never thought you were an old donkey, sir—"

"You young rascal!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"I—I didn't, sir," gasped Bunter, in alarm. "I—I wouldn't dream of calling you an old donkey, sir! I—I'm much too respectful to tell a Form master what I think of him, sir—I am, really."

There was a chortle in the dormitory.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "Bunter, answer me at once! Did you awaken during the night?"

"Oh! No, sir! It wasn't me!" gasped Bunter.

"What was not you, Bunter?"

"Anything, sir! I mean, nothing! I—I was fast asleep all the time," said the alarmed Owl. "If Coker of the Fifth has missed that cake, I never had it."

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"I—I never knew he had a cake, sir!" gasped Bunter. "When he copped me in his study last evening, sir, I—I'd gone there to borrow a Latin die—and he kicked me for nothing, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter, you crassly stupid boy! Did you leave this dormitory during the night?"

"Owl! No!" gasped Bunter. "Never, sir! I—I may have thought of going down to Coker's study, sir, but I—I—I didn't! I fell asleep! All these fellows can bear witness that I was fast asleep all night, sir, as they were fast asleep, too!"

Mr. Quelch uttered a sound like a snort and quitted the dormitory.

Remove fellows turned out of bed, without waiting for Gosling to begin on the rising-bell. They were excited and curious to know what had happened. Billy Bunter groped for his big spectacles, and jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked round him in alarm.

"I say, you fellows, it wasn't me, you know!" he exclaimed. "Just like Quelch to jump on me! 'Tain't fair! They can't miss a cake, or anything, without thinking of me at once! As if I'd touch a fellow's cake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I never had the cake—I've been dreaming about it, but I never had it—"

"You howling ass!" said Harry Wharton. "It's not a cake—a cake wouldn't bring Quelch up here looking like a gargoyle! It's something a jolly lot more serious than a cake!"

"It is something terrific and preposterous," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But what the dickens has happened?" exclaimed Squiff.

"Goodness know!"

"Well, if somebody's had that cake, it wasn't me," declared Bunter. "If it's anything else, very likely it was Coker of the Fifth did it. He was up that night the burglar came—and very likely he's been up again. Coker's a thorough roiter, you fellows—kicked me last night—"

"I guess he didn't kick you hard enough, you fat clam!" snorted Fisher T. Fish. "And I calculate you've got another kick coming: if you don't cough up the tuppence you owe me!"

"Oh, you go and eat cake!" said Bunter. "Blow you and your twopence!"

The rising-bell began to ring. Billy Bunter turned out of bed; curiosity to learn what had happened overcoming his desire to snatch a few extra minutes

of slumber. The Remove were unusually early that morning; but when they came down they found that other fellows were also up early.

They came on an excited crowd of the Fourth and the Shell. It seemed that the Remove dormitory was not the only one visited by a Form master before rising-bell. Mr. Capper had looked in on the Fourth; Mr. Hacker on the Shell; and it transpired that Mr. Wiggins had visited the Third; and Mr. Twigg the Second. Evidently the beaks were very keen to learn whether any junior had been down in the night.

"It's in the Fourth!" declared Fry.

"Whatever it is, it's in the Fourth."

"How do you know that?" asked Harry Wharton.

"They've got a prefect in the study passage, to keep fellows from going to the studies. And they've called Temple."

Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth Form, was not in the buzzing crowd downstairs. Everybody wanted to know where he was, and what the beaks had called him away for. Capper, it seemed, had taken Temple to Study No. 2 in the Fourth, and he was still there—but no other fellow was allowed to go to the Fourth Form studies. From which fellows deduced that "it," whatever "it" was, had happened in Temple's study; and they wondered, with burning curiosity, what it could be.

Fellows gathered in excited groups, in the frosty air in the quad, discussing the mysterious affair. Even Billy Bunter almost forgot breakfast. Something had happened in the night—something awfully serious, which had set all the beaks agog! But what was it?

So far, nobody knew, but everybody was frightfully keen to learn; and keenest of all was the "boy with a past," upon whose heart a vague apprehension lay with the weight of lead.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Cute!

"SAY, bo!"

"Leave me alone!" snapped Jim Valentine.

"Say, you don't want to go off on your ear—"

said Fisher T. Fish, in surprise.

"Leave me alone, you fool!"

Valentine, generally one of the best-tempered fellows in the Remove, snapped at the surprised American junior almost savagely.

While the rest of the fellows were discussing the mystery of the morning, in excited groups, Valentine had left them, quietly, and was walking by himself under the frosty elms.

He wanted to be alone—to think! What had happened he did not know and could not guess—but his heart was heavy with fear.

He had been in danger before—he was only too well aware that suspicion must inevitably have fallen on him had not his friends kept secret the episode of the notecase.

That danger had missed him. But had it recurred? Was it something of the same kind again? What had Mr. Quelch, his generous friend and protector, been thinking when he looked into the dormitory that morning? Did he doubt—did he suspect?

The boy's mind was in a torment.

He was in no mood for Fisher T. Fish. Fishy, on the other hand, was surprised and offended. He had tracked Valentine out in that quiet walk under

the elms. To speak to him on a subject that was very near his heart. He had spoken in his most amicable and ingratiating tone, only to have his head snapped off in return. It got Fishy's goat!

Valentine turned angrily away. Fishy stared after him, and jerked his bony person after him—and grabbed him by the sleeve.

"Will you leave me alone, you fool?"

"Aw, can it!" snapped Fisher T. Fish. "No need to go on on your ear when a galoot speaks to you, I guess. We got to get this matter settled."

Valentine breathed hard; but he calmed himself. He did not want fellows to see that his nerves were in rags.

"What matter?" he asked as quietly as he could. "What do you mean?"

"I guess I'm talking about that 'Hobby Annual,'" explained Fisher T. Fish. "That guy Bunter allowed that it was his'n, and I gave him tuppence for it. Waal, if the book was yourn—"

"You gabbling ass, give a fellow a rest!"

"If the book was yourn," repeated Fisher T. Fish, "I ain't asking you to buy it of me. But where do I come in? I lose tuppence?"

If Fisher T. Fish had lost a thousand pounds he could not have spoken with more harrowing earnestness.

"That guy Bunter is broke, like he always is," went on Fishy. "I've kicked him—and peck—hard. But that ain't cash! See? No good trying to touch Bunter for tuppence! Tuppence ain't much, bo! Tuppence won't hurt you!"

Fisher T. Fish's nasal voice grew persuasive; he almost cooed through his long nose.

"You're the guy that's responsible. You lend that fat clam a book, and he makes out it's his'n, and sells it to me for tuppence. I ain't losing tuppence! You shouldn't lend your books to that guy, see? Well, I ain't howling over losing my profit—I guess I can stand that, though it's sure fierce. Shall out that tuppence, and we'll call it a deal! You got me?"

"You silly, stingy, swindling Shylock!" said Valentine. "Is that what you're bothering me for? Take that!"

He grasped Fisher T. Fish by his long, bony neck, and banged his Transatlantic head against the nearest tree.

Bang!

"Aw! Wake snakes!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "Great jumping Jehosaphat! Ow, my cabeza! Wow!"

Bang!

"Yaroooooh!"

Twopence was not to Jim Valentine so important a sum as to Fisher T. Fish. He had certainly less money than Fishy; but he did not regard it as such a priceless article. Really, he hardly cared a straw whether he had twopence more or twopence less. To Fisher T. Fish it was a matter of the deepest import. If he lost twopence on a transaction, it was enough to give Fishy a heartache.

To let a benighted son of John Bull put it across him, even to the small extent of twopence, was altogether too painful to a cute guy who had been raised in Noo Yark. Somebody had to pay Fish, or else Fishy would remain unpaid; which was too awful to contemplate!

Had Valentine been in his usual good and cheery temper he might have thrown the twopence to Fishy, like a bone to a dog, and left Fishy as happy as a dog with a bone.



"You cheeky rotter!" bawled Bunter. "I never touched your rotten stamps—and twopence isn't much, either, after all I've done for you! Take that, you beast! Yah!" Whiz! The "Hobby Annual" flew. Peter Todd saw it coming, and dodged in time. Crash! Smash! Clatter! The volume flew past his head and crashed through the window!

Fishy had caught him at an unfortunate moment. What he did was to bang Fishy's head on the elm, and he banged it hard.

Fishy wriggled and roared.

"Now leave a fellow in peace, you gabbling fathead!" snapped Valentine, and he sat Fishy down with a bump and walked away.

"Aw! Carry me home to die!" gasped Fisher T. Fish.

He sat and rubbed his bony head. It felt hurt! He crawled to his feet at last, angry and indignant. He glared after Valentine, strongly tempted to run him down, collar him, and make potato-scrappings of him. But that, after all, was not business! Moreover, in the event of a scrap, it would probably not be Jim Valentine who would have been turned into potato-scrappings!

Fisher T. Fish breathed indignation and wrath; but he did not follow Valentine. Leaving that youth to himself, Fisher T. Fish jerked away to the House. Fishy knew what he was going to do.

He went up the Remove staircase.

Across the landing he saw Wingate of the Sixth, with a grave face, in the Fourth Form passage. He heard a murmur of voices from a study farther on. Fellows were still being kept away from the Fourth Form studies.

That did not concern Fisher T. Fish. He was not wasting a thought on the mystery that excited all the other fellows. He had a much more important matter to think of.

He went into the Remove passage and into Study No. 1. His keen eye glanced along the bookshelf, and fixed on the "Hobby Annual." His bony fingers grabbed that volume.

Fishy had bought that volume, fair and square, from Bunter. If Bunter had no right to sell it, that was a matter that Bunter could settle with the owner. It was as clear as noonday to Fisher T. Fish that he had a right to keep that volume until his twopence was refunded. And that was what Fisher T. Fish was going to do.

With the "Hobby Annual" in his bony grasp Fisher T. Fish whisked out of Study No. 1, and whisked along the Remove passage. He whisked into Study No. 14, the study he shared with Johnny Bull and Squiff. The locker under the window belonged to Fishy, and he had a key to it.

He opened the locker, laid the "Hobby Annual" within, closed down the lid, and locked it again.

His frowning brow cleared when he left Study No. 14 with the key in his pocket. He grinned as he went down the stairs. If any guy in this mouldy old island guessed that he could put it over on Fisher T. Fish, that guy had another guess coming! So Fisher T. Fish said to himself, with pardonable satisfaction at his own spryness and cuteness.

He went out into the quad and looked for Valentine. Jim was still walking under the elms, a prey to dismal reflections. This time Fisher T. Fish addressed him from a safe distance—contact between his bony head and the trunk of an elm, being neither grateful nor comforting.

"Say, bo!" jeered Fishy. "You want your 'Hobby Annual' again you'll know where to come for it—see? When you want it, you mosey along to a galoot about my size, and bring tuppence in your fist! You get me?" "Oh, shut up!"

"Waal, I've put you wise," said Fisher T. Fish. "You won't see that pesky Annual again till you cough up my tuppence! And that's what's the matter with Hanner!"

Fisher T. Fish stalked away again—and Valentine forgot his existence the next moment.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Who?

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE of the Fourth had a worried look at brekker. He had cause to look and to feel worried. Only yesterday Sir Reginald Temple had handed him that munificent "tip" of a tenner. And already that tenner was gone from Cecil Reginald's gaze like a beautiful dream.

There was a ceaseless buzz at breakfast. Most of the fellows knew by this time what had happened in the night.

At the Remove table Mr. Quelch, who breakfasted with his Form, sat with a face which Skinner compared to a gargyle. His lips were tight, his brows knitted, his gimlet eyes had a glint in them. It was easy for the fellows to see that Mr. Quelch was deeply disturbed by what had happened.

Why it should specially worry the Remove master they did not know. There had been a theft in a Fourth Form study—that was clear. Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, might be expected to take it to heart. But it was no special concern of the Remove master's—so far as most fellows could see.

After breakfast the Greyfriars follows
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gathered in groups again, with more to discuss than before—now that they knew what had happened. A crowd surrounded Temple of the Fourth.

"Some rotter's got my tenner!" said Temple. "It's frightfully thick, isn't it? Can't quite believe such a thing could happen at Greyfriars! But there it is! Some fearful rotter went down in the night and busted open my desk and bagged my tenner! Horrid, ain't it?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"What's the Head doing about it?" asked Fry.

"I don't know. He's got it in hand, of course. Some rotter will be sacked for this—and the sooner the better!"

"Anything else taken, Temple?" asked Harry Wharton.

"They've found the other things," answered Temple. "You see, I had a drawer in my desk, where I kept a few things—desk locked, of course. The housemaid found a ring lyin' on the carpet when she was sweepin' the room early in the mornin', and picked it up, and then she noticed that the desk had been broken open. She called Mrs. Kebble, and Mrs. Kebble called Capper, and then Capper called me, as it was my desk. Then we found out."

"The pincher must have dropped the ring after pinchin' it," remarked Vernon-Smith.

"I suppose so. I dare say he was in a tremble at the time—a fellow would be," said Temple, with a nod. "He seems to have meant to make a clean sweep, for he took the ring, and the banknote, and a tiepin—my ruby tiepin—from the drawer, leaving only a few half-crowns. The tiepin was picked up near the landin', just inside the Remove passage."

"Then the pincher went that way!"

"Must have!"

"Pretty careless sort of ass, pinchin' things and droppin' them about," said the Bounder.

"Well, I fancy he was in a blue funk—a fellow would be, rootin' about the House in the middle of the night, stealin'."

"Yes, that's so."

"Tremblin' from head to foot, very likely," said Temple. "You can fancy his feelin's at the time. If he dropped somethin' he couldn't find it without a light, and he wouldn't be likely to root about with a light."

"He didn't drop the banknote, though," said Peter Todd.

"Well, it hasn't been found."

"I say, you fellows, it's jolly queer that the pin was picked up in the Remove passage," said Billy Bunter.

"What would a Fourth Form man want to go along the Remove passage for?"

"It wasn't a Fourth Form man, you fat chump!" snapped Temple. "There's no pinchers in the Fourth!"

"Dash it all!" said Fry. "It looks as—"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "Looks as if it was a Remove man! Nobody else would take his loot to the Remove studies!"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"Well, what does it look like?" asked Temple.

"You silly fathead—"

"No good yellin' at a fellow, Cherry! The pincher went to your passage after robbin' my study—that's proved. If he wasn't a Remove man I'd like to know what he went there for—and so would the Head!"

The Fourth did not take long to make up their minds on that point. They jumped at the chance of believing that the thief was not in their own number. And, as Temple said, what did it look like?

The obvious theory was that the thief had been on his way to his own study to hide the plunder when he dropped the tiepin, and lost it in the dark.

Remove fellows, however, were not likely to admit anything of the kind. Bob Cherry proceeded to tell Temple of the Fourth what he thought of him, and of his silly ideas. And a hot argument was soon in progress.

Jim Valentine had listened to the talk in silence. Now he moved away, his hands in his pockets, his brow dark and

troubled. It seemed to the hapless boy that a net was closing round him.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent exchanged a glance, and followed Valentine. What had happened was a shock to them—that was not to be denied. What it looked like they knew only too well. Once more their faith in the boy with a past was undergoing a severe strain.

Wharton touched Valentine on the arm and stopped him under the elms, at a distance from the other fellows.

Jim looked at him, with a bitter face. "You think—" he muttered.

"No," said Harry, though it cost him an effort. "No—never! I've said that I trust you, and I do trust you! But what can it mean?"

"It was a Remove man," breathed Nugent. "Who else would be going to our studies after pinchin' in the Fourth?"

Valentine drew a deep breath.

"I can't make it out," he said—"I can't! But when you found Mauly's notecase in my study, I told you what I thought. Somebody who knows about me—knows that I must be suspected if there's a theft—is putting it on me. That tiepin was dropped near my study on purpose."

"B-but," stammered Wharton, "who can—"

"I tell you I can't make it out. But it can't be coincidence. Mauly's notecase, with the money gone, in the study cupboard a few weeks ago, now a stolen tiepin picked up near my study door. It's plain enough."

It was plain enough—if Valentine himself was not guilty. The chums of the Remove were determined to believe that he was not guilty.

Yet to believe that there was a dishonest fellow at Greyfriars thieving, and deliberately landing suspicion upon an innocent fellow, was too steep. They simply could not believe that. It was not sense.

But what were they to believe?

"Do you think that Quelch—" asked Nugent.

"I've seen it in his face," answered Valentine quietly. "He's trying to stick to me; but he can't help doubting. How can he? I'm not blaming him."

He pressed his hand to his forehead. "I feel like a fellow in a trap. After that notecase affair, I told you very likely it would happen again, with something pointing to me. Now it's happened. That's all."

"It doesn't point to you, any more than to any other Remove fellow, if you come to that," said Harry. "Only because—"

"Because I'm what I am, or what I was," said Valentine bitterly. "What's Quelch to think, and the Head? The Head was doubtful about letting me into the school at all. Quelch got round him to make him agree. What is he to think now? Did these things happen before I came here?"

The two juniors were silent, dumb-founded by that remark. It was like proof of Valentine's guilt from his own mouth.

"Look here, they'll find the banknote," said Harry. "They're bound not to leave a stone unturned, and when it's found, it will see you clear."

Valentine nodded.

"That's all I've got to hope for," he said. "But it's easy enough to hide a banknote. Goodness knows if they'll find it!"

"Anyhow, it won't be found in our study—and that leaves you out," said Frank. "I—I'm afraid they'll search our study in the circumstances, but they won't find Temple's beastly banknote there—so that's all right."

"Yes, that's all right," said Wharton,

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with a feeling of relief. "They'll search the room—that's a cert! But that's all the better really, as it will prove that the rotten banknote isn't there. The pincher wouldn't leave it where another fellow might find it."

"He's got it tucked away somewhere safe, you can bet!" answered Valentine. "It won't be found."

"It's in a study—a Remove study!" said Wharton, with conviction. "It's as clear as daylight that the thief went into the Remove passage with the loot. And what can he have done that for, except to put it in a Remove study—his own study, of course? That's plain enough. Well, then, when they root through Study No. 1, and find that it's not there, you're cleared."

Valentine's face brightened a little. Wharton's reasoning seemed good. Indeed, it was convincing to fellows who did not know, or suspect, that the theft was the work of a rascal from outside the school.

"There's the bell," said Frank. It was the bell for class, and the Greyfriars fellows headed for the Form-rooms. Valentine went in with Wharton and Nugent, and joined the crowd of Remove fellows. Mr. Quelch was speaking with Monsieur Charpentier at the door of the Remove-room. The Removees took their places, and their Form master briefly informed them that first lesson would be French with Monsieur Charpentier, and left them to it. Evidently Mr. Quelch was going to be occupied otherwise that morning. Valentine could guess how he was going to be occupied.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Search!

DR. LOCKE'S face was very grave as the Remove master entered his study.

Dr. Locke was giving the Sixth a miss, as Mr. Quelch was doing with the Remove. The affair of the theft in Temple's study occupied both their minds, to the exclusion of other matters.

Mr. Quelch's lips were compressed. He knew what was in the Head's mind—the same thought that he vainly strove to keep out of his own. But Mr. Quelch was resolved that he would, at least, continue to trust the boy he had befriended until trust was no longer possible.

"This is a dreadful occurrence, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "In the circumstances, it is impossible for me to avoid thinking of—"

"Valentine, of my Form?" asked Mr. Quelch quietly.

"Have you not thought of him in this connection, also?"

"I admit it," said the Remove master. "Yet I cannot believe that the boy could be so base, so ungrateful, so—"

"We must face the facts, sir," said Dr. Locke. "The boy had doubtful antecedents, and has been very reticent on the subject. His early training appears to have been very bad. I consented to admit him to this school on your responsibility. A theft has followed. We must face the facts."

He paused a moment. "Mr. Capper takes the view that the finding of the stolen tiepin in the Remove passage indicates that the thief was going to a Remove study when he dropped it—a natural view, I think. That would certainly point to the guilty boy being in your Form."

"It would appear so, sir," said Mr. Quelch reluctantly.

"As there is a boy in your Form of doubtful antecedents, the inference is

obvious," said the Head. "There can be little or no doubt that the missing banknote is at the present moment concealed in the thief's study—one of the Remove studies. In a word, sir, what doubt can there be that a search of Valentine's study will reveal it?"

"I suggest, sir, an immediate search of Valentine's study, to place the matter beyond doubt," said Mr. Quelch. "While the boys are in Form, this can be done without drawing undue attention to the matter. If the boy is innocent, it would be scarcely just to draw attention to him in this connection."

"Quite so!" said the Head. "As the Form master concerned, doubtless you will make the search, and I will be present."

"I am ready, sir." The two masters left the Head's study, and proceeded to the Remove passage. That passage, of course, was entirely deserted during class. They entered Study No. 1, and Mr. Quelch closed the door.

Dr. Locke stood by the window, leaving the disagreeable task of searching to the Remove master.

It was unpleasant enough, but it had to be done, and Mr. Quelch lost no time in proceeding with it.

That the stolen banknote would be found there, the Head had little doubt. And Mr. Quelch dreaded that he was right.

If the banknote was there the matter was definitely settled, and he was done with the boy who had repaid benevolence with black ingratitude and dishonesty. That very morning Jim Valentine would leave Greyfriars, never to return. Inspector Grimes believed that he was still in association with his old intimates. And if he was a thief, it could hardly be doubted that Mr. Grimes was right. Greyfriars was no place for a crook.

But Mr. Quelch still hoped. He dreaded to find the banknote; but he searched as carefully and meticulously as if he desired to find it. The truth had to be established, even if it was a crushing blow to him.

A professional detective could hardly have carried out the search more thoroughly than the Remove master.

Valentine had a small desk in the study; but it was not locked. Mr. Quelch searched that desk first. He found no banknote there, but he found a good many Latin exercises, which showed that the boy was a hard worker. Jim Valentine was a good deal behind most of the Remove, and Mr. Quelch had often given him extra tuition to help him make up the leeway. The contents of Valentine's desk showed how earnestly he was trying to make up for lost time. The sight of those Latin exercises, all of them written in a faultless hand, touched the Form master strangely.

In silence he went on with the search. Nothing was locked in the study, and he searched among Wharton's and Nugent's things, as well as Valentine's. It was unlikely that a thief would hide a stolen note where his study-mates might discover it; but Mr. Quelch was leaving nothing to chance.

He came to the bookshelf at last. Between the leaves of a book was a very probable place for the concealment of a banknote. Mr. Quelch took every book in turn, opened it, and shook out the leaves. Had any volume in Study No. 1 contained a banknote, that banknote would undoubtedly have come to light.

With every book that he picked up, Mr. Quelch trembled with the dread of seeing a crisp slip of paper flutter to the floor.

He breathed a deep, deep breath of relief when he had finished.

Silent, he looked at the Head, standing like a statue by the window. Dr. Locke had a perplexed look.

The banknote had not been found. The search had been so thorough that a pin hidden in the study must have come to light. The banknote was not there. That was certain now.

Dr. Locke coughed.

"The banknote is not here, Mr. Quelch?" he said slowly.

"That is now established beyond doubt, sir."

"On the boy's person, perhaps—"

Mr. Quelch set his lips. "We must be just, sir," he said. "Had the thief intended to keep the banknote in his pockets, he would have gone back to his dormitory after the theft—there would be no imaginable reason for him to come to the studies. That he came to the studies is proved by the fact that the tiepin was picked up in this passage."

"No doubt. We have, at all events, taken that much for granted hitherto," said the Head. "Nevertheless, he may, perhaps, have changed his mind. I think, Mr. Quelch, that Valentine had better be searched."

"It is for you to say, sir!"

"And his box in the dormitory."

"Let us proceed there, sir."

The two masters proceeded there. Valentine's possessions in the Remove dormitory were quickly examined. There was no result.

"I will call Valentine into my study when the Form is dismissed in break," said Mr. Quelch. "You will agree, sir, that it would be unfair to draw particular attention to him, when all our investigations, so far, have resulted only in exonerating him."

"Perfectly so!" assented the Head. "I leave the matter in your hands, Mr. Quelch. I take it that you have no expectation of finding the banknote in the boy's personal possession?"

"No, sir!" said Mr. Quelch firmly. "None! I admit that I feared I might find it in his study. It has not been found, and my faith in him is confirmed."

"In that eventuality, sir, suspicion must rest on the whole of the Remove, as it is undoubted that the thief came to the Remove studies after committing the theft in Temple's study."

Mr. Quelch winced. "It would appear so," he admitted reluctantly.

"You have no idea—no suspicion—of any individual?"

"None!"

"That can only mean, then, a rigorous search of every study in the Remove passage!"

The Head sighed. There were fourteen studies in the Remove passage, and two hours had been occupied in searching one of them! At the same rate of progress there were twenty-six hours of work ahead of somebody.

"You will inform me of the result, Mr. Quelch, when you have seen Valentine. If the banknote is not found on him—"

"I am convinced that it will not be found on him!"

"Then I shall have only one resource," said Dr. Locke. "I shall ask Inspector Grimes to call, and take the matter in hand. The matter must be placed in competent hands to be dealt with."

"I fully agree, sir."

And it was left at that, and the two masters separated. When the Remove came out in break, Trotter informed Jim Valentine that he was wanted in his Form master's study.

Jim's heart was beating painfully when he arrived there.

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Mr. Quelch's face was grave and troubled—but kind.

"Valentine," he said quietly, "you are aware of what has occurred—you cannot have failed to realise the suspicions to which it may have given rise."

"I understand, sir."

"Personally, my faith in you is not shaken," said Mr. Quelch. "Your study has been examined, and, as I hoped and believed, no discovery has been made there. Have you any objection to being searched?"

Valentine crimsoned.

"No, sir! None at all!" he answered steadily. "I suppose any other fellow here would think it an insult—but I have no right to think so. If only you believe in me, sir, I don't care about anything else."

"I do, my boy—I do," said Mr. Quelch. "This matter is terrible. It cannot be doubted that there is a thief in the school, and all evidence points to my Form. But I cannot and will not believe that you have betrayed my trust in you. It is to satisfy others, not myself, that I ask you to turn out your pockets."

"Willingly, sir!"

When Valentine left the study, no banknote having come to light, Mr. Quelch was left in harassed thought. Temple's banknote was still missing; and nothing remained now but to call in a police-officer to deal with the matter. The Remove master could only hope that Mr. Grimes' investigations would prove that the thief was not in his Form; but it was a very faint hope.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"G" IT!" snapped Fisher T. Fish. Fisher T. Fish was in his study, after morning school.

He was not feeling happy. He sat on the locker under his window caressing one of his keen, sharp, cute, spry eyes.

That eye had been punched.

Tubb of the Third had punched it. Once more Fisher T. Fish had made an attempt to collect the five shillings that Tubb owed him, on the half-crown Fishy had lent the previous term. Tubb had warned him that if he asked for it again he would hit him in the eye. Having asked for it again, Fishy had been duly hit in the eye—and now he was rubbing that eye and feeling bad.

He glared at Billy Bunter with his sound eye, as the fat junior presented himself in the doorway of Study No. 14. He was tired of Bunter. Even Bunter, the most all-fired jay at Greyfriars, had put it over on Fishy—and Fishy felt very sore about it. That big bargain in "Hobby Annuals" had turned out a delusion and a snare. Fishy had bagged the book itself, as a security for his twopence—it was in the locker he was sitting on. But Valentine had told him that if he did not take it back to Study No. 1 it would be called for—adding that if he called for it, he would bring, not twopence, but a five-bat.

Fishy did not like the prospect.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, and grinned at the aspect of Fishy's damaged eye. He found that eye more amusing than Fishy did.

"Absquatulate, you fat clam!" snarled Fisher T. Fish. "Got anything more to sell, you pie-faced boob? You took me in!"

"Well, I offered you a bob back for the book," grinned Bunter. "If you hadn't been the meanest skunk going, you—"

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"I guess I'll take the bob now!" said Fishy hopefully.

Billy Bunter chuckled, and held up two pennies in a fat hand.

"That's your twopence," he said. "I wouldn't have any dealings with a rotter like you, Fishy, only that beast Wharton's kicked me, and he says he's going to kick me again every time he sees me till Valentine gets his book back. I mean, I feel that it's up to me to let Valentine have his book back. I'm honest, I hope! I had to sell some stamps to raise this twopence, Fishy—it was lucky that Toddy had some! Well, here it is. Gimme the book!"

Bunter threw the pennies on the study table.

Fisher T. Fish grunted.

"I guess you can take the book!" he snapped, "and I guess I'll give you something to take along with it, you fat peccan!"

He rose from the locker, and sorted out his key. It went against the grain to part with anything for the same sum that he had given for it, but Fishy realised that there was no help for it. He did not want Valentine to call for his "Hobby Annual" with a five-bat in his hand. By bagging the book from Study No. 1, he had, at all events, got his twopence back, and that was a consolation. He picked the "Hobby Annual" out of the locker, and handed it to Bunter, and slipped the two pennies into his trousers pocket.

"Now git, you fat clam," he snarled, "and take that along with you!"

"Wow!" yelled Bunter, as he took it along with him—"it" being a drive from Fishy's boot.

The fat Owl dodged into the passage. Fishy sat down again, and resumed rubbing his eyes. Between the pain in his eye and the loss of the small American debt, Fishy was in a very unhappy state of mind. He felt that life was hardly worth living in a mouldy old island for a spry galoot that had been raised in Noo York.

Billy Bunter rolled down the Remove passage with the "Hobby Annual" under his fat arm.

Peter Todd was standing in the doorway of Study No. 7, with a rather grim expression on his face.

"Oh, here you are!" he said.

Bunter eyed him warily.

"If you've lost your stamps, old chap, I don't know anything about it," he said. "I never knew you had any stamps in your desk. I'm not a fellow to spy and pry in a fellow's desk, I hope."

"You fat villain!" said Peter. "I came up here to get a stamp to put on a letter home, and—"

"I'll help you look for them, if you like," said Bunter. "Wait a tick till I've taken this book into Valentine's study—it's his. I'll come back, old chap. I'm not going to scoot."

"You're jolly well not!" agreed Peter. And he grabbed the fat Owl by the collar and jerked him into Study No. 7. "Now, you pilfering porpoise, where's my stamps?"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Cough up those stamps!" hooted Toddy. "My hat, if Quelch knew you pinched a fellow's stamps, he would think you'd had Temple's tenner!"

"Why, you—you—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "You rotter! I suppose I can borrow a stamp from a pal! Leggo my collar, you beast! I'll lend you a stamp another time! I'm going to get some when my postal order comes!"

"You can borrow a stamp," agreed Toddy, "if you mention it to the owner first and get permission—not otherwise! Otherwise it's pinching—and

from pinching stamps to pinching banknotes isn't a very long step!"

"Oh, you beast!" gasped Bunter. "I never had the stamps! And there were only four ha'penny stamps there, as you jolly well know, and I had to get twopence from somewhere to give that beast Fishy! Leggo!"

Peter Todd did not let go. He spun the fat Owl over on the study carpet, and Billy Bunter's little fat nose almost punctured the carpet. He gave a muffled roar. Toddy seized the "Hobby Annual" in both hands and lifted it.

Whack!

"Whooooop!" roared Bunter, as the volume came down with a terrific swipe on his tight trousers.

Whack!

"Yocop! Leave off, you beast!" shrieked Bunter. "Take your bony knee out of the back of my neck, you rotter!"

Whack!

"You-ow-ow! You'll damage that book!" howled Bunter. "Wow!"

Whack!

"Wow! I never had those stamps!" howled Bunter. "I never sold them to a fellow for twopence, Peter! Besides, I had to have twopence—I had to, really! Leave off, you beast! I'll settle up out of my postal order—"

Whack!

"Oh crikey! Oh lor'! Whooop!" "There!" gasped Peter Todd.

"That's a tip, Bunter! Now, get out, or I'll give you some more!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter staggered to his feet. Peter handed him the "Hobby Annual," and he grabbed it and rolled to the door. At the door he stopped.

Bunter was hurt. He had had five hefty swipes from a rather heavy volume, wielded by a pair of heavy hands. He was hurt, and he was wrathful. Even the worm will turn—and Bunter was a worm! He turned in the doorway, with the "Hobby Annual" gripped in his fat hands, and vengeance gleaming through his spectacles.

"You cheeky rotter!" he bawled. "I never touched your rotten stamps! And twopence isn't much, either, after all I've done for you! Take that, you beast! Yah!"

Whiz!

The "Hobby Annual" flew.

Had it landed where Bunter intended—on Peter Todd's head—probably it would have damaged Peter a little.

But it didn't. Peter saw it coming, and dodged in time. The volume flew past his head, and there was a terrific crash as it went through the window.

Crash! Smash! Clatter!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Toddy.

"You've done it now!"

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Bunter.

He blinked in dismay at the broken pane. The "Hobby Annual" had vanished, falling into the quadrangle outside with a shower of fragments of glass. There was a huge gap in the pane.

"Oh crikey! It was all your fault, you beast!" gasped Bunter. "Somebody will have to pay for that!"

"Somebody named Bunter!" grinned Toddy.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter. "Quelch will put that down in the bill, and it'll mean a row with the pater! Beast!"

The fat Owl rolled away, leaving Peter chuckling. He rolled out into the quad to look for the fallen volume. He found it under the study windows, lying wide open on the ground. He picked it up, with a grunt. The book had naturally opened as it whizzed downward, a distance of over thirty feet; but that a crisp slip of paper that



"Boys!" boomed Mr. Quelch. "Cease this riot instantly—Instantly, I say!" "Chuck it, you men!" gasped Harry Wharton. "It's the Beak!" The combat ceased at last. Dishevelled and draggled juniors separated, gasping for breath and glaring mutual defiance. Cecil Reginald Temple sat up, looking very much the worse for wear, and gurgling spasmodically: "Ooooooooooogh!"

had been shut between the leaves had fallen out, and blown away on the wind, was, of course, quite unknown to Billy Bunter. He picked up the volume, and rolled back into the House with it.

He met Harry Wharton as he came in, and the captain of the Remove made a motion with his foot. Bunter dodged hurriedly.

"Keep off, you beast! I've got that rotten book! Here it is! You can take it back to Valentine, and be blowed!"

Harry Wharton laughed as he took the "Hobby Annual."

"I think I'd better kick you, all the same!" he said. "Turn round!"

"Beast!"

Bunter backed away and departed. A few minutes later Valentine's "Hobby Annual" was back in its place on the bookshelf in Study No. 1. And somewhere in the Greyfriars quadrangle a crisp slip of engraved paper was fluttering on the winter wind.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

"ABSOLUTELY rotten!" said Temple of the Fourth dismally.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

Fry nodded sympathetically.

"After beatin' the Remove at football—takin' the trouble to beat those fags, you know," said Temple—"the pater tips me a tenner, and then a Remove tick pinches the tenner! Absolutely too thick!"

Temple of the Fourth was mourning, like Rachel of ancient times, for that

which was lost, and could not be comforted.

It was understood that a "bobby" was coming that afternoon to look into the matter; but whether he found out the pincher or not, Temple doubted whether he would find the tenner. Of the two, Cecil Reginald would have preferred to find the tenner.

It really was too bad. For once in his slacking and dandified career, Cecil Reginald had "made work" of Soccer, and, owing to the peculiar circumstance of Bunter keeping goal for the Remove, he had got away with a victory, and his happy pater had tipped him a tenner, and all, so to speak, was calm and bright. And that tenner had been pinched! His pater might as well not have tipped him the tenner at all; Cecil Reginald might as well not have made work of Soccer! He was still feeling a little tired from his uncommon exertions, and it all went for nothing—absolutely nothing! It was no wonder that Temple of the Fourth felt rather bitter about it.

Perhaps that was the reason why he made his remarks in the hearing of the Famous Five of the Remove. It was clear—to Temple & Co., at least—that it was a Remove tick who had annexed the ten-pound note, and he had rather a desire to "rub it in." If there was a dashed pincher in the dashed form, it served them jolly well right to have it rubbed in!

"Sickenin'!" went on Temple. "Which of 'em had it, I wonder?"

He noted, with satisfaction, that Bob Cherry's eyes were beginning to gleam, and that Johnny Bull was breathing hard through his nose.

"I wonder!" said Fry. "I suppose the bobby will go through their things

when he comes. I hear that the Beak's goin' to telephone for Grimes. I heard Capper say so."

"The rotter will be sacked, that's one comfort," said Temple. "But they won't find my tenner! I fancy that's tucked away safe. And the pater specially tipped me that tenner because he was pleased to see me moppin' up those fags at footer!"

"You silly, swanking, howling ass!" interjected Bob Cherry. "You never mopped up the Remove at footer! You couldn't mop up a team of bunny rabbits! We gave you that game, as you jolly well know!"

"You did, you ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

Cecil Reginald glanced round superciliously, affecting to see the group of Removites for the first time, though all his remarks had been intended for their ears.

"You chuckle-headed chump," went on Bob. "You wouldn't have bagged a single goal if we hadn't had Bunter between the posts, and you jolly well know it. And as for your measly tenner, if you say that a Remove man bagged it I'll jolly well rub your silly nose in the next puddle!"

"My dear man!" drawled Temple. "Don't get excited! I'm not suggestin' that you had it—"

"What?" yelled Bob.

"As I've said, I don't know which of you had it," said Temple calmly. "All I know is that it was a Remove tick."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"My esteemed and idiotic Temple—" began Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, Bob Cherry's eyes blazed.

It was an undoubted fact that circumstantial evidence pointed to the Remove.

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Temple's tiepin had been picked up in the Remove passage, obviously where it had been dropped by the thief. All the Fourth were convinced that Temple's tennor was tucked away somewhere in a Remove study. Other fellows in other Forms certainly thought that it looked like it.

But the Remove had no use for such suppositions. Feeling was already running high in that Form on the subject. Already several Fourth Form noses had been punched. Now another was booked.

"You cheeky, silly apology for a tailor's dummy!" said Bob Cherry. "I've told you that nobody in the Remove would touch your putrid tennor with a barge pole! And I've told you that I'd rub your nose in a puddle if you said so again! And now I'm going to do it—see?"

And Bob rushed at the captain of the Fourth.

As a matter of fact, Bob was not sorry to have a good reason for punching the ineffable Cecil Reginald. He was very sore over the Form match. Temple had pinned him down to a hasty word, his friends, against their better judgment, had backed him up, and the result had been disaster. The Fourth were swanking over a football victory, and it was likely to be a long time before the Remove left off telling Bob what they thought of him. Bob Cherry could not very well punch Temple for having held him to his hasty words. But he could punch him for making out that there was a thief in the Remove—and he did, with great satisfaction to himself, though with none to Temple.

"Here, keep off, you dashed hooligan!" shouted Temple, backing away and putting up his hands at the same time.

Bob Cherry did not keep off—he rushed on. Right and left he punched, and Temple's guard did not help him much. Bob's right landed on Temple's handsome Greek nose, and turned it at once into a Roman one. His left landed on Temple's chin, and Cecil Reginald yelled and tottered. Then Temple's head went into chancery.

"Now, you cheeky tick!" gasped Bob, as he punched. "Take that—and that—and that! You can't play footer—take that!—you can't do anything but talk like a silly ass—take that!—and—Leggo, you rotters! Fair play!"

Fry and Dabney rushed to the rescue. They grabbed Bob together and dragged him back.

That was enough for the Co. They rushed in and grabbed Fry and Dabney in their turn.

"Fair play!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"The esteemed fair play is the proper caper!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, as he waltzed with Dabney, both of them punching hard.

"Mop them up!" yelled Bob. "Give them beans!"

"Yaroo! Rescue! Oh gad! Rescue!" yelled Temple.

Scott of the Fourth rushed up, and Wilkinson and Kenney, and two or three more. All the Famous Five were now hotly engaged, with the odds against them. But Jim Valentine came sprinting up to join in, and the Bounder and Tom Redwing followed him. Then came more of the Fourth, and more of the Remove. In a few minutes it was quite a battle royal.

"Mop 'em up!" roared Bolsover major. "Give 'em jip! Lemme get at that tick Temple! I'll give him tenners!"

"Yah! Pinchers!" howled Fry; and then he rolled over in the grasp of

Vernon-Smith, and they sprawled and pommelled.

"Give 'em toco—"

"Give them esteemed jip!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanpur, with Dabney's head in chancery. "Give them terrific toco!"

"Oh crikey! Wow!"

"Owl Gerroff!"

Loder of the Sixth came striding up.

"Stop that, you young sweeps!" roared Loder. "Do you hear? Stop it at once!"

But the excited juniors were heedless even of the voice of a Sixth Form prefect. Loder strode among them, swiping with his asphalt to restore order. But Loder did not succeed in restoring order. A rush of the juniors bumped Loder over, and he sprawled, and the next moment a dozen excited fellows were treading on him. Loder roared frantically.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, here comes the Head! I say, here come the Head and Quelch!"

But even that warning was not heeded.

"Yah! Pinchers!" yelled the Fourth.

"Mop 'em up!" roared the Removes.

"Owl! Owl! Wow! Grooogh!" came in anguished tones from Cecil Reginald Temple. Bob Cherry had Cecil Reginald by the back of the neck now and was rubbing his features into a puddle left by recent rain. There was water in the puddle, and there was mud, and Temple got plenty of both. He struggled and wriggled and squirmed and gurgled, but all in vain.

"There, you cheeky tick!" panted Bob. "That's for you! I'll give you pinchers! I'll give you tenners! Have some more!"

"Grrrghh!" gurgled Temple. "Help! Owl! Oh crikey! Wow! Grooogh! Leggo! Oh, my nose! Wow!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Boys!" came the deep voice of the Head. He arrived on the scene with Mr. Quelch at his side and Mr. Capper trotting after them.

"Boys! Wharton! Cherry! Vernon-Smith—how dare you?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Cease this riot instantly—instantly. I say!"

"Scandalous!" gasped Mr. Capper. "Such a riot—scandalous! Really, Mr. Quelch, these boys of your Form—"

"The boys of your Form are also rioting, Mr. Capper!" snapped the Remove master. "If you will kindly command them to cease—"

"Really, Mr. Quelch—"

"Really, Mr. Capper—"

"Boys!" boomed the Head. "I command you—"

"Chuck it, you men!" gasped Harry Wharton. "It's the Beak!"

The combat ceased at last. Dishevelled and dragged juniors separated, gasping for breath and glaring mutual defiance. Cecil Reginald Temple sat up. His face was streaming with water and mud, and he gouged the same from his eyes and nose, and gurgled spasmodically.

"Ooooooogh!"

"This is—this is shocking!" exclaimed the Head. "Boys! Wharton, what is the meaning of this riot?"

"They asked for it, sir!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"The askfulness was terrific."

"Making out that a Remove man pinched their putrid tennor!" squeaked Billy Bunter indignantly. "I don't

believe that Temple ever had a tennor, and I believe he's got it in his pocket now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Temple, if you have made any such reckless accusation—" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"Grooooooogh!"

"Temple—"

"Urrrrrrghh!"

"Get upon your feet at once, boy!" snapped the Head testily. "How dare you sit there in the presence of your headmaster!"

"I—I—Grooogh—hoogh!" gurgled Temple, still gouging mud. "Woogh!"

Fry gave him a hand up, and the hapless Cecil Reginald staggered to his feet. He stood rather unsteadily, holding on to Fry with one hand and gouging mud with the other.

"Now—" recommenced the Head.

He broke off suddenly.

His eyes, with a startled look, were fixed on the spot where Cecil Reginald Temple had been sitting. On that spot lay a slip of engraved paper, crumpled and rather muddied, but easily recognisable as soon as it was looked at as a banknote.

Dr. Locke gazed at it.

"What—what—what is that?" he gasped.

He pointed.

All eyes in astonishment turned on the spot. In the excitement of the scrap nobody had noticed that fellows were trampling over a banknote that lay in the quad. They noticed it now.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

He stooped and picked up the slip of white, crisp paper—not so white and crisp now as when Sir Reginald Temple had handed it to his dear boy who was so good at games! He blinked at it.

"Is that a banknote, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head.

"It is a banknote for ten pounds, sir!" answered the Remove master.

"Oh gad!" gasped Temple of the Fourth. He blinked at the banknote in Mr. Quelch's hand with a muddy blink.

"A banknote for ten pounds!" repeated the Head. "It can scarcely be other than the banknote that is missing, then. Temple, did you take the number of your missing banknote?"

"I've got it in my pocket-book, sir."

"Kindly compare the number at once."

In the midst of a breathless silence Cecil Reginald took out his natty little pocket-book. He read out a number.

"No. 000001112468."

"That is the number on this note, sir!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Extraordinary!" said the Head. "Undoubtedly it is Temple's banknote. You may hand it to Temple, sir."

The banknote was handed to Temple. He took it quite dazedly. He had almost given up hope of ever seeing that tennor again. But if he had thought of finding it, certainly he had never thought of finding himself sitting on it in the quad. Really no fellow could have thought of that. But that was what had happened. How the banknote had got there was a mystery. But there it was.

"You know nothing of this, Temple?" asked the Head.

"Nothin', sir!" gasped Temple. "I—I suppose it's my note! I haven't seen it since I locked it in my desk yesterday."

"It is extraordinary!" said the Head. "We must be thankful, at all events, that the banknote is recovered. Extraordinary!"

The Head walked back to the House, (Continued on page 28.)

Read and enjoy the Splendid School Yarns of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's now running in

The GEM Every Wednesday!

NOBBY, the 'Shooting Star'!



Bitter Blood!

THUNDERSLEY reached for the telephone, and in a few seconds was speaking earnestly to Lord Douglas Weatherstone.

"Hallo, uncle! I say, I've been thinking about that young fellow—er—er—Nobby, isn't his name?"

Came a surprised murmur over the wires from his lordship.

"Thought I'd like to give the poor beggar a look in for half an hour or so," concluded Thundersley, and inwardly laughed as he heard Weatherstone's involuntary ejaculation of increased surprise. "Can you oblige me with his address?"

His lordship intimated that he could. He also declared himself extremely happy to learn of his nephew's attitude towards the nameless wail who had entered into their lives so strangely. In fact, he suggested that he might accompany his nephew to 23A, Derham Street. But this, of course, did not suit Thundersley, and he used all his guile to put the old man off.

For Lord Douglas Weatherstone to see him in his present state would upset a deception that had been practised for years. Most certainly his appearance would not suggest that he had been sweating. More certainly would it convey to anyone with eyes to see that he had imbibed not wisely, but too well. Added to that, the conversation which was destined to pass between Thundersley and Nobby was hardly of a nature for the ears of his lordship.

"Very well," said his lordship, quite

affably. "Expect you have been sweating, and you don't want an old man like me hanging round you. Some other time we'll go together—No, no! I don't mind in the least. Good-bye!"

Thundersley breathed his relief when the telephone was silent. Then, after a few moments thought, he tossed the sandy beard which he had worn earlier in the evening into the heart of a glowing fire and saw it consumed. A wig that matched it, so far as colour scheme and texture of the hair were concerned, rapidly followed.

Whistling blithely, albeit his head ached and his steps were none too steady, Thundersley hailed a cab and drove off to Nobby's lodgings.

His handsome face creased into a sneer as he dismissed the taxi and surveyed the exterior of the apartment house. Next second he was confronting the buxom landlady.

"And what may you want, young gentleman?"

Her greeting was not too promising, but Thundersley turned on his best smile and asked to see Nobby.

"Friend of yours, at all, at all?" asked Mrs. Sullivan, melting somewhat. "If so, begorrah, ye've called at a late hour."

"I think he will see me, madam," smiled Thundersley. "My name is Thundersley. I think he will."

And he was right. The door was shut in his face, but it opened again a few moments later, and Mrs. Sullivan informed the visitor that he could go up. Nobby was waiting for the visitor.

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

NOBBY, a red-headed youngster of sixteen, who has worked in a football booth belonging to

DON CARLOS' circus, runs away to London. Through

FERRERS LOCKE, the detective, and Jack Drake, his boy assistant, he is introduced to

LORD DOUGLAS WEATHERSTONE, chairman of the Perriton Rovers F.C., who gives him a "job" as ground-boy. Within a few days Nobby becomes a full-blown professional. Later, he sees Lord Douglas' nephew,

DANIEL WILLOUGHBY THUNDERSLEY, the famous amateur forward of the Rovers, disguised in a beard and the worse for drink, outside a shady club. Fearing Nobby might talk, Thundersley plans to bribe the youngster into silence. (Now read on.)

He had slipped into a dressing-gown and blinked the sleep out of his eyes, but his head was in a whirl at the unexpectedness of the visit.

Thundersley met him coolly. His keen eyes searched the youngster's face. How much did he know? The query drummed itself repeatedly in his aching head. But a glance at the scornful healthy face of the youngster told him the worst without any words being needed.

Disgust was written large in Nobby's expressive countenance. He, on his part, knew now that he had made no mistake. This was the fellow, most assuredly, who had worn the sandy beard. Why, he hadn't even troubled to change his clothes. True, the beard and wig were gone. But the clothes and tell-tale lines of dissipation remained.

Nobby broke an awkward silence, what time Thundersley closed the door and put his back to it.

"You are the last person I expected to see here to-night!" said Nobby indignantly. "Why have you come here, you blackguard?"

It was out now. Blackguard! Inwardly Thundersley writhed, but he gave no sign of his rage in his pale, handsome face. "Every man has his price!" said his inner voice. "So has every boy!"

"Look here, you spying hound—" he began, with a show of indignation that was meant to be impressive.

"Better language, please!" interrupted Nobby. "I'll stand that language from nobody, let alone a blackguard like you! Now say what you've got to say and get out—quick! The sight of you makes me sick!"

Thundersley gulped with rage, swaying unsteadily on his feet, coloured as he saw that his movement had not passed unnoticed, and deliberately withdrew a handsome leather wallet from his pocket.

"How much?" he asked, with a meaning smile.

Nobby's brows came together in utter perplexity. For the moment he failed to understand the utter rascality of the fellow.

"How much?" he repeated. "Do you mean the taxi-fare—when I followed you?"

"If you like to put it like that—yes," said Thundersley, beginning to rustle a banknote for five pounds. "I'll go to five pounds."

"You'll go to fifty bob?" gasped Nobby. "What on earth do you mean?" Thundersley grimaced. He hated having to explain matters of this kind in words of one syllable, so to speak. It was not a gentleman's method, he told himself.

"I'll be more explicit," he began. "I had a particular reason for disguising myself as I did. It was sheer bad luck that you should be present to bowl me out. Well, I've thought it out. I'm willing to pay for silence, you understand. Have I made myself plain—er—Nobby?"

Nobby's fists clenched.

"You have, you unspeakable cur!" he said fiercely. "I see your game now. You are trying to bribe me to keep quiet about what I found out to-night. Bribe me! Not being content with laying me out with a coward's blow, you have the dashed effrontery to come here and offer me a bribe! You hound!"

With that, Nobby came at Thundersley like a dog unleashed. Instinctively Thundersley put up his hands, but even so his defence was not sufficient to take all the sting out of the right-hander that caught him between the eyes. He reeled back against the door, banged his head on it, and next moment rebounded from it like an infuriated animal.

Biff! Wallop! Thud!

The pair of them were going it hammer and tongs. Nobby was thinking of the cowardly blow he had received earlier in the day from his taller adversary. And that blow was repaid with interest. A beautiful shade of purple and blue began to flow around Thundersley's right eye.

"You meddling cur!" panted Thundersley. "I'll smash you!"

But he wasn't doing much of the smashing. His blows were wild, ill-timed; his legs were unsteady. And, but for the sudden interruption of Mrs. Sullivan, he would have been a complete wreck by the time Nobby had finished with him.

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed the outraged landlady, bursting into the room. "Is this place a bear garden, at all at all? Begorrah, an' ye call yourself a friend of Nobby's? Outside, you—outside!"

And Mrs. Sullivan, well versed in the noble art herself, be it said from long acquaintance with bad lodgers who had tried to diddle her out of her just dues and a late husband who was handy with the mitts himself, bared her arms and advanced on the rocking visitor.

He offered no resistance as the buxom landlady gripped him by the collar and propelled him out of the room; neither did he resist the whirlwind descent of the stairs she compelled him to make.

"Open the front door, Nobby!" cried Mrs. Sullivan. "Begorrah, 'tis meself that'll show this friend of yours out! I didn't like the look of the spalpeen first time I set my eyes on him. Out you go!"

And out Daniel Thundersley went, neck and crop. Taken altogether it had not been his lucky day. He swayed on the pavement, jumped with nerves as he heard Mrs. Sullivan slam the front door, and failed to see the near approach of a tall, foreign-looking individual who had been lurking on the other side of the street.

It was the Don. No one could mistake those long, flowing moustaches, although on this occasion he was more soberly clad.

"The cub!" Thundersley almost

screamed his rage. "I'll give him Nobby! I'll hound him down! I'll break him! I'll—"

He broke off as he became aware of the close proximity of an interested spectator. But he did not see the peculiar start the Don gave as he looked upon Thundersley's battered features.

"Caramba!" muttered the Don. "Can it be possible—"

He stooped and obligingly picked up Thundersley's felt hat which had been flung out of Nobby's house after its owner.

"This is your hat, yes? Pardon me?"

The Don's greasy face broke into a false smile. It remained fixed even when Thundersley snatched his hat and began to stagger along the pavement. The Don had made a great discovery, but he wanted to make absolutely sure.

Behind the cab which took Thundersley back to his chambers followed another which contained the Don. Both cabs were paid off at much the same time. The Don watched his quarry disappear into the gloom, and heard the patter of his feet as he mounted a flight of stone steps. A moment later the Don was striking a match and gazing at the numerous name-plates ranged outside the wall of the building.

A grunt of satisfaction escaped him when he fastened on one which bore the legend:

"Daniel Willoughby Thundersley."

"Caramba!" murmured the Don softly. "The fates are kind! Thundersley! Well, well!"

For long minutes the Spaniard remained below, turning things over in his mind. Then, arriving at a decision, he mounted the steps to Thundersley's chambers and eventually rang the door-bell.

A sleek manservant answered it, who grinned at his disfavour at the outward appearance of the visitor and announced that his master was abed and would see no one.

But the manservant was not prepared for the hearty push the Don gave him, and next moment Don Carlos, unannounced, was striding into a small, but comfortable, lounge.

Thundersley, who was examining his bruised face in a small oval mirror, wheeled sharply.

"What the devil do you want?" he snarled. "Who are you?"

The Don's olive face broke into an expansive smile. He bowed with old-world courtesy.

"But five minutes of your precious time, Meester Thundersley, yes?"

It was on the tip of Thundersley's tongue to order his strange visitor out, but some instinct restrained it. The Don jumped into the pause that ensued with quick, well-chosen words.

"I heard you speak of Nobby, yes? That fine young gentleman belongs to me! He ran away from me! He hates me. I, yes, hate him! Caramba! We shall all get on well together, yes, Meester Thundersley, because you hate him, too!"

"What the devil are you talking about?" gasped Thundersley.

But his interest was aroused. If the Don hated Nobby he might prove useful. There were several scores Thundersley had to settle now.

With jerky strides he was across the room. A quick glance into the passage, a hurried gesture of dismissal to the

manservant who still waited by the open front door, and he was back again in the lounge.

"Sit down, won't you?" he invited. "So you hate that young cub, eh? Well, you can't hate him more than I do! Have a drink?"

Thus began a partnership, even as Nobby's imagination had pictured scarce an hour ago, which was to have far-reaching results. Long into the hours of night the Don and his rascally host talked—and always the subject was the downfall of Nobby.

Kidnapped!

SANDY MACFARLAND was bad tempered. His long, gaunt face expressed the deepest disgust.

Not even the fact that a particularly pretty young lady stood before him explaining her errand, with two large eyes that threatened to swim with tears, appeared to soften the Rovers' trainer-manager.

"Ye tell yer miserable brother that he's no right to fall downstairs and sprain his ankle on the day of an important match, lassie."

Miss Peggy Jones shrugged. She had heard from her brother that old Sandy was one of the most miserable-looking creatures alive, particularly sour when things went wrong, and not particularly amiable when things went right. Still, she had expected a little sympathy in the circumstances.

"You see, Mr. Macfarland, our silly charlady left a cake of soap on the stairs. David"—meaning her brother—"was not to know that it was there."

"So he trod on it to find out, eh?" almost snarled Sandy. "An' that's what the Rovers paid a ten thousand pounds transfer fee for?" He wagged a long and bony forefinger at the girl. "Ye niver knew ye had a brother worth as much as that, eh?"

"He's worth what the club gave for him, anyway," retorted Peggy Jones, with some spirit. "Plenty of other clubs would have been glad to get him, Mr. Macfarland."

"Would they now?" said Sandy thoughtfully. "Weel, plenty can have him now. He's no use to me, with a sprained ankle."

With that old Sandy began to pace up and down the floor of the club-room, after the manner of a wild animal in a cage. As was his custom, he talked to himself and answered his questions. Thus:

"The fool! Why did he tread on that wee bit o' soap? Because he hadn't the boss-sense to look for it! Why didn't he sprain his ankle to-morrow, if he must sprain it at all? Because the young fool sprained it to-day! Now what am I going to do? Get somebody else, I expect! But who?"

Sandy came to a halt then, what time the girl studied him like a small child gazing at a freak in a circus show. Sandy seemed oblivious of her presence. He was much exercised in his mind. That afternoon the Rovers were to meet Blampton Wednesday, and without David Jones in the side the Rovers would be considerably weakened, for the International was a sharpshooter who made the most of his chances, and kept going to the bitter end like Dixie Dean and other famous centre-forwards.

But Sandy's worry did not stop there. The reserve centre-forward was also an absentee—a victim of influenza; in fact, half a dozen of the Rovers were

absentees for some cause or another, which narrowed old Sandy's choice of a substitute down to very slender proportions.

Suddenly his sour face brightened—it actually broke into something approaching a smile.

"Nobby!" he murmured. "Shall I give the lad his chance? I will!"

The smile stayed on Sandy's face as, having reached a decision, he confronted Miss Peggy Jones.

"Now go run along home, lassie," he said quite kindly. "Tell David he's not to worry. We'll soon get his ankle all right, won't we? We will, lassie! Good-morning—ah! many thanks for troubling to call on me."

In a daze Miss Peggy Jones departed. Then Sandy reached for his hat, dragged out an ancient bicycle from a cupboard

under the stairs, and pedalled out of the ground.

He looked a quaint figure as he wound in and out of the traffic, but the bus drivers and policemen whom he passed knew him well. For years Sandy had clung to his old-fashioned bicycle, refusing to exchange it for a car, which, he said, was an old man's lazy way of travelling about.

At a leisurely pace he made for Derham Street to apprise Nobby of the decision he had reached concerning David Jones' substitute for the afternoon's match. It took the old trainer three-quarters of an hour to reach his destination, and in that time Fate—and the villainous Don—were contriving events that would have caused Sandy Macfarland the greatest alarm!

"A telegram for me?"

Nobby's surprise was pardonable. It was the first telegram he had ever received in his life. He found himself trembling all over as he took the buff-coloured envelope from his plump landlady, and slid his thumb under the flap.

Then his face went a ghastly pallor. If Mrs. Sullivan, his landlady, had seen the effect of that telegram on her young boarder she would have felt considerable alarm. But Mrs. Sullivan, who was not a curious person, had departed—to make sure that the waiting telegraph-boy was not "walking his muddy boots up and down her newly cleaned steps."

Nobby, his colour returning gradually, read the telegram through again and again. It ran:

"I know your real name. Come at once to Horley Hospital."

"MARTIN HUNT."

(Continued on next page.)



Come Into The Office. Boys!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

MY first letter this week comes from George Amers, of Leytonstone, who asks a query which will interest all readers who make a hobby of

anyone else can answer, for the total number must be stupendous! There must certainly be

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF FLAGS

in existence! Lloyd's Book of Flags, which is the recognised authority on this matter, is a tremendous volume which gives an illustration of every well-known flag from the White Ensign down to the customs' flags of such tiny places as Tonga and Karatonga. But even that does not include the flags of various African chiefs, nearly all of whom—where they are in touch with civilisation, at least—have their own particular ensigns!

Some of them look as though they have been made out of old blankets and bedspreads, embroidered with all sorts of fantastic native designs. The harbour of Freetown, in Sierra Leone, sometimes looks like a patch-work quilt, owing to the number and variety of flags which are flown by native trading boats. The native chiefs are very proud of their flags, indeed, and in many cases they are almost as big as the boats which fly them!

HERE is some interesting information concerning

TURTLES AND TORTOISES

which I have "dug out" in response to a request from Alan Black, of Whitehaven. Alan bought a tortoise last summer with the intention of keeping down the insects in his garden. He soon discovered, however, that his new pet infinitely preferred to eat his plants! This is not surprising, for the majority of tortoises kept in captivity in this country are Greek tortoises, which are herbivorous. Only pond tortoises live on purely animal diet.

Here are some more facts concerning tortoises (turtles, of course, are of the same family).

Tortoise-shell comes only from the hawk-bill turtle, which is found in the Celebes and China.

The largest tortoises in the world are

the giant land tortoises which are found only in the Galapagos Islands, and in the Western Indian Ocean. They are in process of extermination.

Turtles which can be eaten (and which provide aldermen with turtle soup!) are the green turtles of the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Indian Ocean. South American turtles not only provide food, but their eggs yield a valuable oil.

Some turtle shells are as long as four feet, while the total weight of the reptile may exceed 3 cwt.

Would you believe it is possible to ride upon turtles? If the front part of their shell is gripped and held back, the reptile cannot dive, and will swim miles with a man upon its back. The first explorer to discover this was Louis de Rougemont, and when he came back to civilisation with this tale he was disbelieved. But subsequent explorers have justified him.

A RAPID-FIRE REPLY

What are "Devil Fish"? (Tom K., of Chester-le-Street): They are also known as "Eagle Rays," and are found in the tropics. The body is broad and flat, and the tail long and whip-like. They have two horns on their heads and sometimes measure eighteen feet across. Devil-fish measuring fifteen feet across have been encountered off the British coast.

SPACE is running short, so I had better get on to next week's programme without delay.

Frank Richards gives us one of the best yarns he has ever written in

"THE MAD MUSICIAN OF GREYFRIARS!"

You'll enjoy every line of it, chums, believe me! Take my tip and ask your newsagent to deliver or reserve a copy for you. There's bound to be a rush for next week's MAGNET!

Letters still keep pouring in to tell me how much Hedley Scott's footer and detective story is appreciated. There are plenty of thrills in store for you in this magnificent yarn, and you'll get quite a number of them next week.

There'll be our shorter features, as usual, and another "extra" strip of picture stamps among which you may find one or more pictures that will help to fill in the blanks in your album—that is, of course, if your album was incomplete when our Great Picture Stamp Scheme came to an end a few weeks ago. These "extra" strips will not be included in Overseas copies.

YOUR EDITOR

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,303.

COLLECTING CIGARETTE CARDS.

Do other countries have cigarette cards? asks George. Or is this hobby confined to Britain?

Yes, boys of other countries certainly follow this hobby as well, and just a little while ago one of my readers sent me a Norwegian cigarette card, to show me the difference between theirs and ours. It was rather a peculiar card, shorter in length, but broader in width than ours. Apparently, the most popular series in Norway is one which gives "Tales From All Countries," and this particular card had a four-colour illustration from "All Baba" on one side and a brief synopsis of the story on the other.

Cigarette card-collecting is quite a popular hobby in all Continental countries, and the cards all differ in size from ours. The most popular cards in France and Belgium are those which give photographs of famous film stars. Germany is very patriotically inclined so far as cigarette cards are concerned, for most of their series deal with such things as Beauty Spots of Germany, Old German Costumes, and the like. A complete series is anything from 75 to 400 cards.

FLAGS OF THE WORLD

is the most popular series that is being collected at present in Germany, but here again the patriotic note is struck, for, although there are 400 cards in the series, a very large number of them are flags of German states. Included in the series, however, are over twenty flags of Great Britain, and over 120 flags of the British Empire!

THIS brings me to a query from "Bunting," of Worthing, who wants to know how many flags there are in the whole world! That's a question that neither I nor

The blood pulsed wildly in Nobby's veins. At last—at last he was to learn who he was! At last, perhaps, he would be able to meet his parents! The thought made him dizzy with joy. For some seconds he stood there, trembling like an aspen leaf. Then he grabbed his coat and hat and flew down the staircase.

"Where's Horley, Mrs. Sullivan?" he jerked out.

"Be jabbers, an' how should I know at all, at all?"

The telegraph-boy was more helpful. "About thirty miles down the line, sir. Train from Waterloo! Er—any reply, sir?"

"Yes!" gasped Nobby. "Wire I am coming at once! Here, take this!"

He jammed three shillings into the hand of the telegraph-boy, beamed upon Mrs. Sullivan, and then bolted up the street like a hare. Another shilling was spent on a taxi which took him to Waterloo.

Arrived at the booking-office, Nobby did not notice that four dark-skinned onion-sellers, with a considerable quantity of their odoriferous wares, paid particular attention to him.

In feverish haste he took a ticket to Horley and strode on to the platform. He had twenty minutes to wait—twenty minutes long drawn out, such as he had never spent in his life before. His head ached with excitement, doubts, fears and impatience. Who was this Martin Hunt? What was he doing at a hospital?

So busy was Nobby with his thoughts that he paid no attention to the presence of the four onion-sellers. But they seemed very reluctant on their part to lose sight of him. Wherever he went along the platform, so they followed, jabbering among themselves in a foreign tongue.

It seemed an eternity before the train drew in; but once Nobby was comfortably settled in a corner seat he felt a little more contented. Not even when the four onion-sellers surged into the compartment, however, did he do more than give them a cursory glance. If the overpowering scent from the onions offended his nostrils, he seemed oblivious of it. He gazed out before him with unseeing eyes, conjuring up mental pictures of this mysterious Martin Hunt, and imagining the conversation that would ensue when they met.

The guard's whistle shrieked; the station reverberated to the mighty panting of the engine as the driver started her off; the platform began to whiz by. Nobby knew that for a distance of fifteen miles the journey was non-stop. He closed his eyes and began his dreams afresh, lulled by the even rolling of the

carriage and sing-song note of the wheels.

It was then that the onion men exchanged glances of satisfaction and settled down to await the moment for which they had planned.

Ten miles rolled beneath the wheels of the train; still Nobby leaned back in his seat. Eleven miles—twelve miles—thirteen miles—fourteen miles!

The four onion-sellers rose at a given signal. The foremost drew a pad from his pocket, soaked it with some of the contents of a bottle; then, even while Nobby blinked at the unusual sight of four passengers standing upright in a fast-moving train when there was ample room and to spare for them to sit down, the man with the pad sprang at him like a tiger.

The pad, smelling sickly sweet, was jabbed hard against Nobby's nostrils. He struggled and fought like a young tiger; he even managed to thrust his head away and yell for help. But the cry was quickly lost in the swelling roar of the train as it swept through a darkened tunnel. But that one cry made Nobby breathe deeply, which was what the four mysterious assailants wanted. The pad was held fast against Nobby's nose, what time they stilled his struggles by seizing his arms and legs.

The youngster's struggles faded out quickly enough thereafter, but not until he was limp and helpless did the tall, dark-looking man withdraw the chloroform-pad. With a satisfied smile, he opened the window of the carriage and tossed out the pad and the bottle as well. Then he turned quickly on his companions and muttered something.

In a moment they were stretching out Nobby's inanimate form on the seat. Cord securely fastened his wrists and ankles together. Next two stout ash poles were taken from the rack and stripped of the festoons of onions which hung from them. To these two poles Nobby was strapped after the fashion of a big-game hunter's kill. Then innumerable strings of onions were draped over him until his figure was completely lost to sight.

Working to their prearranged plan, swiftly and silently, the four foreigners had completed their task with minutes to spare by the time the train drew in at its first stop. Unconcerned the four stepped from the train, which was not particularly well patronised by passengers at that hour of the morning, and made their way to the station exit, carrying their strange burden.

(You must not miss next week's chapters of this grand story, boys. It teems with thrills and surprises. And don't forget next week's MAGNET contains more Free Stamps.)

BUNTER, THE FOOTBALLER!

(Continued from page 24.)

apparently forgetful of the "riot" which had drawn him to the spot. Fellows, both Fourth and Remove, gathered round Temple to stare at the recovered banknote. There was a buzz of excitement and amazement. Temple's face was bright. He had his celebrated tenner again. But brighter still was Jim Valentine's face. The finding of the tenner meant more to him than even to its owner.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Bob Cherry blankly. "Blessed if I half believe there was any pinching at all! Pinchers don't leave the things lying about when they pinch them! Was it some silly ass larking?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry Wharton. "I can't make it out! Somebody took a ring, a tiepin, and a banknote from Temple's desk last night. He left the ring in Temple's study, the tiepin in the Remove passage, and the banknote lying about the quad! That isn't pinching—that's sheer lunacy!"

"It's some weird practical joker, or else a jolly old lunatic!" said Frank Nugent.

It was a complete mystery. Greyfriars fellows and Greyfriars masters puzzled over it in vain. But as nothing was now missing the affair, strange and mysterious as it was, could hardly be regarded any longer as a matter of theft. Why any fellow should break open a desk and scatter its valuable contents about the school was inexplicable; but that was what seemed to have occurred, and it could not be supposed the work of a thief. Dr. Locke was deeply thankful that he had not yet put through the telephone-call to Inspector Grimes. "Mr. Grimes was not wanted on the scene now."

But if Greyfriars was puzzled, still more perplexed was Mr. Nosey Clark when he discovered that nothing had come of his latest move. "This time Nosey had counted on success with absolute certainty—and this time, as on previous occasions, he had failed. How and why, Mr. Clark could not guess. It was said of old, "Magna est veritas et praevaleret"—Great is truth and it must prevail. Mr. Nosey Clark was really beginning to wonder whether there was something in it.

THE END.

(Look out for next Saturday's MAGNET and another yarn in this splendid series, entitled, "THE MAD MUSICIAN OF GREYFRIARS!" It's great! It's grand!! It's one of Frank Richards' extra-specials!!! Don't miss it, whatever you do, chums.)

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No. 18 (New Series).

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

February 4th, 1933.

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1. N.B.—The correct answers are given below.
2. Mr. Quelch am a kindly man.
3. Bunter have a very healthy appetite.
4. Stolt is a fellow which is famed for his generosity.
5. Coler's birth are very small.
6. Goshing snailed amiable.
7. Is the Heald's arm muscles strong?

1. Mrs. Quelch am the very reverse of a kindly man.
2. Bunter have a very UN-HEALTHY appetite.
3. Stolt is a fellow which is famed for his meanness.
4. Coler's birth are non-existent.
5. Goshing never snailed amiable in his life.
6. We should jolly well say they is!

MAKING HIS NAME!

Bolsever doesn't like his Christian name of "Percy," and threatens to change it shortly.

LONZY'S LITTLE LETTERS

Dear Editor,—Numerous juveniles having recently given anonymous attestation to the persistence of Mr. Quelch in his epithet, as they appropriately term him, a "beast," I feel moved to re-annote the inscription. While not unparaphrased with those whose flagellated epigrams are indubitably part prophecies of a magnified view of the performer in question, I cannot forbear to remark that Mr. Quelch performs an invidious duty with discernment, impartiality, and judicial propriety.

That Mr. Quelch will successfully surmount the defamatory activities of his calumniators is my confident prognosis. Do you not agree with me, dear Editor?

Yours expostulatorily,

Alonzo Todd.

(Some silly ass has bored our die, so we don't know whether we agree with you or not, Lonzy—Ed.)

WHY RUSSELL WON

Simple, Non-Technical Explanation

Greyfriars sportsmen will be interested in a non-technical explanation we have secured of the reason for Russell being declared the winner over Bulstrode in their recent all-in wrestling match. The explanation was supplied to us by Dan Doublestone, an old-time wrestler from Courtfield, who has been coaching several Greyfriars juniors in the sport.

This, we gather, is why Dick Russell won: As a result of Russell applying the American body seissors, Bulstrode touched the mat, but recovered with a head-seizure and seized the chance offered by Russell balancing on the lobe of his ear to apply a toe hold. Russell, after balancing on his chin and turning cartwheels all round the ring, delivered the head seissors, followed by a combination arm and head lock, from which Bulstrode escaped, pinning by the rabbit punch. Russell, after cleverly responding with the rat flip, did



Don't trouble to thank us. It's part of our duty to make everything transparently clear to the public.

FUGITIVES FROM JUSTICE

Greyfriars Junior Warders

Following on the recent escape of two convicts from Washford Prison, uniformed warders created considerable excitement by paying a visit to Greyfriars. They stopped to interrogate a group of Removites who were lounging at the gates.

"None of you boys happens to have seen a couple of desperate-looking scoundrels in this neighbourhood lately, I suppose?" "Yes, I have," responded Skinner, at once, much to everyone's surprise.

"One's taller than the other? And they've both got cruel, cunning, expressions on their faces?" "Sounds like them all right!" nodded Skinner.

"Did they strike you as being big, menacing bulges who would turn into enraging, cowardly curs on the least sign of opposition?" "That's exactly how they did strike me!" "Then they were the men, right enough?" the warden declared in a favor of excitement. "Where did you see them?"

"In the School House over there!" "The leader of the warders blinched. "In—in the School House? Two escaped convicts in your School House? How the dickens—" "Oh, these things weren't dressed like escaped convicts," said Skinner. "I didn't know it was convicted

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of William Wibley

By Harold Skinner

Wibley's a theatrical genius—the inspired and gifted Thespian prodigy of the Removites. When he stalks on the stage he holds the audience spellbound, and makes the rest of the performers look like emeralds, pinpoints, and nitwits. That's what he thinks himself, anyway, and he should know, shouldn't he? (Shrieks of laughter from delighted readers appreciating the writer's bitter wit.)

My own opinion, my dear, is that Wib, somewhat over-estimates his Thespian gifts. They say his father is an actor. Well, if the father's acting is anything like the son's, I can only imagine he must be one of those down-at-heel merchants you see giving shivers outside theatres while the greases are waiting to go in!

Wibley can't act for toffee! It's true he's spoiled everyone in the Removite into believing in him, but that's merely proof of their ineptitude, not his ability. Of course, the Removite Dramatic Society is Wibley's pride and joy. He's about the only one who finds any pride and joy in it; the fellows find them painful to watch, and my own idea is that they ought to change their name to the Removite FAULTING Society!

Incidentally, I've often seen a peculiar contrived action about Wibley's acting. What's he taking a humorist part, he's enough to make the audience creep; yet when he's taking a serious part, the result is equally to make a cat laugh!

Naturally, this inspired "genius" has ambitions as a professional actor. But I have an idea of my own that he'll end up as a green-rooper. His performances usually fetch enough vegetables from the auditorium to start a shop on, and one of these days the temptations will be irresistible!

Finally, if you think I'm unduly biased against Wib, because he punched my nose in "groggling" during "Hamlet," some time ago, forget it! I'm simply given you an honest opinion about this very-much-overrated young Hambone—that's all.

SELLING SPACE FOR "HERALD"

Fish's Record Hustle

"What you want on this noose?" anything like that, of course, but how much space in next week's "Herald" do you want to order?" "Why, you cheeky young ass—," roared Cohen.

He made a wild rush at Fishy, and that's the last we've heard of our space salesman.

If any of you chaps find bits and pieces of Fish scattered about the Fifth Form passage, bring 'em along to us, how you?

"I'll start out right now as space salesman for the 'Greyfriars Herald,' and I'll take in all the ads. I can in time for the next number," explained the business genius of the Removite, "I shan't ask any salary or expenses from you guys, so you lose nothing. All I want is seventy-five per cent commission on the takings, and if that isn't fair, what is? All agreed?" O.K., then! Before lo-night you'll find me back in this four square foot of space bookings. Whoopee!"

Fishy then leaped about six feet in the air and dove away before anybody could utter a word.

We understood that his first call was on Wingate.

"This means you'll be said, pointing a bony fore-finger at Wingate. "Why do football attendances drop? Because executives ain't go-ahead—they don't advertise their games in the Press?" O.K., then; how much space can I book for you in the next issue of the 'Herald'?" "Wingate's answer, to Fishy's surprise, consisted of a dictionary, hurled with unerring aim at Fishy's prominent nasal organ. Fishy tried to dodge.

COMES NATURAL TO US

In sending us a recent number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," Tom Merry, of St. Jim's, mentions that in a Personal Pen Competition the competitors made puns about every study in the Fourth and Shell, with the solitary exception of No. 6 in the Fourth.

If this means that Study No. 6 was beyond them, we'll oblige. What about these?

1. The 8c. Jim's claps can undoubtedly BLAKE rielce.
2. The bunshop girl is very pretty. HERBIES are like stars.
3. The swell of the Fourth thinks he's a great lad. We D.A.R.C.Y. think he's a great lad. We D.A.R.C.Y. think he's a great lad!

OUR OLD BOYS' CORNER

(For the benefit of our numerous Old Boy readers, we are printing this week accounts of a few recent achievements of Greyfriars men that happen to have come to our notice. The dates quoted, of course, refer to the period during which the particular person mentioned was at Greyfriars.—Ed.)

Sir DAVENPORT DOUGLASS (1888-94), who has represented Hopeborough in Parliament since leaving Oxford, this week made the first Parliamentary speech in his life. We print this historical utterance verbatim:

"Bosh, my dear sir! Bosh!"

GENERAL LOM-STERNBERG (1876-84) addressed a mass meeting of hundreds of bullying sergeants. Each night, before turning in, he pins his old Greyfriars cap to the wall, salutes, sobs and smiles, then shouts: "For France! For France! For France! For France! For France!"

That's all for this week. Doesn't it make your pulse quiver and your chest expand to think that those games of our day used to be just ordinary Greyfriars men like you and me?



Dicky Nugent's Weekly Wisdom
Two burglars who broke into the Kross Keys at Farnfield last week run for their lives when soundbuddy turned on the life.
As the old proverb remarks: A SWITCH IN TIME SAVES!