

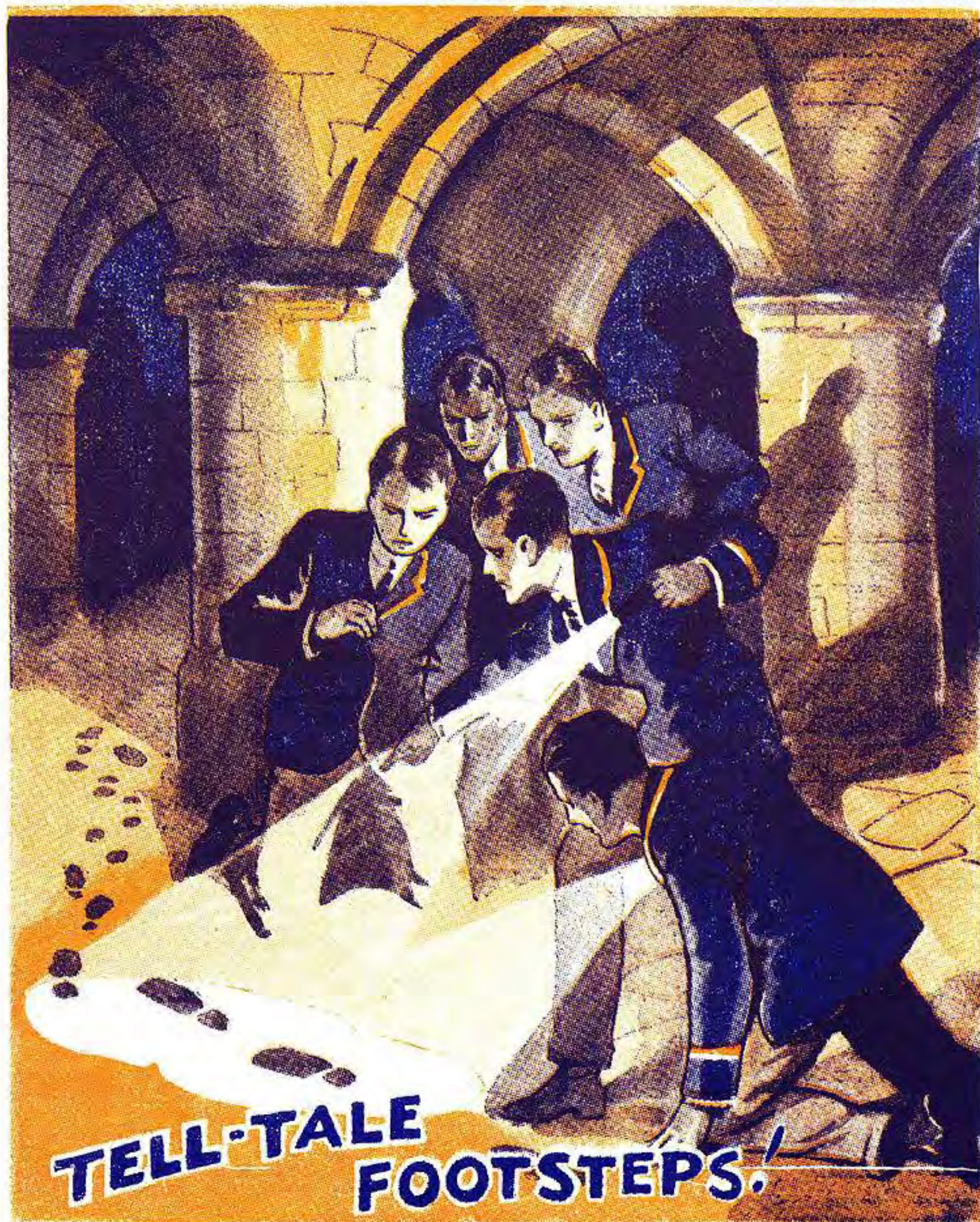
"THE MAN BEHIND THE SCENES!" Brilliant New Detective
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**TELL-TALE
FOOTSTEPS!**

THE SLACKER'S AWAKENING!



BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mauly Asks For It!

"MAULEVERER!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was not loud, but deep.

There was no answer from Mauly.

Had the Remove master's voice been loud, as well as deep, perhaps his lordship would have heard it, and sat up and taken notice.

As it was he did not seem to hear.

Lord Mauleverer sat at his desk in the Remove Form Room at Greyfriars, with his elbow rested thereon, his chin cupped in his hand. He looked as if he was thinking deeply.

But if he was thinking, it was not about the valuable instruction that the Remove were receiving from their Form-master. Remove fellows glanced round at him, and grinned. It was quite clear that Mauly had forgotten the existence of Henry Samuel Quelch.

Mr. Quelch was far too important a personage to be forgotten with impunity. His gimlet eyes glinted at Mauly's bent head.

"Mauleverer!" he repeated.

Still his lordship did not heed.

"Mauly, old man—" whispered Harry Wharton.

He was anxious to save Mauleverer from the vials of wrath. Wrath, deep and dark, was gathering in the corrugated brow of the Remove master.

"Silly ass!" murmured Skinner.

Billy Bunter giggled.

Every man in the Remove that morning was in a wary state of mind, and anxious not to catch Quelch's eye. Quelch was not in a good temper. He had been far from amiable since the beginning of the term.

Quelch was not, as a matter of fact, The Magnet Library.—No. 1,358.

in his usual state of health. He had returned to Greyfriars weeks late after a bad cold. Unusual troubles had dogged his steps since. Three members of his Form were missing—in strange and mysterious circumstances. The Head had kindly advised him to go away for a change and a rest. But so long as the present troubled state of affairs continued, Quelch did not feel justified in doing so. So he carried on—not to the comfort of his Form.

With their Form-master in that touchy state the Remove, like Agag of old, had to walk delicately. So it amused Skinner to see Mauly asking for it like this. It alarmed some of the other fellows. In the French class it would have been safe for the slacker of the Remove to indulge in a little doze. It was far from safe with Quelch. "Mauleverer!"

For the third time Mr. Quelch pronounced that name. Deliberately he did not raise his voice. Fellows were supposed to give attention during class. If they did not, so much the worse for them.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.

Bunter was amused. But the next moment he repented having given audible expression to his amusement. The gimlet eyes turned on the fat Owl of the Remove.

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean, yes, sir! It wasn't me, sir."

"Take fifty lines, Bunter!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped the Owl of the Remove, glad that it was not a whopping.

Mr. Quelch picked up his cane and came among the desks. All eyes in the Remove were fixed on him, except Mauleverer's.

Most of the juniors supposed that

Mauly had fallen asleep. Latin prose, combined with Quelch's drone, was enough to make any fellow feel inclined to nod off, in the opinion of most of the Form. But fellows nearer to him could see that Mauly was not asleep. His eyes were open, though fixed on his desk in a brown study. Breathlessly the Removites watched their Form-master as he approached the unconscious Mauleverer.

Swish!

"Whooop!" roared Lord Mauleverer, suddenly awakened from his deep reverie by that swish of the cane on the knuckles.

He jumped upright, and blinked at his Form-master.

"Ow!" he went on. "Wow! Ow!"

"Mauleverer, how dare you go to sleep in class?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Ow! I wasn't asleep, sir!" gasped Mauly.

"I spoke to you three times, Mauleverer."

"D-d-did you, sir? I—I didn't hear you. I—I was thinkin'—"

"Gammon!" murmured Skinner; and there was a chuckle, which died away immediately as the gimlet eyes glinted round.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, in his best sarcastic style. "I am delighted to hear that you were thinking, Mauleverer. It is quite a new departure for you. May I inquire whether you were thinking about your lesson?"

"N-n-no, sir," stammered Mauly.

"You had something of more importance to occupy your thoughts?" asked Mr. Quelch, still acidly sarcastic.

"Yaas, sir."

"Wha-a-t!" ejaculated the Remove master.

His question had been what the juniors called "sarc," and certainly he

had not expected an answer in the affirmative.

"Yaas, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch. "Then I must inquire, Mauleverer, what was the subject of your meditations, so much more important than giving attention to your Form-master."

"Yaas, sir," said Mauly. "I was thinkin' about Bob Cherry, sir, and Smithy, and Redwing. They're missin' from—"

"I am aware that those three members of my Form are missing, Mauleverer, and no doubt the matter is very much in the thoughts of their Form fellows," said Mr. Quelch. "But in class is not the place to think of extraneous matters, 'unless,' added the Remove master, more bitterly sarcastic than ever—'unless, Mauleverer, your intellectual efforts may result in solving the mystery of their disappearance.'"

"Yaas, sir; I hope so."

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Skinner. "Jevver hear a fellow asking for it like that?"

Mr. Quelch gave Lord Mauleverer a long, grim look. Probably he was not impressed by the possibility of Mauly's mental gymnastics resulting in the solution of a mystery which not only puzzled all Greyfriars, but the police as well.

"Mauleverer!" He snorted rather than spoke.

"Yaas."

"How dare you talk such nonsense?"

"Was I talkin' nonsense, sir?" asked Mauleverer mildly.

"You are talking the most arrant nonsense, and you are well aware of it!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I presume that your object is to be impertinent."

"Not at all, sir. I—"

"You will stand out before the Form, Mauleverer."

"Yaas."

His lordship went out before the Form, and Mr. Quelch followed him.

The Remove master pointed to the chair beside his desk.

"You will bend over that chair, Mauleverer."

"Oh gad!"

Lord Mauleverer bent over the chair. The cane swished.

Whack, whack, whack!

Mr. Quelch, nervy and irritated as he was, was too just a man to be severe without cause. But he considered that he had cause now—as no doubt he had—and he was in a mood to put in all the severity required, and perhaps a little over. The three swipes rang through the Form-room like three pistol-shots.

"Ow, ow! Wow!" gasped Mauleverer.

"You may go back to your place, Mauleverer," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "and I recommend you to give attention to your lesson, and dismiss other matters from your mind during class."

"Ow! Yaas! Wow!" gasped Mauly. And he limped back to his place.

"Rough luck, old chap!" murmured Johnny Bull, as he passed.

It was the merest of murmurs; but Mr. Quelch seemed to be gifted with marvellous keenness of hearing that morning.

"Bull!" he rapped, in a voice that made the owner of that name jump.

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Johnny.

"Are you speaking in class?"

"I—I—I—"

"Take a hundred lines."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Nobody else expressed his sympathy as Lord Mauleverer limped back to his

place. His lordship sat down in a rather gingerly way. Three hefty swipes from Quelch made him feel rather inclined to stand. And from that moment to the end of the lesson Mr. Quelch had the fixed and undivided attention of Lord Mauleverer. Three swipes were enough for Mauly, and he took his Form-master's advice and dismissed extraneous matters from his mind and gave attention to the lesson. For a whole hour by the Form-room clock Mauly wriggled painfully on his form and listened to Latin prose as if he loved it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Biffs for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Pass that ball, Bunter!"
"Beast!"

It was a cold and frosty morning, and the Remove fellows were punting a footer about in break.

There was no better way of keeping oneself warm on a cold and frosty morning! But it was not a way that appealed to William George Bunter, the fat and lazy Owl of the Remove.

Frowsting over a study fire, or snuggling on the hot-water pipes, was more in Billy Bunter's line.

Bunter gave the punt-about a wide berth. Had Bunter been in funds he

It isn't often that Lord Mauleverer "wakes up," for he prefers to take life easy. But there are occasions when his lazy lordship proves that his brains and his vigour are equal to those of any other Greyfriars Remove fellow. And one of these startling occasions is when he solves the mystery of the vanished schoolboys!

would have been inside the tuckshop, which was open in break. But his celebrated postal order, so long expected, had not arrived. So Bunter's only comfort was to gaze in at the tuckshop window and feast his eyes, as he could not feast his capacious interior. The ball shot away from a hefty kick by Bolsover major in a direction not intended—as a football often did when Bolsover kicked it. It whizzed past Bunter and dropped, and a dozen voices shouted to him to send it back.

"Pass that ball, you fat ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yah!"

Bunter, like the deep and dark blue ocean in the poem, rolled on, heading for the tuckshop. There was a rush of the juniors after the ball. Squiff reached it first, and instead of kicking it back to the others he kicked it after Billy Bunter, landing it on the back of a bullet head. This was intended as a tip to Bunter to be a little more obliging. It was quite an emphatic tip—in fact, it tipped Bunter over, and he landed on his fat knees, with a roar.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! Beast!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows— Wow-wow-yow!" He staggered up and blinked round through his big spectacles. "You beast, Wharton—"

"Not guilty, my lord!" said the captain of the Remove, laughing.

"You beast, Bull—"

"Fathead!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You beast, Nugent—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Send us that ball, Bunter!" said Squiff.

"Yah!"

"The kickfulness of the esteemed footer is the proper caper, my absurd and ridiculous Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled on. Squiff, grinning, kicked the ball after him again. The other fellows chuckled. Once more the footer tapped on the back of a bullet head. Again Billy Bunter lurched forward and landed on podgy knees.

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

"Yaroooh! Beasts! Rotters!" roared Bunter, as he squirmed to his feet. "I'll jolly well punch your head for that, Toddy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked round and clutched up the ball. Taking it in both fat hands, he darted away with it. There was a yell.

"Chuck it!"

"Handling the ball—"

"Think this is Rugger, fathead?"

"You can't handle the ball, even in a punt-about, you blithering ass! Chuck that ball over here!"

Bunter rushed on. He was going to "chuck" the ball—over the school wall! As fellows were not allowed out of gates in break that ball would be gone past recovery—which Bunter considered a just retaliation for two biffs on a bullet head. Not understanding, for the moment, what the fat junior's antics implied, the footballers stared after him blankly as he flew.

"Bunter!"

"Stop!"

"Send that ball back!"

Bunter raced on.

"After him!" yelled Squiff. "He's going to chuck it over the wall!" Bunter's vengeful intention dawned on the Australian junior.

There was a rush in pursuit. Bunter had a good start, and he flew on. Exertion did not appeal to Bunter in the very least. But he was wrathful now and wanted vengeance. Ball in hand, he ran as if he had been a Rugby three-quarter keen on touching down. After him a crowd of juniors came scampering.

It was just then that two figures in overcoats walked in at the gates. One was Major Cherry, the father of the kidnapped member of the Remove. The other was a short, stocky, powerful man with light blue eyes, recognisable as Mr Franz Kranz, an "Old Boy" of Greyfriars, who had been much about the place of late. They came in together and crossed towards the House at a quick walk, in conversation as they came.

Bunter did not even see them. They did not observe Bunter—till he happened! It was rather unfortunate for all parties that they happened to cross Bunter's line of flight. Bunter certainly never intended to charge a governor of the school and an Old Boy of Greyfriars! Without intending to do so, he did it!

Crash!

Bunter hurtled headlong at Major Cherry, sending him staggering on Mr. Kranz. The major was not a big man, but he was rather a heavy one, and he landed hard on the Old Boy with the foreign name. Franz Kranz went tottering, taken quite by surprise, caught his

foot in the border of the path, and crashed. Major Cherry made a desperate effort to recover his balance, failed, and sprawled over Mr. Kranz.

"Good gad!" spluttered the major.
"Thousand thunders!" yelled Mr. Kranz.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter, as he sat down from the shock.

The football flew from his hands.
"Oh, my nat!" gasped Frank Nugent.
"Bunter's done it now!"

"The donefulness is preposterous!" chuckled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"We've got the ball, anyhow," said Squiff. "Come on!"

Squiff hooked away the rolling ball, sent it flying back into the quad, and the juniors rushed after it, leaving the fallen to sort themselves out at their leisure.

Bunter, completely winded, sat and gurgled. Franz Kranz was the first on his feet. He pushed the major off his legs and scrambled up, and Major Cherry sat and spluttered. The Old Boy's face was convulsed with anger. Probably he was hurt. Anyhow, he was obviously in a fearfully bad temper. He made a jump towards Billy Bunter and shot out a foot, which landed in the fat junior's ribs.

"Whoooop!" roared Bunter.
"Fat fool—brute—idiot!" panted Kranz.

And he kicked again, and yet again, and Bunter rolled over, roaring.

"Stop that, Kranz!" roared Major Cherry.

He jumped to his feet and ran forward, his bronzed old face red with anger. And as Mr. Kranz was drawing back his foot for another angry and savage kick, the old major unceremoniously shoved him back. Kranz's foot, meeting with no resistance as he kicked, flew into the air. He staggered on the other leg, and sat down with a sudden and heavy bump.

"Thousand thunders!" he gasped.
"Yaroooh! Yooop! Whoop! Leave off kicking me, you beast!" roared Billy Bunter. "Help! I say, you fellows, rescue! Yarooooooh!"

"Cut off, you clumsy young ass!" grunted Major Cherry, and he hooked Billy Bunter to his feet by his collar and set him going. Bunter, panting and gurgling, was glad enough to cut off. Franz Kranz was getting on his feet again, and Bunter was anxious to hit the open spaces before he got on them!

The stocky man rose, panting, his light blue eyes glittering at the major. But, as if he remembered himself in time, the anger passed from his hard face as if washed away by a sponge. His thick lips curved in a smile.

"Thank you, sir!" he said quite suavely. "I fear that I lost my temper. Thank you for intervening."

Major Cherry blinked at him. Kranz's brutality had angered him, and he had intervened without ceremony. Certainly he had not expected the Old Boy of Greyfriars to take it so good-temperedly as this. It was a relief to him, however, for assuredly he did not want a "scene" in the quadrangle of Greyfriars School.

"Sorry!" he said. "But—"
"Not at all!" said Mr. Kranz. "You have done me a favour, sir! I have a rather hasty temper, and that foolish boy irritated me extremely. Let us go on. Mr. Quelch, I believe you said, is expecting you."

Major Cherry nodded, and they walked on to the House together. Harry Wharton & Co. went on punting the ball, while Billy Bunter, gasping for breath, tottered away. He stopped at a safe

distance, leaned on the trunk of an elm and spluttered.

"Oooooogh!"
"Hard cheese, old fat bean!" Billy Bunter blinked round and saw Lord Mauleverer. "Hurt?"

"Ow! Wow! Yes I—I believe that beast has busted some of my ribs!" gasped Bunter.

"Rot!" said Mauleverer cheerfully. "Not so bad as that. But the fellow is a rotten outsider, old fat bean! Beastly cad!"

"Wouldn't I like to punch his head!" groaned Bunter rubbing his fat ribs. "I believe he was sacked from Greyfriars years ago. The Head oughtn't to allow him to hang about the school."

Ow! What's he always barging in for, I'd like to know? I've heard that he hasn't been near the school for twenty years, or more; then, all of a sudden, he takes to walking in every other day. And I believe he was sacked—ow! I know he was a rotter—wow!"

"He looks it!" agreed Mauly.

"That's not all," said Bunter. "I've heard about him—Gosling was here when he was here. I've heard Gosling talking to old Mumble about him. He was a bad hat when he was here, like the Bounder, only worse. He used to smoke and play cards in the vaults—ow!—if he wasn't sacked he ought to have been! Wow!"

Bunter rubbed his ribs and groaned.

"Feel better if you had a ginger-pop and a jam-tart?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

Bunter ceased to groan at once.

"Yes, rather!" he answered promptly.

And Lord Mauleverer grinned and led the way to the school shop, where the fat Owl of the Remove was comforted with ginger-beer and jam-tarts and forgot all about that disagreeable Old Boy of Greyfriars with the foreign name.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Startling!

MR. QUELCH raised his eyebrows ever so slightly as his visitors were shown into his study.

He was expecting to see Major Cherry; he was not expecting to see Mr. Kranz. And, as a matter of fact, he did not want to see Franz Kranz. Quelch's opinion, which he was too polite to express, was that that particular Old Boy was honouring his old school with rather too much of his presence. Certainly, Mr. Kranz had obliged him with a lift in his plane when the railway was blocked on the day of his return to the school. But since he had heard the Head's opinion of that Old Boy, Quelch had wondered once or twice whether Mr. Kranz's kindness on that occasion had been due to a desire to receive a welcome at Greyfriars.

When Mr. Kranz called it was generally to inquire whether any news had been heard of the kidnapped junior; but Mr. Quelch was beginning to wish that he would make those kind inquiries by telephone—if he made them at all. Somehow—he hardly knew how or why—he was feeling a vague dislike towards Franz Kranz, and a disinclination to seeing him continually about the school.

However, courtesy came first with Mr. Quelch, and he bowed politely to both his visitors. Mr. Kranz hastened to explain.

"I was about to call, sir, to inquire whether any news had yet been heard

of Master Cherry when I met Major Cherry near the gates. The major is aware of my deep interest in the fate of his son—a splendid lad, whom I was very pleased to meet when I came here on the day of your return, sir."

"Quite so, sir!" assented Mr. Quelch.

"Major Cherry mentioned that there was news of some sort, and that he was coming with regard to it," continued Mr. Kranz. "A letter, I understand, from the kidnapper—the dastard who calls himself Nemo. But if I am in the way, sir, please do not hesitate to say so. But my deep interest—"

"Not at all," said Mr. Quelch. "If Major Cherry has mentioned the matter to you—"

"Mr. Kranz is kind enough to be concerned about my son's danger," said the old major.

"There is certainly a letter," said Mr. Quelch. "There is also other news of a very strange kind. The letter is here; we will deal with that first."

The Remove master took a typed sheet from a drawer of his desk and laid it down for the two gentlemen to look at. It ran:

"H. S. Quelch, Esq.

"Sir,—You are doubtless aware that Major Cherry is the inventor of a certain flying gadget, now being tried out in great secrecy at Wapshot Camp. I have certain reasons for believing that this device may have the effect of revolutionising flying. I have offered Major Cherry his son's liberty in return for the secret. He had refused. My patience is not inexhaustible, and in the event of the boy's father definitely declining to come to terms all hope must be abandoned of the boy ever being seen again. As his Form-master, you will naturally be concerned. I suggest that you should put the matter to the major and point out to him that his son's life is worth more than his secret. I must warn you that the matter is now not only one of liberty or imprisonment, but of life or death!—NEMO."

Mr. Franz Kranz read that letter with an intent face, the major with a gathering, darkening frown.

"That, sir, is the letter," said Mr. Quelch. "It reached me this morning, by the ordinary post, and I telephoned to you at Wapshot immediately, as you know. It will be passed on to the police."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Major Cherry, his cheeks red with rage. "The dastard! My son's life—the villain!"

"The rascal!" said Mr. Kranz. "The boy's life is threatened. Your only son, I believe, major?"

Major Cherry nodded.

"Such a demand is sheer insolence!" said Mr. Kranz. "And yet—"

He paused thoughtfully.

"Yet what, sir?" gasped the major. "You would not advise me to yield to this dastard's demand?"

"No, sir; and yet—I fancy that if I were in your place I should think of the boy first," confessed Mr. Kranz. "His life would be dearer to me than anything else."

"My boy's life is dearer to me than my own, sir! But the gadget, as that villain calls it, if successful—as I believe it will be—will place the country possessing it in a superior position in the air. It belongs to my own country, and shall never belong to any other if I can help it. It is a matter of duty, and my son, if he could speak to us now, would advise me not to yield a jot or tittle."

"Yet—" murmured Mr. Kranz.

"There is no 'yet' in the matter, sir! A man's duty is plain and simple, and has to be done. But you said that there was other news, Mr. Quelch," added the major.

"Quite so. You are aware that a boy named Vernon-Smith left the school some time ago. He was about to be expelled for breaking out after lights-out, and it was supposed that he had run away—"

"Yes, yes; but what—"

"His friend, a boy named Redwing, held the belief that he had gone in some search for Cherry, and feared that he had fallen into the hands of the same kidnappers. I was very angry

"Redwing was kidnapped—"

"My dear sir!" said Mr. Kranz.

"Unfortunately, there is little doubt about it," said Mr. Quelch. "Redwing had gone to a lonely place, called the Pike, with some idea of searching there for his missing friend. It seems that another boy, named Bunter, had preceded him there, with some foolish intention of playing a trick on him. Hidden on the cliff above, this boy, Bunter, witnessed the whole occurrence and reported it to me when he returned to the school later."

"Thousand thunders!" ejaculated Franz Kranz.

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

are, then, three Greyfriars boys in the hands of these rascals?"

"I fear so. That, sir, is the news I had for you, in addition to this impudent letter from the rascally kidnapper. We derive this information from it—that the rascals are still in the neighbourhood, and that it is probable that Cherry is not far away—as was at first believed from the fact that he was carried off in an aeroplane. I think that this affords some hope that your son may be found and rescued."

"I hope and trust so!" said the major fervently.

Franz Kranz rose.



Ball in hand, Bunter raced ahead of his pursuers. The two figures entering the gates did not observe Bunter—till he happened. Crash! The fat junior hurtled headlong at Major Cherry, sending him crashing into Mr. Kranz. The Old Boy of Greyfriars, taken by surprise, staggered backwards. "Good gad!" spluttered the major. "Thousand thunders!" yelled Mr. Kranz. "Oh lor!" gasped Bunter.

with the boy for setting afloat such a story, but—but—"

"But what?"

"But subsequent happenings, sir, have lent colour to it," said Mr. Quelch. "Redwing is now missing, and—"

"Good gad!"

"I received a note, written in Redwing's hand, explaining that he had met Vernon-Smith and joined in his escapade," said Mr. Quelch. "I had no doubt on the subject. But it seems that it was not so."

Mr. Kranz looked very keenly at the Remove master.

"Surely, sir, if the boy wrote such a statement, there is not much room for doubt in the matter?" he said.

"It would seem not," said Mr. Quelch, "and, but for an unforeseen event, the Head and I would certainly have concluded that Vernon-Smith and Redwing were both at large. But—"

"An unforeseen event?" exclaimed Mr. Kranz. "But what—"

No doubt Franz Kranz took a kind interest in the fate of a boy belonging to the school to which he had himself belonged in the past. But really he seemed to be making this quite a personal matter. His face was flushed with excitement, his light blue eyes gleamed, and his loud and emphatic ejaculation seemed to Mr. Quelch quite out of place. Mr. Quelch gave him a cold stare, and then went on rather pointedly addressing himself to the old major.

"It is clear, therefore, that Redwing has been kidnapped; and Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, agrees with me that that gives probability to the theory that Vernon-Smith actually did fall into the kidnapper's hands. It is plain that the scoundrels are still in the vicinity, and that they have seized Redwing because they feared what discoveries he might make. Such, at least, is Mr. Grimes' opinion—and mine."

"It looks like it, sir," said Major Cherry, with a thoughtful nod. "There

"I trust so, indeed!" he said. "I will intrude no longer, sir; you will, no doubt, desire to discuss the matter."

And the Old Boy took his leave, leaving the Remove master and Major Cherry in deep consultation.

Several fellows in the quad "capped" Mr. Kranz as he walked down to the gates, and he smiled and nodded.

But once he was clear of the school there was no smile on the face of Mr. Franz Kranz.

His brow was knitted in a dark and thoughtful frown as he walked across the common to Courtfield, and there was a glint in his eyes. There was no doubt that he had been deeply startled by the news he had heard in Mr. Quelch's study, though why it should concern him so closely no one at Greyfriars could have guessed—with possibly one exception. But if Franz Kranz felt that there was danger in the air he certainly did not dream of the direction from which

that danger might come—he had almost forgotten the existence of Lord Mauleverer of the Remove.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoners of the Vault!

"O H, shut up!" snarled Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Bob Cherry's eyes glinted.

"Smithy—" murmured

Tom Redwing.

"Shut up!" snapped the Bounder.

Redwing and Bob Cherry looked at him, then looked at one another and burst into a laugh.

The Bounder scowled.

Deep in the hidden vault beneath the mass of buildings of Greyfriars School the Bounder was tramping to and fro with a black brow.

Bob Cherry and Redwing were sparring.

Neither liked the strange situation any more than Smithy did; but it was Bob's way to make the best of everything, and Redwing's steady and quiet character made it natural to him to keep a stiff upper lip. But the Bounder, savagely impatient and irritable, was like a caged animal. He longed to plant his fist on the jutting nose of the kidnapper—and he looked as if he could have found some satisfaction in planting it on Bob Cherry's, or Redwing's.

He was friendly enough with Bob in the Remove, and Redwing was his special chum. But both of them found it difficult to avoid a row with him in the weary days of imprisonment in the hidden vault.

"You fellows seem to enjoy bein' here!" snarled the Bounder, staring at

the two. "Sort of home from home—what?"

"What's the good of grousing?" asked Bob.

"Oh, shut up!"

"They're bound to find us sooner or later, Smithy!" said Redwing.

"Rubbish!"

"While there's life there's hope!" said Bob. "My father will be doing his best to get after me, and your pater, Smithy, will be doing the same."

"Your father's an old ass!"

Bob compressed his lips. He was patient—all the more patient with Smithy because it was in seeking him that Smithy had fallen into the hands of the kidnappers. But there was a limit—and the Bounder was perilously near it now.

"That scoundrel Nemo wants some silly rubbish that your father has invented, or thinks he has invented!" snarled the Bounder. "He's willing to trade us for it. The silly rot can't be worth anything! Why can't he hand it over and get us out of this?"

"If the gadget was worth nothing, Smithy, that villain would hardly be running this risk to get hold of it," said Redwing quietly.

"Oh, rats!" The Bounder was not to be reasoned with. "I tell you I can't stand this—and I won't! That fool Kranz—hang him! I told him I suspected that that dolt Cherry was parked under the school, and he knew I'd come after him. Why doesn't he guess that somethin' has happened to me?"

"May be thinking about his own affairs, and not yours," said Bob rather sarcastically. "He may not be in Court-field now, either."

"Oh, rot! He was sticking there for weeks."

"He was there a day or two ago," said Redwing. "Mauleverer made me go and see him to ask whether he could tell us anything about Smithy after it was found out that Smithy had called on him."

"Mauleverer!" repeated Bob. "I—I wonder—Old Mauly's jolly keen, with all his lazy ways. I wonder—"

"What?" snarled the Bounder. "Do you fancy that that yawning, slacking ass Mauleverer is likely to guess where we are—or to give us a thought even?"

"Well, I'm sure he's giving us a thought or two," said Bob. "But I suppose he can't guess what's happened to us, any more than anybody else can. Still, he's jolly keen."

"Rot! A silly, yawnin', slackin', fozzin' ass!"

"Oh, all right! Let's get on with the sparring, Reddy! May as well get a little exercise—and Smithy's conversation isn't really entertaining."

"The set of dashed fools!" went on the Bounder, unheeding. "Here we are, parked thirty feet under Greyfriars—under that old duffer Quelch's feet when he trots to the Form-room to gabble! And the old ass will never guess!"

"How the dickens could he?" exclaimed Bob.

"Well, I guessed—"

"From what you've told me, you were out of bounds at night, and tried to get in by the tunnel from the old priory, and saw the kidnapper in the vaults. That was enough to put you wise," said Bob. "And if you'd had the sense to go to the police, instead of trying to work off your own bat—"

"Is that your thanks to me for trying to hook you out of this?" sneered the Bounder.

"Oh, draw it mild! You've told me that you were going to be sacked—as you jolly well deserved—and you thought you'd get another chance with the Head if you got me back!" said Bob. "You were thinking of yourself all the time, as you always are. Redwing got nobbled hunting for you like a good pal. But you were thinking of H. Vernon-Smith—and you jolly well never think of anybody else, either!"

"Bob, old chap!" murmured Redwing. It looked as if the "row" so long avoided was coming at last. Bob Cherry had plenty of good-nature and plenty of patience, but neither was inexhaustible. And the Bounder's reference to his father had stung him. Not that Smithy really meant what he had said. His angry and irritating words were merely the outcome of savage impatience.

"Oh, rot, Reddy!" growled Bob. "I'm getting fed-up with Smithy's rotten temper! It's no worse for him than for us, I suppose; but he's making a song and dance about it, as if it was nice for us here!"

"I wish I'd left you to rot here!" snarled Vernon-Smith. "I was a fool to trouble my head about you at all!"

"You never did!" retorted Bob. "You were thinking of yourself, as I've said. If Redwing had found out what you did he would have thought only of getting help to me, not of serving his own turn. So would Wharton, or Nugent, or Johnny, or Toddy—or almost any fellow—excepting you!"

"No good ragging, you fellows!" said Redwing. "We shan't make matters better by quarrelling. Smithy, stand back, you fool!"

Vernon-Smith was coming at Bob Cherry, with his hands up and his eyes blazing over them. Redwing thrust between them, and the Bounder gave him a shove that sent him spinning.

"Leave me alone!" he snarled.

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And he advanced on Bob again. Bob backed away.

"Don't be a fool, Smithy!" he said quietly. "I don't want to punch you—" His hands flew up as the angry Bounder came on with a rush, hitting out. "Well, if you will have it, then!"

The next moment they were fighting. It was sheer evil, irritable temper that led the Bounder into that angry outbreak. But Bob Cherry was angry, too, now; he was, as he had said, fed-up with Smithy's temper. They went it hammer and tongs—Redwing looking on with a distressed face.

"Will you fellows have a little sense!" exclaimed Tom. "What's the good of ragging? Look here—"

Thump! Thump! Thump! Crash! The Bounder went down on his back on the stone flags and lay gasping. Bob Cherry stood over him, with clenched fists and flashing eyes.

"If you want this to go on—" he snapped.

"Wait till I get on my feet, you rotter!" panted the Bounder.

He scrambled up.

"Smithy—" exclaimed Redwing.

Unheeding him, the Bounder rushed at Bob, and they went it hammer and tongs again.

The moving stone that gave access to the hidden vault slid back with a whirring sound, unseen and unheeded by the three prisoners. In the aperture, half-crouching in the confined space, appeared the figure of the kidnapper—with his dark, bearded face, jutting nose, and glasses glimmering under the peak of his cap. Behind him stood his confederate, masked, with a revolver in his hand. "Nemo" stared at the fight going on in the vault for a long moment, and then stepped in. Redwing saw him then.

"Look out, you fellows!" he exclaimed.

"Is that how you amuse yourselves?" asked the man with the jutting nose, his harsh voice sarcastic and gibing.

Bob Cherry and the Bounder dropped their hands and spun round towards him. Instantly their quarrel was forgotten at the sight of the rascal to whom they owed their imprisonment. The Bounder's eyes glittered with a desperate light. Since the time when Tom Redwing had been thrust into the vault, to join the other prisoners there, they had not seen the kidnappers—and food was running short. Only the visits of Nemo stood between the helpless prisoners and starvation. But the Bounder, in his reckless rage and impatience, did not think of that. For a second he stood staring at the rascal with burning eyes, then he made a sudden spring, grasped him, and dragged him over, yelling to the other fellows to help!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Man with the False Nose!

BANG! The sudden roar of the revolver filled the vault with deafening sound. Instantly darkness fell like a black cloak as there was a sound of smashing glass, mingled with the echoing roar of the pistol shot.

What had happened the prisoners of the vault hardly knew.

Smithy's sudden, desperate attack had dragged over the man with the jutting nose, and the Bounder was struggling with him wildly. Bob Cherry and Tom Redwing were leaping to his aid when the masked man at the opening fired. But it was at the electric bulb suspended from the arched roof of the vault that

he directed the shot; and the smashing of the bulb plunged the whole scene into instant darkness.

Bob and Redwing blundered blindly into the struggling two. Smithy's panting voice was heard:

"Back up, you men! Oh, back up!"

The sound of a crash followed. Bob stumbled over a fallen form in the darkness, and knew that it was Smithy's.

The harsh voice of Nemo barked out from the aperture in the wall. He had retreated there, joining his companion

RHYMES OF THE REMOVE.

No. 4.



In dealing with the leading lights at Greyfriars, our clever Rhymester chooses the Chums of Study No. 7, as his subject this week.

Tom Dutton and Alonzo Todd
Had just come in to tea,
And Peter at the study fire,
As busy as a bee,
Was cooking pancakes, juley ones,
To share between the three.

"The time has come," Alonzo said,
"To talk of many things,
Of prep and piffing poetry,
Of Aeneas' voyagings!"
"Not yet," cried Peter. "Not until
The beastly prep bell rings."

"These pancakes now are nearly done,
I've just completed eight,
All hot and crisp and simmering,
They're absolutely great!
One more to do, so make the tea!
Buck up, or we'll be late!"

A head around the study door
Appeared about this time!
It wore a pair of spectacles,
Its grin was most sublime;
It lifted up its podgy nose
And sniffed and said: "How prime!"

Then Peter turned his head and cried:
"Buzz off! There's none for you!"
"Oh, really, Todd!" the Owl replied,
"I fancy one or two."
"I say, old fellow—" Peter rose
And kicked him with his shoe.

"They're finished!" Peter cried. "Just
nine!"
"That's all we shall require.
So get the tea, and then we'll stuff
Them to our heart's desire!"
The Porpoise stood and eyed the dish
Before the study fire.

Then Peter laid the tablecloth,
Alonzo made it trim,
While Dutton drew the curtains to
(The light was growing dim).
But as for Bunter, William George,
They didn't notice him!

But when at length they'd got the tea,
When Peter's task was done,
They spoke to Billy Bunter then,
But answer made he none!
They found no pancakes and no Owl!
He'd eaten every one!

after throwing the Bounder down. Not the faintest glimpse of either of them was to be had in the darkness. The harsh voice was full of fury.

"You will repent this! Had you seen my face, had you endangered me, you would have perished without hope in this vault! Bear that in mind another time!"

The stone thudded shut. Nemo and his masked confederate were gone.

The Bounder sat up dizzily. Something was clutched in his hand, which he had torn from the kidnapper's face in the struggle. What it was, he did not know; he was dizzy from the crash on the stone flags when Nemo's powerful arms had hurled him down.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hurt, Smithy?" came Bob Cherry's voice.

"No—yes—nothing much!" panted the Bounder confusedly. He scrambled dazedly to his feet.

"Lucky that blighter missed!" said Bob. "It was rather potty, tackling the man, with a pistol in the other rotter's hand—"

"Oh, rubbish!"

"The man did not fire at Smithy," said Redwing quietly. "He fired at the light! It was not an accident—he wanted to put us in the dark."

"Eh, why?" asked Bob.

"You heard what he said. He was afraid of being recognised—he must have been in some sort of disguise—and Smithy—"

"I clawed something off his face," panted the Bounder. "I got a grip on that long nose of his, and it seemed to me as if it came off—but I suppose it couldn't have—"

"Ha, ha! Not likely!"

"I've got hold of a beard, anyhow!"

"False beard!" said Bob. "That's likely enough! But, my hat! We're in the dark now! There's a box of candles—and I've some matches—but we're going to get no more electric light."

"Who cares for that?" growled Smithy.

"Well, I do, for one," said Bob. "But it can't be helped, I suppose. Lucky they stood us some candles when they fitted up this home-from-home for my reception."

Bob fumbled for a matchbox, and struck a match. The flickering light glimmered in the dense darkness of the vault.

He sorted a candle from a box, fixed it upright on the table, and lighted the wick. There was now a faint illumination, very different from the light the prisoners had enjoyed before. Some hidden wire had tapped the electric supply of Greyfriars to light the vault; but now that the lamp was smashed, it was shut off for good—unless Nemo brought another lamp on his next visit. Which, in the circumstances, did not seem likely. At all events, there was only candlelight for the present.

The Bounder's desperate attack on the kidnapper had altered matters very much for the worse. Not only had the prisoners lost the light which had been, at least, some comfort to them, but Nemo had left no fresh supply of food—which must have been his intention when he came. The attack had been hopeless, for the masked man who had fired at the lamp would certainly have fired on the prisoners had they attempted to rush him and get out of the vault! The whole thing had been an act of reckless folly—quite in keeping with Smithy's character. But it was useless to reprimand; and Bob Cherry and Tom Redwing did not utter a word of reproach.

They looked at one another in the candlelight.

The Bounder held up the strange object that was grasped in his hand, dragged from the kidnapper's face.

"My only hat!" said Bob, staring at it.

The prisoners had guessed that the kidnapper wore a false beard. But it was not only a beard, with a weird moustache attached, that the Bounder held up. Attached to the moustache was a long, jutting nose—a false nose, such as is used in theatricals. The man with the jutting nose had been in an impenetrable disguise—the nose was false, as well as the beard! What the face was really like, under such a disguise, it was impossible to guess. But only the prompt action of his confederate in shooting out the light, had prevented the prisoners from seeing it. Evidently the masked man had seen that Nemo's disguise was coming off in the struggle with the Bounder, and he had acted swiftly and in time. And with Nemo's words still in their ears, the prisoners realised that they had cause to be thankful that he had!

"A false nose!" said the Bounder, flinging it savagely to the floor. "I wonder what the villain's really like! We should have known if the light hadn't gone—"

"You heard what he said—"

"Hang what he said!" growled the Bounder.

"You silly ass!" said Bob. "If we'd seen his face, and could identify him when we got out of here, we should never be allowed to get out! Do you want to be left to starve here, you silly fathead?"

"Oh rats!"

"They must have come to bring us grub," said Bob. "If so, they've taken it away with them—to give us a lesson, I suppose. Goodness knows when they will come again—and we've got half a loaf left."

"Looks like short commons for us!" said Redwing.

"Who cares?" snarled Vernon-Smith.

"I fancy you'll care a good deal by this time to-morrow!" said Bob Cherry dryly.

The Bounder grunted angrily.

"Can't be helped," said Redwing, as cheerfully as he could. "They're bound to bring us food sooner or later; they dare not let us starve. At any rate, they can't intend to. We shall have to tighten our belts and stand it."

And that was all that the prisoners of the vault could do, but it was not a cheerful prospect.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Slight Misunderstanding!

"BUNTER!"

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Billy Bunter

Bunter was alarmed.

It was the voice of Wingate of the Sixth calling in the Remove passage in tones of impatience.

The voice of authority was never welcome to the fat ears of William George Bunter. He had too many sins on his fat conscience.

Billy Bunter was seated in his study, No. 7 in the Remove. He had been having quite a good time.

On the table before him was a large dish. It had contained a steak-and-kidney pie.

Now the dish was empty, and Billy Bunter contained the pie!

Bunter liked steak-and-kidney pies.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,358.

There was something solid and satisfying about a steak-and-kidney pie that appealed to Bunter.

The fact that that pie had not belonged to Bunter was a minor consideration—a trifle as light as air to the Owl of the Remove.

How many times Billy Bunter had been caned for surreptitious raids below stairs he could not have counted. He would wander into quarters forbidden to all the fellows, like a lion seeking what he might devour. This time he had had great luck.

He was sure—absolutely sure—that no one had seen him on the kitchen stairs. In the kitchen he had found the coast clear. He was satisfied that not a single eye had spotted him conveying the plunder to his study. And yet—just as he had finished the pie—he heard the voice of the head prefect of Greyfriars calling his name in the passage!

"Bunter!" hooted Wingate. "Any of you fellows seen Bunter?"

Bunter listened in terror.

"I think he's in his study, Wingate," answered the voice of Frank Nugent.

"Then why doesn't he answer?" snapped the Greyfriars captain. "Bother the young ass! Quelch wants him!"

"Oh crikey!" groaned Bunter.

Heavy footsteps approached the door of Study No. 7.

Bunter clutched up the pie-dish and dropped it behind the armchair in the corner. There was a loud crack as it landed on the floor. But the remnants were hidden from sight as Wingate hurled open the door of Study No. 7 and stared in.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, and drew a shiny sleeve across his mouth.

"You young sweep!" exclaimed Wingate. "Didn't you hear me call you?"

"Oh! No!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, Wingate, I never had it!"

"Oh, you never had it, hadn't you?" said Wingate. "Well, your Form-master seems to think that you had!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Come along, you young rascal!"

Wingate dropped a heavy hand on a fat shoulder and jerked Bunter into the passage.

"Cut!" he snapped. "Quelch's study!"

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter rolled away dismally. He had one comfort—the pie was in a safe place, and could not possibly be recovered. All the King's horses and all the King's men could not have deprived Bunter now of that steak-and-kidney pie!

But, comforting as that reflection was, Billy Bunter was feeling far from joyful as he rolled away to see Quelch. He was prepared to deny all knowledge of the pie; but he knew Quelch of old. As likely as not, he would refuse to take a fellow's word—Bunter's word, at least! Somehow or other, people always seemed to think of Bunter at once if anything of an edible nature was missing. It was frightfully unjust, of course, but there it was!

Mr. Quelch was standing in his study, staring, with a frowning brow, at the key-rack behind his desk when Bunter arrived. On that rack were hung various keys of which Mr. Quelch had official charge—among them the big iron key of the door of the school vaults. That key, at the moment, was missing from its place. Someone, apparently, had abstracted it.

Bunter, however, did not notice that. He was not thinking of keys, but of pies! He rolled in apprehensively, and

Mr. Quelch turned to fix a glare on him.

"Bunter!" he rapped.

"It wasn't me, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"It was you last time!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! It—it was the cat!" gasped Bunter.

"What?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"I—I mean—"

"You will return it immediately, Bunter—instantly!"

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Lay it on my table!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I can't, sir!" gasped Bunter.

Unaware that the key of the vaults was missing, Bunter naturally did not guess that it was to that key that his Form-master was referring. He had quite forgotten that, a short time ago, he had abstracted that key from Mr. Quelch's study to pay a visit to the vaults. Mr. Quelch had not forgotten it, and, naturally, when he found the vault key missing again, he thought of Bunter at once and sent for him. But all this was hidden from Bunter's knowledge. The steak-and-kidney pie filled his mind as well as his capacious inside.

"What do you mean, Bunter? Do you deny that you have taken it?" demanded Mr. Quelch, still referring to the key.

"Oh! No! Yes!" gasped Bunter, still referring to the pie. "I—I'm not the chap to—to touch anything, sir! I've a very poor appetite, sir—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I hardly eat anything, sir! Ask any of the fellows, and they will tell you! I never—"

"Are you wandering in your mind, Bunter?"

"Eh—no, sir!"

"Then keep to the subject! I have no doubt that you are the person concerned in this matter, as it was you who abstracted it on a previous occasion! Lay it on my table at once!"

Bunter blinked at him helplessly. Laying that steak-and-kidney pie on Quelch's table was a sheer impossibility.

"Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch picked up a cane.

"If you deny having taken it, Bunter—"

"Oh lor'! Yes, sir! I—I mean—the hapless fibber quailed under Quelch's gimlet eye—"I—I mean, I—I—"

"You admit it?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yee-es, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I'd had hardly anything for tea, sir, and—"

"That has nothing to do with the matter, Bunter! You admit that you abstracted it! Enough! Lay it on my table!"

"I o-c-can't, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What? Why not?"

"I—I—I've eaten it, sir!" gasped Bunter desperately.

Mr. Quelch jumped almost clear of the floor. He was well acquainted with that remarkable member of his Form, and was aware that Billy Bunter could eat almost anything. But the statement that he had eaten a long iron key was really too surprising.

"You have—have—eaten it?" gurgled Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! I'd had hardly anything for tea, and Toddy's fearfully mean in the study! I—I was awfully hungry, sir—"

"How dare you say you have eaten it, Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"But—but I have, sir!"

"Do you mean that you have swallowed it by accident?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, staring at him. "It was surely too large for such an accident to happen!"



Vernon-Smith and Bob Cherry went it hammer and tongs—Tom Redwing looking on, with a distressed face. Unseen and unheeded by the three prisoners, the moving stone of the vault slid back, and through the aperture appeared the figure of the kidnapper and his confederate!

"I—I cut it up first, sir!" stuttered Bunter, wondering if Quelch was such an ass as to fancy that a fellow would bolt a steak-and-kidney pie whole. Even Billy Bunter was not capable of such a gastronomic feat as that.

"Y-you cut it up?" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! I—I'd just finished it when Wingate called me, sir."

Mr. Quelch gazed at him. Bunter was evidently in earnest—terrified earnest—yet his statement was utterly incredible.

"Bunter, I fear that you are not in your right mind!" said the Remove master at last. "If you are speaking seriously, you must be examined by the school doctor, and I will telephone for him! But if you are attempting to jest with me—"

The growl of a royal Bengal tiger had nothing on Mr. Quelch's voice at that moment.

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir! I—I really did eat it, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I was so fearfully hungry, sir—"

"You dare to stand there and tell me that you have eaten a large iron key?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

It was Bunter's turn to jump.

"A—a—kick-kick-kick-key!" he stuttered. "Nunno, sir! I wasn't talking about a kick-kick-kick-key! Oh lor'!"

Quelch had wondered whether Bunter was in his right mind. Now Bunter wondered whether Quelch was!

"What do you mean, Bunter? Is there some misunderstanding here? I was questioning you with regard to the key of the vaults, which is missing from my study, and which you abstracted on one occasion some weeks ago!"

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

He began to understand

"What have you done with it, Bunter?"

"I—I—I haven't touched it, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never knew it was gone, sir! I—I was speaking of—of—of—"

Bunter paused. If Quelch hadn't heard of the steak-and-kidney pie, it was judicious not to tell him.

"You have admitted that you took it, Bunter."

"Oh, no, sir! It—it was something else—I mean, it wasn't anything—I haven't been down the kitchen stairs at all!"

Mr. Quelch, in his turn, began to understand.

"You have not taken the key, Bunter?"

"No, sir!"

"But you have taken a pie which, I have been informed, is missing from below stairs?"

"Oh lor'!"

"If you assure me that you have not taken the key, Bunter, I shall accept your word."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Very well; I shall inquire further. In the meantime I shall cane you most severely for having gone down to the kitchen!" Mr. Quelch pointed to a chair with his cane. "Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Whooooooooooooop!"

"You may go, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter rolled away from his Form-master's study, looking as if he were trying to fold himself up. He groaned dismally as he went. Even the pie failed to comfort him.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Maully Springs a Surprise!

"MAULY!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

He smiled.

Lord Mauleverer was seated in the armchair in Study No. 1. Apparently, he had dropped into that study to wait for the owners to come in. In the process of waiting his lordship had fallen asleep. Leaning back in the chair, with one elegant leg crossed over the other and his hands clasped behind his head, the slacker of the Remove slept the sleep of the just.

Frank Nugent followed Wharton into the study. Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came in. They stood and looked at Maully.

"Never mind him!" said Frank, laughing. "We can talk without waking him up!"

Lord Mauleverer's eyes opened.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he yawned.

"I haven't been asleep! I heard all you fellows were sayin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Maully rubbed his eyes.

"Perhaps I dozed off!" he admitted.

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

"Don't get up, old bean," said Harry Wharton. "We've come here for a pow-wow, and we'll talk you to sleep!"

"About Bob?" asked Mauleverer, sitting up, and showing no signs of going to sleep again.

"Yes," said Harry. "How did you guess?"

"Thinkin' of the same thing myself—that's why I'm here," said Lord Mauleverer. "I was thinkin' of it in class this mornin when Quelch got his hair off! Goin' on the jolly old trail?"

"That's the idea," answered the captain of the Remove. "You see, since it's turned out that Smithy and Redwing were kidnapped, we take that as a pretty clear proof that old Bob is parked somewhere in this neighbourhood, and we're going to see what we can do."

"We can root over the whole place, as Redwing started out to do," said Johnny Bull; "and if we go together, the kidnapper won't bag us, as he did poor old Reddy."

"Where are you goin' to hunt?"

"Oh, everywhere!" said Frank Nugent. "Redwing thought that Smithy might be parked somewhere up the Pike. There are caves there, and it's as lonely a place as any in the county."

"Yaas. But—"

"Don't you worry your poor old tired brain about it, Mauly!" said Johnny Bull kindly.

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"I've been worryin' the old nut a lot," he replied. "I got a whoppin' this mornin' for that very thing. I don't suppose my ideas on the subject are frightfully valuable, but I dropped in here to speak to you fellows about it. Like me to run on?"

"Go it!" said Harry.

With all his lazy ways, there was no keener fellow at Greyfriars than Lord Mauleverer when he chose to exert his aristocratic intellect. Harry Wharton & Co. were more than willing to hear the result of his cogitations on the all-absorbing topic.

The recent happenings had encouraged them to believe that their missing chum might be somewhere in the vicinity of the school. The fact that he had been carried off in an aeroplane had given a general impression that he had been taken a distance, and the idea of searching for him had seemed utterly hopeless. But the disappearance of Smith, and then of Tom Redwing, had put quite a different aspect on the matter. The kidnapper, it was certain, was not far away, and it was difficult to imagine why he had lingered if his prisoner was at a distance.

"Play up, Mauly!" said Frank Nugent, taking a seat on the corner of the study table.

"If it won't bore you men—" said his lordship considerably.

"Fathead! Get on with it!" said Johnny Bull.

"Right! I've been thinkin' a fearful lot since old Redwing was nobbled by the jolly old kidnapper," said Lord Mauleverer. "Somethin' sort of came into my old brain-box while I was puzzlin' it out in class this mornin'. You men have seen that chap Kranz?"

"Franz Kranz? Yes. What about him?" asked Wharton, in surprise.

"Like him?"

"Not a lot. But what—"

"He was a Greyfriars fellow donkeys' years ago," drawled Lord Mauleverer.

"Rather a bad hat!"

"I've heard so. But—"

"All the fellows have spotted that the Head doesn't like him much. Hardly any present inhabitant was here when he was here as a boy. But old Gosling was. Our jolly old porter was here in the time of the Tudors, I believe. Anyhow, he was here a long time ago. He remembers that man Kranz. I've asked him."

"What on earth for?" asked Harry blankly.

Lord Mauleverer was the last fellow at Greyfriars to be inquisitive or to take an interest in anyone's business but his own. It was difficult to imagine

Mauly questioning old Gosling about the past of a former Greyfriars boy.

"Got a hint from Bunter," said Lord Mauleverer. "I've heard from that bright and merry youth that he'd heard some talk from Gosling, so I weighed in and got some more."

"Well, you ass!" said Johnny Bull, staring at his lordship. "You don't mean that you're taking up Bunter's Nosoy-Parkering! So what do you mean?"

"Interestin' chap, that man Kranz!" said Mauleverer calmly.

"Blessed if I see it!"

"The things you don't see, old bean, would fill books!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm goin' to make you see—see? That man Kranz, when he was at Greyfriars, was somethin' like Smithy, and somethin' like Loder of the Sixth, and somethin' like Hilton of the Fifth—or, rather, like the lot of them bunched together—only worse! He was a card—a cough-drop! Breakin' bounds after lights out, pub-hauntin'—all sorts of things—which don't interest me in the very least! But he had a stunt of gatherin' a few choice spirits to smoke and play cards in the vaults under this jolly old buildin'."

"I suppose you're driving at something, Mauly?" said Frank Nugent.

GLASGOW READER WINS ONE OF THIS WEEK'S LEATHER POCKET WALLETS.

Said Fisher T. Fish: "Say, you guys,
I guess I can sure put you wise.
If you only just think
I save gallons of ink
By simply not dotting my 'i's'."

Sent in by Johnston Gardner,
of 43, Strathard Street, Glasgow,
E.2.

Write a Greyfriars limerick
to-day, chum, and send it along to
"Limericks and Jokes" Editor,
c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

"Yaas!"

"Well, accelerate a bit, if you can."

"Yaas! The Head in those ancient days got on to somethin' goin' on below stairs, to put it like that. There was a search. Dear old Gosling was chief searcher—see? They found that a smokin' party had been goin' on—cards and smokes galore, and all that; but the jolly old smokers and carders—I mean, card-players—had vanished into thin air."

"Well," said Wharton with a touch of impatience.

"Well, that's that! Gosling thought, and he thinks that the Head thought at the time that the naughty ones had spotted one of the old secrets of that dusty old place. There's said to be a lot of secret vaults and passages and things. Some have been found, and some haven't. It looked as if the merry beans knew one of them, and parked themselves in it while the search was goin' on."

"Shouldn't wonder. But what—"

"Well, later on, Kranz was fairly caught, and a lot came out, and he had to go. The Head let him go quietly, instead of sackin' him; but he had to go. He was a Sixth Form man, and a prefect at that time."

"You got all this out of Gosling?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yaas. Gossy doesn't like him. He used to play tricks on Gosling when he was a fag. And it seems that he hasn't tipped him, as an Old Boy, though he's always bargin' in, and he must know that Gosling hasn't lost his appetite for half-crowns."

"Well, the less you say about it the better, I think," grunted Johnny Bull. "He hasn't been near the school for twenty years till just lately, and it's rather rotten to bring all that up against a man in middle life. You'd better forget all about it."

"Think so?"

"Yes; I jolly well do!"

"Now I don't agree," said Lord Mauleverer urbanely. "I've been chewin' over this, and I want you men to chew over it, too. Doesn't it look as if this man Kranz may know a secret place about the school that nobody else knows anything about?"

"I dare say it does," said Nugent. "But we came here to talk about Bob, old bean, and we're not really interested in Kranz."

"Borin' you?" sighed Mauleverer. "I was afraid I should."

"Well, not exactly," said Harry Wharton. "Only, you see, we're keen on fixing up some scheme for hunting for old Bob, and we don't really care a brass farthing about Mr. Kranz, or what he was like, or what he did, when he was a Greyfriars fellow before we were born."

"Oh, I see! You don't spot the connection?"

"What connection?"

"Between Kranz and Bob."

"The connection between Kranz and Bob," repeated Wharton blankly. "Are you dreaming, Mauly?"

"I think not. You fellows woke me up, you know."

"Then what the thump do you mean?" demanded Johnny Bull. "What on earth has Mr. Kranz to do with Bob Cherry?"

"Oh, I forgot to mention that I think that Mr. Kranz is the kidnapper!" drawled Lord Mauleverer.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER:

Mauly Thinks It Out!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. jumped.

They had wondered, rather impatiently, what on earth Lord Mauleverer was driving at. Certainly they had not expected that it was anything like this. They stared at him in blank amazement.

"Kranz!" ejaculated Wharton.

"The kidnapper!" gasped Nugent.

"Mad?" asked Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed and idiotic Mauly—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Lord Mauleverer uncrossed an elegant leg, and crossed the other over it. He smiled benignly at the astounded four.

"Surprised you?" he asked.

"Just a little," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The surprisefulness is terrific!"

"Look here! What's the good of wasting time talking rot?" asked Johnny Bull. "Go to sleep again, Mauly."

"Am I talkin' rot?" asked Lord Mauleverer. "Very likely. Lots of fellows talk rot without realisin' it. Bull, for instance—"

"Oh, rats!" growled Johnny.

Harry Wharton closed the door of the study.

"We'd better keep this to ourselves," he said. "If there's anything in what you've told us, Mauly, get on with it, and tell us your reasons."

"Yaas; lots of reasons!" said Mauly. "I've been givin' the old nut a lot of exercise on this subject. Thinkin' isn't really my long suit, but I can put in a little at times. What's Kranz doin' about here?"

"He's a flying man—amateur," said Harry. "He's doing flying stunts with the Aero Club at Courtfield. That's his reason."

"His reason—or his excuse?" asked Mauleverer. "He would have to give some sort of reason, if he had another reason he couldn't mention. He never came near his old school for twenty years or more, then all of a sudden he barges in, and puts up in the neighbourhood—"

"Well, he came in the first place to give Quelch a lift in his plane when the railway was blocked."

"Awfully obligin' of him, an' helped him to a footin' here," said Mauly. "Also, a man who was going to land in a plane and pick up a kid on the football field, might like to make a trial trip an' learn the lie of the land—what?"

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Kranz lands on the football field the day he hops in with Quelch, and only a week later that johnny with the long nose hops down in the same spot and whisks off Bob Cherry. Gettin' his hand in—what?—when he obliged Quelch with that lift."

"Oh!" repeated the captain of the Remove.

"It wasn't the same plane," said Johnny Bull.

Lord Mauleverer smiled patiently.

"Would it be?" he murmured.

"Well, no. But"—Johnny shook his head—"this sounds the most awful rot, Mauly!"

"Yaas; but look at it! You see I've been asking questions, and thinkin', and all that—you men haven't. Frightful fag, but I thought it was up to me for old Bob's sake. Decent old bean, Bob Cherry. It's been quieter in the Remove passage since he went; but I want to see him again like anythin'. I don't care how much row he makes when he comes back."

"You silly ass—"

"I've heard that one," said Lord Mauleverer gravely.

"Look here, Mauly, get on with it," said Wharton. "I suppose what you've suggested is possible. But—but what else have you got to say? Something must have made you think of Kranz—what was it?"

"Yaas, that's the point," agreed Mauleverer. "Why did my eagle eye first fix on that sportsman—what? Well, you men know what Redwing was sayin'—that when Smithy cleared off, the mornin' he was goin' to be sacked, he told Reddy he hoped to spot where Bob was parked, and bring him sailin' merrily home, and get another chance from the Head. Smithy's pater fancied there might be somethin' in it, as the young sweep never turned up at home, and asked the local police to barge in. They found that the mornin' he left here, Smithy called on Kranz at the Courtfield Hotel."

"Ancient history," said Johnny Bull.

"Yaas. Still, a bit more interestin' than the ancient history we get with Quelch in Form—what? If you'd rather I told you about the Greeks and Romans—"

"Oh, get on with it!"

"Which—Kranz, or the Greeks and Romans?" asked Lord Mauleverer innocently.

"Kranz, you fathead—"

"Oh, all right! Well, when that

came out, I advised Reddy to go and see Kranz, and exerted myself to the extent of goin' with him to see whether the good man knew anythin' about Smithy. He said he didn't."

"Well, of course, he didn't," said Johnny Bull. "Mean to say that you began to suspect the chap, then?"

"Not at all. Not till Redwing disappeared," explained Lord Mauleverer. "Smithy calls on Kranz, and disappears soon afterwards. Nothin' in that. Redwing calls on Kranz, and tells him he's goin' to root all over this part of the country till he roots out Smithy. Redwing disappears! Somethin' in that! At the very least," said Lord Mauleverer gently, "it seems to be shockin' unhealthy to call on Kranz—what?"

"You called yourself, with Reddy, and you never disappeared, that I know of," said Johnny Bull.

"A hit—a very palpable hit—as jolly old Shakespeare remarks. But there's a difference. Kranz had quite a talk with Reddy, and got out of him that he was in deadly earnest goin' huntin' for Smithy. Me he only looked on as a harmless ass—the general opinion, I believe," remarked Lord Mauleverer placidly. "I haven't gone huntin' for anybody, and I'm not considered dangerous; but I am, though," added his lordship. "Frightfully dangerous to kidnappin' blighters, when I set the old nut goin'."

"Well, it's a sort of coincidence, both fellows getting nabbed, after calling on Kranz," said Harry Wharton slowly. "But—"

"The butfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Is that the lot, Mauly?" asked Frank.

"Far from it, old bean! Now I've started I'm goin' to talk you fellows blind and deaf! It's tirin' work, and I wish I had Bunter's jawbone to do it with—but I'm goin' on! Lots and lots of points! Member that Kranz stayed the night, the time he landed Quelch here? Bunter was playin' the goat—hidin' in Quelch's study that night—and he swore that Kranz came down in the night and nosed over that secret panel in Quelch's study that gives free admission to the vaults—"

"It's screwed up now," said Harry. "Smithy found that out when he tried to get in that way."

"Yaas—I've no doubt Kranz wanted to know."

"Why should he?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ah, why?" said Mauleverer. "Another time, when Bunter had a stunt of playing tricks by gettin' into the vaults, he went by that tunnel from the old priory—and barged into Kranz there. Member?"

"I'd forgotten," said Harry. "But I remember Bunter said so. Nothing strange in an Old Boy of Greyfriars going over the old spots."

"Nunno! But the time you went down into the vaults after Bunter you barged into the kidnapper himself—long nose and all."

"That was weeks ago, and he's never been seen since."

"Unless Smithy saw him that night he was out of bounds an' tried to get in by the vaults!"

suggested Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh!"

"Smithy certainly had an idea that Bob wasn't far away—and he must have picked up that idea from somewhere. That same night, too—see!"

Somethin' must have happened, and we know that Smithy was in the vaults. He hammered to be let out in the mornin'. Why?"

"Because he wanted to be let out!" said Johnny Bull, staring.

"Why couldn't he go back the way he got in, by the tunnel from the old priory?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Suppose he spotted a long-nosed johnny about, that johnny might have shut the stone when he went, and Smithy couldn't have got it open from underneath! Think anythin' of that?"

"Oh!"

"You see, I've been puttin' two and two together—doin' a frightful lot of thinkin'," said Lord Mauleverer. "Since it occurred to me that it was odd that a fellow callin' on Kranz seemed sort of bound to disappear afterwards, I've been connectin' up Kranz with everythin' that's happened here—and it sort of seems to fit."

"But why the thump should Kranz do anything of the kind?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Why should anybody?" asked Mauleverer.

"Well, that villain who calls himself Nemo is after a flying gadget Major Cherry has invented, and has offered to let Bob free in exchange for it," said Nugent.

"Well, Kranz knows the major—hopped in with him to-day, in fact! Nemo must be a man who knows the major, or he wouldn't know anythin' about the gadget."

"You'll make your head ache at this rate, Mauly," said the captain of the Remove.

"Yaas—I'm afraid of it! But anythin' to save poor old Bob! Think there's anythin' in it?" yawned Lord Mauleverer.

"There's one thing you seem to have overlooked, Mr. Sherlock Holmes!" said Johnny Bull, with a grin.

"Lots of things, very likely; but what's the particular point?"

"The kidnapper's been seen—and he's a man with a beard and a nose like a big tomato. Kranz hasn't a beard, and his nose is a little knob."

"Dear man!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, what do you mean?" demanded Johnny warmly. "Think Kranz can alter the shape of his nose whenever he likes?"

"Yaas!"

"You howling ass—"

"Know a fellow named Wibley?" asked Mauleverer.

"Eh! Do you mean Wibley of the Remove?"

"Yaas!"

"Of course I know him, fathead! What about Wib, ass?"

"Member he does theatrical stunts?"

"Yes, you duffer! What about it?"

"Ever seen him with a different nose on?"

"Lots of times! Oh!" ejaculated Johnny. "You mean that the kidnapper may be got up in a false nose?"

"Why not?" yawned Lord Mauleverer. "He could hardly do kidnappin' stunts in his own jolly old name and character. You have to keep yourself

(Continued on next page.)

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rather dark when you're breakin' the law, you know!" explained Mauleverer. "It's rather a dangerous game to go kidnappin'; and a fellow can't be too careful! Kranz strikes me as a very sharp and careful sort of sportsman, and if he went in for disguise I've no doubt he'd make a good job of it."

"You've thought of everything, Mauly," said Harry Wharton, with a faint smile.

"Yaas—I've tried to."

"But it's all rot, you know!" said Johnny Bull, shaking his head.

"Shouldn't wonder!" agreed Mauleverer amiably. "I don't claim to be one of those brainy men! It's just an idea of mine—a poor thing but my own, as Tennyson says—"

"Shakespeare, fathead!"

"Was it Shakespeare? I knew it was somebody! Now, look at all the points!" argued Mauleverer. "Man who knows old Major Cherry bags Bob! Kranz knows him! Man who dropped in by plane to kidnap Bob would very likely want to sample the landing-place first! Kranz sampled it! The kidnapper turns out to be still in the jolly old locality! Kranz is hanging on in the jolly old locality! Smithy noses out somethin' that makes him think Bob is parked just handy, and tells Kranz, thinking that as an Old Boy he might be able and willin' to help! Smithy's never heard of again. Redwing goes to Kranz inquire after Smithy, tells him he's determined to raise Cain till he finds him—Reddy does the vanishin' trick in his turn!"

Lord Mauleverer ticked off the "points" with a slim forefinger on an elegant knee.

"If Bob's parked at hand, where is he? Some secret sort of a place! Kranz knew of a secret place in the vaults when he was a Greyfriars chap long ago. Prisoners have to be fed—the kidnapper is seen in the vaults, and on another occasion Kranz is seen there. I fancy he parks that nose and beard in some cranny, after he's called on his prisoner with grub—and when he goes out again he's Kranz! Bob sees him as Nemo, but Bunter, meetin' him comin' out, saw him as Kranz! What?"

"A Greyfriars man—kidnapped and parked in the vaults under Greyfriars itself!" said Johnny Bull, with a grin.

"Safest place—last spot anybody would dream of lookin' in!"

"Um!" said Nugent.

"You men don't think a lot of this!" yawned Lord Mauleverer. "Never mind—the proof of the pudding's in the eatin'! We'll see! I'm going to have a squint at the vaults; I've borrowed the key from Quelch's study—"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "Bunter's up for that!"

"Is he? Well, that's all right—Quelch won't whop him for what he hasn't done! Just old bird!"

Harry Wharton's face was grave and thoughtful.

"Kranz or not, you believe that Bob has been shut up in a secret vault under the school, Mauly?" he asked.

"Not exactly—but I think that everythin' seems to point to somethin' of the sort."

"It's occurred to nobody else."

Lord Mauleverer tapped his forehead. "Nobody else," he said gently, "is the happy possessor of this old nut."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Nothing in it!" said Johnny Bull.

"In the nut?" asked Mauleverer.

"No, ass—in the idea! All rot!"

Lord Mauleverer rose from the armchair.

"I'll leave you men to chew over this!" he said. "Think it over a bit!"

I'm goin' to put salt on the kidnapper's tail if I'm right."

"How?" asked all the four juniors together.

"I'm goin' to borrow Toddy's bottle of marking-ink!"

The juniors gazed at Lord Mauleverer.

"Is that going to help?" asked Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"Yaas!"

And with a cheery nod to the chums of the Remove, Lord Mauleverer ambled out of the study. He left Harry Wharton & Co. staring! Johnny Bull gave a snort! But his friends looked very thoughtful! Whether Lord Mauleverer's remarkable theory was right or whether it was wrong, undoubtedly he had given Bob Cherry's chums plenty of food for thought.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs for More!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!"

"I've been whopped—"

"Good!"

"Hard!" groaned Bunter.

"Fine!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter, in great indignation. "You might be sympathetic, at least! I've had six from Quelch!"

"I dare say it ought to have been sixty!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"And all for nothing!" said Bunter pathetically. "I was absolutely innocent. Some beast has bagged the key of the vaults from Quelch's study—"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. He remembered what Lord Mauleverer had told him. "You haven't been whopped for that?"

"Not exactly that!" admitted Bunter. "But I've been whopped. It doesn't matter much, really, what it was for; it's the whopping that matters. Ow!"

"The matterfulness seems to be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Some silly ass larking with that key, you know!" groaned Bunter.

"That was how it came out about the pie! Quelch missed the key, and sent for me. I never knew the silly old key was missing. So I thought that it was about the pie, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. The old ass was talking about an idiotic key, and I thought he was talking about the pie. Not that I had the pie, you know. I haven't been down to the kitchen at all, and I never took it to my study and ate it there! I never chucked the dish behind Toddy's armchair when Wingate came up—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter bitterly. "Cackle! You wouldn't cackle if you'd had that six! Fellows say that old Quelch isn't fit, and there's a talk of his going away for a rest; but he seemed to me to have developed a frightful lot of muscle! Stacks of it! I've had a fearful whopping!"

"Well, you've had the pie, too!" said Frank Nugent. "Are you going on groaning like that?"

"Ow! Yes. I'm in fearful pain!"

"Then for goodness' sake go and groan somewhere else!"

"Beast!"

"The groanfulness is too terrific, my esteemed and groanful Bunter," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"The groanfulness in your own esteemed study is the proper caper."

"That beast Todd chucked a book at me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, it's beastly unfeeling to cackle when a fellow's in awful agony. I've had six, for bagging that pie from the larder. And I never had it, you know. Never even saw it, or knew that there was a pie at all! And there wasn't much kidney in it, either!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's what they call justice here," said Bunter bitterly. "The fact is, you fellows, old Quelch is worried about Smithy and Bob, and Redwing, and he's taking it out of me! Venting his rage on me, you know. Making out that I bag pies from the larder! I hope I'm not that sort of fellow! They always seem to think of me when any grub's missing, I don't know why. It's not much I eat, as you know."

"Shut the door after you."

"Beast! I say, you fellows, I can tell you that I'm fed up with Quelch's rotten bad temper and injustice. Has one of you fellows got that key?"

"Nobody here," said Harry.

"Well, somebody's got it," said Bunter. "It's missing from the rack in Quelch's study. That man Kranz was here to-day. Think he pinched it?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, he's a bat hat," said Bunter. "Look how he came down in the night, nosing over that secret panel in Quelch's study, the night I was hiding there. And he told Quelch lies about it when Quelch came down. He used to go down in the vaults to smoke with his pals when he was a Greyfriars man. I've heard old Gosling jawing it over to Mimble. He kicked me in the quad to-day—awful ruffian, you know! I believe he'd pinch anything."

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned. After what Lord Mauleverer had told them they hardly knew what to think of Mr. Franz Kranz. But they certainly did not suppose that he was likely to "pinch" things because he had kicked Bunter in the quad. In Bunter's opinion, however, anyone who kicked so important a person as William George Bunter was capable of anything.

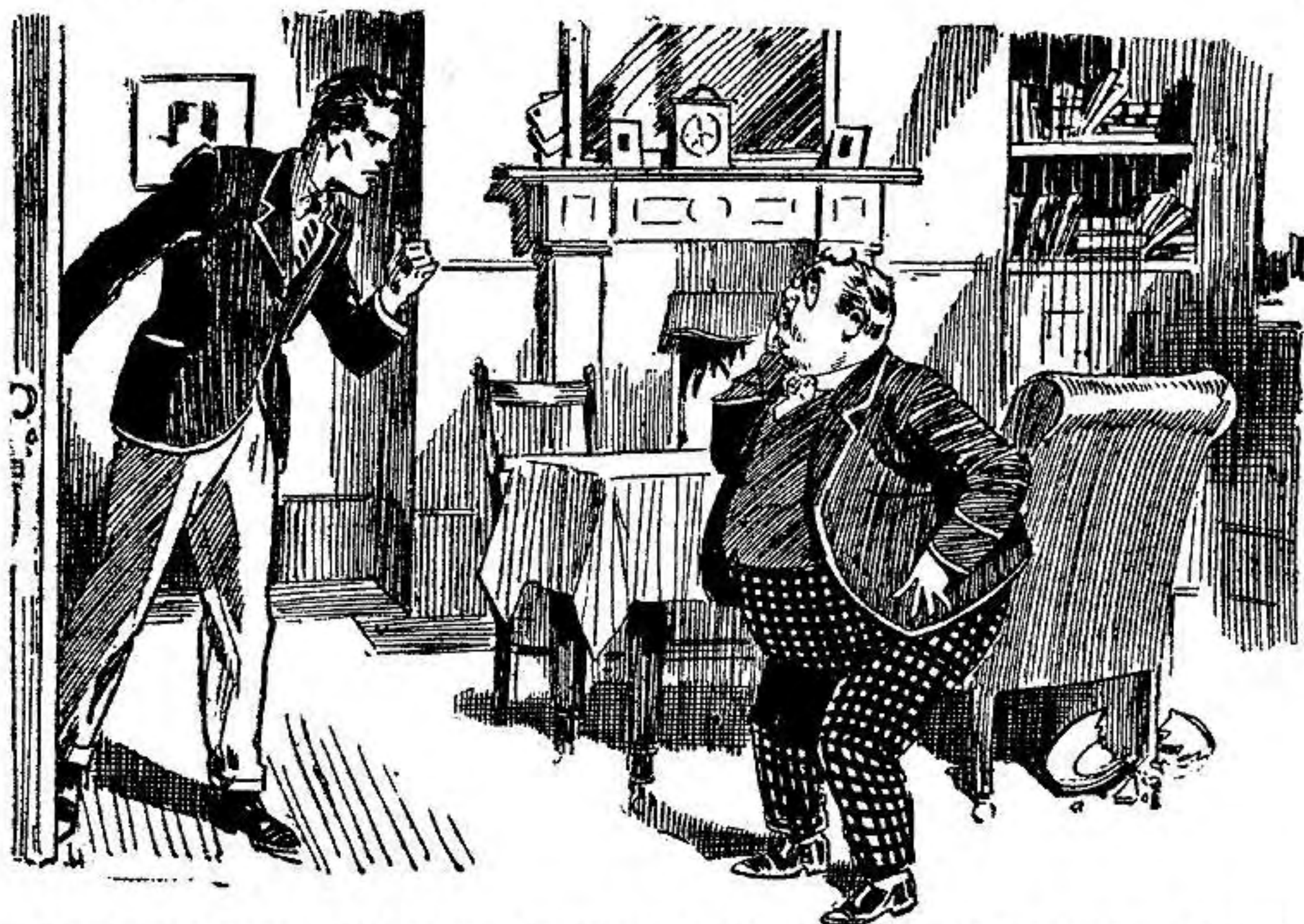
Moreover, they were aware that the missing key was in Mauly's possession. Mauly had bagged it, apparently with the intention of visiting the school vaults. As Mr. Quelch had missed the key so soon it did not seem likely that Mauly would be likely to carry out his intention. It was certain that there would be immediate inquiry after that key, for the vaults were very strictly out of bounds for Greyfriars fellows. Billy Bunter having been drawn blank, as it were, Mr. Quelch was probably already carrying the investigation farther.

"Well, if a Remove man has got it I want it," went on Billy Bunter. "I can tell you I'm fed up with Quelch! You fellows remember that time I went down into the vaults, when you came after me, and we ran into that kidnapping beast with the nose? Well, I was going to find that panel in Quelch's study and squirt ink over him. It turns out that the panel's been screwed up; but I could bore it—"

"You could bore anybody!" remarked Nugent. "You're boring us now."

"You silly ass! I mean I could bore the panel with a gimlet. See? Fancy old Quelch's face if he got a spurt of ink in his eye while he's sitting in his study! Funny—what? He, he!"

"Rather too funny!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.



As heavy footsteps approached the door, Bunter clutched up the ple-dish and dropped it behind the armchair in the corner. The next moment the door was hurled open and Wingate stared in. "You young sweep!" he exclaimed. "Didn't you hear me call you?" "No!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, Wingate, I never even had it!"

"Well, I'm not going to be whopped for nothing! Not without making old Quelch sit up!" said Bunter. "I want you fellows to help. It's safe enough in the vaults. That kidnapper won't barge in again. I suppose he was hiding there, or something. But he must have cleared off ages ago. You fellows needn't be afraid. Besides, I shall be there to protect you!"

"Ye gods!" "We'll all go together," said Bunter. "You've got a gimlet in your toolbox, Bull—"

"And it's staying there, you blithering ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"If you're funky you can stand out and just lend Wharton the gimlet," said Bunter scornfully. "Wharton ain't afraid. Are you, old chap?"

"Fathead!"

"First thing is to find the fellow who's got the key," said Bunter. "Then we'll jolly well make old Quelch sit up. If Quelch thinks he's going to whop me just because he's bad-tempered and shirty, he's making a mistake, as I shall jolly well show him! Blow Quelch!"

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Nugent, as he sighted a tall and angular figure through the open door in the Remove passage, coming from the stairs.

"Shan't!" answered Bunter, happily unconscious of danger. "I say, you fellows, back up, you know! Don't be funky! Just think of old Quelch's face when he gets the ink right in his eye—"

The tall figure in the Remove passage came to a dead stop. Mr. Quelch seemed bereft of speech as he gazed at the back of Bunter's unconscious head in the doorway.

"He, he he! Make the old blighter

sit up—what!" grinned Bunter. "What are you making faces at me for, Nugent? I say—"

A finger and thumb that seemed like a steel vice closed on Billy Bunter's fat ear. His little round eyes almost popped through his big, round spectacles as he blinked round at his Form-master.

Still holding Bunter's fat ear in that vice-like grip, Mr. Quelch glanced into the study and addressed the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton?"

"Yes, sir?" gasped Harry.

"Owl! Wow!" came from the fat Owl.

"Silence, Bunter! Wharton, the key of the vaults has been abstracted again from my study. I came up to tell you to call the whole Form together in the Form-room for the matter to be investigated."

"Very well, sir!"

"Owl! Wow!"

"You will come with me, Bunter!"

"I—I—I say, sir, I—I—I— Oh lor'! Oh crumbs! Oh dear! Owl!"

Mr. Quelch walked away, with his finger and thumb still tightly compressing the fat ear of the Owl of the Remove. Bunter did not want to follow him. But his ear had to go—and Bunter, of course, had to accompany his ear! So he went. It was in fear and trembling that the helpless Owl accompanied Mr. Quelch into his study. He had a deep apprehension that there was going to be another whopping—that history was going to repeat itself, so to speak!

He was right—history did!

When the Remove assembled in their Form-room one member of that Form

was groaning dismally and wriggling horribly. Like Rachael of old, Billy Bunter mourned, and was not to be comforted.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Own Up!

MR. QUELCH glanced over the assembled Remove in the Form-room with a grim, stern eye.

The juniors stood at attention, Billy Bunter trying to suppress his sounds of woe under the gleam of that gimlet-eye. Lord Mauleverer was his usual placid self, though the captain of the Remove, in passing the word for the Form to assemble, had warned him what it was for. There was a minute of rather apprehensive silence before the Remove master spoke.

"Some boy in this Form," said Mr. Quelch in a deep voice, "has taken the key of the vaults from my study!"

"Is that all?" murmured Skinner in great relief. Skinner had been wondering uneasily whether cigarettes had been spotted in the Remove box room—where Skinner kept his supply of smokes.

"This is a serious matter," went on Mr. Quelch. "Some time ago the key was taken by Bunter. Bunter denies having taken it now—"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never—"

"You may be silent, Bunter."

"Owl! Yes, sir!"

"The boy who has taken the key will stop forward and return it to me," said Mr. Quelch. "The vaults are a dangerous place, and strictly out of bounds. If

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

the boy in question has used the key to enter the vaults he will be severely punished."

"Poor old Mauly!" murmured Nugent.

"I am waiting!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"The waitfulness will probably be terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Really it looked like it. Quelch's cane lay handy on his desk and no fellow in the Remove wanted to sample that cane. Harry Wharton glanced at Mauleverer. His lordship stood calm and placid without a sign. Several long seconds ticked away.

"I command the boy in question to stand forward and hand over the key he has abstracted from my study!" Mr. Quelch's voice grew deeper.

"No takers!" whispered Skinner to Snoop. And Sidney James Snoop grinned.

"Did you speak, Skinner?" Mr. Quelch's ears seemed remarkably keen.

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Skinner in alarm.

"I am waiting!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "I am waiting for the boy to stand forward."

Nobody stood forward. Quelch's tone was not encouraging—neither was the cane on his desk inviting.

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch in a voice that implied that, so far from its being very well, it was not well at all. "Very well! As the key has certainly been taken by a member of this Form, the whole Form will be placed under detention until the key is returned to me."

"Oh!" gasped the Removites.

This was rather drastic. Quelch evidently was in a drastic mood. With so many worries on hand that troublesome term, Quelch had no mind to be the victim of tricks played by mischievous members of his Form. Dismay fell on the Remove.

Lord Mauleverer sighed. This put it up to him. He stepped forward from the ranks of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

Lord Mauleverer was about the last fellow in the Form whom the Remove-master would have suspected of playing tricks of any kind. Not for a moment would Mauly's name have crossed his mind as that of the delinquent.

"Mauleverer!" he ejaculated. "What have—"

"It was I, sir!" said Mauly cheerfully.

"You took the key of the vaults from my study, Mauleverer!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yaas, sir!"

"Place it on my desk."

Lord Mauleverer drew the long iron key from his pocket and laid it on the master's high desk; then he faced Mr. Quelch again with cheerful resignation.

"I am surprised at this, Mauleverer!" said Mr. Quelch severely. "Why did you take the key?"

"I borrowed it, sir," murmured his lordship. "I assure you that I should

have taken great care of it, sir, and returned it. I keep on losin' my own things, but I really never lose anybody else's, sir."

"You have been down in the vaults?"

"No, sir!"

"You intended to go?"

"Yaas!"

"Had you carried out your intention, Mauleverer, I should have caned you very severely!" said Mr. Quelch. "You are not a foolish boy, like Bunter, and you know very well, Mauleverer, that this is a serious matter."

"Yaas, sir. Sorry!"

Mr. Quelch picked up the cane from the desk.

"Bend over, Mauleverer," he said laconically.

Swish, swish, swish!

It was only three, but the three were fairly hefty. Lord Mauleverer wriggled painfully as he rose after the infliction.

Mr. Quelch laid down the cane and picked up the key.

"Dismiss!" he snapped.

And the Removites marched out.

"Hurt, old man?" asked Frank Nugent, as they went down the corridor. Lord Mauleverer made a grimace.

"Yaas."

"Well, you asked for it, you know," remarked Johnny Bull, apparently in the role of Job's comforter.

"Yaas."

"You won't get another chance at that key!" said Harry Wharton. "Now it's been bagged twice, I fancy Quelch will stick it in a safer place."

"Yaas."

"That knocks your little game on the head, doesn't it?" asked the captain of the Remove.

"Does it?" asked Mauleverer.

"Well, you can't get into the vaults without the key."

"Why not?"

"Fathead! How are you going to unlock the door without the key?"

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"The door doesn't need unlockin'," he murmured.

"What?"

"You see, I rather fancied that Quelch would miss the key, and might go after it," explained his lordship. "So I nipped along and unlocked the door of the vaults as soon as I had it."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"I haven't been down yet—not goin' yet awhile," said his lordship cheerily. "Just unlocked the door and kept it ready. See? Quelch can put that key in his safe, or up his study chimney, or lodge it in the Bank of England—I'm sure I don't mind! I shan't want it any more."

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at his cheery lordship. Mauleverer was popularly supposed in the Remove to be a priceless ass, too lazy to use his brains—if he had any, which was considered doubtful. But it was clear that Mauly's noble brain could put in some good work at times.

"You see," further explained his lordship, "it ain't likely to occur to Quelch that a fellow bagged that key just to unlock the vault door and leave it unlocked—what? As I haven't been down, he naturally supposes that I haven't used the key. But I have, you know."

"Oh, my hat!" said Nugent.

"If he spots it—" said Johnny Bull. "He might—"

"Yaas—he might!" agreed Lord Mauleverer. "I'm goin' to keep an eye on his nibs and see whether he staggers along to investigate. If he does, and locks the door, I shall have to make a trip to the old priory and get in that way. Frightful fog! I hope he won't."

Lord Mauleverer lingered in the corridor and saw Mr. Quelch come along with the big iron key in his hand.

The Remove-master went directly to his study.

He remained in that apartment.

Evidently it had not occurred to him that the door to the vaults had been unlocked by that key and left unlocked.

Satisfied on that point, his lordship ambled away to the Remove passage. Harry Wharton went with him with a thoughtful frown on his face. He did not share the general opinion of Mauly as a priceless ass, and he had been considerably impressed by what his lordship had said in Study No. 1. He tapped Mauly on the arm in the Remove passage and spoke in a low voice.

"Look here, Mauly, if you're going down, you'd better not go alone."

"That's all right; I'll call in you fellows when you're wanted, old bean. I can manage all right."

"If you've got it right, Mauly, that man Kranz ought to be watched."

"Yaas."

"And we can all go together and search in the vaults."

"Yaas."

"Well, then, what about it?" asked Harry.

"Leave it to me, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'll tip you the wink when you're wanted. I've got to put salt on the Kranz-bird's tail first."

"Well, it's your stunt," said Harry. "We'll back you up if there's anything in it, of course. But if there's a secret vault, as you suppose, we might search for donkey's years without spotting it."

"Exactly!"

"Well, then, I don't see—" said Harry, with a touch of impatience. "Look here! When are you going down?"

"In prep."

"If you're missed in prep, it means a whopping."

"Yaas. And I've had two to-day already," sighed Lord Mauleverer. "What a life!"

"Well, then, ass, if you're going, why not now?"

"Not ready yet," said Mauleverer.

"I've got to get ready."

"In what way?"

"I've got to borrow some more ink."

"Ink!" gasped Wharton.

"Yaas."

Lord Mauleverer ambled on, leaving the captain of the Remove staring. He gave a grunt as he went to his own study. Either Mauly was the priceless ass the Remove supposed him to be, or else he was leg-pulling; but Wharton could not quite believe either. He did not know what to think; and he had to leave the puzzle unsolved.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"I SAY, you fellows! Seen Mauly?"

"What about Mauly?"

"He's mad!" explained Billy Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Mad!"

It was nearly time for prep when the fat Owl of the Remove rolled into the Rag with that surprising news.

"What on earth—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, he must be mad!" said Bunter, blinking at the surprised juniors through his big spectacles. "What do you think he's doing?"

"Has he lent you something on that postal order you're expecting?" asked Skinner. "That would look rather like it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, really, Skinner—"
 "Well, what is Mauly up to, fat-head?" demanded Peter Todd.
 "He's collecting ink," said Bunter.
 "Ink!" exclaimed half a dozen voices.
 "Ink!" said Bunter. "Tottering up and down the studies borrowing ink. Bottle after bottle of it. What do you think of that?"
 "What utter rot!" said Toddy. "He could get a quart bottle out of the Form-room if he wanted ink."
 "Not writing-ink," said Bunter. "Marking-ink! Stuff you use on rubber stamps, for shirts and things."
 "Oh! I remember he borrowed my bottle," said Peter Todd. "I suppose

he wanted to mark a collar or something."
 "He's borrowed mine, too," said Wibley.
 "And mine," said Squiff.
 "He's asking every man in the Remove, one after another, for bottles of indelible marking-ink," said Billy Bunter. "Only a few fellows have got them, of course, and he's borrowed the lot. I looked into his study, and he had six bottles of marking-ink on his table."
 "What on earth for?" asked Skinner.
 "He's mad!" said Bunter. "I asked him if he thought he'd got enough, and he said 'no'; he was going to see if he could bag some in the Fourth. And

he's gone along to the Fourth to borrow ink."
 "Well, my hat!"
 "Must be right off his rocker," said Hazeldene, in wonder. "What on earth can he want it for?"
 "Jape on somebody, perhaps," suggested Wibley. "I've heard of marking-ink being put in a fellow's hat."
 "Mauly never japes," said Hazel.
 "The japefulness of the esteemed Mauly is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the hope is great that he has not wandered in his esteemed and ridiculous senses."
 "Has he any to wander in?" grinned Skinner.
 "There goes the bell."
 (Continued on next page.)



"Linesman" is only too delighted to pass on his Soccer wisdom to MAGNET readers. If you've got any problems that want solving, write to him, c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A reply will appear in due course in this weekly feature.

SHOULD CAPTAINS DICTATE?

DOES it really matter who is captain of a big football team? This is a leading question which is put to me by a MAGNET reader. It is not the sort of question which I can answer with a direct yes or no. In some big football teams the captain does a real job of work in addition to playing his part in the game. In other teams the captain is just a figure-head who leads the team out at the beginning of the game, and who tosses for choice of ends.

What I can say in reply to that question and as the result of my experience, is that the tendency of to-day is to curb more and more the activities of the skipper of a side in the sheer captaincy sense.

The players, with the help of their manager, talk over team tactics before a game. They decide on their plan of campaign. Then on match day the manager is usually there, and if, while watching his men play from his position in the stand, he thinks that the team should be pulled about, or the tactics changed, he sends a message to the skipper via the trainer, who is, of course, near the touch-line.

So it is really the manager who dictates, to the captain.

In this connection I remember watching a match a little time back. After it was over I met the captain of the losing side, and I suggested to him that the result might have been different if he had made certain changes in the make-up of the side while the contest was in progress: had switched the positions of two players. The captain was inclined to agree with me, and he said that the idea had occurred to him. But he had been told on several occasions that it was not his job to pull the team about: the manager would do it. "So I just let the game drift," he said. Whether it is good for the activities of the captain to be restricted thus I do not propose to discuss just now. The fact remains that many football captains are not allowed to captain.

CORNER-KICKS AND OFFSIDE!

THIS subject leads me to reply to another question, which comes from the skipper of a junior club. "I was very much upset by the methods of one of our players in a recent match. He did not come under the ban of the referee, but I felt like sending him off the field. Should I have been within my rights in doing so?" The answer to that question is in the negative.

The captain of a football team has no right, under the rules of the game, to send any of his players off the field. There is a rule which governs the point, and the rule says: "Any player leaving the field during the progress of a game—except through accident—without the consent of the referee will be deemed guilty of misconduct, and will render himself liable to be punished."

Thus you will see that the captain cannot order even one of his own players off the field.

A Luton reader saw his favourite team—Luton Town—in a recent match, and he noticed that on two or three occasions when a player was obviously offside following a throw-in the whistle was not blown. I can assure my reader friend that the referee was not at fault.

A player cannot be offside directly following a throw-in.

This is a comparatively new rule, and maybe that is the reason why many people are not aware of it.

I should point out, of course, that after the ball has been touched by another player following a throw-in, the offside rule begins to operate at once. While I am on this subject, perhaps I ought to mention that a player cannot properly be given offside from a corner-kick. Here again, however, it is only a case of the first player who touches the ball being in a legitimate position, no matter where he is standing. Another player touching the ball from a corner-kick can be offside. It frequently happens that after the taker of a corner-kick has dropped the ball in

towards goal it goes back to him when he is still near the corner-flag, from one of his colleagues. And then the whistle goes, because the probability is that the original taker of the corner-kick is offside.

A CORNER-KICK TIP.

WHILE I am talking about corner-kicks, perhaps I may now say a few words more on the subject of goals from corners. I mentioned last week that a goalkeeper had estimated that only one corner-kick out of thirty-three resulted in a goal.

The proportion should be higher than this, and I am certain that the reason why goals are so seldom scored is that corner-kicks are taken in too haphazard a fashion. The fellow kicking the ball over from the flag just drops it somewhere into goal and usually as near to the goal as he can get it. This is, in my view, a mistake.

The ideal corner-kick does not send the ball so near to goal that the goalkeeper has the best chance of getting at it. Remember that he can use his hands, whereas the attackers can only use their heads. Therefore, if the ball is within reach of the goalkeeper he usually gets it—and clears.

I know that goals are occasionally scored direct from a corner-kick, without anybody else touching the ball, but these are freak efforts, and it is not worth while trying for them. There have been fewer goals scored from corners, in my judgment, since the rule was altered which permitted goals to be scored direct than previously. The reason for this is that too many corner-kick takers try to score. Really, it isn't their job.

Here is a corner-kick tip. If you have a specially tall fellow in the side—a half-back or a full-back—let him go up into goal when a corner is being taken, bringing some smaller player back to take his place. Height tells when the ball is coming over from the flag. Arsenal always send Roberts, their tall centre-half, up into the penalty area when their side have a corner-kick. He doesn't score often, but he frequently gets his head to the ball, and helps his side that way.

I was very much interested the other day to hear an opinion given by James McGrory, the Celtic and Scottish International centre-forward, to the effect that if a player is injured so that he has to go off the field, then the other team's player occupying the same position should go off.

It is an intriguing suggestion for balancing the effects of an injury. But I don't like it, do you?

I don't see why, if I go to play a football match, and an opponent who occupies the same position is hurt, I should be deprived of my share in the game.

"LINESMAN."

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The juniors trooped out of the Rag, to go up to the studies for prep. A crowd of fellows came on Lord Mauleverer on the Remove landing coming back from the quarters of the Fourth Form.

Evidently his mission had been a success; for he had a little purple bottle in either hand, and a bulge in his pocket indicated that more were stacked there. He glanced at the staring Removites.

"Anythin' the matter?" he inquired. "Is my necktie sideways, or is there a spot on my nose, or what?"

"I say, you fellows, he's mad!" "What the thump are you collecting marking-ink for, Mauly?" demanded Peter Todd.

Lord Mauleverer smiled. "Oh, I see! I want to get about a quart of the stuff, if I can," he explained.

"Off your rocker?" asked Skinner. "Not at all, dear man."

"Is it a jape?" demanded Squiff.

"Well, in a sort of a way, you might call it a jape," said Mauleverer reflectively.

"You blithering ass!" said Peter Todd. "If you're fixing up a booby-trap, you'd better not stick indelible marking-ink in it. If a fellow got that sort of stuff on his head—"

"Yaas; that would be rather thick," said Lord Mauleverer. "But he might get it on his feet."

"On his feet?" gasped Toddy.

"Yaas!"

Lord Mauleverer walked up the passage, and went into Study No. 12.

"Mad as a hatter!" said Skinner; and the juniors dispersed to their studies for prep.

In Study No. 12 Lord Mauleverer laid all his little bottles of marking-ink on the table. His study-mate, Jimmy Vivian, stared at them. Mauly rooted round the study for an empty bottle, into which he poured the contents of the little bottles. For whatever purpose his lordship had collected indelible marking-ink, he had succeeded in collecting a large quantity. A ginger-beer bottle was filled to the brim, and his lordship carefully corked it.

"What about prep, Mauly?" asked Jimmy Vivian, who had watched those proceedings with great astonishment.

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"No time for prep," he answered.

"You'll get a ragging from Quelch to-morrow."

"Yaas."

The study door opened, and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in. Billy Bunter blinked at the ginger-beer bottle, and then at Lord Mauleverer. Bunter was intensely inquisitive, and, as usual, he wanted to know. Unless Mauly had indeed gone "off his rocker," it was really difficult to account for his present proceedings.

"I say, Mauly, old man, what are you going to do with that?" asked the Owl of the Remove. "If it's a jape, you might tell a fellow."

"What are you doin' out of prep, Bunter?"

"Oh, blow prep! I say, Mauly, what—"

"Loder's takin' prep. If he catches you—"

"Blow Loder! What—"

Lord Mauleverer picked up one of the little bottles, in which a few drops of marking-ink yet remained.

"You want to know what I'm goin' to do with this?" he asked.

"Yes, old chap," said Bunter eagerly.

"Trot in, then, and I'll show you."

Bunter trotted in. Lord Mauleverer

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carefully poured the few drops of ink from the bottle on a sheet of paper.

"Now look at that!" he said.

"Eh! I can see it," said Bunter, staring.

"Look at it closely."

Bunter, in surprise, bent his fat face over the inky sheet of paper. Lord Mauleverer calmly placed his hand on the back of Bunter's neck, and jammed his fat chin down into the ink.

"Urrrgh!" spluttered Bunter.

"See now?" asked Mauleverer.

"Gurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jimmy Vivian.

"Wurrgh!"

Billy Bunter struggled away with an empurpled chin, and glared at his cheerful lordship with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"You silly ass!" he yelled.

"You asked me—"

"Beast!"

"To show you—"

"Yah! Rotter! My chin is all inky!" howled Bunter. "Look at it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Lord Mauleverer

looked at it. It seemed to strike him as amusing, for he roared.

"You—you—you silly idiot!" gasped

Bunter, jabbing at his fat chin, and smearing the marking-ink over his

fat face. "You—you—you—"

"My dear man, you shouldn't ask for

these things, if you don't like them,"

said Lord Mauleverer placidly. "Like

me to show you some more stunts? I've

got a lot of marking-ink here—"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. And he

rolled out of Study No. 12.

"Bunter!" It was the voice of Loder

of the Sixth, in the Remove passage.

"You're out of your study in prep!"

"I—I—I say, Loder— Yaroooh!"

Whack! Whack!

"Whooooop!"

Billy Bunter fled into Study No. 7.

About a quarter of an hour later, Lord

Mauleverer looked out of his study. The

passage was deserted; all the juniors

were in their studies at prep, and there

was no sign of Loder.

Mauly slipped the ginger-beer bottle

under his jacket and strolled away.

"Better look out for Loder!" called

out Vivian.

"Yaas, old bean!"

Loder was not on the scene, however.

He was not a very dutiful prefect, and

having given the Remove a look-in, he

had gone back to his own study, to

smoke a cigarette with Carne.

It was not till prep was nearly over

that Loder of the Sixth made his

appearance in the Remove passage

again. He was walking along that

passage, with his official ashplant under

his arm, when he was surprised to see a

Remove man coming up the Remove

staircase. He stared at Lord Maul-

overer.

"Oh gad!" murmured Mauly as he

sighted Loder. "A fair catch! What

a life!"

Loder strode up to him.

"You've been down in prep,

Mauleverer?"

"Yaas."

"Sneaking out while my back was

turned for a moment, what?" snapped

the bully of the Sixth.

"Was it turned only for a moment,

Loder?" asked Lord Mauleverer

innocently. "A long moment, what?"

Loder scowled. He had allowed him-

self an hour off duty, but he did not

like having that circumstance rubbed in

by a junior. He slipped his ashplant

down into his hand.

"Go to your study!" he rapped.

"Yaas."

Lord Mauleverer went meekly to his

study, with Loder of the Sixth striding

behind him. In the study Loder pointed to a chair with his cane.

"Bend over that chair!" he said.

"Yaas."

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe!

Loder tucked his ashplant under his

arm, and walked out of the study again.

Lord Mauleverer wriggled painfully.

"Three lickin's in one day, Jimmy!"

he said. "They say that lightnin' never

strikes twice in the same place. I wish

a whoppin' was like lightnin', Jimmy."

"You'll get another in the morning,

from Quelch," said Jimmy Vivian.

"You've done no prep, Mauly! You're

asking for it, and no mistake."

"Yaas."

"Is that bottle empty now?" Vivian

watched Lord Mauleverer dropping an

inky ginger-beer bottle into the waste-

paper basket.

"Yaas."

"What have you done with the

marking-ink you parked in it?"

"Poured it out."

"What for?"

"For a fellow to tread in."

"Oh, my hat!" said Vivian.

Ten minutes remained of prep. Lord

Mauleverer did not utilise them in look-

ing at his books. Perhaps he felt that

he might as well be hung for a sheep as

for a lamb! Anyhow, he settled down in

his comfortable armchair to rest after

his mysterious excursion; and he was

placidly reposing there when the

Removites streamed out of their studies

after prep.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Face of the Kidnapper!

"MY fault, of course!" snarled

the Bounder.

"You know it is!"

answered Bob Cherry quietly.

"You silly dummy—"

"What's the good of ragging?" put in

Tom Redwing pacifically. "It doesn't

matter much whose fault it is. We're

in the soup—and that's that!"

"Right-ho!" agreed Bob. "We've got

to stand it, and it's no use grouching."

It was dismal enough in the hidden

vault under Greyfriars School. A single

candle cast a glimmering light in the

gloomy vault. Even that dim illumina-

tion was not likely to last much longer,

for the box of candles that had been left

in the vault was becoming exhausted.

The prospect of being left in the dark

in that gloomy den was dismaying. But

even worse than that was the prospect

of being left without food.

All three of the prisoners were hungry,

and it was long since the last crust had

been finished.

They could not believe that the kid-

nappers meant to leave them to starve.

But it began to look like it.

Bob Cherry was quite certain that his

father would never yield to the demand

made by the mysterious Nemo. And if

the rascal found that his scheme was a

failure, that he had taken so much

trouble and run so much risk for

nothing, was he likely to set his prisoner

free, or to leave him to perish from

motives of revenge? It was a terrible

thought, which Bob tried to drive from

his mind.

It was likely, more likely, that Nemo

was leaving them on short commons as

a punishment for the attack made on

him in the vault. It was likely, too,

that he desired to keep clear of the place

as much as possible. Now that Bob

knew where he was imprisoned he knew

that the kidnappers must enter the place

by the tunnel from the old priory in

Friardale Wood. In the winter-time,

the ruined priory was lonely, deserted,

hardly ever visited—it was safe enough



Lord Mauleverer carefully poured the marking ink from the bottle on to a sheet of paper. "Now look at that!" he said. As Bunter bent his face over the inky sheet of paper, Lord Mauleverer placed his hand on the back of the fat junior's neck and jammed his fat chin down into the ink. "Urrrgh!" spluttered Bunter. "See now?" asked Mauleverer.

for them. Still, the fewer visits they paid, the greater the safety. And one thing was fairly certain—that had the prisoners discovered the identity of the kidnapper, they could never have hoped to regain their freedom. Even the angry, obstinate Bounder realised that Nemo would never release them to bear witness against him and send him to prison. Was the man ever coming again?

"My fault—oh, of course!" sneered the Bounder. He was in a mood for a row with friend or foe—as he always was now. "You fellows would like to take it lying down! Well, whether we starve or not, I can tell you that if that scoundrel butts in again I'm going for him on the spot."

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bob. "What's the good? If we knocked him out the other brute would pot us like rabbits before we could get out of the vault."

"I'm chancing it!"

"You're not!" said Bob coolly. "You've made matters bad enough already, Vernon-Smith! You're going to keep quiet if that rascal hops in again. You won't play the goat any more."

"Who'll stop me?" snapped the Bounder.

"I will!" said Bob. "If there's a chance of handling those rotters, I'll be as quick as you in jumping at it. If there isn't a chance we're not going to ask for more trouble than we can do with. You'll take a back seat, Smithy, and leave the matter to a fellow with more sense."

"I'll jolly well——"

"You'll jolly well shut up! It's your fault we're here!" snapped Bob. "If you'd gone to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, instead of to that fellow Kranz, something might have come of it. It's your dashed selfishness that

landed you—and us along with you. Now shut up."

"For goodness' sake——" urged Redwing.

The Bounder's eyes glittered at Bob. "Wait till he comes!" he said, between his teeth, "and then you'll see whether I'll handle him or not."

"We look like having to wait!" grunted Bob. "He may be giving us a lesson, or he may be leaving us here for good. Give us a rest."

Temper was wearing out. The Bounder's headstrong obstinacy had made matters infinitely worse for the prisoners of the hidden vault—and he bore it less patiently than the other two. If Nemo came again, it would be with food for the hungry prisoners, but all Smithy could think of was springing on him as soon as he entered and taking once more a desperate chance. But would he come?

As the hungry hours passed, all three of them began to doubt it. They had kept their watches wound, and they looked at them often. It was strange to think, at half-past nine, that thirty feet above their heads the Remove were going to their dormitory.

Endless, endless minutes ticked off! As a rule, Bob Cherry and Tom Redwing turned in at the usual bed-time, though the Bounder kept any sort of hours. But this night they were too hungry to think of sleep. Even Bob's cheery spirits were failing him, and he looked pale and dismal in the flickering light of the candle. Light and books and regular meals had helped, at least, to pass the dreary hours—now all were denied. How was this to end?

It was at night that the kidnappers came, when they came at all. When midnight was past the juniors found themselves listening intently for the

sound of the moving stone. Would the man come?

It was at one o'clock that a sound was heard! With a faint whir the great stone in the wall rolled out of place.

An electric torch flashed in at the aperture.

It was held in the hand of the masked man, a revolver in his other hand. In front of him appeared the man with the jutting nose.

The juniors stared at him.

False nose and false beard had been torn off in the struggle with the Bounder, and still lay on the stone flags. But Nemo was in exactly the same rig again—beard, jutting nose, and glasses! They could guess now that the rascal concealed his disguise in some subterranean recess, to be assumed before entering the vault. Evidently he had replaced that deep disguise which hid every trace of his real identity from the most searching eye. From that fact it was possible for the prisoners to draw hope. His exceeding care to conceal his identity from them told that he had, for the present, at least, no intention of leaving them there to perish.

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth and clenched his hands. Hunger and danger were forgotten; the exasperated Bounder was only thinking of getting at his enemy. Nemo, half crouching in the low opening, stared into the secret vault, the light shining over his shoulder from the hand of the masked man behind. The Bounder made a forward movement—and Bob Cherry unceremoniously grasped him by the shoulder and spun him back.

Smithy went staggering, and fell sprawling at the farther side of the vault. He lay there, gasping.

"Keep quiet, you fool!" snapped Bob.

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The man with the jutting nose gave a harsh laugh.

"You are learning sense," he said.

He stepped into the vault.

There was a bag in his hand, crammed full—evidently a new supply of provisions for the prisoners. He tossed it on the table.

The Bounder staggered to his feet.

Bob's eyes were on him—and Redwing stepped into his way! In the cavity in the wall the masked man had shut off his torch, but his revolver was steadily levelled, his finger on the trigger. There was no chance—not the remotest chance—of escape, and the Bounder was not going to be allowed again to change matters from bad to worse. As he came forward Tom Redwing pushed him back.

"Chuck it, Smithy, you ass!" he snapped.

"Stand aside!" hissed the Bounder.

"I won't, you fathead!"

Vernon-Smith stood back, panting. His eyes blazed at the man with the jutting nose. A leg broken from a stool was in his hand to be used as a weapon. But he had no chance of getting near the kidnapper to make a desperate attempt to use it. His grasp closed convulsively on his cudgel.

"I have brought you food once more!" The man with the jutting nose was speaking. "I fancy you are ready for it."

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "I'd rather knock your features through the back of your head; but I shall be jolly glad of some supper."

"Same here!" said Redwing.

The Bounder did not speak. His eyes were fixed on the man with the jutting nose across the vault with a deadly intensity in the glimmering candlelight.

"Take warning by what has happened!" said the man with the jutting nose. "Another attempt—"

He broke off with a startled cry. There was a whiz as the cudgel flew from the Bounder's hand. It whizzed with deadly aim and crashed on the face of the kidnapper.

He staggered back and fell at full length on the stone flags. His hand went to his face as he howled with pain.

A yell of amazement broke from Bob Cherry as he stared at the sprawling man. For the cudgel, as it struck, had swept away disguise—false beard and nose were gone, and the candlelight gleamed on a hard, dark face that Bob Cherry knew!

"Franz Kranz!" gasped Bob.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Footprints!

"FRANZ KRANZ!"

Redwing repeated the name blankly.

Overwhelmed with amazement, the juniors stared at the man.

The Bounder rushed forward.

"Back up!" he yelled. "Now—"

Bang!

The masked man's revolver roared, and Redwing dragged the reckless Bounder aside just in time. The bullet missed him by an inch.

The man with the jutting nose—no longer in disguise—leaped to his feet! His dark face was convulsed with fury for a moment. But he controlled himself. There was a trickle of crimson from his cut face. The blow of the whizzing cudgel had hit him hard.

"You know me now!" His voice came in a snarl. "Your own doing—you have brought your fate on yourselves! Stand back, Bane!"

The masked man stepped back from the cavity in the wall. Franz Kranz stepped through after him. The Bounder stood, panting, with clenched hands. But even the reckless Bounder did not rush on the revolver—one terribly narrow escape was enough even for him.

Franz Kranz's eyes glittered at the juniors.

"Your own doing!" he repeated.

"You have asked for this! You will never see the light of day again! If you live after this I am a ruined man—a fugitive from the law! Your own doing—your own fault!"

He disappeared, and the stone thudded shut.

In the candlelight the juniors looked

at one another with pale faces. The Bounder panted.

"Franz Kranz!" he said. "The Old Boy of Greyfriars! Who'd have dreamed that it was—"

"Blessed if I can half believe it now!" muttered Bob. "But—"

"That explains a lot of things!" The Bounder burst into a bitter laugh. "And to think that I went to Kranz to tell him that I believed you were parked in these vaults and to ask his help in finding you! How he must have laughed in his sleeve! No wonder he told me to wait for him in the tunnel—and never turned up—and they got me there! No wonder!"

"And I!" said Redwing. He was thinking of the visit he had paid to Franz Kranz in his turn, with Lord Mauleverer, hoping to hear from him news of the missing Bounder. Franz Kranz—the kidnapper—himself! No wonder the prisoners had fallen like trapped rabbits into the hands of the kidnappers! Franz Kranz and his man Bane—they were the man with the jutting nose and the masked man! All was clear enough now!

Bob Cherry drew a deep breath.

It was a startling discovery—an amazing discovery! But it did not help the prisoners! It doomed them!

For all three of them knew that the kidnapper had spoken in deadly earnestness; he meant every word he had said! He had warned them on the previous occasion, when Bane's promptness in shooting out the light had prevented this discovery from being made. That warning was enough for Bob Cherry and Redwing—but not for the reckless Bounder! In his headstrong fury and folly he had doomed himself and his companions.

For they knew that Franz Kranz could not afford to let them leave the hidden vault alive, now that they were aware of his identity. He was a man of wealth and position, and it was utter ruin to him to be known as a desperate law-breaker. He was of foreign origin, and it was in the service of a foreign country that he had planned and schemed to obtain possession of Major Cherry's gadget. There could be no doubt that he was, in fact, a spy—and he could not afford to be driven from the country with the police at his heels! If the kidnapped juniors escaped to tell what they knew, Franz Kranz was a lost man!

Even the Bounder was sobered by that outcome of his reckless folly. The secret stone had shut—for the last time!

Only too often the prisoners had striven, and striven again, to open it from the inner side, and found that it was impossible! Only from the outside could it be stirred, and the secret was known only to Franz Kranz—known to him of old, from old days at Greyfriars when he had discovered it, perhaps by chance, while using the vaults for his blackguardly escapades. There was no hope!

The Bounder breathed hard! His companions uttered no word of reproach—reproaches were useless. But he knew what he had done.

"We've seen that villain for the last time!" said Vernon-Smith at last, breaking the miserable silence.

Bob Cherry nodded, without speaking.

"We're for it now!" said the Bounder. "I—I—I'm sorry, you fellows! It was no good, and I played the fool! I'm sorry—if that's any good."

"Not much good now!" said Bob.

"We're not dead yet! We've got grub enough for days now. While

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there's life there's hope. If we're found—"

Bob gave a shrug of the shoulders. He had been in the hidden vault for weeks and weeks. He had quite given up the faintest hope that the hidden vault would ever be discovered, or its existence even suspected.

Hungry as they were, the juniors did not touch the food. There was despair in every heart.

The Bounder crossed to the moving stone and ran his hands over it. The other two fellows watched him without interest. They knew that the stone could not be stirred, as the Bounder knew.

He turned from it with set teeth. "The game's up, I suppose!" he muttered. "We're done! But—" He broke off, staring at the stone-flagged floor near the stone. "What the thump's this? Bring the candle here, Reddy!"

"Why—"

"Bring it here, confound you!" Redwing lifted the candle from the trestle table and carried it across to where the Bounder stood.

Vernon-Smith was scanning the stone flags with eager, excited eyes. He took the candle from Redwing, bent down, and examined the floor.

"What the thump—" asked Bob, approaching the spot.

"The fellow's left footprints here!" said the Bounder.

"Footprints?" repeated Bob.

"Look!"

Bob stooped and stared at the dim marks on the discoloured stone. Where the man with the jutting nose had trodden, there were distinct traces of his boots to be seen. Never before had he left a trace of his passage. It was not mud. Any mud on the kidnapper's boots from the wintry roads would have been tramped off in the long passage of the tunnel from the old priory. What it was, the juniors could hardly guess.

Vernon-Smith rubbed one of the marks with his finger, and held it up. He fairly blinked at it.

"Ink!" he said.

"Ink?" repeated Bob and Redwing blankly.

"Not ordinary ink. Marking ink. The kind you use for marking collars and things," said Vernon-Smith. "Indelible ink! Look at it. You can see it's purple in colour! The man's upset some marking-ink and trodden in it!"

"My only hat!" murmured Redwing.

"But—but—where—how—" stuttered Bob in amazement. "He has to walk miles to get to the priory, and a good half-mile underground to get here by the tunnel. If he upset ink in his rooms at Courtfield and trod on it he would walk it off long before he got here—"

"Must have been nearer than that."

"Blessed if I understand it!"

"Neither do I." The Bounder rose to his feet, his eyes gleaming. "It's no good trying to understand it. It beats me hollow! But there's no doubt about the fact, you've got eyes. That villain walked into some spilt marking-ink before he entered this vault, and if he's left traces here he's left them outside."

"Outside?" repeated Bob.

"And if anyone spotted them—"

"Likely! Nobody ever comes down to the vaults!"

"Somebody must have come down. He never brought those traces with him from Courtfield. Somebody's been down in the vaults, spilling marking-ink. Goodness knows how and why. But it must be so. And if that somebody comes down again—"

The Bounder broke off. It seemed the slightest, the wildest of hopes. But it was all that the prisoners of the hidden vault had, now, to sustain their courage and keep them from utter despair. That faint, faint glimpse of hope was like a glimmer of light in great darkness.

— — —

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Trail!

"If there's anything in it—" grunted Johnny Bull.

"If!" said Nugent.

"The if-fulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "is terrific! But the esteemed and ridiculous Mauly is no fool!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

It was several days since that talk in the study; and nothing, so far, had come of it. Whether there was "anything," in Lord Mauleverer's surprising theory, the chums of the Remove could hardly decide. But if there was it was urgent to put the matter to the test. The three kidnapped juniors were still missing. There was no news of them. Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, had found out nothing; the mystery was as baffling as ever.

Every fellow at Greyfriars could see how it troubled the Head, and Mr. Quelch was looking worn and old. And as the days passed Bob Cherry's chums grew more and more anxious. The matter seemed hopeless, unless there was "something" in Mauly's idea. But was there?

"We've agreed to leave it to Mauly; that's only fair," said Harry. "It's his stunt, and he's said that he will give us the word when we're wanted to help. He's up to something—I don't know what. I know jolly well that he gets down into the school vaults at least once every day. Nobody besides ourselves knows that the door's unlocked."

"If there's anything in it, we ought to be searching down there—and the police, as well," said Johnny Bull. "I don't believe there's anything in it at all. But if there is—"

"That's what I think; and I fancy we'd better put it to Mauly," said the captain of the Remove. "If there's the remotest chance that old Bob's parked in some secret vault under the school we're wasting time, only—"

"Only what?" grunted Johnny.

"Only, I think Mauly's on to something, and we might spoil sport by barging in. Still, I think we'd better put it to him. We—"

A tap at the door of Study No. 1 interrupted the captain of the Remove. The four juniors were "teasing" together there, while the discussion went on. The door opened, to admit Lord Mauleverer.

"Trickle in, old bean!" said Harry, with a smile. "Just talking about you. Find a pew."

"I haven't come to tea, old things," said Lord Mauleverer. His face was very grave. "I want you."

"Anything turned up?" asked Johnny Bull, with a touch of sarcasm.

"I think so."

The juniors rose to their feet. Mauleverer closed the study door. In spite of their doubts, the chums of the Remove were eager.

"You've found something out, Mauly?" asked Wharton.

"Yaas."

"That means that you've been down in the vaults again?"

"Yaas."

"Seen the jolly old kidnapper there?" grinned Johnny.

"No; but he's been since I talked

to you men in this study!" answered Lord Mauleverer calmly. "I've been lookin' for him, you know; and now he's been on the spot again. That's why I want you men."

"How do you know?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Tell you later. You'll see for yourselves—save breath!" said his lordship laconically. "I suppose you're game to come down into the vaults—and never mind Quelch?"

"Of course, ass!"

"Get your electric torches. I've got one. We shall want some light. Might take a fives bat each. 'Tain't likely we shall run into the johnny with the nose; he don't call often. But we might! If we do, we shall want to knock him on the head—what?"

The four juniors looked at Lord Mauleverer, and at one another. Mauly's manner was calm and placid, as usual, but there was an unaccustomed gleam in his eyes. Whether he had made a discovery or not, it was evident that he believed that he had.

"We'll come, of course!" said Harry.

"Yes, rather!" said Frank.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, we'll come!" said Johnny Bull.

"It's all rot—but we'll come. It will mean six each from Quelch if we're spotted; but never mind that."

"Not if we bag old Bob, and Smithy, and Reddy!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "In that case, Quelch will fall on our jolly old necks and weep tears of joy an' gratitude."

"I can see us doing it—and him doing it!" said Johnny. "But let's go, by all means! One fool makes many."

Lord Mauleverer grinned. But he said no more; and the chums of the Remove followed him from the study. A few minutes later they were downstairs, each with an electric torch in his pocket and a fives bat hidden under his jacket. In spite of their doubts, they were feeling a growing excitement, and even Johnny Bull was getting keen.

One by one, and with considerable caution, the party slipped into the dusky old corridor that led to the vaults.

The strong oak door in the arched doorway at the end was closed, but the massive lock was unlocked. It had remained so ever since Mauly had borrowed the key; but as the vaults were seldom or never visited the circumstance had not been discovered or suspected.

Lord Mauleverer opened the heavy oak door, and closed it again after the juniors had passed through.

They turned on the torches and descended the stone steps into the vaults. Harry Wharton & Co. had not been down there since the day they had gone after Bunter and had unexpectedly fallen in with the man with the jutting nose. But they knew that Mauleverer had been down a good many times—though why was difficult for them to guess. He could hardly have hoped to fall in with Nemo by chance, even if the kidnapper—as he suspected—had his prisoners hidden there, and came at intervals to supply them with food. Mauleverer's proceedings were quite a mystery to the Removites.

Dark and gloomy the vista of dim vaults opened before the juniors as they moved away from the stone stair.

Lord Mauleverer led the way.

Seldom as their feet had trodden those gloomy depths, the Co. knew the way well enough. Mauly was leading them to the spot where the tunnel from the old priory in Friardale Wood joined the school vaults. If Mauly's theory was well-founded, that was the way the kidnapper came when he came at all; there

was no other mode of entrance, as certainly he could not have entered the vaults from the school. But it was wildly improbable that they would happen to meet him there.

Lord Mauleverer stopped in the last vault, at the opening of the tunnel. The opening was bricked round, and was not more than four or five feet wide. He bent a little and cast the light of his torch on the stone flags that covered the earth.

"Looking for sign?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Yaas."

"Oh, my hat! Do you fancy that these old stones would show a trail?"

"Yaas."

"Fathead!"

"Thanks! I've heard that before."

Lord Mauleverer turned from the tunnel, and, with his light gleaming on the stone floor, led the way back into the vaults.

"This way!" he said.

"Look here, what are you getting at, Mauly?" asked Nugent. "Mean to say you're picking up a trail?"

"Yaas."

"How the thump—"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Wharton, his eyes shining with excitement. He concentrated his light on a dark smudge on the discoloured stone. "Look at that! What—what is it?"

"Ink," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Ink!" breathed the juniors.

"Yaas—indelible marking-ink," said his lordship.

"Mauly!"

"Member that I borrowed it up and down the Remove and the Fourth the other day?" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "I got a ginger-beer bottle full."

"And—" gasped Wharton, light breaking on his mind at last.

"I came down here in prep that evening and distributed the jolly old purple ink at the openin' of the tunnel," yawned Mauleverer. "Any fellow walkin' in was bound to tread in it. I distributed it generously up and down and round about. Bit extravagant, but, in the jolly old circumstances—"

"And—and you think—" stuttered Johnny Bull.

"I don't think, old bean; I know," said his lordship calmly. "I've been down here every day since to see whether any sportsman had come along from the

priory and trodden in the ink. The mouldy state of the place has kept it nicely damp, all ready for him. He came last night—or, rather, they came; there were two of them."

"How do you know—"

"The ink hadn't been trodden in when I barged down yesterday; but when I dropped in this afternoon I found that it had."

"Oh, Mauly!" murmured Nugent.

"See for yourselves," murmured Mauly. "I don't say it's frightfully conspicuous; if it was they'd have seen it themselves, and there would be no game. It wants pickin' up; but with a good light and a keen eye you can pick up the jolly old purple patches."

"Here's one—" breathed Wharton.

"And here's another!" said Nugent.

"And here is another, my esteemed and idiotic chums."

Wharton's eyes danced.

"Somebody's been here, that's a cert!" he said. "And—and if you're right, Mauly, these inky traces will lead us to—"

"Old Bob!" said Mauly. "Come on!"

And he led the way, and the Co., their hearts thumping with excitement now, followed him, hardly daring to believe that they were on their way to their kidnapped chums, and yet feeling a growing conviction that it was so.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Solving the Secret!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. moved on through the gloomy vaults slowly, but steadily.

As Mauly had said, the patches of purple marking-ink on the grubby old stones were not conspicuous. Had they been they would have defeated their own object, for there was no doubt that the kidnappers were watchful and wary.

Whoever the two men were that had come along the tunnel from the priory and stepped on the ink spread over the old stones, they had no suspicion that they were being tricked into leaving a trail. But for the fact that Mauly had laid the trap and expected to pick up the traces, he certainly would never have observed them—and neither would

the other fellows, keen Scouts as they were.

But knowing what to look for, they looked for it and found it. Here and there, again and again on the damp stone flags, purple patches were picked up in the light of the electric torches, where the stained soles of boots had trodden and left the stain.

Nowhere was there a complete footprint, or anything like it; but a mere spot of the indelible marking-ink was sufficient for a guide. If it was there, there was only one means by which it could have got there—by being trodden on the soles of boots that had come from the priory tunnel. The merest speck was enough.

Slowly—slowly, but surely—the eager juniors picked up trace after trace. The trail led them through several vaults and into a stone passage that branched off. They passed along the passage, still scanning the stone floor, and picking up here and there an inky spot.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Frank Nugent suddenly. He flashed his light on the solid stone wall that closed the passage at the end.

"The hatfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull grunted.

"We've come to the end of a blind alley," he remarked.

"Yaas," Lord Mauleverer looked at the stone wall at the end of the passage and nodded. "Yaas, that's so."

"What next?" grinned Johnny. His doubts were reviving. "Did they walk this way and then walk back again, just for exercise?"

"Hardly."

"Hold on a minute!" said Harry Wharton. "You remember that time we spotted the nosey man here—the day we came down after Bunter! It was in this very passage—I remember that!"

"It was," said Frank Nugent, with a nod.

"Yaas, I've no doubt of that," agreed Lord Mauleverer. He gazed meditatively at the stone wall. "I wonder how it opens?"

"How what opens?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The door."

"What door?"

"Dear man!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"I fancy Mauly's on to it," said Harry. "They never came up this passage for nothing. That's rot! If there's a secret vault, it's here."

"The herefulness is terrific, but the wherefulness is preposterous," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull shook his head. He had to admit that Lord Mauleverer had worked it out like a mathematical problem. But he simply could not believe that the stone wall before him was all that separated him from his kidnapped chum, so long missing from the school.

Unheeding that Doubting Thomas of the party, Lord Mauleverer stepped close to the wall and examined it with close attention in the light of his torch. Not an inch of the surface escaped his searching eye. Taking the fives bat from his pocket, he tapped on the stone. The tap rang loud and clear along the passage.

The juniors listened intently, but no answering tap came. If there was really a hidden vault on the other side, the stone wall was too thick for the tapping to penetrate within.

"No go!" said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully. "They can't hear from this side."

"If—" began Johnny Bull.

"Never mind 'if!'" said Mauleverer.

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The cudgel flew from the Bounder's hand and crashed on the face of the kidnapper, sending him staggering sideways. The next moment a yell of amazement broke from Bob Cherry, for the cudgel, as it struck, swept away the disguise, revealing the dark face of Franz Kranz, the Old Boy of Greyfriars.

"Let's use our eyes and fingers, instead of our chins. Much more useful!"

Once more Mauleverer scanned and groped over the surface of the stone wall at the end of the passage. Close by the wall several purple patches were clearly to be discerned, the kidnappers had not only stepped there, but one, at least, had stood there for some little time, leaving traces more distinct than in any other spot.

It was scarcely possible to believe that the two men had come there in the night for nothing, to no purpose. Lord Mauleverer, at all events, was convinced that they had not. And with cool and quiet patience he sought and sought for the secret. The wall was built of large blocks of stone, and in the course of centuries, much of the cement between them had fallen away, leaving crumbling edges. Along every edge of every stone Mauleverer ran his searching finger, and the other fellows joined in the search. But the secret, if secret there was, remained a secret.

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer at last. "You men will be feelin' sorry that I interrupted your tea! What?"

"Fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "Keep going!"

"So long as we go in for supper—" murmured Johnny Bull.

Lord Mauleverer turned from the stone wall at last. He stooped, and scanned the stone flags of the floor by the wall, searching every inch with his light.

"Eureka!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"What—"

"Look!"

Mauleverer pointed to a depression in the stone. The gleam of his light showed a distinct purple mark in the grime there.

"Some johnny trod there—hard!" he

remarked. "Can't do better than follow your leader—what?"

Placing his foot in the depression in the stone, Lord Mauleverer threw his weight on it.

The result was startling.

There was a faint whirring sound; and a block of stone rolled out of the solid-looking wall in front of the juniors.

An aperture, tunnel-like, owing to the thickness of the massive wall, was open before them.

From the other side came a dim glimmer of the flickering light of a candle. And through the opening came the sound of angry voices.

"You fool!"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Wharton. He knew those angry tones. It was the Bounder of Greyfriars who was speaking. The angry tone, and the angry word, were what might have been expected of Smithy after long and weary imprisonment in the hidden vault.

"Oh, shut up, Smithy!" came another voice, that fairly thrilled the chums of the Remove as they heard it. It was a voice they had not heard for long weeks.

"Don't rag, you fellows!" It was Redwing's voice. "It's bad enough without that!"

"If you fellows had backed me up, we might have got clear!" snarled the voice of Vernon-Smith. "You fools—"

"Rubbish!" snapped Bob Cherry's voice. "If you had the sense of a bunny rabbit, Smithy, you'd know there wasn't an earthly. You've done for yourself and done for us all, by playing the goat."

"Fool!"

"I'm not the fool here," growled Bob. "Fat lot of good it has done us, to find

out that that man Kranz was the kidnapper. Do you think he will give us a chance of telling the police about him?"

"Oh rats!"

"We can make the grub last two or three days on rations. Then—"

"Oh, give us a rest!"

"I'll give you a thick-ear if you don't shut up!" roared Bob Cherry. "I'm fed-up with your cheeky rot, Vernon-Smith."

Evidently tempers were wearing thin. In the altercation in the hidden vault the imprisoned juniors had not heard, or heeded the faint whir made by the moving stone. Outside, Harry Wharton & Co. stood as if transfixed. Through the tunnel-like aperture in the immense thickness of the wall, every word came clearly to their ears.

"Time we barged in, I think," murmured Lord Mauleverer. "They'll be punchin' noses in a minute more."

And he stooped his head and stepped through the opening. The other fellows followed him. There was a yell from the Bounder as he discerned that the moving stone was open.

"They've come back! Now—why—what—what—who— Oh, great gad!" The Bounder's voice died away in a gasp of amazement.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Out of the Depths!

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

"Bob!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"My esteemed and ridiculous Bob!" exclaimed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

(Continued on page 23.)

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MEET FERRERS LOCKE, THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE, IN—

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HEDLEY SCOTT

The Opening Chapters of a Brilliant New Story of Amazing and Sporting Detective Adventure, featuring **FERRERS LOCKE**, the wizard of Baker Street, and his boy assistant, **JACK DRAKE**.

THE FIRST CHAPTER No Case of Accident!

OUT in the mighty Atlantic the shifting, mountainous waves frothed and hissed a music all their own. Accompanying it was the soulful sighing of the wind. From the west the spreading canopy of crimson and gold burnished the restless waters in an eerie demon's cloak as the sun went down.

From somewhere in that vast, infinite expanse of turbulent water came the faint echoes of a ship's siren and the terrified, despairing call of a seagull which had lost its way. Then, once again that monotonous, eerie, perpetual music of the waves as they rolled upon their never-ending journey, much worse than silence to a landsman, but so much balm to the souls of those who follow the sea.

Lower and lower sank the sun.

Faintly at first, then swelling with every passing second, came the steady humming of an aero engine. The humming of the super-tuned engine grew to a thunderous roar. The monoplane, *Heart's Desire*, was eating up the miles of space which lay between the shores of Ireland and Newfoundland at the rate of a hundred and twenty miles an hour.

Christopher Dean, at the controls of his trusty plane, was quite content with his progress. For nine hours now he had flown across that tossing, heaving expanse, experiencing all the changeable weather for which the mighty Atlantic has earned a reputation—through gales, rain, sleet, and even snow. Now, with his altimeter needle flickering a registered height of no more than 200 feet above the water, he hummed a cheerful ditty to himself, what time he checked his course by compass and chart.

It was lonely out there in the mighty Atlantic, but Christopher was happy. His great chance had come at last, and he promised himself that before two days had passed he would have established a flying record that would be difficult to beat. From Ireland to New York and back, without a break, except

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for the purpose of refuelling, was this already world-famous airman's crowning ambition. Everything he possessed had gone into the melting-pot to make this formidable—some said suicidal—flight possible. The *Heart's Desire* was his own—his very own. His own brains had designed it, his money had built it, his courage and his life now gambled upon its performing all that theory had indicated to be possible.

"She's going like a bird!" Christopher told himself, eyeing the vacuum flask in the little rack alongside and wondering whether he should help himself to a cup of coffee. "Like a bird—an' she's keeping to time. Gosh, old Mervyn's excited, I'll wager!"

Mervyn Villiers, much in the public eye, for he dived into and gave his patronage to every kind of sport, had been the last person to wish young Christopher God-speed. Right from the first Mervyn had shown a great and personal interest in the big venture Christopher had contemplated. He had even offered to finance the flight, but Christopher very firmly, albeit politely, had rejected that and many similar offers. It was to be his "show," as he styled it—his from beginning to end.

The engine thundered a comforting, enduring note; the fuel gauges told the keen-eyed man in the spacious, enclosed cockpit that all was well. Then suddenly, unexpectedly, disaster overtook that speeding plane.

From somewhere in the region of the tail of the *Heart's Desire* came an almighty, devastating explosion. Like so much paper and matchwood, the once-proud monoplane collapsed, and shattered into a hundred fragments. The fuselage broke clean in two, just behind the pilot's cockpit, the tail and elevators scattered in pieces to all points of the compass, the starboard wing cracked and snapped asunder, and next second what remained of the *Heart's Desire* went roaring towards the curling waves.

Instinctively Christopher Dean thumbed off the engine switch, little knowing that his wonderful engine was already hissing and frothing in the waters below—blown completely from its bearings, little knowing, in that first terrifying moment the extent of the

damage. Gazing wildly through the splintered windows of his cockpit and conscious of a peculiar numbness at the back of his shoulder, Christopher caught sight of sea and sky and sunset inextricably mixed.

He was crashing, he told himself, and gave himself up for lost in those flashing seconds when he realised fully that his fuselage had been blown clean away, and that his engine and starboard wings were minus quantities.

The centre section of the monoplane, in which the cockpit was built, twisted and cavorted like a live thing as it hurtled towards the frothing waters and shuddered in every spar as the one remaining wing first crashed and then buckled into the surface of the sea.

Christopher shut his eyes, felt a terrible blow on the forehead as he pitched forward against the wrecked dashboard, and then knew that the angry waves had parted to accept him in his unusual coffin. The cockpit became completely submerged, and Christopher, as the waters surged around his helpless body, remembered having read somewhere that drowning was a pleasant death. He closed his eyes again, struggled chokingly for breath, and collapsed in merciful unconsciousness.

When he came to, his watertight wrist-watch told him that he had been unconscious for no more than three minutes. And during that time the buoyant cockpit and the buckled port wing had risen to the surface of the ocean.

The last rays of the setting sun seemed to mock him from afar, for they spelled warmth, and he, shivering until his teeth threatened to shake themselves out of his head, was drenched to the skin, and icily cold. It was then that Christopher, always a practical young man, remembered the existence of the vacuum flask. Heaven grant that it had not been lost in that awful, whirlwind descent! It had not. It lay on its side, but apparently otherwise unharmed. Seated in the rocking, waterlogged cockpit, Christopher swallowed a generous mouthful of the strong, hot beverage, and felt its warming effect immediately.

Next, he calmly reviewed his perilous position, calculating that he was at least

a thousand miles out at sea, well out of the beaten track of ocean-going liners, and worse still, without a wireless.

"Fool that I was not to carry wireless!" he started to tell himself; and then grinned. Fathead! How much of a wireless set would it be now, after this smash?"

What had happened to cause the explosion in the tail of the Heart's Desire Christopher hadn't the foggiest idea. What could have caused it, anyway? The fuselage was hollow, and no petrol had been stored in it, for the precious fuel had been carried in special tanks fitted into the wings.

The remains of the monoplane, gradually sinking lower into the embrace of the restless ocean, did Christopher but know it, spun round and round like a very badly made top—up on the crest of a wave one moment, carried bravely along, then tossed down into the depths and swirled around willy-nilly.

Despite the awful feeling of loneliness and despair, and now the fast-rising pangs of sickness, due to the unnatural movement of his improvised craft, Christopher began to think.

This was no case of accident. It could not be. Something had exploded in the fuselage and tail of his plane—something which must have been placed there deliberately to bring about such a calamity as this. As the suspicion grew to the proportions of a certainty, Christopher became mindful of the numbed feeling in his shoulder. He clawed at it with his left hand, and his groping fingers encountered a hard, ragged substance, which seemed to be embedded in the thick leather of his flying-jacket. Into Christopher's eyes came a curious light as he persevered and finally plucked out a piece of metal about two and a half inches in circumference. Metal—

He looked at it again and knew at once that it was a piece of the casing of a bomb. Why, he had seen many similar pieces among his elder brother's collection of souvenirs of the Great War.

"Good heavens!" he muttered hoarsely, eyeing the ominous piece of metal in horror. "It can only mean one thing—some dastard planted a bomb or something with the idea of blowing me to—"

A cold sweat broke over him as he realised to the full how narrowly his life had been spared in that tragic explosion. Then he grinned and began to laugh a trifle hysterically. Spared! What chance of life had he now, even so? Thousands of miles of ocean lay to every point around him, and the only

thing 'twixt him and a watery grave was this waterlogged cabin.

For three minutes this burst of mingled despair and hysteria lasted. Then Christopher had himself well in hand, and blamed himself for being a weak-kneed fool and a softy. He hadn't jibbed at death when he had set out on that was-to-be-epic flight; why should he act like a coward now—

It was strange for a man, helpless and alone, living practically next door to death, to take himself to task in such a way. But it served its bulldog purpose. Christopher, after that fierce, self-imposed talking to, was prepared—for anything.

Carefully he wedged the piece of bomb into the small toolrack by his side. Coolly he withdrew from a watertight compartment his log-book of the journey, and began to write upon it with the stub of a pencil. Perched as he was, half sitting in water, and spun about like a shuttlecock, writing was a matter of difficulty; but he managed it, and calmly re-read what he had written. Then swallowing the remains of the coffee, he rolled up the log-book and placed it together with the chunk of metal, inside the vacuum flask, methodically screwing on the cap afterwards.

With a grim smile on his young, resolute face Dean balanced the flask on his hand, what time he murmured playfully:

"Good luck, old fellow! I hope you make the journey better than I did."

With that he flung the flask well clear of the wreckage, watched it reappear upon the surface of the water, and then bob up and down, until finally, still floating, it disappeared from view altogether.

The wrecked plane, or what remained of it, sank lower and lower. The mantle of night closed in upon the chilly murmurings of the vast Atlantic; the eerie music of the ever-troubled waves went on.

Borne on the shifting breeze came the sounds of a human voice raised in song.

The song ceased, and from the singer flowed a light laugh. Next a wax vesta suddenly glimmered in that awful vault of darkness—a tiny, fleeting glow, which was the preliminary to a stab of crimson light much smaller, but of considerably longer life. Christopher Dean remembered that he hadn't had a cigarette for over nine hours.

The night shut down—
The Atlantic rolled—

The Heart's Desire felt the grappling, overpowering strength of the ocean engulf her. Protestingly she gave up the ghost.

A "Fishy" Business!

"PUT the helm over, Jack!"
"Ay, ay, sir!" grinned Jack Drake.

The little cutter glided on into Pegg Bay, its bulging canvas aglimmering in the afternoon sun. Standing aft were six youths, five of whom wore the well-known blazers of Greyfriars school. The sixth youth, who had answered Ferrers Locke in the approved nautical fashion a moment since, was clad in a suit of grey flannels.

"A nice little craft," observed Ferrers Locke, squatting on his haunches. "It's a long time since I enjoyed an afternoon like this." He turned to Jack Drake. "It was quite a brain-wave of yours, Jack, to suggest a run down to Greyfriars to-day."

Jack Drake winked.
"Rely on me, guv'nor, for brain-waves," he remarked. "But seriously, I wanted to see the fellows."



JULIUS TANKERHEAD.

"And we wanted to see you, old chap," said Harry Wharton, with a laugh. "Since Mr. Locke has taken you as his assistant you've almost forgotten that you were once a Greyfriars chap."

"And we, for our part, have almost-forgotten what your esteemed and ridiculous chivvy looked like," beamed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Ferrers Locke grinned. Well as the famous Baker Street detective knew Hurree Singh and his weird idea of King's English, he could scarcely ever restrain a smile when he heard the dusky junior speak.

"One of these days you'll pack up this detective bizney, I suppose," remarked Bob Cherry, "and come back to Greyfriars to learn Latin and a lot of other tommy rot—I don't think!"

The Famous Five and Jack Drake laughed. Not one of the former but would willingly have changed places with Drake, whilst it was pretty certain that Jack himself had no desire to return to Greyfriars as a scholar. Working as Ferrers Locke's assistant was much more exciting than swotting at Latin and listening to "old Quelch's" lectures on Ancient History and the like.

"Well, unless the guv'nor gets a job soon," chuckled Drake, "we shall both be out of work, and then I might have to come back to Greyfriars—you never know."

Considering that Ferrers Locke was one of the most sought after private detectives in the world, and that neither he nor Drake had taken a day's holiday until to-day for a year, the likelihood of a return to Greyfriars for the reasons Drake stated was very remote.

"Well, I'm not so sure we'd have you now, anyway," grinned Frank Nugent. "We've got mighty particular in the Remove since you left, old top."

"We have!"
"We has!"

The cutter forged on, drawing nearer and nearer to the jetty at Pegg Bay. Bob Cherry, who was eyeing the water wistfully as it rushed past, and wondering whether he'd chance it and have a dip, suddenly caught sight of an object that bobbed up and down slightly to port.

"Mr. Locke!" he exclaimed. "Look—it's a bottle! Floating— No, it's a giddy vacuum flask. I wonder if some giddy pirate dropped it overboard, complete with treasure chart?"

"Did pirates have such things as vacuum flasks, Bob?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically. "Because if so, it's the first I've heard of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars juniors and Ferrers Locke
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MERVYN VILLIERS.

Locke joined in the general laugh, but Bob's rugged face crimsoned.

"I'm jolly well going to get that flask, anyway," he said obstinately, and looked for all the world as if he intended jumping overboard.

Ferrers Locke's hand fastened firmly on his shoulder.

"Don't be a young ass, Bob," he said. "I'll get the flask if you particularly want it. Shift the tiller a point, Jack."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The cutter glided through the rippling waters, and, under Drake's expert handling of the tiller, came within arm's length of the bobbing flask.

"Right-ho, young 'un, resume course!" sang out Ferrers Locke, as, stretching out his arm, he gripped hold of the flask, and smilingly handed it to Bob Cherry.

Bob examined it for a full minute, turning it over and over.

"I say, you men, it's a thumping good flask. Cost every bit of a quid. It's a special one, too, like those long-distance flyers use."

Ferrers Locke, whose interest at first had been but a mild one, now took the flask from Bob's hand and gently unscrewed the cap. Then his keen grey eyes glimmered as his delving fingers withdrew a rolled-up exercise book, which was plainly marked "Log-book," and a piece of metal which looked as if it might have been a fragment from a burst shell or a bomb.

"Phew!" whistled Bob. "I believe we've hit on a mystery. Look, Mr. Locke"—as Ferrers Locke began to turn the pages of the log-book—"there's some writing in pencil! And—Eureka—it's signed Christopher Dean!"

But Ferrers Locke hardly heard Bob's excited exclamations. He was reading the last page of the log-book with an intentness that told Jack Drake, accustomed to his every mood and expression, that something "big" was in the wind.

To the dismay and disappointment of the juniors Ferrers Locke pocketed the log, the piece of metal, and the vacuum flask.

"This is a message from that gallant fellow Christopher Dean," he said solemnly. "I cannot tell you more than that, my boys, at this juncture, for it is of the utmost importance that the finding of this vacuum flask should be kept a close secret."

"Oh!" said Harry Wharton & Co.

"When I have had time to examine this properly, my boys, I'll be pleased to hand it back to you. You know, of course, that Dean tried to make a double Atlantic flight a few months back. Well, like so many other gallant flying men who attempted to cross the Atlantic he was never seen again."

"We read about it in the newspapers, sir," remarked Harry Wharton. "Does that message indicate, sir, that he might be alive?"

The great detective shook his head.

"I'm afraid not. And that, for the moment, is all I can tell you. Steady, Jack, swing her round a point!"

Ferrers Locke's manner as good as said that the finding of the vacuum flask and all matters connected with it were, so far as Harry Wharton & Co. were concerned, finished. The cutter ran in and grounded on the yielding, golden sands, and the juniors scrambled out.

Gone from the face of Ferrers Locke was that happy "holiday" expression now that he was once more on land. His handsome, strong face was set and hard in a mould of determination.

"My boys, I'm afraid Jack and I will have to leave earlier than I anticipated. Wharton, kindly give my respects to Dr. Locke. Come, Jack"—glancing at his watch—"we have just ten minutes in which to catch our train. Good-bye, my boys, and many thanks for a pleasant afternoon."

"Good-bye, sir!" replied the Greyfriars juniors. "Good-bye, Jack!" And realised without any telling that the finding of the strange flask and its equally strange contents had prompted the famous detective to curtail his visit.

Once in the train speeding towards London, Ferrers Locke treated his young assistant to a brief grin, and pulled the log-book out of his pocket.

"I know you're burning with curiosity, my lad," he said, "so take a look at this."

Wonderingly, Jack Drake took the log-book and read it through, until he came to the last page, with but ordinary interest. Then his young face lit up with excitement, for this is what he read:

"At five-thirty-five I was a thousand miles out to sea, making good headway, engine running perfectly, fuel in plenty. At five-thirty-six there was a violent explosion in the tail and fuselage of the Heart's Desire, and she broke apart and crashed into the sea. The enclosed piece of metal, obviously, was part of the infernal machine which had been placed in the plane to destroy me. Whoever finds this flask and its contents please take them to my friend Mervyn Villiers of 60, Malplaquet Crescent, London. (Signed) CHRISTOPHER DEAN. 6.33 p.m."

"Well!" Jack Drake could hardly master his excitement. "Foul play, guv'nor. No wonder we never heard a sound from anyone after that last report that he was going strong about seven hundred miles off the coast."

"You're right, my lad. Some villain very cunningly and very deliberately lodged that bomb in Dean's plane, and timed it to a nicety."

"You think that Dean's dead, guv'nor?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"There seems little else to expect now," he remarked. "It's some months ago since he disappeared, and nothing's been heard of him. But, out of tribute to his memory—for he was a great fellow, full of pluck—I'm going to look into this. Now, don't talk."

For the rest of that journey up to London, Ferrers Locke gave himself up to deep meditation, and Drake, knowing his beloved chief as did no other being in this world, remained as quiet as a mouse.

Locke was still gloomily silent as the taxi bore them from Waterloo to their chambers in Baker Street; but once in his own den the detective began feverishly to turn up the records of Christopher Dean's attempted flight.

A newspaper photograph pasted down in the "Cuttings" book showed the Heart's Desire just prior to taxi-ing off on that long flight across the ocean. By the side of the cockpit stood the well-known sportsman, Mervyn Villiers. In the background were mechanics and a cheering crowd.

Locke snapped the book shut, and spent half an hour going through his "Rogues Gallery"—a collection of photographs and complete records of criminals who had crossed his path.

Then, with a peculiar glitter in his eyes, he took up his telephone receiver. In a few moments he was through to a famous insurance underwriter.

"Tell me in confidence, Stewart," said the detective, after an inquiry as to his friend's well-being, "was the Heart's Desire Atlantic trip—you remember, that poor chap Christopher Dean—you do remember! Was there any insurance effected on his life, or the success of his venture?"

The reply sent a thrill through Ferrers Locke.

"My dear fellow, it is strange you should ask that question, because only to-day I paid out one hundred thousand pounds to a Mr. Tankerhead, who, according to his own statement, prior to taking out the insurance, declared that he had a big personal interest in the flight. He intimated that the engine design was his invention, that he had spent a fortune on it, and so on. He insured with me on the basis of fifty pounds per hundred—so the premium cost him a cool fifty thousand pounds."

"And you settled on those terms?"

"Of course, old chap. It seemed a snip for us—then."

Ferrers Locke's lips snapped shut in a thin, grim line.

"And you say you have paid him out your cheque for a hundred thousand pounds to-day?"

"Yes, worse luck! Still, business is business. Cheerio, Locke—see you at the club to-morrow."

Locke grunted an affirmative answer and clapped down the receiver. For five minutes he paced up and down the room. Then suddenly he turned to Drake.

"Slip along to Villiers' house at Malplaquet Crescent, and keep a watch on it," he said briefly. "Phone me descriptions of all people calling there. Get busy."

Jack Drake got "busy" with a vengeance. In a few moments he was out of the Baker Street flat and hastening towards the select neighbourhood known as Malplaquet Crescent. Under the cover of a thick group of bushes, in the gardens of the crescent, he watched the house for more than two hours.

During that time Ferrers Locke once again resorted to the telephone. This time he was put through to Mr. Mervyn Villiers, and after a few moments' idle conversation he sprang a leading question:

"By the way, Villiers, there's a lot of chatter going the rounds concerning a man named Tankerhead. Ever heard of him? Know anything about him?"

Followed a slight pause and the sound of a sharp intake of breath. Then, very deliberately, came the answer.

"Tankerhead? Never heard of him. Don't know the name."

"Liar!" muttered Locke to himself, as he clapped down the receiver. "For you were in prison together twenty years ago!"

Within half an hour of that conversation between Ferrers Locke and Mervyn Villiers came a startling telephone call from Jack Drake.

"That you, guv'nor? Good! Fellow just arrived at Villiers' house. Queer-looking bloke. Discovered his name was Tankerhead. Villiers greeted him like an old friend."

(Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake have "dropped on" a puzzling case this time, what? And you'll be every bit as interested as they are if you follow the exciting adventures ahead. Watch out for thrills next week!)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

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

A MIDDLESBROUGH chum asks me this week to give him a little information regarding

EXPLORING THE STRATOSPHERE!

Up to date, the record balloon ascent into the stratosphere is held by three Russians, who ascended 62,337 ft. Professor Piccard, a Belgian, who previously held the record, went up 10½ miles. But Britain is going all out to beat the record, while in France a plane has already been constructed to make the attempt. As you know, it is impossible for a man to breathe at such great heights; therefore, the cabin of this new French aeroplane—the Farman F. 1000—is hermetically sealed, and the two men who are going to make the attempt in it will be provided with air pumped from storage tanks into the cabin by special filters.

This plane is said to be capable of rising to a height of over

TWELVE MILES ABOVE THE EARTH!

That is 1,000 ft. higher than the present balloon record. What is going to happen then? That is what the experts are asking. If, as many of them declare, engine power can be maintained at such a height, it is claimed that planes specially designed for flying in the stratosphere may be able to travel at the astounding speed of 1,000 miles per hour! "Some" going, eh? It is about 3,000 miles to New York, which means that the aviator of the future will be able to breakfast in London—and be in New York well in time for lunch on the same day! The new altitude attempt is to be made shortly, so I shall be able to let you have some more information soon.

The main drawback to these stratosphere attempts is that the men making them have to be sealed up in their cabins. But there is another explorer who actually proposes to go up into the stratosphere in an open balloon! Needless to say, he would soon freeze to death—if it were not for one thing. He is going to be clad in an entirely new kind of electrically-heated suit, fitted with oxygen apparatus, which will allow him to breathe and keep warm in the rarified atmosphere. Details of the construction of this "stratosphere suit" are being kept secret at present, but it is said to resemble a sort of diver's costume.

HERE is another "Careers" query, which comes from Will Truman, of Barking. He wants to know

HOW TO BECOME A PILOT!

Not an air pilot, but a ship's pilot, who is alone allowed to bring a vessel into port. Captains of ships, as you probably know, are compelled to pick up a pilot before entering port, the reason being that the pilot, working continuously in local waters, has much more knowledge of them than a ship's captain, whose duties take him constantly to other parts of the world.

To become a pilot it is necessary for the candidate to have served for at least seven years in an ocean-going vessel. One of these years must have been spent as a second mate of a square-rigged ship, and

another as the mate of a steamer which has been trading in the area for which he wishes to become a pilot. He must also hold a Master Mariner's certificate, and have a thorough knowledge of buoyage, navigation lights, fairways, depth of water at different times, positions and sizes of shoals, and width of channels, etc.

It is a most severe examination for pilotage, and the candidate must have passed at least three ordinary seafaring examinations before he is even allowed to sit for it. Even then he must be prepared to serve as an assistant before he is allowed to become a pilot proper. So, you see, it is no easy task to become a pilot.

CAN you swim, chums? If you can't, you ought to learn as soon as possible. A Birmingham reader asks me

HOW TO LEARN TO SWIM!

He wants to know if it is true that anyone thrown into deep water will swim automatically. The answer is a definite "No!" If everybody could swim naturally, there would be no drowning accidents. It is natural for animals such as dogs and horses to swim, even if they have never been in the water before; but, unfortunately, this does not apply to boys.

And yet every boy should be able to swim! The greatest thing is to have confidence. Learn the movements of the breast stroke by lying on a chair before you ever enter the water. Then go to the local baths and enter the water at the shallow end. Keep close to the rail and try to strike out. After a few attempts you will find that the buoyancy of the water will lift you, and, once you discover that, you will get the necessary confidence, and progress in swimming will just be a matter of course. There is no need to pay money to learn to swim. Any good swimmer is always ready to help a novice, if the latter really shows that he wants to learn.

I have handed on several readers' letters this week to Frank Richards. Several readers have made various suggestions for future stories, and, as you know, both Frank Richards and myself are always pleased to hear what type of stories you prefer, although it might not always be possible to attend to these requests at the time. So, will "Hopeful," of St. Annes-on-the-Sea; "Ginger," of Bournemouth; T. P. G., of Whitstable, and others, please note that I have made notes of their requests, and will see what can be done about them in the near future.

DON'T MISS THIS!

I SUPPOSE all you fellows dream of the day when you'll be able to throw a leg across the saddle of your very own motor-bike and go thundering off down the open road? Well, here's an opportunity of bringing that happy day definitely nearer—by buying a copy of this week's issue of our companion paper, "Modern Boy," price 2d., and entering for a fascinating FREE Competition.

A topping 1934 Model "James" Motor-Cycle is offered as First Prize in this competition, and all you have to do to win it is to solve some simple puzzle-pictures. And for the runners-up there are 24 "Ingersoll" Mickey Mouse Wrist Watches as consolation prizes.

I strongly advise you to get a copy of this week's "Modern Boy," now on sale, and make a start at once to win one of these splendid prizes!

HERE is rather an amusing yarn which my old pal, "Mr. X.," was telling me the other day.

As you know, he is an enthusiastic amateur conjurer, and this yarn concerns a pal of his who was giving a conjuring entertainment in a certain prison to "good behaviour" convicts. One of his tricks was

THE MYSTERIOUS HALF-CROWNS!

The conjurer took a top-hat and, holding it in the left hand, began to "find" half-crowns in all sorts of peculiar places. He grabbed them from the air, took others out of the audience's ears, mouths, and so on. The half-crowns were coming in rapidly, and he half-filled the hat, set it down, and proceeded with his next trick.

When he went to clear up his things after his act he got a shock. The half-crowns had behaved even more mysteriously. Every one of them had vanished!

He was a good conjurer, all right—but he had forgotten he was performing before convicts! And a professional pickpocket had seized the opportunity of seeing if he was still in practice—as he undoubtedly was! The conjurer never recovered his coins.

There is a sequel, however. Professional conjurers rarely use real money in their acts. They use "palming coins," which can be obtained at any conjuring store. And, though they look like half-crowns, even a blind shopkeeper is not likely to be "taken in" with them when he gets them into his hands. And as the coins in this case were "fakes" the pickpocket had merely loaded himself up with useless white metal discs!

IT must have been a disappointment for the pickpocket—what? But, believe me, chums, you'll get an even greater disappointment if you don't take my tip and order next week's issue of the MAGNET without delay! If it should be "sold out" you'll feel like kicking yourself. Frank Richards has certainly written a real top-notch yarn for you in:

"WHO WALLOPED WINGATE?"

—which is the title of next week's long complete tale of the Greyfriars chums. It's a bang-up-to-the-minute, full of smiles and thrills yarn, and one of the best Frank Richards has yet given us. You'll enjoy every word of it. So slip along to your newsagent right now and ask him to reserve a copy for you.

More thrills are in store for you in next week's chapters of our brilliant new detective thriller, "The Man Behind the Scenes!" And you'll chuckle loud and long over the ever-popular "Greyfriars Herald" supplement.

Fire in your queries, chums. I'm always ready to give information, settle arguments, or pass along interesting paragraphs.

Cheerio, until next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

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THE SLACKER'S AWAKENING!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Bob—Smithy—Redwing—" panted Nugent.

"Mauly, old man!" Johnny Bull gave his lordship a dig in the ribs. "You can kick me if you like! I deserve it."

Lord Mauleverer chuckled.

Bob Cherry, Tom Redwing, and Herbert Vernon-Smith stood staring at the juniors who crowded through the aperture into the vault. It was not easy for them to believe their eyes.

"You—you—you've really found us!" he stuttered. "Oh, my hat! Oh crikey! It's too jolly good to be true! But how—"

"Mauly did it!" said Harry, laughing. "Worked it out in his tired old brain like a jolly old problem! Tell you later! Get out of this!"

Gladly enough the three prisoners of the hidden vault passed through the opening, into the passage beyond. Even yet they could hardly believe in their good fortune. From the darkness of despair they had passed, at a jump, to freedom and safety.

Of the three, only the Bounder had a slight cloud on his satisfaction. Smithy had to remember that he was under sentence of the "sack" at Greyfriars.

In a happy party, rescuers and rescued reached the stone stair that led up to the school. They tramped up the steps, and hurled open the door, and passed down the corridor beyond. Emerging from that corridor, they found themselves in the school, and Bob Cherry, catching sight of Wingate of the Sixth in the distance, gave a merry yell:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Wingate!"

The Greyfriars captain spun round.

"What—who—" he gasped. He stared at Bob Cherry as if Bob had been the ghost of a Removite, instead of a particularly lively one.

"Little me!" roared Bob. "Hurrah!"

"Cherry—Vernon-Smith—Redwing—" Wingate fairly stuttered. "What—what, how—"

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" sang Bob, in a voice that awoke most of the echoes of Greyfriars School, and brought a crowd of fellows swarming from all directions.

Mr. Quelch rustled up.

"What is this disturbance?" he snapped. "I will not allow— Why—what— Is—is—is that Cherry?" Mr.

Quelch looked for a moment as if he was going to fall down.

"Yes, sir!" said Bob cheerily.

"Smithy and Redwing, too, sir!"

Mr. Quelch gazed at them. He was bereft of speech. But he found his voice at last.

"Come with me to the Head!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir!"

Harry Wharton & Co. followed Mr. Quelch, the Famous Five once more happily reunited. Dr. Locke glanced at the little crowd in the doorway of his study, and rose from his stable, staring.

"Is—is—is that Cherry?" he articulated at last.

"Yes, sir!" said Bob.

"And—and Redwing?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And—and—and Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head faintly.

Then the story was told! All the fellows joined in telling it—except Lord Mauleverer. His lordship stood silent, more than willing to leave the talking to the other fellows.

But when the story had been told, Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch regarded the schoolboy earl with great attention.

"Most amazing—most amazing!" said the Head. "And it seems, Mauleverer, that this astounding discovery is due to you!"

"Yaas, sir!"

"I—I—I am quite astounded!" said the Head. "I must telephone to Mr. Grimes at once, and inform him of these boys' statement concerning Franz Kranz. He must be charged! Most amazing! And Mauleverer—my dear boy—"

"Yaas, sir! But it was really Smithy who did it, sir!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I should never have barged in but for Redwing, and Reddy would never have barged in but for Smithy. Smithy was the man who first got a clue and followed it up."

The Bounder gave Mauly a grateful glance.

The Head coughed.

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"In the circumstances, Mr. Quelch," said Dr. Locke, "I—I can hardly think of—of proceeding with the matter that was in abeyance when Vernon-Smith fell into the hands of that rascally man."

"I quite agree, sir!" assented the Remove master.

"It certainly appears that, as Mauleverer says, Vernon-Smith played a material part in bringing about this happy result!" said the Head. "To some extent, we owe it to him that Cherry has returned to us."

"Quite so, sir!"

"If you'll give me another chance, sir—" murmured the Bounder.

"I shall do so, Vernon-Smith—and trust that you will benefit by the warning you have had!" said the Head. "You may leave my study!"

The Head turned to his telephone.

The juniors left the study—to be surrounded by an eager crowd, and marched off to the Rag, to tell the story over and over again. Meanwhile, the Head was on the telephone to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield—with startling information for that gentleman. And Mr. Franz Kranz was still more startled when, a little later, the inspector called on him at the Courtfield Hotel.

It was a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars School.

Crowds of fellows went down to inspect the hidden vault where the kidnapped juniors had been imprisoned; till once more the door was locked, and the vaults placed out of bounds again. Early the following morning Major Cherry was at the school to see his son—and there was a joyful meeting.

Later in the day there was news that Mr. Franz Kranz, and his man, Barto, were under arrest, charged with kidnapping, and lodged behind bars to stand their trial. For days and days Lord Mauleverer was the cynosure of all eyes, and quite a number of fellows told him that he couldn't, after all, be such an ass as he looked!

"It's jolly to be here again!" remarked Bob Cherry, at tea in Study No. 1. "Jolly all round, what? Smithy's not sacked, after all—and old Reddy's rejoicing—and I'm on the spot in time for the Highcliffe match! We're jolly well going to give the Highcliffe men beans, you fellows!"

And Bob's chums agreed that they were!

THE END.

(Next Saturday's yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled: "WHO WALLOPED WINGATE?" Gee, it's the real goods, too, chums! Make sure and order your copy early, as there's a bigger demand than ever for the MAGNET these days.)

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WILL ANY POLICEMAN
sell us his cast-off footwear? We want to make a present to a Fourth-Former who's too big for his boots! Offers to the "TREAT TEMPLE" COMMITTEE, Study No. 1, Remove.

MY WORST AND BEST EXPERIENCE

By George Blundell

The day was Friday, the date the thirteenth, and I walked under two ladders and dropped my umbrella, so, naturally, I wasn't a bit surprised when My Worst Experience followed!

I was on my way to meet a most charming young lady at the time, so I was particularly anxious to look quick and span. You can imagine what a dashed nuisance I found it, therefore, when a fellow went and fell off a bridge near by, and started yelling for help from the river below!

I don't pretend to be a giddy hero or anything idiotic like that, of course, but I'm a strong swimmer, and nobody else seemed anxious, so there was nothing else for it. I plunged in and brought the fellow ashore.

No sooner had we landed than a third man joined us, grinning like a Cheshire cat and, much to my surprise, thanked me for winning him ten pounds. The rescued man, who didn't seem to have appreciated my help at all, then explained that he had weighed his friend ten pounds that if he fell in, nobody would fish him out. As a matter of fact, he could swim just as well as I could!

As soon as I'd recovered from the initial shock, I did the natural thing and soaked the bouncer on the jaw. He promptly responded by socking me in the eye, and the two then got into their waiting car and calmly drove away!

Of course, at the very moment when I looked my worst, the lady sailed along, gave me one look, and started laughing as though she'd never leave off!

I'm glad to be able to say that I met the rotters singly on later down as My Best Experience.

Once In A—

After a sharp shower in the Greyfriars district one evening last week, a peculiar phenomenon was observed in the sky: the moon, for several minutes, took on a distinctly blue tint.

This is taken to mean that Billy Bunter's postal order may arrive in the near future!

Cheese It, Mr. Hacker!

Mr. Hacker of the Shell, who is a connoisseur of good cheese, tells us that it does a man good now and again to eat a small piece of mouldy cheese.

A case of "mole" being right!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



After eating, Billy Bunter's interest is sleeping. The other night he dreamed he scored 999 lam-tarts in succession—and he got by "consideration!"



Getting claims he has never failed to do his duty in reporting juniors who come in after looking-up time. "Smiley, however, says he once got by "consideration!"



Peter Todd sometimes delivers a legal harangue to his study mate, as matings of a first-class footballer or cricketer. As it is, he is immersed in study—but Today to short-winded for a grueling game.



Harold would give swimming pool, in which Bob Cherry is never tired of giving exhibitions of trick diving. Nobody can touch Bob in this department.



Horace Coker says that decency is the one thing he couldn't stand. Coker doesn't worry—his way of playing football alone would earn him fame—as a comedian!



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LIGHT AT LAST

Sark "Monster" Speaks

The mystery of the Sark Monster has been solved at last! This is the startling news which we are now able to announce, and we are happy to be able to add that the mysterious Sark Monster Committee, on whose inactivity we commented rather severely a week or two ago.

Spurred on to renewed activities by Press and platform time were not surprised that so early this week and decided to organise a Gigantic Monster Hunt at dusk on Tuesday, the Monster's most frequent time of appearance having always been shortly after sunset.



Scouts were posted within calling distance of each other for some distance down the river on both banks, and a careful watch was kept for any unusual phenomenon.

The Monster was seen soon after the watchers had taken up their various positions, three scouts giving a simultaneous yell as their eyes fell on it emerging from the water.



Vernon-Smith, who was directing operations, promptly blew a shrill blast on his whistle, as a matter of course, and within a minute or so the crowd was made aware that the gentleman in the elaborate diving suit—for that was what it was—was an inventor who for weeks had been experimenting, after business hours, with a new type of suit for under-water workers.

Very Striking

When Mr. Prout asked for a mask with which to light his cigar, Skinner and Snoop produced half a dozen boxes of well-matched "pair" they are!

Unfettered by a previous failing to cross the Channel or a middle-bicycle, Coker is making plans to do the trip in a week's next summer.

Before the show started, he explained the idea of it. His opposition to boxing, it appeared, had long been tempered by considerations of its undoubted value as a means of exercise. After careful thought, he had been able to devise a system of boxing which eliminated the "brutality" whilst retaining its more commendable features.

The show then started. As his opponent, 'Lonzy' had chosen a particularly tame rabbit—Sidney James Snoop. Snoop rushed into battle, looking more like a real boxer than he has ever looked before. His left lashed out, and 'Lonzy' looked like getting the k.o. in the first second of the "fight."

Can You Play Hopscotch?

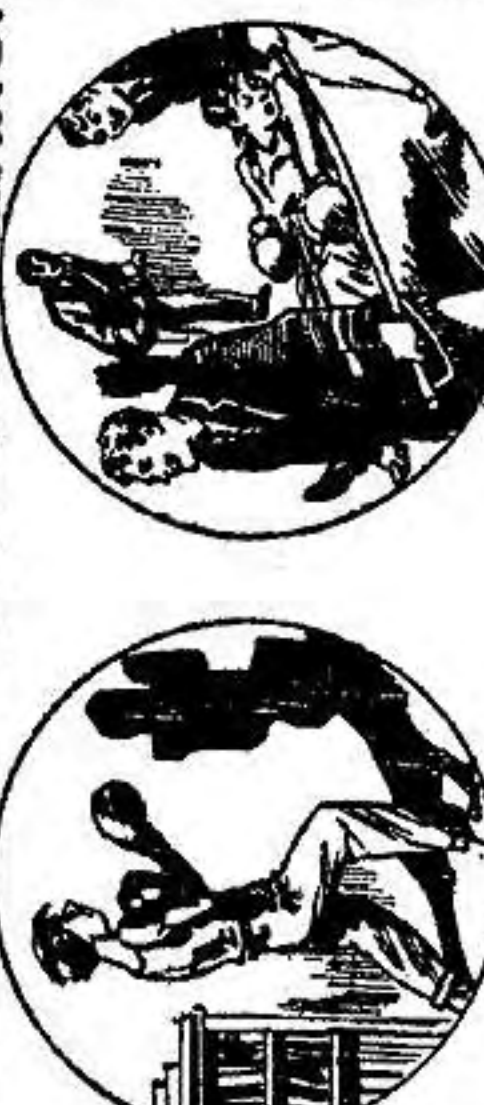
If you can't and you'd like to learn, turn up on Little Side after classes next Monday and watch the experts. The Fourth are going to practise footer!

What! You don't know what it means? Pleasant Wednesday! Afternoons, of course! Skinner runs them behind the woodshed every week—weather permitting! Lovers of cheap cigarettes, stable information and games of chance for penny point welcomed with open arms! Be manly! Come and enjoy a P. W. A.!

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BOXING WITHOUT TEARS!



But he didn't! Snoop pulled up with a jerk when his knuckles were within an inch of 'Lonzy's jaw. And 'Lonzy turned round to us with a boastful smile and remarked: "That's how it's done, my dear fellows!"

And that, if you'll believe us, was just how it actually was done all the way through! The two harmless loonies looked as if they were fighting for dear life—but actually they didn't touch each other once!

At least, not till the finish. And then, by sheer accident, 'Lonzy's fist went a couple of inches farther than he had intended, and gave Snoop a tap on the nose.

Snoop screamed and was carried out on a stretcher for medical aid.



'Lonzy burst into tears, and was escorted back to his study by friends, weeping bitterly. Apparently 'Lonzy's new style of boxing isn't completely fool-proof yet. He'll have to have another think!

COKER'S AWFUL MISTAKE

Shock for Mr. Prout
Coker rolled into the Fifth Games Study the other evening looking exceedingly wrathful.

"I'm not going to stand it!" he roared. "Stand what?" inquired Fitzgerald. "That fearful smell of burning garden refuse that's hanging around the House!"

hooted Coker. "It's enough to put a man off. Mumble ought to use a proper incinerator when he's working near the school buildings, and I'm jolly well going to see that he does!"

"How are you going to manage that?" Blundell asked. "By giving an ultimatum to Prouty!" was Coker's retort, as he turned on his heel again. "He won't need telling twice, I imagine. Dash it all, a sanitary inspector would condemn the place as unfit for human habitation if he came in and smelt it."

But wait a minute—began Blundell, as an idea occurred to him.

Coker, however, had no time to wait to listen to Blundell's idea. He tramped out and made his way to Mr. Prout's study in a state of great indignation, holding his handkerchief to his nose as the smell intensified on his journey downstairs.

"Well, Coker?" rapped out Mr. Prout, as the Fifth-Former presented himself in the master's study, still shutting out the obnoxious odour as best he could. "What is the matter, boy? Have you sustained an injury to your nasal organ?"

PLEASE WEAR RUBBER SHOES

When walking down the Fifth passage, as Hilton is ill in his study. He heard somebody mention WORK this morning and the shock has resulted in a nervous breakdown.

Excellent charcoal in handy squares. Can be used for the manufacture of home-made ink or for paving garden paths. My fag calls it toast!—G. WINGATE, Sixth Form.

FOR SALE
Excellent charcoal in handy squares. Can be used for the manufacture of home-made ink or for paving garden paths. My fag calls it toast!—G. WINGATE, Sixth Form.

Then the truth suddenly occurred to Coker, and, before he had time to stop himself, he pointed to the cigar that was stuck between Mr. Prout's lips.

"That's what it is, sir!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "It's your cigar!"

Was Prout's face red? And did even the bold Coker, when he realised what he had said, wish for the earth to open and swallow him up?

Reader, we won't deceive you. The answer to both those questions is decidedly and unequivocally in the affirmative! Neither Mr. Prout nor Coker have looked quite the same since. And the rest of the House hasn't stopped laughing!

EXTRA GOOD EDITION

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