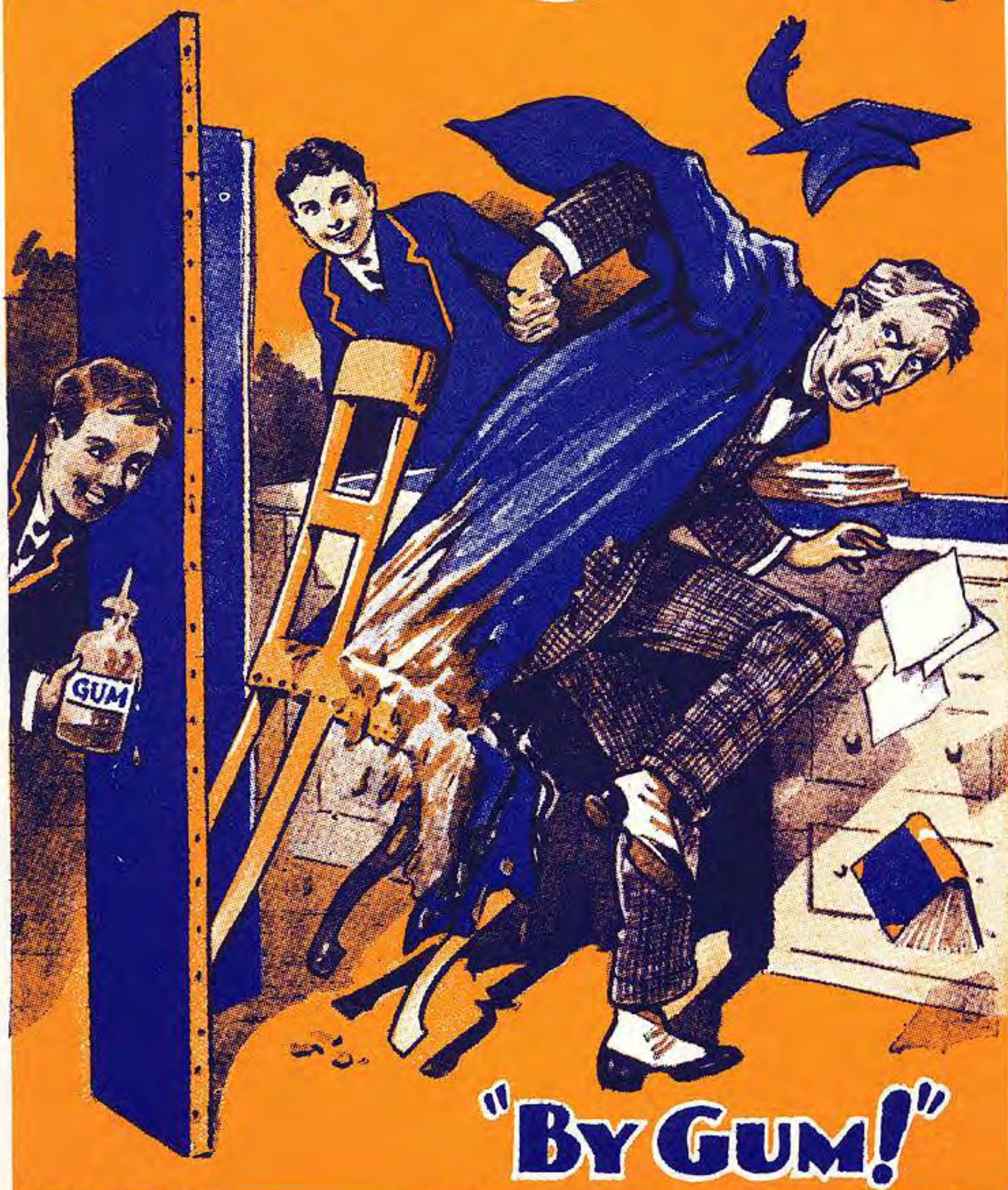


"BUNTER GETS HIS OWN BACK!" THE WORLD'S FUNNIEST AND FATTEST SCHOOLBOY RAISES ROARS OF LAUGHTER **INSIDE**

The Magnet

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BUNTER GETS HIS OWN BACK!

By FRANK
RICHARDS.



A TIP-TOP SCHOOL STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & CO., AT GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Lost in the Fog!

"SOUP!" said Bob Cherry. Really, it was like it. The November fog had come down thick on Greyfriars School.

It had been misty all day. But the famous Five of the Remove had gone out for a trot after class. The mist thickened while they were walking back to the school. Great masses of sea-fog rolled up from the North Sea. At the school gates they had to grope their way in.

They could barely make out the gateway. Within, they could make out nothing. The school buildings had disappeared in fog. They could not even see the ground under their feet. They could hardly see one another.

"Keep together!" said Harry Wharton.

They groped onward.

Bump!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What—"
"Ow! I say, you fellows! Wow!"
There was a sound of a fall. Some-

one had sat down suddenly.

"I think I barged into somebody!" said Bob.

"Ow! Beast! Ow!"

"Sounds rather like Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat squeak from the fog told that it was Billy Bunter who had sat down. He sat and squeaked.

"Ow! I say, you fellows, help a chap up! I say—ow!"

The five juniors gathered round, peering in the dimness. There was a glimmer of spectacles in the fog. They grasped Billy Bunter, and heaved him to his feet.

The fat Owl of the Remove gasped for breath.

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"Beasts! Barging a chap over—ow! You clumsy ass, Cherry—"

"You silly owl!" said Bob. "I couldn't see you in the fog! You barged into me, as much as I did into you! What the dickens are you going out for in this pea-soup?"

"I'm not going out—I'm going to the House—"

"You were heading for the gates, fat-head!"

"Rot!" snorted Bunter. "If you fellows are trying to get to the House, you'd better follow me. I know the way all right!"

"I tell you—"

"Rats!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yah!"

Bunter, evidently, knew best. He barged on, and disappeared in the fog towards the gates—under the impression that he was heading for the House, in the opposite direction!

"Come back, Bunter, you ass!" called out Frank Nugent.

"Yah!" floated back from the fog.

Bunter was gone.

"Silly ass!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Keep on—and don't barge everybody over, Bob, old bean! Better keep behind me."

"You blithering bandersnatch!" said Bob Cherry. "I never saw Bunter till we barged—"

"Fellow ought to be careful in a fog like this!" admonished Johnny. "Keep behind me, old chap, and don't have any more accidents!"

"Can you see through this soup any more than I can?" bawled Bob.

"Well, I'm careful, you know! You won't see me barge into anybody, fog or no fog! Just follow on, and—
Yooooop!"

Bump!

Johnny Bull was interrupted by a

sudden bump into an unseen figure ahead. There was an angry exclamation, and a hand groped out and grasped Johnny.

"You clumsy ass!" roared the voice of Loder of the Sixth. "What the thump are you charging at me for in the fog?"

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

"Ow!" roared Johnny. "Wow!"

Smack!

"Yarooogh!"

Loder of the Sixth seemed annoyed. He loomed through the fog, for a moment, as he smacked Johnny's head and disappeared again. Loder, apparently, had lost his way, and was trying to find it when Johnny Bull had found him—unexpectedly.

Four members of the famous Co. chuckled. Johnny Bull rubbed his head where Loder's smack had landed, and growled.

"Cheeky ass!" he exclaimed. "Smacking a fellow's head—as if a fellow could help running into him in a fog like this—"

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

"What are you cackling at?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Considering what Johnny had been saying at the moment he ran into Loder, it struck the other fellows as funny.

"Oh, shut up!" grunted Johnny. "For goodness' sake, let's get in!"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

They groped on again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's somebody!" exclaimed Bob, as a footstep was heard. "Don't barge him over, Johnny! Fellow ought to be careful in a fog like this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!"

"Hallo, who's there?" came a voice, and a rather tall and athletic figure loomed dimly. It was Warren of the

Fifth. "Know the way to the House? I've lost my bearings entirely."

"That you, Warren?" said Harry Wharton. "I think we have to keep straight on—"

"Not so easy in this!" said Jim Warren, with a laugh. "I've been groping about for a quarter of an hour! Is this the path?"

"I—I think so!"

"It's the path, all right," said Johnny Bull. "We haven't left it, I know that! I've been a bit too careful for that! Keep with us, Warren, and we'll be at the House in a minute or two."

"Well, if you're sure——" said the senior.

"That's all right."

"My esteemed chums," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "I have a preposterous idea that we have turned leftfully——"

"My dear chap, come on!" said Johnny Bull impatiently. "It's not a minute to the House, if we keep right on——"

"I think——" began Nugent, doubtfully.

"Don't you begin thinking, old fellow!" advised Johnny. "Keep on after me, and I'll lead you straight into——"

"Loder?" asked Bob.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" grunted Johnny crossly. "A few more steps, and we shall see the windows! And then—— Oh! Ah! Oooooogh!"

Something tangled in Johnny's feet, and he stumbled. He grabbed wildly at his comrades to save himself, and caught Bob Cherry with one hand, and Harry Wharton with the other. He crashed, carrying both down with him.

"Ow!" roared Johnny.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"Wow!" hooted Bob Cherry.

"What the thump——" exclaimed Warren.

"Yow-ow! Something caught in my feet!" howled Johnny Bull. "Some ass has been tying something across the path!"

"It's a chain!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, sitting up and groping.

"A—a—a chain!"

"We're on the Sixth Form green!"

"Oh crikey!"

The Sixth Form green was surrounded by a low chain, slung between posts to keep common mortals off. Johnny Bull had walked into it, and it had tripped him up. Obviously, they were off the path!

"You silly ass!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We're about a mile off the way——"

Warren of the Fifth chuckled.

"Thanks for guiding me, Bull!" he remarked, with polite sarcasm. "I think I'll try my luck on my own!"

He disappeared into the fog.

Johnny Bull scrambled up. He rubbed his nose, which had tapped rather hard on the Sixth Form green. Wharton and Bob Cherry were gasping. That sudden fall had been neither grateful nor comforting.

"We can get our bearings from here," said Frank Nugent. "Keep along by the chain, and mind you don't trip over it, and—— Yaroooooh!" He tripped over it as he was speaking, and there was another fall.

"This," said Bob Cherry, "is what I call enjoying life! I'm beginning to feel like a Babe in the Wood."

"We seem to be jolly well lost!" said Harry.

"The lostfulness is terrific!"

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull. "How the dickens can we get lost in our own quad? Keep behind me, and——"

"What else do you want us to fall over?" asked Bob.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Johnny Bull marched on, and the Co. followed him. One direction was as good as another, as they had not the remotest idea of the right one.

"Oh!" howled Johnny suddenly.

"Who's that?"

He bumped.

"Oh!" he gasped. "It—it's a wall!"

They groped over the wall. They had found something, at all events, if only a wall! But what wall it was they had not the faintest idea. It was a wall of some school building—that was all they knew.

"Well, we've got somewhere!" said Bob cheerfully. "And here comes somebody—perhaps he knows! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hold on, fathead, and tell us if you know the way to the House!"

"What—what?" came a sharp voice. "Who is speaking? How dare you address me in such a manner? Who are you?"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob, as he recognised the sharp, acid voice of Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell.

Mr. Hacker's long, thin figure loomed dimly in the fog. Harry Wharton & Co. promptly backed off.

Bob had had only the faintest glimpse of Mr. Hacker when he hailed him, and certainly had not intended to address a master as a fathead! But it was no use explaining that to Hacker. He was not a good-tempered man, and his temper was worse than usual now, as it was

Billy Bunter has had his fat ear tweaked by a beak! Now comes the fat junior's chance to get his own back! Does he take advantage of it? Trust Bunter for that!

evident that he also was lost in the fog. His sharp voice came snapping again:

"Who is it? Who is there? Who spoke?"

The Famous Five were silent. Luckily, the master of the Shell did not spot them. They heard him snort, and his footsteps died away in the fog.

"Narrow escape!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That's the first time I've called a beak a fathead—though not the first time I've wanted to! Look here! Where's that jolly old wall?"

They had lost the wall in backing away from Hacker. They groped, and groped, and groped, and cold stone met a groping hand at last.

"Here it is!"

"But where?"

"The wherefulness is terrific!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob.

Suddenly, from the misty silence, came a burst of merry music—strange and startling. It came from above, the sound of an orchestra playing a dance tune; and the chums of the Remove stared upward in great astonishment.

Utterly amazed, they listened to the merry strains of Henry Hall and his band! But the next moment they understood.

"That's old Browney's wireless!" exclaimed Bob. "We know where we are now!"

"Oh, good!"

"Come on!"

They knew now. Tom Brown of the Remove had his wireless on in Study No. 2, and that meant that they were under the windows of the Remove studies—high above, out of sight in the mist. It gave them their bearings, and they groped along the wall to the House door—where a glimmer of light came

out into the fog. A few minutes more, and the chums of the Remove were in the House—and very thankful to get there.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Caught Bending!

BILLY BUNTER blinked through his big spectacles, and blinked in vain.

Where he was, the fat Owl of the Remove had no idea. He had fancied that he was on the right path when he left Harry Wharton & Co. Since then he had been wandering at large. He had not reached the House! He had not even reached the gates! He had reached nothing but fog! Fog surrounded him like a blanket.

He stopped at last, gasping and dismayed.

He might have been only a few yards from the House! He might have been a hundred yards! He yelled from time to time, in the hope that somebody would hear, and come along. But nobody came along.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

It was rather absurd for a Greyfriars fellow to be "lost" in the Greyfriars quad. But it was more alarming than absurd.

For he was lost—there was no doubt about that! Some fellows, who had come in since that heavy fog had dropped on the school like a blanket, had got through. Some hadn't. Bunter was one of those who hadn't!

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He yelled again.

"I say, you fellows! Beasts! I say, help!"

The fog muffled his voice, and echoed it eerily on all sides. Through the echoes came the sound of another voice.

"Who is that?"

It was the sharp voice of Mr. Hacker. The master of the Shell, groping in the fog, had heard Bunter's yell.

It was a comfort to Bunter to hear a voice. He groped and fumbled and stumbled in the direction of Hacker's voice.

He could not see him—he could see nothing but blinding fog. He kept his hands outstretched to feel his way.

That was all that a fellow could do, and it really was not Billy Bunter's fault, what happened next.

It had occurred to Mr. Hacker to stoop down and grope on the ground, for guidance there—such as the edge of a path. If he found a path it would lead to somewhere.

It was quite a good idea. But, as it happened, it caused Bunter's outstretched fat hands to pass over him.

Feeling nothing in the way, the fat Owl naturally kept on—and his fat knees came into sudden contact with Hacker's stooping head.

It was nobody's fault, really. But it was very unfortunate. Hacker, feeling something suddenly bang on his bent head, gave a startled howl, and jumped up, colliding violently with Bunter.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, staggering.

"Oh!" spluttered Hacker. "Who—what——"

"Oh crikey!"

"Who is that?" roared Mr. Hacker. He groped fiercely, and his groping hand came in contact with a fat head, and fastened on a podgy ear.

Promptly he pulled that ear.

Hacker's temper, seldom good, was now at its worst. He had been groping about quite a long time, since he had come in, and missed the way to the House. Some person, unknown, had addressed him as a fathead—a

deliberate act of disrespect, under cover of the fog, in Hacker's opinion. Now somebody had walked into his bent head, and nearly knocked him over. Having captured that somebody's car, he pulled it—hard.

Bunter howled:

"Ow! Leggo! Ow! Leggo my car! Wow!"

Instead of letting go, Mr. Hacker gave the fat car a twist. Bunter's yell rang far through the fog.

"Boy! How dare you!" roared Mr. Hacker. "How dare you knock me over! Who are you? Take that!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter got his car away at last. He jumped away into the fog. It was better to be lost in the fog than found by Hacker!

Three yards off he was completely invisible. He stopped, and rubbed his fat ear, his little round eyes gleaming wrath through his big round spectacles.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

He waited a few minutes, to make sure of keeping clear of Hacker. Then, wearily, he began groping round again.

A glimmer came through the mist. A match had been struck. Billy Bunter caught that glimmer, and headed for it. Then he stopped again.

It was Hacker!

He was behind the master of the Shell now—close behind him.

Mr. Hacker, stooping once more, had struck a match, in the hope of picking up a sign of a path. The illumination was dim—but it was just enough to enable Billy Bunter to see that it was Hacker!

His eyes glittered through his spectacles.

He was just behind the bending figure of the master of the Shell, and Hacker did not know he was there. One backward step would take him out of the reach of possible discovery. Hacker had twisted his fat ear—still burning and tingling from the twist. Now, here was a chance to get his own back on Hacker! It was such a chance as seldom came a fellow's way!

Bunter seized it!

His foot shot out.

Crash!

It landed on Mr. Hacker's coat-tails.

The master of the Shell shot forward in a nose-dive, under that sudden and unexpected attack in the rear. The match went out.

Bunter jumped back.

He heard a muffled roar from Hacker, rolling over on the ground. He did not stay to listen. Heedless of the fog, he raced. All he wanted, just then, was to get to a safe distance from Hacker—unrecognised!

Behind him, Hacker's voice was audible, loud and shrill with fury. It died away as the Owl of the Remove barged on.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

A light flashed before his eyes. It was that of an electric torch.

"Here's one of the young asses!" said the voice of Wingate of the Sixth. "This way, kid!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Wingate—I say—"

Sixth Form prefects, with bike-lamps and electric torches, were searching for fellows who had missed call-over. Billy Bunter was found—much to his satisfaction.

"Take him to the House, Gwynne, will you? Come on, you men—there's still three or four fellows out!"

Billy Bunter rolled off thankfully to the House, lighted by Gwynne. He gasped with relief when he got inside. The prefect went out again.

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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's Bunter!"

Bunter blinked round and grinned at the Famous Five. He rubbed his fat car as he grinned.

"I say, you fellows, I ran into Hacker in the fog," he said, in a thrilling whisper. "I say, he pulled my car, the beast, and I jolly well kicked him! He, he, he!"

The chums of the Remove stared at Bunter.

"You kicked Hacker?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather! He, he, he! Jolly well booted him! He, he, he!"

"Gammon!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You'd be jolly well sacked—"

"He didn't see me!" grinned Bunter.

"He, he, he! I caught him bending! He, he, he! I say, you should have heard him yowl, when he went over on his hands and knees! He, he, he!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Keep it dark, you know!" grinned Bunter.

"Yes," gasped Harry Wharton. "I think it had better be kept dark, you howling, blithering ass!"

"He, he, he!"

"If Hacker knows—"

"He doesn't! He, he, he!"

And Billy Bunter, rolled on, still chuckling. Billy Bunter was proud of that exploit.

Undoubtedly he was the only fellow at Greyfriars who had ever landed a boot on a Form-master's coat-tails!

But even Bunter realised that it had better be kept dark. It was an exploit, in fact, that could not be kept too dark. At the same time, he could not resist the temptation of telling Remove fellows what a bold, bad Bunter he was. For the next hour William George Bunter was busily engaged in whispering to amazed juniors that he had booted Hacker, and warning them to keep it dark!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Who Booted the Beak?

JIM WARREN stared round in the fog, listening.

Since parting with the Remove fellows, he had not found his way. He had found nothing but a tree, on which he had bumped.

He was still in search, when he heard sounds through the blinding mists—sounds that seemed to tell of an accident. There was the distinct sound of a fall, and then of a string of sharp ejaculations, in a voice familiar to his ears—the acid voice of Hacker, master of the Shell.

It was like Warren, one of the best-natured fellows at Greyfriars, to start at once to the rescue. He did not like Hacker—and Hacker did not like him. But he did not think about that, at the moment. It was clear, from the sounds that reached him, that Mr. Hacker had taken a tumble in the fog, and he went to his aid at once.

But for the voice of the master of the Shell he could not have found him. But that voice was loud, and sharp, and angry. It guided Warren through the blanket of mist. He groped for Hacker.

Hacker, also, was groping.

He was groping savagely.

Seldom or never had the acid-tempered master of the Shell been so infuriated.

He had been booted!

It was incredible—unbelievable—unimaginable! But he had!

A boot had been planted, suddenly,

on his coat-tails, catching him bending. He had sprawled on hands and knees.

He had risen in wild wrath to grab the booter. But his unseen assailant had vanished in the fog.

Hacker groped for him, boiling! He had been trying to find his way; but now he was no longer trying to find his way—he was trying to find the unknown ruffian who had booted him.

"Where are you? Who are you? Where—what—who— Upon my word, I will find you! I will identify you! I will— Ah! Oh! You rascal, I have caught you!"

His groping hands brushed other groping hands in the fog. He grabbed swiftly, before the other proper could escape.

"I have you, you rascal!" he panted. "Do not attempt to struggle! I intend to identify you! I shall use force if you resist—"

There was a startled exclamation from Jim Warren. He had found Hacker—and Hacker had found him. But why the Form-master grabbed him and hooted he did not know.

"Mr. Hacker, please let go my collar—"

"I know that voice!" Hacker's crimson, enraged face peered, close to the Fifth Former's. "Who are you?"

He still held Warren's coat collar in a grasp of iron.

"I'm Warren of the Fifth!" gasped Jim. "Really, sir—"

"I thought so. I might have guessed it! This is of a piece with your usual insolence!" roared Mr. Hacker. "I am glad that I have succeeded in identifying you! You will be expelled for this!"

Jim Warren wondered whether Hacker was a little out of his mind. His words and actions were difficult to explain on any other theory.

"Ruffian!" hooted Hacker. "Hooligan! I shall take you instantly to your headmaster—I shall report you to Dr. Locke instantly—at all events, as soon as I can find my way to the House!"

Hacker remembered that he was still lost in the fog.

"What on earth have I done, sir?" exclaimed the bewildered Warren.

"You dare to ask!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

"Will you let go my collar, sir?"

"I will not! Certainly I will not! I shall retain you in my personal custody till I can find my way! I shall take you to your headmaster—"

"But what's the matter?" yelled Warren. "I was looking for you—"

"Looking for me?" gasped Mr. Hacker. "You dare to admit that you were looking for me, to repeat your dastardly assault—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I have no doubt of it—not a shadow of doubt! As you escaped unseen the first time, I have no doubt you intended to repeat your dastardly act! But I have caught you this time!"

"I—I haven't—I—I never—" stammered Warren. "I—I heard you fall over and came to help you—"

"Pah! How dare you tell me such palpable falsehoods, Warren? Do you imagine that I shall believe you—that Dr. Locke will believe you? You shall be expelled for assaulting a Form-master—"

Mr. Hacker had no doubt about it. Hardly a minute after he had been booted, he had grabbed Warren in the fog, right on the spot! He was only surprised and disgusted by Warren's denials—which seemed to him impudent and palpable untruths.

"I never—" gasped Warren.

"Enough!" hooted Hacker.

"If you will not listen to me, sir—"

"I will not! Not a word!"

"Very well, sir, please yourself," said Warren. "But let go my collar, please. I will not allow any man to lead me about by the collar! My own Form-master would never think of such a thing!"

"Add to your impudence!" hooted Mr. Hacker. "Add to it! But I will not release you—most certainly I will not release you! Oh—Oh! Ah—Where are you, Warren?" shrieked Mr. Hacker.

Jim, with a sudden twist, wrenched his collar out of Hacker's grasp. He backed into the fog and vanished.

"Boy! Warren, Stop!" roared Hacker.

Jim did not stop. He had had enough of Hacker!

the House was what mattered. He groped and stumbled on.

A few minutes later he caught a flash of light in the mist. He called, and a voice called back—that of Gwynne of the Sixth.

"Here's one of them!" Gwynne came up, flashing the light, and grinned at the Fifth Former. "Oh, you, Warren! Seen anybody else?"

"Hacker's about somewhere," said Jim. "I saw some juniors a little while ago—Wharton of the Remove and—"

"They're in. I'll go and look for Hacker. Here's a torch; you can find your way in with a light."

"Thanks!"

Jim found his way to the House. It was past call-over, and he went to his Form-master's study to report himself

"You ass, it wasn't I; it was somebody else! Only Hacker fancied—"

"Did he spot you, then?"

"He spotted me all right, but it was somebody else who—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up, Price!" said Jim gruffly. "If you can't take a fellow's word, shut up!"

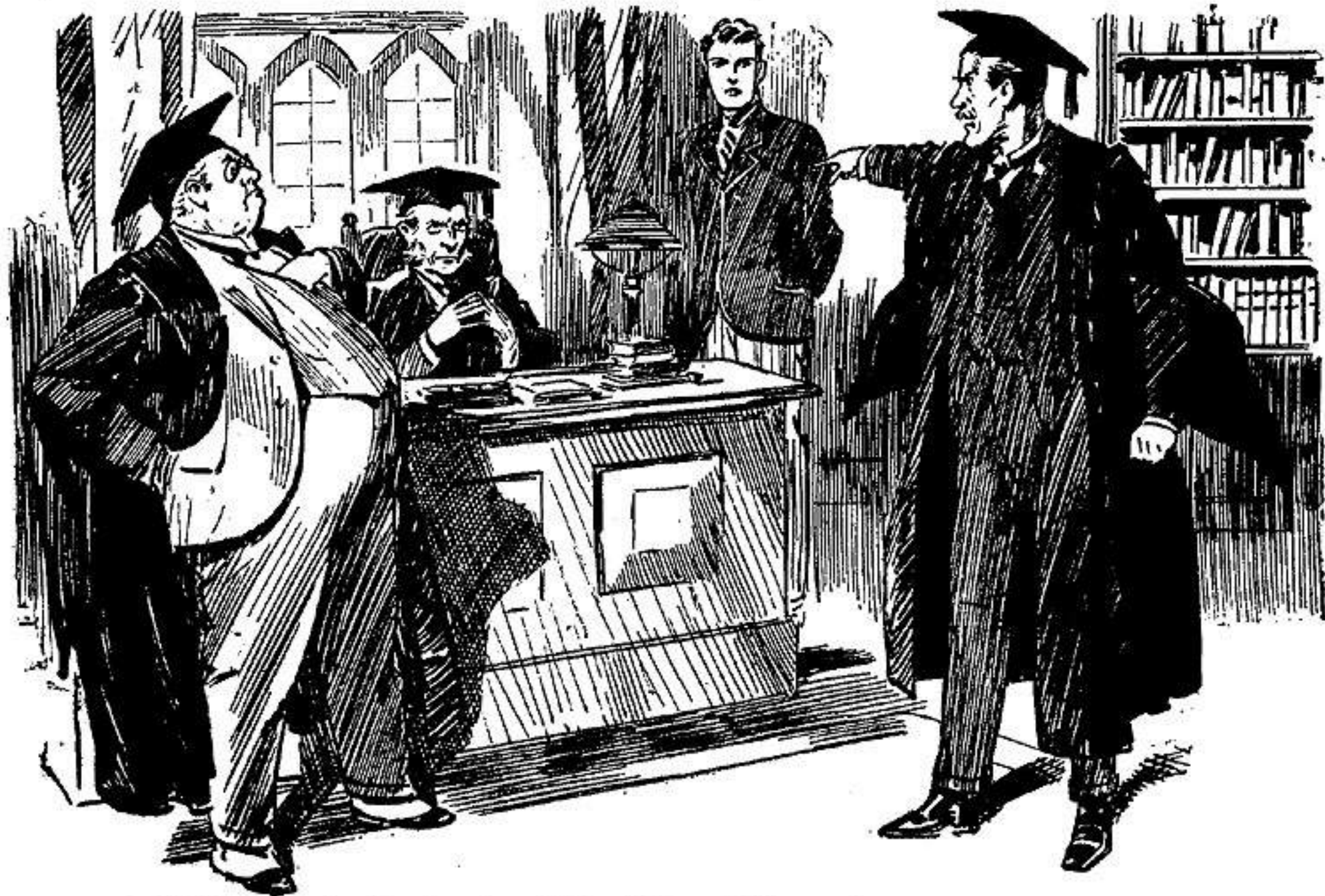
Price chuckled.

"Who did it, then?" asked Hilton.

"How should I know? I never saw him; and Hacker can't have, as he fancied that I did it—"

Another chuckle from Price.

Jim glared at him across the table. Cedric Hilton regarded his friend rather dubiously. Jim's word was as good as gold—but there was no love lost between him and the master of the



"Dr. Locke!" Mr. Hacker's voice almost trembled. "I do not believe a single word that Warren has uttered! This boy, sir, has a personal dislike for me. I am convinced—I know, sir—that he was the person who kicked me!" "As you did not actually see your assailant in the fog," said Dr. Locke, "judgment must depend largely on the value of Warren's word." "Most assuredly, sir!" boomed Mr. Prout.

He regretted by that time that he had gone to his aid. It was not, as he had supposed, an accidental fall. It seemed that somebody had pitched into Hacker in the fog. Hacker, catching him on the spot, supposed that he had done it. Perhaps that was excusable, in Hacker's wildly excited state of mind. But Jim, naturally, had had enough; and assuredly he did not intend to be led to the House by his collar, like a fag in the grasp of a prefect!

He groped away, Hacker's voice shrilling after him.

"Warren, stop! Return at once! You young scoundrel, I order you to stop! You shall be flogged—expelled—"

The howl died away in the fog.

Jim groped on. Hacker, he hoped, would realise that he had made a mistake when he was cool. Hacker, anyhow, was not the important matter now; getting out of the blinding fog and into

to Prout; then, in a rather worried frame of mind, he made his way to Study No. 4 in the Fifth—his study. Hilton and Price, his study-mates, were there at tea.

"Oh, you've got in!" said Hilton, with a grin. "I fancied you were held up in the fog at Courtfield."

"Pretty thick out, isn't it?" asked Price.

"Not so bad till I got back to the school," answered Jim. "But it's settled down on the quad like a blanket. I've been about twenty minutes getting across the quad. I'm more than ready for tea."

He sat down.

"Hacker's out in it," he said. "I fancy there's going to be a row. Somebody seems to have given him too under cover of the fog, and the old ass fancies it was I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Price. "What a lark! Pretty dangerous game to play on a man like Hacker, though."

Shell. The three Fifth Formers proceeded with tea; but they had not finished when the study door opened, and Coker of the Fifth looked in.

Horace Coker's rugged face was grave.

"Warren here? Oh, here you are, Warren! I say, you're a frightful ass!"

"What the dickens—"

"What I mean is, nobody likes Hacker, and it may have been a lark to boot him," said Coker. "But, dash it all, old man, a man can't boot a beak—it's not done!"

"Who's booted him?" yelled Warren.

"Eh? Haven't you?"

"No, you ass!"

"Oh, all right, then! Hacker thinks you have. He's just come in with Wingate. Wingate found him in the fog and brought him in. And he's telling the world that you came behind him in the fog and kicked him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Price.

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"He's gone to the Head," said Coker. "I say, old chap, it was rather thick, if you don't mind my saying so. Hacker's a bit of a worm and a meddling ass; but booting a beak, you know—"

"I didn't!" raved Warren.

"Well, if you didn't, all right; but if you did—" Coker shook his head very seriously. "You see, it isn't done—"

"Get out, you ass!"

"You needn't get shirty, Warren. I don't like Hacker any more than you do, and I know he's made himself unpleasant to you, but, dash it all, a fellow draws a line somewhere! And booting a beak—"

Warren jumped up and slammed the door on Coker's nose.

He sat down, with a heightened colour, to finish his tea. Price was grinning; Hilton looking very grave. Tea was still unfinished when there came a tap at the door and Trotter, the page, looked in.

"Master Warren wanted in the 'Ead's study!" said Trotter.

Jim Warren, breathing hard, went down, to proceed to Dr. Locke's study. And about fifty fellows watched him as he went, deeply interested in a chap who had "booted a beak."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Benefit of the Doubt!

DR. LOCKE, the revered headmaster of Greyfriars, sat in his study with a grave and portentous brow.

He was not alone when Jim Warren arrived there. Mr. Hacker, red in the face and breathing hard, was there,

standing—he was too angry and excited to sit down. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was there; he had been sent for, as a member of his Form was concerned in this serious matter. Prout sat portly and plump and a little contemptuous.

Prout was called "Old Pompous" and "Don Pomposo" in the Fifth, but there was one thing about Prout that the Fifth agreed was sporting—he was the man to stand up for men in his Form. He would never hear anything against a Fifth Form man if he could help it—and if he had to hear it he wouldn't believe it.

On the present occasion Prout was not only sceptical, but scornful. Fellows in Prout's Form were quite incapable of such an action as booting a beak. The mere idea was an absurdity, in Prout's opinion.

"Warren!" said the Head in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir?"

"Mr. Hacker fancies—" boomed Prout.

"Will you leave this matter in the headmaster's hands, sir?" barked Hacker.

"Mr. Hacker—"

"Mr. Prout—"

"Kindly allow me to speak, gentlemen!" said the Head, with a touch of severity.

Prout and Hacker exchanged an inimical glance, and kindly allowed the Head to speak.

"Warren, Mr. Hacker states that you—'hem!'—attacked him—actually committed a violent assault—in the quadrangle a short time ago—"

"Mr. Hacker is mistaken, sir," said Jim quietly.

"I had no doubt—" boomed Prout.

A glance from the Head checked his

boom, and he relapsed into indignant silence.

"Mr. Hacker's statement is positive, Warren," said Dr. Locke. "But I hope, I trust, that some error may have been made. You did not actually see your assailant, sir, at the moment when he—he—'hem!'—attacked you?" The Head directed an inquiring glance at the master of the Shell.

"As he was behind me, sir, and took me completely by surprise, naturally, I did not see him at the moment of the assault," said Mr. Hacker. "I was stooping to feel the edge of the path, to find my way in the fog. Warren came behind me and—attacked me, knocking me over on my hands and knees—" Hacker did not like the word "kicked." "Having attacked me, he disappeared instantly, trusting to the fog to conceal his identity, of course."

"Sir," boomed Prout, "on Mr. Hacker's own statement, he did not see who kicked him!" Prout, in a state of annoyance, preferred the word "kicked." He was aware that Hacker hated it. "How, then, sir, can he declare with any positiveness that it was a boy of my Form?"

"Instantly, sir, I was upon my feet and searching for him," snarled Mr. Hacker. "I caught Warren."

"You admit this, Warren?" asked the Head.

"Certainly, sir!" said Jim. "Mr. Hacker caught me by the collar."

"And Warren wrenched himself away with the utmost violence and escaped," said Mr. Hacker.

"I asked Mr. Hacker twice to let go my collar, sir," said Jim. "I told him that my own Form-master would never handle a fellow in such a way."

"True!" boomed Prout. "Very true! Very true indeed! I should not dream of—"

A glance from the Head checked Prout's boom again.

"It would have been more judicious, Warren, to remain with Mr. Hacker, as he desired you to do so," said Dr. Locke.

"Perhaps so, sir. And if I did wrong, I am sorry," said Jim. "But Mr. Hacker is not my Form-master, and had no right to take me by the collar. I would have stayed with him willingly otherwise."

The Head coughed. "Passing over that point," he said, "it appears that immediately after the attack you were so close to Mr. Hacker that he was able to seize hold of you. How do you account for this, Warren, if you were not the person who—'hem!'—attacked him?"

"Easily enough, sir," said Jim. "I heard a fall and a cry, and supposed that somebody had had an accident in the fog. I ran up at once to offer help. That was how I came in contact with Mr. Hacker."

"A natural proceeding," boomed Prout—"a very natural proceeding on the part of a good-natured boy, Dr. Locke! Quite in keeping with all that I know of this boy's character!"

"You deny having—'hem!'—attacked Mr. Hacker, Warren?"

"Most certainly, sir! I should never dream of doing such a silly, rotten, and disrespectful thing!" exclaimed Jim hotly.

"Quite so," boomed Prout—"quite so!"

Dr. Locke looked worried.

"Mr. Hacker, Warren's explanation seems to account for your having found him so near you after the—the attack," he said.

Mr. Hacker shut his thin lips hard. His eyes glinted.

The master of the Shell was very far

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from being a bad-hearted man. He was, according to his lights, a just and reasonable man. But he was absolutely convinced that Warren had booted him in the fog, and he felt, at the present moment, rather like a tiger whose prey was escaping.

His view was that a fellow who disliked him, and whom he disliked, had taken advantage of the fog to boot him; and, having been spotted, was lying with brazen impudence to avoid the consequences. Taking that view, it was natural for Mr. Hacker to be very angry indeed.

His face, from red, became quite pale under the stress of his anger and bitterness.

"Dr. Locke"—his voice almost trembled—"I do not believe a single word that Warren has uttered! He has been disrespectful to me before! This boy, sir, has a personal dislike for me—founded, sir, upon what he knows of my opinion of him! I do not believe for a moment that he would come to my aid in case of an accident! I am convinced—I know, sir—that he was the person who attacked me! I seized him within a few moments of the attack, and I have not the slightest doubt of it, sir!"

Hacker panted.

Prout snorted.

Warren stood silent, his eyes on his headmaster.

"Did you see anyone else on the spot, Warren?" asked Dr. Locke.

"No, sir—not in the fog. I did not even see Mr. Hacker before he collared me."

"You saw no one else, Mr. Hacker?"

"No, sir! No one else was there!"

Dr. Locke drummed on his table with his slim, white finger-tips. It was undoubtedly a difficult matter for the headmaster to decide.

"As you did not actually see your assailant at the moment of the assault, Mr. Hacker, we must, at least, admit a doubt," he said at last. "Judgment must depend largely on the value of this boy's word. On that subject his Form-master can speak. Mr. Prout, do you regard this boy's word as trustworthy?"

Prout began to boom at once.

"Most assuredly, sir! Warren has been in the school only this one term, but he has made the most favourable impression on me. I have never known him to speak untruthfully; I have never known him guilty of a disrespectful act. During the whole term, sir, he has been guilty of only one fault to the extent of causing me to punish him, and that, sir, I realised, upon reflection, was chiefly due to an easy-going good nature—too easy-going and thoughtless, sir; a desire to help another boy out of a difficulty."

"Certainly a very good record!" said Dr. Locke.

"And that fault, sir," snapped Mr. Hacker—"perhaps you will tell the headmaster what that was, sir?"

"I have no objection, sir!" boomed Prout. "Warren wrote a paper for Coker, of my Form, which I was led to suppose that Coker had written."

"An act of deception!" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"So I regarded it, sir, and punished both boys!" snorted Mr. Prout. "But the intention was kind, if thoughtless; allowances must be made, sir, for a clever boy desiring to help a stupid boy in a difficult task. Warren realised that he had done wrong, and expressed his regret. Thoughtless good nature was the cause of his fault—the same good nature, sir, that led him to come to your aid in the fog."

"One moment!" said the Head. "When this matter you speak of came

to light, Mr. Prout, did Warren prevaricate in any way, or confess frankly?"

"He made no attempt whatever at prevarication, sir. He is quite incapable of anything of the kind. There is no boy in the Fifth Form, sir, whose word I would take more unquestioningly."

Dr. Locke drummed on his table again.

"Mr. Hacker, you have heard what Mr. Prout says. In the circumstances, perhaps you are prepared to accept this boy's word?"

"No, sir!" said Mr. Hacker grimly. "I am not!"

Dr. Locke coughed.

"At all events, as you did not actually see Warren commit the—the assault, and as the boy's Form-master speaks so highly of him, we must admit an element of doubt," he said. "Further investigation, perhaps, may throw new light on the matter. In the meantime, I—"

Hacker trembled with suppressed rage.

"You do not mean, sir, that this boy is to remain unpunished after committing an attack on a member of your staff?" he asked, in a choking voice.

"I mean, sir," said the Head, rather sharply, "that there is no proof that Warren was guilty of this act, and, without proof, I would not find a boy with a bad reputation guilty; and Warren's reputation is exceptionally good. Warren, you may leave my study!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Jim.

Quietly he went.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Quelch Wants to Know!

BILLY BUNTER, the following morning was grinning when the Remove gathered in their Form-room. The fat junior was lucked.

Nearly every fellow in the Remove had heard of Bunter's wonderful exploit by that time.

Nobody, certainly, had believed it till he heard from other sources that a beak actually had been booted.

That fact having been ascertained, and there being no other claimant to the distinction, Bunter captured the honour and glory.

He revelled in it.

There were fellows in the Remove—quite a lot—who considered the fat Owl rather a funk. Now Bunter was able to ask them whether a chap was funky—a chap who booted a beak? He inquired whether any other man in the Remove would have ventured to boot a beak—even the Boulder, famous for his recklessness—and the answer was in the negative.

Nobody else in the Remove, in point of fact, was fathead enough. Even Smithy, reckless as he was, would have drawn the line at that.

As a fellow could hardly fail to be sacked for such an action, if spotted, Bunter would have been wiser to say nothing about it. But wisdom and Billy Bunter were far as the poles asunder.

Certainly, he enjoined every fellow he told to "Keep it dark." He would march up to a fellow, and say:

"I say, heard about Hacker? It was me booted him! Keep it dark, you know! He, he, he!"

Luckily for Bunter, there were no tell-tales in the Remove. And by the time it was learned that Warren had been

accused by Hacker, it was learned also that Warren had been found not guilty by the Head.

What Bunter would have done if Warren had been found guilty was perhaps a doubtful question. But as Warren had been found guiltless, it was all right.

"Of course, if they'd put it on Warren, or any other fellow, I should have owned up like a shot!" Bunter told the Remove—which some of the Removites permitted themselves to doubt.

However, the fat Owl was not put to that test. It was, in truth, rather a relief to him that Hacker's suspicions had taken a wrong direction.

He wanted all the Remove to know what a bold, reckless, devil-may-care Bunter he was. But he did not want Hacker to know—very much indeed he did not want Hacker to know!

He had wondered rather uneasily whether Hacker might recall having twisted his ear, and put two and two together. But no such thought, it was clear, had occurred to Mr. Hacker. Indeed, he would hardly have believed that the fat junior had performed that extraordinary prank if he had been told so.

Nobody, looking at Bunter, would have fancied that he was the fellow for wild and whirling deeds. Indeed, Bunter himself wondered afterwards how on earth he had found the nerve to do it.

However, he was glad he had done it. All was safe, and he was able to brag to his fat heart's content. Smithy liked to make out that he did not care a snap of the fingers for prefects and beaks; but even Smithy could not make out that he had ever booted a beak.

Only Billy Bunter had ever done that. Bunter was alone in his glory. In the Form-room that morning he grinned the fat grin of complacent satisfaction. Fellows had sometimes called him funky. Now they had to admit that he was a stout lad—in every sense of those words.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, was looking unusually grave that morning. Lessons did not begin immediately. The Remove master had something to say first; and as he proceeded to say it, the fat, complacent grin slowly faded from the countenance of William George Bunter, leaving him looking as grave as his Form-master—or graver.

"My boys!" said Mr. Quelch, surveying the Remove from his high desk. "There is a matter to which I must refer before we commence. Probably you have all heard of an extraordinary occurrence yesterday, during the fog—" He paused, scanning the faces of the Remove.

"We've heard that a beak was booted, sir!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith. And there was a suppressed chuckle in the Form.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"That is not the way to express yourself, Vernon-Smith!" he said severely. "I am referring to an audacious attack made upon a Form-master. Mr. Hacker, was—was knocked over—"

"We heard that he was kicked, sir!" said Smithy. "A man in the Shell told me he saw mud on his coat-tails when he came in."

There was another chuckle, not quite suppressed this time.

"You will take a hundred lines, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, sir! I didn't boot Mr. Hacker," said the Boulder.

"If you speak again, I shall cane you!"

The Bounder did not speak again. He winked at the fellows nearest him, and there were suppressed giggles. But they died away under the glare of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"I understand," resumed Mr. Quelch, "that some of the boys of my Form were caught in the fog. Every boy who was out of the House will stand forward—every boy who came in after the fog descended."

The Famous Five left their places at once.

Billy Bunter sat tight. Bunter was not feeling so happy and glorious now.

Booting a beak was ripping. Being booted out of Greyfriars as a reward was not nearly so ripping.

"Mr. Hacker's opinion is that it was a Fifth Form boy who committed this disrespectful action," said Mr. Quelch. "But there appears to be no proof, and the headmaster has asked me to question boys in my Form who were out of the House. You must not take this as implying that you are under any kind of suspicion. I am convinced that no boy in my Form would or could be guilty of such an act."

Tom Brown, Hazeldene, and Redwing joined the Famous Five, in front of the class. Mr. Quelch glanced over them.

"You boys came in after the fog closed down on the quadrangle?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch consulted a list.

"Brown, Hazeldene, and Redwing were present at calling-over," he said. "You three must have come into the House before the occurrence."

"I had a torch, sir," said Tom Brown, "and Hazel and Redwing came in with me. We got through the fog all right."

"You three may go back to your places," said Mr. Quelch. "According to my list six boys in the Remove were late for calling-over. These boys were absent from the House when Mr. Hacker was attacked. The names are Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Bull, Hurree Singh and Bunter."

Bunter quaked.

"Bunter, stand out!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'!"

Feeling like anything but a bold, bad, reckless, and devil-may-care fellow, Bunter limped out before the class.

All eyes were upon him.

"As a matter of form," said Mr. Quelch, "I must ask you boys whether you were concerned in this deplorable affair."

"Certainly not, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"Did you come into contact with Mr. Hacker in any way whatever while you were out in the fog?"

"Well, yes, sir," said Harry. "He passed us, and called out, and then we lost sight of him again. We never touched him."

"You were all together, I presume?"

Wharton hesitated a second. The Famous Five, certainly, had been all together. Bunter hadn't been with them. Quelch's question was addressed to all six. Billy Bunter weighed in quickly, before the captain of the Remove could speak.

"Oh, yes, sir! I was all together—I mean, we were all together! I was with these chaps all the time, wasn't I, you fellows?"

The Famous Five stood silent. They did not want to utter a word to endanger the fat and fatuous Owl. But they were by no means prepared to bear false witness on his account.

"Bunter, you will be well-advised to tell the truth!" said Mr. Quelch, in a

deep voice. "You may place yourself under suspicion by prevarication."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"If you came in with these boys, Bunter, why did you not report yourself at the same time?"

"I—I—I—"

"I think you came in a quarter of an hour later, Bunter—not till after the prefects had been sent out with lights to find the boys who were out of the House."

"Oh! Yes! That—that's what I—I really meant to say, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Bull, you may go back to your places!" said Mr. Quelch.

The Famous Five went back to their desks. Bunter rolled after them.

"Bunter! Stop!"

"Oh lor'!"

"You need not be uneasy, you absurd boy," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, not unkindly. "Nobody is likely to suspect you of such a daring, lawless, and utterly unheard of action!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"I must, however, question you, as it appears that you were in the quadrangle at the time, and alone. Did you see Mr. Hacker at all?"

"I couldn't see in the fog, sir! After I left those fellows, sir, I—I wandered about and—and called for help! I never saw Hacker, sir! He was absolutely hidden by the fog when I saw him—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, when I didn't see him, sir," gasped Bunter.

"Did you see Mr. Hacker or not?" rapped the Remove master. "Say yes or no, immediately."

"Yes or no immediately!" gasped Bunter. He was getting rather confused.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, try not to be so utterly stupid!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "If I supposed for one moment, that you were capable of such an act, I should suspect you of having assaulted Mr. Hacker."

"Oh crikey!"

"Did you see Mr. Hacker or not?" hooted Quelch.

"Not, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never knew he was in the quad at all! You can ask Mr. Hacker, sir! He knows! He pulled my ear!"

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

"Mr. Hacker pulled your ear!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch blankly. "Then you did meet Mr. Hacker in the fog?"

"No, sir! I mean, yes, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I couldn't help walking into him, in the fog, sir, and he pulled my ear! Not that I was anywhere near him at the time, sir!" added Bunter, cautiously. "It wasn't till afterwards—long afterwards—that I know Hacker was there at all, sir."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch.

"The fact is, sir, I don't know anything about it," said Bunter. "I wasn't there, sir, when Mr. Hacker pulled my ear—"

Mr. Quelch picked up his cane.

"Bunter, you will bend over that chair! I do not suppose, for one moment, that you had the lawless audacity to assault a member of Dr. Locko's staff. But I will not allow you to be guilty of such reckless prevarication. I shall cane you for your untruthfulness, Bunter."

"Oh crikey! I—I say, sir—"

"Bend over!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"You may go back to your place, Bunter."

The fat Owl of the Remove crawled

back to his place. He sat there very uncomfortably.

During morning school Mr. Quelch glanced at the fat junior several times, with a very keen look in his gimlet-eyes. A good many of the Remove noticed it, and wondered whether suspicion was stirring in Quelch's mind. If so, he appeared to dismiss it, for he did not address Bunter again—the subject was dismissed, much to the fat Owl's relief.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Warning for Wharton!

STEPHEN PRICE, of the Fifth Form, came up the Remove passage and looked into Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were there. It was nearly tea-time, and Frank, with a ruddy face, was making toast at the study fire, while Wharton was sorting out crocks from the cupboard. Neither of them, for the moment, noticed Price, as he stood looking into the study, seeming to hesitate to enter. And when Wharton, glancing round, spotted him, his look was far from welcoming.

The black sheep of the Fifth was not liked in that study.

"Want anything, Price?" asked Harry, rather pointedly.

"Yes! I want to speak to you!" Price stepped in and shut the door after him.

Nugent stood up, toasting-fork in hand, and stared at him. Wharton knitted his brows a little. Shutting the door looked as if Price had something private to say, and the juniors did not want to hear anything in private from Price of the Fifth.

"Look here—" began Wharton restively.

"It's about Warren!" said Price.

"Oh! Is it?" exclaimed Wharton sharply. "Then you can cut it out before you begin, Price! Last time you came here to speak about Warren there was a row! If you want another, you—"

"Don't be a young ass!" said Price. "I'm not up against Warren now! We're not friends, certainly; but we're not enemies as we were. I'm afraid he's got some trouble coming, and it's a bit my fault, in a way."

Wharton looked at him keenly. He did not like Price, or trust him an inch. But he was aware that, during the past weeks, Price's enmity to Warren of the Fifth seemed to have faded out.

"I suppose Nugent knows—I can speak before him!" said Price.

"He knows as much as I do," said Harry. "But, look here, Price, I don't want to talk about Warren! I know how to mind my own business, and you might as well do the same."

"I think you'd better listen to me," said Price sourly. "I'm going to put you on your guard, if you wish that chap well."

"I don't see—"

"Shut up and listen, then!" snapped Price. "No good beating about the bush, Wharton, as nobody can hear us. You know that that chap Warren isn't the fellow he makes himself out to be. I dare say his name is Warren, as he's got a cousin of that name; but he's not James Warren, the son of Sir Arthur Warren, of Warren Croft, and you know it."

Wharton did not reply.

He did know it, and knew that Price knew that he knew it. But he was not going to utter a word to the detriment of Warren of the Fifth.

"That day in the Cloisters I heard you talking to him," muttered Price.



Hobson was about to empty a bottle of gum into Mr. Hacker's chair, when the door suddenly opened and Wharton looked into the study. "You ass!" gasped Hobson, almost jumping out of his skin. "I thought it was Hacker! I've a good mind to punch your silly head!" "I shouldn't!" said Wharton, laughing. "Hacker's just coming!"

"You told him plainly that he wasn't the James Warren you had met at Warren Croft. He as good as admitted it, and gave you his word that there was no wrongdoing in the matter, queer as it looked—"

"His word's good enough for me, if not for you," said Harry.

"Well, it's pretty thick!" said Price. "But I'm not down on him, as I've said. I was—but not now. You know that cousin of his, James Warren, has turned up near the school—he's staying with a rowdy party at Popper Court. Old Popper's let the place to a man named Cook—and he's got a rowdy lot there—James among them. You knew that."

"What about it?"

"The fellow is a brute and a rotter," said Price. "Not knowing who he was, at the time, I had trouble with him. He's twice as strong as I am, and he was going to smash me up, when Warren barged in and licked him. He had me down, and was kicking me—"

"That's the sort of bullying brute he is," said Harry.

"I did my best," said Price, flushing. "But, as I've said, he's twice as strong as I am. I had no chance! I should have been pretty near a hospital case if Warren hadn't chipped in. It was fearfully decent of him, considering the way I'd treated him, and—and he risked a lot! That brute at Popper Court is the real James Warren, and he could give Warren of the Fifth away any minute, if he liked. I've wondered a lot why he doesn't."

"He means no good to Warren, at any rate!" said Harry.

"I'm quite sure of that. He told me who he was—he was in a fearful temper when Warren knocked him out, and I thought he'd be along at the school pretty soon afterwards. But

when he looked in a few days later, he said nothing to give Warren away—goodness knows why. He's got some reason, I suppose, for keeping it dark that there's another fellow here in his name."

Price paused.

"But what—" asked Harry. He could not make out why the Fifth Former had come to tell him all this.

"It was I who spread the story about Warren in the school, after what I heard you say to him in the Cloisters," muttered Price. "I was up against him then. And I didn't see why a spoofer shouldn't be shown up. I found out that the real James Warren used to be at Oakshott School, and let that out, too. I don't blame myself—he's a spoofer all right! But—but since he did what I've told you, I'm not up against him any longer. But somebody else is."

"Somebody else!" repeated Harry. "Why, everybody likes Warren!"

"Hacker doesn't!"

"Hacker!" repeated Harry.

"The Shell beak! From what I can make out, Hacker heard the story going the rounds, and asked Warren about it—you know what a meddling, inquisitive blighter he is. Warren snubbed him. It's no bizney of Hacker's, anyhow; he has nothing to do with the Fifth. Hacker made himself unpleasant in one way or another, and I suppose Warren saw a chance of getting his own back in the fog the other day, and booted him—"

"Warren didn't boot him!" said Nugent.

"Oh, rot! Of course he did!" snapped Price. "Hacker knows—"

"Well, he knows too much, then," said Harry. "I know he went to the Head, and Warren was called up; but Dr. Locke wasn't satisfied—"

"Hacker is!"

"Look here, Price, we know that it wasn't Warren!"

"You'd better tell Hacker that, then," said Price, with a shrug of his thin shoulders. "He's absolutely certain of it, and he's got his knife into Warren, right up to the hilt."

"We can't tell him, of course. But it wasn't Warren, all the same."

"Whether it was or not, Hacker believes that it was, so it comes to the same thing. He's after Warren like a dog after a bone. He's raking up that story he's heard, that Warren isn't really James Warren of Warren Croft."

"Oh, rot!" said Harry uneasily. "He wouldn't!"

"He's exactly the man that would!" said Price. "He's the kind of man who fusses and meddles, and thinks it's all from a sense of duty."

Wharton was silent. That was, no doubt, a rather accurate description of Mr. Hacker.

"Now he knows—or thinks, if you like—that Warren booted him, he's just wild," went on Price. "He thinks Warren told lies in the Head's study—I suppose he did, really—"

"He didn't!" snapped Harry.

"Anyhow, that's Hacker's idea," said Price impatiently. "It comes to the same thing. Hacker's raking up that story, and he's jolly well going to fix Warren if he can. That's why I'm warning you."

"Look here, how do you know?" demanded Harry.

"I've just been to his study! He sent for me!" answered Price. "He had nosed it out that the story about Warren started from me. He asked me to tell him the whole facts."

Wharton whistled.

"Two or three weeks ago I'd have been jolly glad for a beak to take it
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up," said Price. "But now—well, I've told you what Warren did for me. I've got some decency, I hope. Whether he's a spoofer or not, he saved me from getting knocked to bits by a bullying hooligan, after the way I'd treated him. Well, you can bank on it that I never told Hacker anything. I told him I'd heard some tattle among the fags, and thought it all rot. I couldn't think of anything else to say. But your name was mentioned!"

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Hacker had nosed it out that I'd heard it from you. He wasn't satisfied with what I answered. I know jolly well that he is going to tackle you next. That's why I've come to speak to you. He can't bully-rag a Fifth Form man—but you're a junior, and he means to twist out of you all you know about Warren."

"Does he?" said Wharton, rather grimly.

"I could see it in his face plain enough when he couldn't draw me," said Price. "He'll get you to his study and question you. Goodness knows how you'll deal with him. When I asked you questions about it some time ago you refused to answer; but you can't refuse to answer a beak. But I tell you this; if you let it all out, Warren's done for here. If you mention that the real James Warren can be got at, you can bet that Hacker will get at him, and bring him along here to show the chap up. One word about that fellow at Popper Court, and Warren's game is up."

Wharton nodded slowly.

He realised now that Price had come there with friendly intentions towards Warren. He had done the harm in the first place, but he was willing to do all he could to undo it.

"Keep that brute, James Warren, dark!" said Price. "He seems to want to keep the truth dark himself; no danger from him, unless Hacker hooks him out. Not a word about him when you see Hacker. You see that?"

"Yes, quite!" said Harry.

"It's a queer business," said Price. "Jim Warren's a spoofer—he's under false colours here. But I believe, now, the same as you do, that he's done no wrong, queer as it looks. I'm not going to do him any harm, anyhow—and I'm warning you not to. Hacker will twist it all out of you, if he can."

"He won't get anything out of me!" said Harry Wharton, setting his lips.

"Stick to that!" said Price; and, without saying more, he left the study.

Wharton and Nugent looked at one another.

"That idiot, Bunter!" said Frank.

"The potty clump!" growled Wharton. "He's set Hacker going with his potty tricks. Blessed if I know what I shall say to the man! I suppose I can't refuse to see him."

"Hardly!"

"Well, he's not my beak; he's got no right to question me. If he thinks there's something fishy about a Greyfriars man, he ought to go to the man's Form-master, or to the Head. Looks to me as if he doesn't really believe it, but only hopes that there's something in it, because he thinks Warren booted him."

"All that fat Owl's fault——"

"The howling ass!"

"I say, you fellows!" A fat face and a large pair of spectacles blinked into the study. "I say, old chaps!" Billy Bunter noted the preparations for tea with satisfaction. "I say, I was going to ask you fellows to a spread, but I've been disappointed about a postal order. If you like, I'll tea with you to-day."

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and you can come to my study to-morrow. I say—— Yarooooop!"

Billy Bunter just dodged a whizzing loaf!

"Beast!" came a yell from the passage. Bunter departed in haste.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sticky!

HOBSON of the Shell jumped.

"Wharton, you ass!" he gasped.

"Hobson, you fathead!"

"I thought it was Hacker," breathed Hobby. "You ass, you startled me!"

"What the dickens are you up to here?"

"Well, what are you up to here, you fathead!"

Hobson was in his Form-master's study. The beaks were at tea in Common-room, and after tea they generally "jawed" for a time, so Hobby had considered it quite a safe opportunity to drop into Hacker's study. And he almost jumped out of his skin as the door opened, just as he was emptying a bottle of gum into Mr. Hacker's armchair.

Luckily for Hobby it was only a Remove fellow who came in. But what Wharton of the Remove wanted in the Shell master's study was a mystery to Hobby. Shell fellows had to turn up there when bidden, and on the present occasion Hobby had turned up there unbidden; but a Remove man had no business with the master of the Shell.

"You silly idiot!" went on Hobson indignantly. "Made my heart pop right up into my neck. I've a jolly good mind to punch your silly head."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I shouldn't," he said. "Hacker's just coming."

Hobson stood dismayed, gum bottle in hand.

"I thought he was in Common-room!" he gasped. "Oh crikey!"

"So he was; but he's come out, and he told me to come here," said Harry.

"He wants to jaw to me, and he said he would be here in a minute. He's only stopped to speak to Wiggins in the passage."

Wharton closed the door. Mr. Hacker was not far away; he was in the passage. There was no escape for Hobby unseen. And the gum was in the seat of the leather armchair. It was not visible at a casual glance. But it was certain to be discovered when the master of the Shell sat down.

"Hunt cover!" said Harry tersely. "Get behind that screen! If Hacker spots you here, after what you've done, you fearful ass——"

"Well, he asked for it, didn't he?" mumbled Hobson. "He confiscated my birthday cake last week——"

"Never mind that now——"

"We've never got back on him," said Hobson. "I laid for him twice at Masters' gate with a squirt of ink, and got the wrong man both times."

"You would!" agreed Wharton.

"I thought it was safe now. Sure he's in the passage?"

"You howling ass, he's coming! For goodness' sake, get out of sight!" breathed Harry. "I tell you he said he would be here in a minute."

"Oh scissors!"

Hobson of the Shell backed behind a large screen which stood between the armchair and the window. The winter dusk was thickening in the quad outside. Winter draughts disagreed with Mr. Hacker, who was a little subject to neuralgia—a circumstance that accounted, perhaps, for the sharpness of

his temper. It was rather fortunate for Hobby, for there was no escape for him, and no other safe cover. Behind the screen, however, he was safe, so long as Hacker did not happen to look behind it. Hobby could only hope that he wouldn't.

Parked behind the big screen Hobby peered round the corner at Wharton.

"Keep it dark!" he whispered.

"Yes—yes; keep out of sight, you ass!"

"Don't you give him a hint there's anybody in the study——"

"Quiet!"

"I say! What does he want to jaw to you about? Old Hacker's got nothing to do with Quelch's Form."

"Will you be quiet, you ass? I can hear him coming."

"Yes, but——"

The door handle turned, and Hobson's head popped away behind the screen like a tortoise's into a shell.

He hardly breathed as the door opened, and Mr. Hacker came in.

The master of the Shell switched on the light. Then he stepped towards the window to draw the curtains.

"Please allow me, sir!" said Harry Wharton. He cut to the window and started drawing the curtains.

"Thank you, Wharton!" said Mr. Hacker, quite genially.

He was a little surprised at this thoughtful politeness on the part of the captain of the Remove.

Wharton had not looked pleased when Hacker sent him to the study. He had looked far from pleased. Now he was all politeness.

Mr. Hacker was not aware of the real motive for that thoughtful politeness. Had he stepped to the window he certainly would have seen the fellow behind the screen.

As it was he stepped to the fire, and stood with his back to it, while the Remove junior drew the curtains for him.

The tall screen was between him and Hobson; and Hobby was safe. He was full in Wharton's view at the window; but that did not matter.

Wharton closed one eye at him, and Hobby grinned breathlessly. Then Wharton stepped back, and stood before Mr. Hacker.

"I desire a few words with you, Wharton," said Mr. Hacker. "You may sit down, my boy."

"Thank you, sir!"

Wharton sat down. He wondered whether Hacker was going to sit in the armchair, and how long it would take the gum to soak through his gown, if he did. For the present, however, the master of the Shell remained standing.

"It is a somewhat serious matter, Wharton," said Mr. Hacker, his eyes keenly on the junior. "It concerns a new boy at Greyfriars—a senior who came into the Fifth Form this term."

But for Price's warning the captain of the Remove would have been taken quite by surprise. But he was on his guard now, and he had had time to think out how he was going to deal with Hacker.

"Indeed, sir!" he said quietly.

"I am alluding to Warren," said Mr. Hacker. His thin lips seemed to close like a trap on the name. "For some time past, Wharton, a very strange and extraordinary story has been current in the school concerning this boy. From what I have heard, a Fifth Form boy, Price, learned something from you, but he seems very vague about it now."

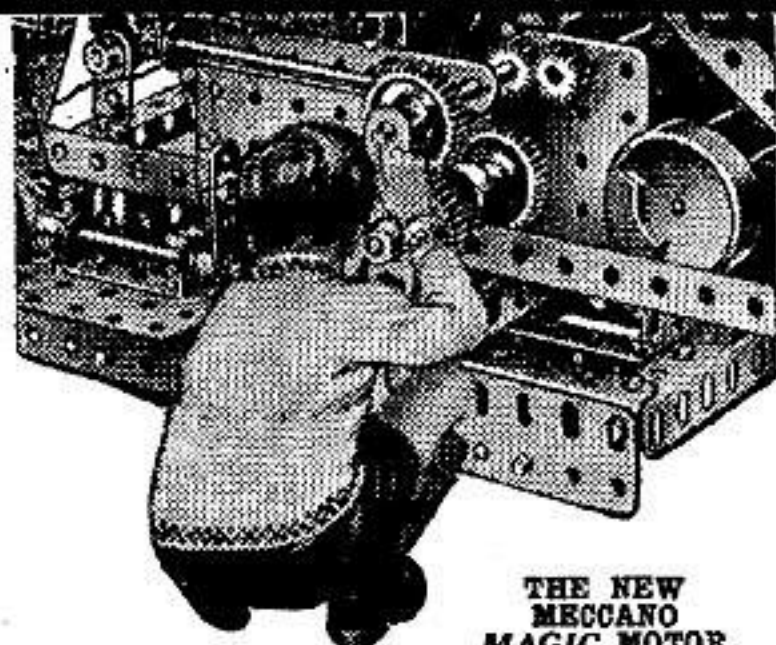
"Does he, sir?" murmured Wharton.

"In any case, he knows only what

(Continued on page 12.)

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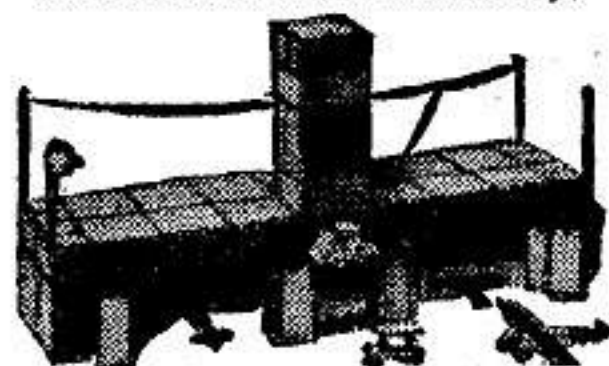
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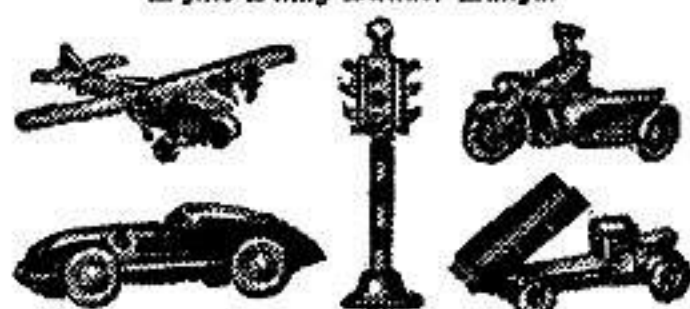
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he heard from you, Wharton. I believe your uncle, Colonel Wharton, resides near Warren Croft, in Surrey, and that you are acquainted with the Warrens."

"I don't know them, sir. I've seen Sir Arthur Warren only once—the day he was leaving for China."

"Did you see his son James at Warren Croft?"

"Sir Arthur asked my uncle and me over to see him, sir; but as it happened he went out, and never came in before we left."

This was the exact truth. Wharton did not feel called upon to add that he had met James, by chance, in the grounds at Warren Croft. That was no business of Hacker's, so far as he could see.

Mr. Hacker pursed his lips.

"I was under the impression that you knew Sir Arthur Warren's son," he said slowly. "I must ask you, Wharton, whether you have any reason to believe that Warren of the Fifth Form is passing under a false name here."

"Not in the least, sir," said Harry, again with perfect truth.

He had not known earlier in the term, but he knew now, that the cousins both had the same name—James Warren, though one was called James, and the other Jim.

"You believe that his name actually is Warren?" exclaimed Mr. Hacker.

"I feel quite sure of it, sir."

Mr. Hacker shut his lips hard.

"If that is the case, Wharton, it is very singular—very singular indeed—that a story should have spread through the school to the effect that you knew James Warren at home, and that Warren of the Fifth Form is not he."

"I certainly did not spread any story through the school, sir," answered Harry. "I have never talked about Warren that I know of."

"I hope, Wharton, that you have told me the truth!" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"I should certainly not tell you anything that was not the truth," said Harry Wharton, with a touch of disdain.

"Possibly, possibly!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "But you may have told me the truth, and yet not the whole of the truth. If you know of anything, Wharton, regarding Warren of the Fifth of a doubtful nature, I command you to tell me at once, with perfect frankness."

Wharton set his lips.

"It is not for me, a Remove boy, to talk about a Fifth Form man, sir," he said firmly. "Or for you, sir, to ask me questions about one of Mr. Prout's boys."

Mr. Hacker started. Evidently he had not expected such plain English from the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton," he gasped, "you are insolent!"

"I don't mean to be, sir; but—"

"I command you, Wharton, to tell me instantly any and all the circumstances you may know about Warren of the Fifth. I am taking this matter up as a Form-master in order to ascertain whether some sort of imposture has been practised here. It is your duty to tell me everything you may know on the subject."

"It is not my duty, sir," said Wharton. "It is my duty to answer my own Form-master if he questions me, or my headmaster. It is not my duty to answer another Form-master."

Mr. Hacker breathed hard.

Had Wharton been in the Shell he would have handled the cane there and then. But he could not cane one of

Quelch's boys. Never had he felt more strongly inclined to do so.

There was a long silence.

"May I go, sir?" asked Harry meekly.

"No!" said Mr. Hacker harshly. "You may not go, Wharton! I am determined that I will learn the facts of this matter, and with those facts, I am certain, you are well acquainted. Stand where you are."

Wharton looked rather rebellious. The master of the Shell had no right whatever to give him orders, and Wharton was tempted to tell him so. But it was rather a delicate matter to dispute with a beak, even if the beak was not a fellow's own beak. He stood where he was.

Mr. Hacker sat down.

Wharton caught his breath.

Hacker had sat down in the gum, in the armchair.

For the moment he did not notice it. Wharton wondered breathlessly how long it would be before he did!

Sitting in the armchair, Mr. Hacker regarded the junior across his writing-table with a fixed, searching, and frowning face. Price of the Fifth had disappointed him—now Wharton of the Remove had disappointed him in turn.

Was there, after all, anything in it?

Hacker was well aware that if he doubted Warren's bona-fides, he should have placed the matter before the Head. It was no business of his as master of the Shell. But he could not go to the Head with a vague rumour that was probably nothing more than idle tattle—disclaimed by the very fellow from whom it was supposed to have come in the first place. Mr. Hacker firmly believed that he was actuated only by a sense of duty—he was going to expose an impostor, if any! But at the bottom of his heart he knew that the booting in the fog had a lot to do with it.

Did Wharton know more than he had admitted?

Hacker believed that he did. But how to extract it from a fellow over whom he had no authority and who was resolved not to speak was another matter. The Head could have ordered him to speak. But there had to be something to "go upon" before the Head could be brought into the matter. And there was nothing at present but vague suspicion and idle rumour.

"You are aware, Wharton," he said at last, "that Warren was at Oakshott School before he came here?"

"Was he, sir?"

"Were you not aware of it?" snapped Hacker.

"It's not my business where he was, sir."

"Will you answer me directly, Wharton?"

"I'd rather not talk about Warren at all, sir!" said Harry coolly. "I'm sure Mr. Prout would not like it if he knew I was being questioned about a fellow in his Form."

Mr. Hacker's eyes glinted at him. He was well aware how Prout would boom if he heard of it.

"Warren was at Oakshott," he said harshly, "and when a boy from that school came here, as I have heard, Warren avoided meeting him. At all events, he did not meet him. Is not that the case, Wharton?"

"Hadn't you better ask Warren, sir?"

"What? What?"

"It's his affair, sir, not mine."

"Upon my word! How dare you be insolent, Wharton!" shouted Mr. Hacker. "I will—" He jumped up, his face flaming with anger.

Wharton backed promptly. Hacker

looked as if he was going to reach across the table and box his ears.

But if that was Hacker's angry intention, he forgot it. His attention was drawn to quite another matter. There was a sticky, squishy sound as he rose from the chair. He stared round behind him in amazement, and made the interesting discovery that the gown was swamped with gum.

"What—what—what is that?" gasped Mr. Hacker.

He gathered up his gown and blinked at it in amazement and rage. He stared into the armchair—swimming in gum! He realised that he had been sitting in about a pint of that adhesive fluid. It had soaked through his gown—it was sticking his gown to his coat-tails! He turned a face crimson with fury on the captain of the Remove.

"You young rascal!" he roared.

"You have done this!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Hacker!

"H!" gasped Harry Wharton. Mr. Hacker, sticky and savage, glared at him as if he would have bitten him. Behind the screen, Hobson almost held his breath.

Hobby had been wondering how long this "jaw" was going to last, and whether Hacker would ever leave off "jawing." The "jaw" had come to a sudden end now, and Hobby realised that Hacker had sat in the gum.

"Gum!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "Great quantities of gum have been placed deliberately in my armchair! I have sat in it! How dare you laugh, Wharton!" Hacker nearly foamed. "You young rascal! You shall be punished for this! You shall see—"

"I never did it, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"That is false—"

"I haven't touched your armchair, sir!"

"It is false!" almost shrieked Mr. Hacker. "Who did it, if you did not? You were in the study before I came—a few minutes, at least. I shall report this to your headmaster. You shall be flogged!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wharton. "But—but I never did it, sir! On my word—"

"Pah!" snorted Mr. Hacker.

"I never had any gum with me when you told me to come to the study," said Harry. "You must have seen that."

No doubt you had it concealed about you!" roared Mr. Hacker. "You were alone here. You have done this. You are an untruthful boy, Wharton—"

"I am nothing of the kind!" retorted Wharton coolly. "And I'm quite ready to go to Mr. Quelch, if you like."

Hobson, behind the screen, grinned. If Hacker marched Wharton off to Quelch, it gave Hobby a chance of getting out of the study.

"You young rascal!" hooted Mr. Hacker. "You mean that you will tell your Form-master untruths, and that he will believe you."

"I do not mean that I shall tell him untruths, but I certainly mean that he will believe me!" said Harry.

He backed to the door and opened it. Hacker was so wildly enraged that he looked like taking the matter into his own hands. Wharton was willing to go to Mr. Quelch, who certainly would have wanted proof that his head boy had played such a trick in another Form-master's study, and who certainly,



"Let go!" roared Wharton, struggling. "I will—ooogh!" gasped Mr. Hacker, as the captain of the Remove hooked his leg. The cane would have descended in another moment. As it was, it was Mr. Hacker who descended. His leg hooked away, he sat down, with a bump that almost shook the study. "Oooogh!" he gasped breathlessly.

in the absence of such proof, would have accepted Wharton's word without hesitation. And for Hobby's sake, he was keen to get Hacker out of the study. It seemed judicious to have a line of retreat open. He set the door wide.

"Shut that door, Wharton!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "As you have chosen to play this dastardly prank in my study, I shall deal with you myself."

He whipped round the table and made a grab at the Removeite. His clutch fastened on Wharton's shoulder.

Wharton's eyes gleamed at him.

"Let me go, Mr. Hacker! I tell you I had nothing to do with gumming your chair, and I will not be caned by you!"

"Will you not?" said Mr. Hacker, between his teeth.

He jerked the Remove junior away from the door with his left hand, and grasped a cane from the table with his right.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Hobson, behind the screen—fortunately unheard.

In his excitement and consternation Hobson peered round the edge of the screen.

Hacker's back was to him as he grasped the junior. The sticky tail of a gown almost flicked Hobby.

"Let go!" roared Wharton.

He struggled and wrenched.

"You young rascal!"

"I say let go!"

"I will—Oooogh!" gasped Mr. Hacker, as the captain of the Remove hooked his leg.

The cane would have descended in another moment. As it was, it was Mr. Hacker that descended.

His leg hooked away, he sat down with a bump that almost shook the study. His back bumped against the screen as he sat.

Wharton stood panting. He was quite

as excited as Mr. Hacker, and rather reckless. No doubt it was a fearfully serious thing to hook a beak's leg, and cause him to sit down on his study carpet with a bump. But Hacker had no right to cane a Remove boy, and Wharton was not going to be caned by him, and that was that!

"Oooogh!" repeated Hacker, in a breathless gasp. "You—you young ruffian, I—I—I will—"

Crash!

It was quite a brain-wave on Hobby's part.

Hacker was sitting with his back to the screen. In a few moments he would have been up again.

But Hobby saw his chance, and took it!

The screen toppled over, under a shove from Hobby, and landed on Mr. Hacker's head.

Wharton jumped!

So did Hobby! He jumped for the door!

Hacker, taken utterly by surprise by the crash of the screen, had rolled over on the carpet, and was, for the moment, covered by the screen. Only his feet could be seen.

That was Hobby's chance!

He did the distance to the door in about the millionth part of a second. He passed under Wharton's astonished eyes, almost like a flash of lightning. He was gone.

Never on the cinder-path had Hobby covered the ground as he did going down Masters' Passage. He just melted away!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Urrrgh!" came from under the screen. It rocked. "Wurrgh! Who—what—oh!—ow!—why—Urrrgh!"

Hacker sat up dizzily. He hardly knew what was over him. But he knew,

when his head burst through the screen and emerged on the upper side. He sat with the screen round his neck, blinking wildly at Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wharton.

Really he could not help it! Hacker at that moment looked extraordinary—sitting up with his head through the screen.

"Oooogh!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"Urrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Was—was—was there someone behind the screen?" gasped Mr. Hacker. That fact dawned on him. "The—the screen was pushed over on me. Someone was behind it—"

He heaved himself to his feet, the wrecked screen clinging round him. He knew now that someone else had been in the study, and it dawned upon him that that someone, and not Wharton, had been responsible for the gum.

He grabbed at the cane he had dropped.

Harry Wharton jumped out of the doorway. Hobby was clear—and it was time for Wharton to get clear! Hacker looked positively dangerous!

"Wharton!" shouted Mr. Hacker. "Come back! I—"

Wharton heard; but, like the ancient gladiator, he heard, but heeded not. He did Masters' Passage almost as rapidly as Hobson, and vanished.

A few minutes later there was a roar of laughter in the Rag, where the captain of the Remove related the wild and thrilling incidents in Hacker's study. The juniors were still chortling, when Trotter, the House page, put his head in at the door.

"Master Wharton here?" asked Trotter.

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Here I am!" called out Harry. "Mr. Hacker wants you, sir!" said Trotter.

"He does, does he?" said the captain of the Remove grimly.

"Yes, sir; in his study at once!"

"Tell Mr. Hacker that I will come to his study if my Form-master orders me to do so!" said Harry Wharton, very distinctly.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Trotter.

"That's the answer!" said Harry.

Trotter blinked at him and departed. There was a buzz of excitement in the Rag.

"Hacker won't like that!" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Let him lump it, then!" said Harry.

"We have to jump when Quelch says jump, but we don't have to jump for Hacker!"

"You'll hear more from him soon!" said Skinner.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

As it proved, Skinner was wrong. No more was heard from Hacker. What he thought of the answer Trotter had taken back the Removites did not know, though they could guess. But no doubt Mr. Hacker, realising that he had exceeded his authority and unwilling to face an interview with Mr. Quelch on the subject, had decided to draw in his horns. Anyhow, no further word came from him, and the captain of the Remove hoped that he was done with Hacker and all his works!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Taking the Plunge!

A BOOT!
Just a boot!
Merely that, and nothing more!

The sight of a boot, in ordinary circumstances, would not have excited the wrath of the most acid-tempered man. Boots are necessary and useful articles—in their proper place! And there was nothing remarkable about this particular boot—except that it was a very old one.

Yet the sight of it caused Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, to change colour with fury.

He stared at that boot.

Though not remarkable in itself, it was in a rather remarkable place. It was lodged on top of the clock on Mr. Hacker's study mantelpiece.

That, obviously, was no place for a boot!

It met his eyes the moment he entered the study. Evidently it was intended so to do.

Mr. Hacker closed his door, and stood with fixed eyes on that boot.

He could not fail to guess what was meant by it. Harmless enough in itself, that boot was a reminder of an incident, now several days old, but unforgettable by Mr. Hacker.

It was intended to remind him that he had been booted!

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Plainly, it could have no other purpose. The most thoughtless practical joker would not play a practical joke without a meaning. Sticking an old boot on Hacker's mantelpiece was no joke—except in connection with that booting in the fog. It was a reminder. It was a "rag."

Mr. Hacker stood breathing hard, gritting his teeth. Never good-tempered, he was easily moved to anger, and his anger now was almost beyond words.

He knew that that booting was still a joke in the school. Hints of it reached his ears from time to time.

Even his colleagues in Common-room did not take it wholly with gravity. Other beaks had expressed their sympathy for that outrageous attack—with a twinkle in the eye. They seemed to think that there was something of a comic nature in a man being caught bending and booted on the coat-tails. There wasn't, so far as Hacker could see, but the general impression seemed to be that there was.

Who had done this? Who had placed the boot there?

Really, lots of fellows might have done it! Hacker was not popular with his Form—a carping, acid temper did not make a beak popular. Only a week or two ago he had confiscated Hobson's birthday cake. Hobson might have done this. Hacker knew, or, at least, suspected, that they chuckled over the story of that booting in the Shell—though really they ought to have been indignant about an attack on their Form-master. Had some boy in the Shell done this? Or perhaps that young rascal in the Remove—Wharton? Or Warren?

The fellow disliked him—feared him, probably, knowing that Hacker regarded him with doubt and suspicion. Under cover of the fog he had booted him—Hacker was certain of that. Was he now "rubbing in" the insult by sticking that ridiculous old boot on Hacker's mantelpiece?

The master of the Shell removed the boot at last. He shoved it into his wastepaper-basket. He did not want it to meet other eyes.

Then he sat down—to think! Mr. Hacker had not a forgiving nature—and even a forgiving man would hardly have pardoned a cheeky fellow who had booted him. His bitterness over that booting episode had not diminished. Warren had escaped punishment—owing to the absurd leniency of the headmaster. Was he to escape unscathed?

Not if Mr. Hacker could help it!

During the past few days Mr. Hacker had been making a few quiet inquiries. He had made it a point to learn all he could about Oakshott School, where James Warren had been in the Fifth Form last term.

What he had learned strengthened his suspicions of Jim Warren. Jim was a tremendous footballer—Wingate had picked him for the first eleven at Greyfriars. Yet in no records of Oakshott matches did the name of J. Warren appear in the games lists. He had not, it seemed, played games for his old school—but he was a tremendous gamesman at his new school! Did that look as if he was the same fellow?

It did not.

It was a trifle, perhaps; but a straw will show the way the wind blows! If that boy Wharton could only be made to speak! But whatever Wharton knew, if he knew anything, he kept to himself.

Was there anything in it?

A fussy and suspicious nature had caused Mr. Hacker to concern himself, in the first place, with a matter outside his own Form. He had not given it much attention. But the

episode of the booting fixed and concentrated him on it.

If Warren of the Fifth was an impostor, Hacker was going to make that fact clear! Was it by chance that he had avoided the Oakshott man who had visited Greyfriars a few weeks ago? Or was it that he was an impostor, and dared not be seen by a fellow from Oakshott? Mr. Hacker inclined to the latter theory.

Among his other items of information, he had learned the names of the senior staff at Oakshott. The Fifth Form-master was named Philpott.

Hacker had known a man of that name in his Oxford days; but it had been a mere nodding acquaintance. He ascertained that it was the same man—and he considered whether it was feasible to write to this man Philpott and put the matter before him.

But he hesitated—long!

If there was nothing in it, after all, what a fool the Oakshott master would think him! He did not know the man well enough to ask him to pay a visit in the ordinary way; moreover, a Form-master could hardly get away in term-time. Certainly, he could take the train, on one of the school half-holidays, if he liked. But the pleasure of seeing Hacker, a man he had hardly known, and had probably forgotten, was not likely to cause him to take such a trip.

Mr. Hacker realised that, if he was to get an Oakshott master to come over to Greyfriars, he would have to tell him why.

It was not easy. The headmaster might have made such a request; or even Warren's Form-master. But it would be rather difficult for the master of the Shell to explain how the matter concerned him at all.

And even if Philpott came—suppose it turned out, after all, that Jim Warren really was the James Warren who had been at Oakshott last term? What an unutterable ass Hacker would look!

So, though he toyed with the idea, Hacker had taken no action—and in all probability he never would have taken any action had the episode of the booting been allowed to die.

But it had not died—it was as lively as ever—as the boot on his mantelpiece proved.

Sitting in his armchair, staring at the wastepaper-basket that contained the offensive boot, Mr. Hacker thought and thought—and his resolve hardened. Warren had booted him—Warren was taking an impudent delight in rubbing in the insult! Warren had lied to the Head, and escaped punishment, and all the time he was some sort of cheating impostor—at least, it was possible that he was!

Hacker, black and bitter, made up his mind.

He drew pen and paper to him and wrote.

He was a long time writing that letter, though it was not a long one. It was not an easy letter to write.

But he got through at last.

Having finished the letter, Mr. Hacker sat staring at it. Should he, after all, post it?

He put it in an envelope at last, sealed it, and stamped it. He slipped it into his pocket and left the study.

Slowly he went to the door of the House. He was going across the quad, to post the letter with his own hands in the box in the wall. He did not care to give it to anyone else to post.

He stepped out into the quad; but he was still hesitating. If it was true that Warren was some sort of an impostor,

well and good. But it not—if not—Hacker hesitated and hesitated.

Warren of the Fifth came across the quad to the House. Mr. Hacker's brow darkened at the sight of his cheery, careless face. He shut his lips hard and his eyes glinted.

Warren smiled. To Jim Warren it seemed ridiculous that Hacker could never come across him without a dark frown wrinkling his brow. He smiled involuntarily.

Mr. Hacker breathed hard. "No doubt you are amused, Warren!" he said, between his closed, thin lips. "You think it amusing to play disrespectful tricks in a Form-master's study, like some disorderly fag in the Third Form! No doubt!"

"I don't understand you, sir!" said Jim. "What have I done?"

"You are perfectly well aware of what you have done, Warren! It was you placed a boot in my study, to remind me of your ruffianly action a few days ago!"

Jim stared blankly. "A—a—a boot?" he ejaculated.

"A boot!" said Mr. Hacker. "I've done nothing of the kind, sir!" said Warren indignantly. "A Fifth Form man wouldn't be likely to play such a silly trick, I should think."

"I do not believe you, Warren!"

"You have no right to doubt my word, sir!" said Jim Warren quietly.

"I have every right, I think—considering what I believe of you!" said Mr. Hacker bitterly. "My opinion of you is that you are an unscrupulous liar!"

Warren looked him in the face, turned on his heel, and walked away.

Mr. Hacker was left staring at his back.

The crimson came into his face as he stared. Two or three fellows were at hand, and they exchanged glances. For a fellow to deliberately turn his back on a beak, and leave him standing, was rather uncommon.

Mr. Hacker stood, for a moment or two, rooted. He had asked for it; but that did not make such an affront more pleasant.

He strode away—to the letter-box. That incident had fixed his wavering mind. Without giving himself time to think further, he dropped the letter into the box. The die was cast now!

And in Hobson's study, in the Shell, in those very few moments, half a dozen fellows were chuckling over Hobby's description of how he had planted an old boot on Hacker's mantelpiece, to remind him of his booting in the fog! Hobson & Co. roared over the joke.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Cat and Mouse!

"H E, he, he!" Bunter seemed amused. What there was to amuse him in the letter-rack, and the correspondence stuck therein, was rather a puzzle.

It was morning break, and, as usual, a number of fellows had come along to look for letters. Billy Bunter seldom missed that function. Bunter lived in perpetual expectation of the arrival of a postal order. By every post it ought to have come—though it never did as it ought!

There was no letter for Bunter this morning. Other fellows took down letters, but Billy Bunter, like the poor dog, had none!

It was Bunter's way to blink over all the other letters. He was as inquisitive as a jackdaw. It had even been known

for a letter to come open by accident in the inquisitive Owl's fat fingers!

Now, as it happened, there was a postcard in the rack. It did not even occur to Billy Bunter's fat brain that there was anything mean in reading a postcard addressed to somebody else. He would, perhaps, have thought it rather mean in any other fellow.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter, and several fellows glanced at him.

"For goodness' sake," said Vernon-Smith, "take that alarm clock back to the dorm, Bunter!"

"Eh! I haven't got an alarm clock, you ass!"

"Rot! I just heard it go off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter, much incensed at his musical laughter being mistaken—perhaps—for the buzz of an alarm clock! "Look here, Smithy—"

"No fear!" said Smithy. "Not till you get a new set of features! I've got to consider my eyesight!"

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Bunter. "You cheeky ass! You—you—"

Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at, in Smithy's rotten cheek, you fellows! I say, you remember that cousin of Warren's, who came here one day, and squinted in at the gates—"

"What about him, ass?" asked Harry Wharton. "He's written a postcard to Warren."

"How do you know, you fat villain?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! There it is, sticking in the rack under your nose!"

Plenty of fellows had seen a postcard addressed in a rather sprawling hand to J. Warren, sticking in the rack. Only Billy Bunter had thought of looking at the other side of it.

"You fat ass," said Bob Cherry, "you don't know James' fist."

"It's signed, you fathead!" said Bunter.

"You toad," said Bob. "Have you been reading Warren's card?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I hope I'm not the fellow to read another fellow's postcards!" said the fat Owl. "I took it down to see if it was for me."

"And you had to look at the back to see what name was written on the front?" asked the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Kick him!" said Bob.

"Here, you keep off, you beast! I say, you fellows—he, he, he!—that fellow James is coming here! He, he, he! He says he's coming to tea with Warren—it's a half-holiday, you know—he, he, he!"

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Having been told to put more punch into his verses, our long-haired poet set out for the gym to interview

JAMES HOBSON,
the Captain of the Shell.

(1)

He's the rough and rugged skipper of the Shell.

His name is Hobson.

He thinks he leads his Form extremely well,

In fact, with knobs on!

It's true his courage and his pluck are great,

They're almost stainless;

It's also true, I'm sorry to relate,

That Hobson's brainless!

(3)

Now, Hoskins would make anybody sore,

He thinks he knows Art,

Composing great sonatas by the score,

Like Grieg or Mozart.

He thumps the old piano black and blue,

He never spares it!

We yell to him to stop—save Hobby,

who

Just grins and bears it!

(4)

This afternoon I thought I'd call on him—

In vain I sought him.

Until by chance I wandered to the gym,

And there I caught him.

Surrounded by a dense and eager crowd,

He gamely battled

With Coker, of the Fifth, whose voice was

loud—

It rang and rattled!



(7)

Then Coker aimed a blow at Hobson's bean,

Which stunned him slightly.

"And who's your favourite actor on the screen?"

I asked politely.

He did not answer, save in words which might

Have come from Texas.

As Coker dented, with a fearful right,

His solar plexus!

(2)

At least, his brain is of the plodding kind,

It's slow but steady;

In anything requiring thought you'll find

He's most unready.

He's quite good-tempered, always wears a grin—

It's Hobby's manner,

Yes, even when old Hoskins makes a din

On the pianer!



(5)

"I'll show you if my footer's like a game

of noughts and crosses!"

Yelled Coker, and began to do the same,

With heavy losses.

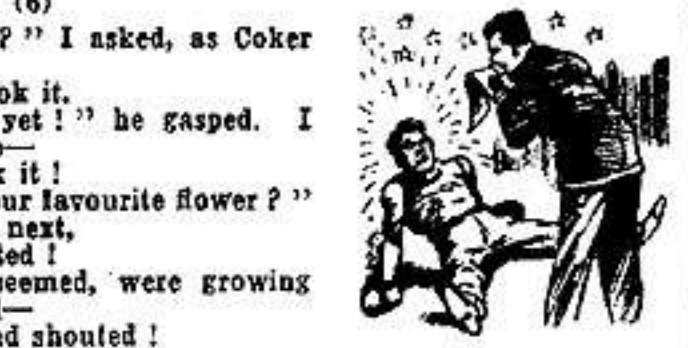
I made my way into the ring to see

My promised victim

Ere Coker ceased, for that would be when

he

Had wholly licked him.



(6)

"Are we alone?" I asked, as Coker

smote.

And Hobby took it.

"I'll beat him yet!" he gasped. I

made a note—

He didn't look it!

"Now what's your favourite flower?"

I asked him next,

As Coker clouted!

The crowd, it seemed, were growing

rather vexed—

They yelled and shouted!

(8)

Down, down he went, and down for good, no

doubt!

The blow had floored him!

"Now tell me what it's like to be knocked

out?"

I soon implored him.

I then saw Coker's huge uplifted hand

Timed to advance a

Terrific blow upon my smeller—and

I found the answer!

I say, you saw them the day he looked in here—Warren looked as if he would like to bite his head off—he, he, he! He doesn't want him here! I say, the chap's barging in all the same! He, he, he!"

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged a quick look.

They knew only too well, how little Jim Warren of the Fifth wanted James Warren to call in at Greyfriars.

They were well aware that the son of Sir Arthur Warren was his cousin's enemy. For some inexplicable reason he was keeping quiet while Jim carried on in his name at the school. But he took a malicious pleasure in alarming and persecuting the boy with a borrowed identity.

James was the most thoroughly unpleasant fellow the juniors had ever met or seen. Evidently he was making himself unpleasant again.

No doubt the thrashing Jim had given him in defence of Price rankled in James' revengeful mind. But it was probable that the enmity was of longer date than that.

"I say, you fellows—" went on Bunter.

He was interrupted. Harry Wharton took him by one fat ear, Bob Cherry by the other.

Bang!

Bunter's head tapped on the wall.

There was a fiendish yell from Bunter.

"Yaroooooh!"

"That's for prying!" said Bob.

Bang!

"Yooop!"

"That's for spying!"

"Yow! Ow! I never—"

Bang!

"That's for lying!"

"Whoo-hooooop!"

"Now, all kick him together!" said Bob. "Every fellow here land one—Don't clear off, Bunter! Stand still! Stop! Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter vanished at top speed. The Famous Five went out into the quad, and Harry Wharton looked round for Warren of the Fifth.

Warren had few letters at the school; and he had not troubled to look in the rack that morning. Wharton spotted him, walking in the quad with Hilton, and cut across to him.

"There's a card for you in the rack, Warren!" he said.

Jim glanced at him.

"Is there?" he said. "Thanks!" But he made no motion to go to the House.

"I think I'd bag it," said Harry pointedly. "There are one or two fellows about who might pry into it."

Warren gave him a sharp look. He understood that the captain of the Remove was conveying a hint.

He gave Hilton a nod, and left him, and went rather quickly into the House. Several fellows glanced at him curiously, as he took down the postcard. Nobody but Bunter had looked at it—but a dozen fellows, at least, had heard the fat Owl's remarks on the subject.

Since Price of the Fifth had given up his feud with Warren, the talk about the new fellow had rather died away. It might have been forgotten altogether, but for the fact that his cousin, of the same name as himself, was known to be staying in the neighbourhood. James had butted in at Greyfriars with the deliberate intention of making things awkward for Jim. His visit had given a new lease of life, as it were, to the talk about Warren.

Certainly, nobody dreamed of suspecting that James was the fellow that Jim was supposed to be.

Price knew it, and Harry Wharton & Co. and the Bouncer knew it; but they were keeping their own counsel.

But fifty fellows had seen James, when he talked to Jim at the school gates, and had noticed his manner of aggressive insolence and mocking impudence, and wondered.

Some of them knew that James was staying at Popper Court, where a rowdy young man named Clarence Cook had a rather rowdy party. Coker of the Fifth had advised Jim to boot the blighter if he came near the school; but that was not advice that Jim was in a position to act upon, much as he might have desired to do so.

Jim Warren was conscious of curious glances turned on him, as he took the card down, and slipped it into his pocket.

There was a glow of red in his cheeks as he walked out of the House again.

He did not rejoin Hilton; but went away to a quiet corner under the elms to read what James had written.

"Popper Court.

Kent.

Tuesday.

"Dear Jim,—I know you'll be delighted to see me at Greyfriars, and I'm dropping in to-morrow, Wednesday, afternoon for tea in the study! I told you I would, you know. Make it a good spread, old chap! I'll come along about four.

"Your very affectionate cousin,

"JAMES WARREN."

Jim crumpled the card in his hand. His face was pale with anger. James had held that threat over his head for some time—and now he was coming!

Tea in the study! And that very afternoon!

An hour, at least, of James' company—listening to his sneers and mockery—with the danger, every moment, of the facts coming out!

He had to take it all quietly! James would ask, over and over again, to have his face punched. And if Jim punched it, the whole story would come out on the spot. He knew that.

James was holding his hand—for his own reasons. But if his vicious temper got the upper hand, he would forget caution. Only too well Jim knew that. The day Jim had thrashed him, he had blurted it all out before Price—only Price was keeping it dark. He would blurt it all out before anyone who happened to be within hearing, if Jim laid a finger on him at the school. And his insolence would be unendurable.

Jim Warren set his teeth.

Whatever might be the strange explanation of his coming to school in another fellow's name, the fellows who knew his secret believed that he was "straight"; but nobody who knew James would have said as much for him. But "straight" or not, he was in a false position!

What was he going to do?

James' amiable desire was to torment him, like a cat with a mouse. James was not going to gratify that desire at all events!

Jim could not prevent him from coming. He could not prevent him from saying what he liked, when he came. He would have died sooner than have asked a favour at his hands.

But he could avoid seeing him when he came. He could deprive James of the pleasure of tormenting him, taunting him, before wondering fellows. That, at all events, was in his power.

The bell rang for third school. Jim rejoined Hilton, on the way to the Form-rooms.

"You were talking about a run in a car," he remarked casually. "A joy-ride for the afternoon up to call-over."

"If you can cut games practice!" smiled Hilton.

"I'll come! Wingate won't mind if I ask him to let me off, for once."

"Good man!" said Hilton.

"What about Price, too?" asked Jim.

Hilton glanced at him. Price had been his pal before Warren came, and he had taken up football and dropped "gee-gees." Hilton had been glad to see the two on rather better terms of late.

"Look here, if you don't mind, I'd be glad to ask old Pricey!" he said.

"I'd be glad, too!" said Jim.

"Done, then!"

Hilton was pleased. So was Stephen Price, when he was asked to join in the joy-ride. And Jim felt, at least, a grim satisfaction. James would come—there was no stopping him. He would barge into his cousin's study. And he could have that study all to himself. James, certainly, would be angry and exasperated. He would feel like a cat when the mouse had got away. He might, in his exasperation, talk too much. But he was certain to talk too much, if Warren stayed in and punched his face for his cheek, as was only too likely.

From every point of view, so far as Jim could see, going out and avoiding the brute was the best way. On this occasion, at least, James' cat-and-mouse game was going to be a frost.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

HOBSON and his friends in the Shell had quite a pleasant little surprise that morning, in third school. Mr. Hacker was even a little more acid and sharp than usual. But soon after third school began there was a tap, and Trotter, the page, appeared. Any interruption to class was, as a rule, welcome, especially in the Shell room.

"The telephone in your study, sir," said Trotter. "I've took the call, sir, and it's—"

"Very well, Trotter!" interrupted Mr. Hacker. "That will do!"

The Shell fellows exchanged pleased glances. They did not know why Hacker was so acid that morning, certainly not guessing that he was a little worried and dubious about a certain letter he had written to a Form-master in a school in Essex. But they knew that they would be glad to be shut of him, if only for a few minutes.

Having enjoined the Shell to give strict attention to work while he was absent, Mr. Hacker hurried from the Form-room to his study. He had been expecting a call on the telephone, and he had no doubt that it was from Mr. Philpott, at Oakshott.

He took up the receiver, after carefully closing the study door. No one was to know anything about that call. There was to be no possibility of Warren getting a hint of what was to come, and taking defensive measures.

"Hallo! Mr. Hacker speaking!" he said into the transmitter. "That, I presume, is Mr. Philpott?"

"Precisely, sir! I have called you in reference to your letter. I was very much surprised—"

"No doubt!" said Mr. Hacker. "It is a very singular affair, sir!"

"Very singular indeed!" came the voice of the Oakshott master. "James Warren was in my Form here, the Fifth, till the end of last term. I understood that he was at Greyfriars. Indeed, an Oakshott boy, named Bullivant, went over to see him there one half-holiday."

"Warren appears to have avoided him—on that occasion."



Mr. Hacker stood with fixed eyes on the boot that was lodged on top of the clock on his study mantelpiece. He could not fail to guess what was meant by it. It was intended to remind him that he had been booted! Never good-tempered, Mr. Hacker's anger was almost beyond words!

"I have spoken to Bullivant since receiving your letter, Mr. Hacker, and he has told me that he did not, as a matter of fact, see Warren while he was at Greyfriars that day. The boy had gone out."

"Intentionally, I fear, Mr. Philpott! If you could make it convenient to pay a visit to this school—say, on a half-holiday—I should be delighted to renew our old Oxford acquaintance."

"Oh, quite so, quite so!" said Mr. Philpott, not very enthusiastically, to judge by his tones. "I should—er—be quite pleased. But the journey is, of course, a very long one, necessitating a change of trains in London, and again, I think, at Lantham. However, if you have any real reason to believe that a deception is being practised—"

"I think I have, Mr. Philpott. And if it should transpire that a boy of unknown antecedents is here in the name of a boy who should have come, it implies that some harm has befallen the real James Warren—and you will naturally be interested in his welfare."

"Oh, quite, quite!" said Mr. Philpott. "But I will be frank, Hacker. The boy Warren was the worst boy in my Form, and I have no desire whatever to see him again. I wish him well, of course, and should be very sorry if harm befell him; but I have no desire to see anything of him."

"What you say, sir, adds to my conviction that the boy here is not the James Warren you knew! Your description does not fit him at all. I mean to say, he is in high favour with his Form-master—"

"I am surprised to hear it."

"He is generally popular with the other boys. Was that the case with the James Warren you knew at Oakshott?"

"Far from it! He was extremely unpopular—indeed, disliked."

"Was he high in class?"

"He was the laziest and slackest boy in my Form, always at the bottom of the class."

"Warren, here, is top of his class," said Mr. Hacker. "You will see, my dear Philpott, that there is a great dissimilarity between the two."

"It certainly appears so, Hacker—and I may add, that I understand that Warren has become a prominent footballer at Greyfriars. Here he was as hopeless a slacker in games as in class."

"Obviously not the same boy, Mr. Philpott. Many circumstances have led me to suspect that an imposture is being practised. All that you say confirms that suspicion. You, of course, could identify James Warren at a glance, as his Form-master at his former school you—"

"Naturally!"

"One glance at this boy, therefore, will be enough to show whether he is the James Warren you knew at Oakshott, or some impudent impostor using his name?"

"Quite!"

"Once in possession of actual facts, I shall be in a position to place the matter before the headmaster. May I beg you, my dear Philpott, to make the journey—"

"Really, you leave me little choice, Mr. Hacker, when you tell me that there are grounds for believing that a former Oakshott boy has been somehow made away with, and his place taken by an impostor. It sounds to me, sir, a most extraordinary thing—very surprising indeed—I may say, to be frank, somewhat incredible. But, in the circumstances, I feel that I have no choice but to come."

Mr. Hacker could not doubt that the Oakshott master was far from pleased. The prospect of renewing Hacker's acquaintance did not seem wholly to

console him for a long and troublesome journey by train.

But, as he had stated, he could scarcely refuse. And so long as he did not refuse, Mr. Hacker was satisfied.

"Very well, sir!" said Mr. Hacker. "When—"

"I am at liberty this afternoon, sir, as it is a half-holiday here," said the Oakshott master. "Such a matter cannot be settled too soon, I think."

"I fully agree!" said Mr. Hacker very heartily. "I shall be delighted to see you this afternoon. It will be a pleasure—"

"Oh, quite, quite! I have looked at the time-table, sir, and find out that my last train will reach Courtfield at four. That, I think, is the station for Greyfriars."

"I will meet you at Courtfield Station in a car, Mr. Philpott, and bring you to the school."

"Thank you, sir. I shall be there."

"I am obliged—"

"A matter of duty, sir, in the circumstances," said Mr. Philpott. "Good-bye!"

Mr. Hacker put up the receiver, and smiled.

All was going well!

Philpott, it was clear, was very dubious, and a little annoyed; but that mattered nothing, so long as he came over to Greyfriars and saw Warren of the Fifth. And he would be glad, at all events, that he had taken the trouble, if it turned out that an impostor was passing at Greyfriars under the name of the former Oakshott senior.

If it turned out otherwise—Hacker felt a flush come into his cheeks at the thought of that. What an utter fool Philpott would think him, if he made that long and troublesome journey, only to find at the end of it that there was nothing the matter—nothing but a

groundless suspicion! That, undoubtedly, would be extremely uncomfortable for Mr. Hacker.

But he was sure—almost sure—that his suspicion was well founded. Anyhow, he was sure that Warren had booted him.

He left his study, and went back slowly to the Form-rooms thinking as he went. Naturally, Mr. Philpott selected a half-holiday for the journey; he could not get away from Oakshott any other day. But on a half-holiday Warren might be out of gates. That would never do! True, he had no hint of danger—he would not go out for that reason! But on a half-holiday, any fellow might go out.

Mr. Hacker paused, and looked at the notices on the board. There was one in Wingate's hand, he knew, concerning the first eleven, and now he read it carefully. It was to the effect that the first eleven would attend games practice from three to four—with a list of the names of other men, not in the eleven, who would be required.

That settled it.

Warren was in the first eleven, and would turn up with the rest, as a matter of course. Mr. Hacker knew how keen a footballer he was. He could not "cut" that practice without asking leave of his skipper, which he was the very last fellow to do, unless for some very special reason. All was safe in that direction.

Games practice—with Warren—would be going on at Greyfriars till the Oakshott master arrived at Courtfield. The footballers would be in the changing-room afterwards—when the Oakshott master reached Greyfriars. He would be on the spot—when the Oakshott master was on the spot. It was "all clear."

Mr. Hacker returned to his Form-room in quite a good humour. Hobson & Co. had not given that strict attention to work in his absence that Hacker had enjoined. They had, in fact, been skylarking, and there was a sudden scamper to desks when Hacker came back.

So it was rather a relief to them that Hacker returned in an unusually good temper. That telephone call seemed to have had the effect attributed to music—of soothing the savage breast—which was rather fortunate for Hacker's Form, though they were far from guessing the reason.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

James Arrives!

"I SAY, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, "there's that beast!"

"Jolly old James!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The esteemed and ridiculous James!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

It was a very fine afternoon for November, with a glimmer of sunshine in the grey sky. Harry Wharton & Co. had put in an hour at football practice. Now they were sauntering in the quad, discussing the approaching junior football fixture with Rookwood School, and paying no attention whatever to Billy Bunter, though he had a matter of great importance to communicate. This was that he was expecting a postal order in the morning from one of his titled relations.

What Bunter wanted to know was—who was going to lend him five bob till that postal order came? Apparently, nobody was; for nobody answered

Bunter, all the cheery Co. passing him by like the idle wind which they regarded not.

But they gave the fat Owl heed when he pointed a fat and rather grubby finger at a fellow who appeared in the gateway.

Big and beefy, hulking and aggressive, with his square chin and pug features, James Warren stood there, with his hands in his overcoat pockets, looking in.

Bunter eyed him uneasily through his big spectacles. He had felt the weight of James' boot once, and had not liked it. Booting was much better fun for the booter than for the bootee, so to speak.

"Well, he's come!" said Harry, in a low voice.

"I say, you fellows, he said he was coming on that postcard, you know," said Bunter; "and now he's come. Warren jolly well doesn't want to see him. He hasn't got a spread ready for him, like he said on the postcard."

"How do you know, you fat villain?"

"Well, I looked in his study," said Bunter. "Not that I was going to touch anything, you know. I hope I'm not the fellow to touch a fellow's tuck. But there wasn't anything. I say, you fellows, what about collaring that beast and ducking his head in the fountain? You fellows could do it, and I—I'll keep watch for beaks—"

"Not a bad wheeze!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton shook his head. "No rows, for goodness' sake!" he said. "It's bad enough for Warren to have that cad barging in, anyhow! Here he comes!"

James walked—or, rather, swaggered—in.

He looked about him as he came with the air of aggressive self-sufficiency that made even fellows who did not know him inclined to punch his head.

"Oh, you!" he said, with a stare at the Famous Five.

Billy Bunter backed behind the Co.

"Little us!" said Bob Cherry affably.

"Nice afternoon for the time of year—what? Pleasure to see you!"

"The pleasuredness is terrific!"

"Where's my cousin?" said James.

"He might have come down to the gates to meet his nearest and dearest relation!"

"I'll take you to his study, if you like?" said Harry Wharton, with great politeness.

James stared at him surlily.

"You're jolly civil all of a sudden!" he grunted. "But get on with it!"

"This way!" said Harry.

He left the Co., and James stalked after him to the House.

Harry Wharton had not the slightest desire to be civil to James. But, for Warren's sake, he was anxious to get him out of the general view.

James, loud and aggressive, wanted to attract attention. He had written a postcard instead of a letter to Jim with the idea that other eyes might see it and cause his visit to be more generally known.

He had no intention whatever of giving his Cousin Jim away—for the reason that it did not suit his own plans to do so. But he did intend to keep his victim on tenterhooks, dreading every moment that it might all come out. There was a vicious and cruel strain in James' delightful nature, which he indulged to the full whenever it seemed safe to do so. In the present circumstances, it was safe, so James was fully prepared to enjoy his cat-and-mouse game that afternoon.

Wharton would gladly have hurried

him into the House. But James had quite other ideas, and was not to be hurried.

He swaggered along at a leisurely rate, and a good many fellows looked at him, as he intended that they should.

"That's Warren's cousin!" Temple of the Fourth was heard to remark.

"Looks a bit of a bargee—what?"

James scowled as he heard that.

"Oh, you!" said Coker of the Fifth, meeting him near the House.

James gave him a defiant stare.

"If you weren't Warren's cousin," said Coker, "I'd mop you up—see?"

And Coker snorted and marched on.

On the steps of the House they met Mr. Quelch. The Remove master gave James a sharp, rather searching look. He did not seem to be very favourably impressed by James. Few were.

"Who is this, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch in a very cold tone.

"Warren's cousin, sir," said Harry.

"I thought I'd take him to the study, as Warren isn't about."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. "A relative of Warren of the Fifth Form?"

"That's it, sir."

"You may certainly take him in, Wharton."

Quelch glanced after James, as he went in, curiously. He liked Warren of the Fifth, as nearly all Greyfriars did. But, on his looks, he did not like Warren's cousin. If ever a fellow looked an out-and-out "bounder," James did, and Quelch was surprised that Jim had such a relation.

He would have been more surprised had he known that James was son and heir of Sir Arthur Warren, baronet, a great man in the diplomatic world.

James swaggered in after Wharton.

There was nobody visible in the Fifth Form passage when they arrived there. Most of the Fifth had been at games practice, and were now in the changing-room.

Harry tapped at the door of Study No. 4 and opened it. Whether Warren was there or not he did not know. He hoped that he was, for he suspected that Jim would be anxious to keep his cousin as much out of the general view as possible.

But the study was vacant.

James shoved the junior aside in the rudest possible manner, and swaggered into the study. Wharton's eyes glinted at him, but he kept his temper.

It was odd enough, perhaps, that Harry should be anxious for the welfare of a fellow whom he knew to be playing a part at Greyfriars School. But he trusted Warren, in spite of appearances; he accepted his word that he had done no wrong, and he was not the fellow for half-measures.

On his own account, he would have been glad to land his fist in James' eye. On Warren's account, he was anxious to avoid anything like a shindy.

"Is this Jim's study?" grunted James.

"Yes," answered Harry.

"Why isn't he here? I told him I should be coming at four, and it's past four now!"

"I suppose he's in the changing-room," said Harry. "The first eleven have just knocked off games practice, I believe."

Wharton, of course, knew nothing of Warren's plans for that afternoon. He had no knowledge whatever of the fact that Jim Warren at that moment was ten miles away in a car with Hilton and Price.

"Well, cut off and tell him I'm here!" said James. "Poke that fire first; it's doocid cold!"

James threw off his coat and hat, and

sat down in the study armchair. He stretched out his legs, and felt in his pocket for a cigarette-case.

Wharton, breathing rather hard, mended the fire, and then left the study to look for Jim Warren. His last view of James showed him that youth lolling ungracefully in the armchair, smoking a cigarette. He shut the door when he went, unwilling for that sight to meet other eyes if it could be helped.

The captain of the Remove went down to the changing-room. It was crowded with Fifth and Sixth Form men. But he did not see Warren among them.

"Is Warren here, Potter?" he called out.

Potter of the Fifth looked round.

"Eh—no! He's gone out, I believe."

"Gone out?" repeated Harry blankly.

"Yes. He cut this afternoon. I believe he went out in Hilton's car."

"Oh, my hat!"

Wharton left the changing-room, rather at a loss. He rejoined his friends in the quad.

"Seen anything of Warren?" he asked.

"No."

"Well, Potter thinks he's gone out for the afternoon in a car with Hilton. That blighter is waiting in his study for him."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Giving him a miss in hault," he said. "Best thing he could do, I dare say. Rather a joke on James."

"The jokefulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, yes. It's no business of ours. The fellow can sit in the study as long as he likes. He's out of sight there, anyhow."

"I say, you fellows, there's old Hacker! Who's that he's got with him?" asked Billy Bunter. "Looks a crusty old stick."

A taxi had stopped on the drive, and the juniors glanced at the two gentlemen who alighted from it—Mr. Hacker, and a rather stout man with a ragged moustache and horn-rimmed spectacles. Bunter blinked at them inquisitively; but Harry Wharton & Co. were not in the least interested in either of them, and they walked away, leaving Bunter blinking. And Mr. Hacker and Mr. Philpott passed into the House.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Oakshott Beak!

"THIS way, sir!" said Mr. Hacker.

Mr. Philpott made a sound of assent rather like a grunt.

He followed the master of the Shell up the staircase. The Oakshott master was not in the best of tempers, and his manner, though polite, was cold.

It was fine weather for November; but it was cold and chilly, and there was a sharp wind. Mr. Philpott was elderly—long past the age for finding any pleasure in a long railway journey, with changing trains.

A sense of duty had urged him to come. He had felt that he could not very well refuse to do so. But he was not enjoying the trip—far from it. And he was doubtful—more than ever doubtful since he had met Mr. Hacker.

They had had a talk in the taxi from Courtfield. And Mr. Philpott, who was no fool, had detected the fact that Hacker had a strong dislike for the boy Warren, whether he was an impostor or not.

The whole thing was unusual, dubious. Mr. Philpott felt that he had to see the boy, and state definitely whether he was the fellow he pretended to be. But it was very irritating to think that possibly—indeed, probably—he had been given that long and uncomfortable journey, because Hacker had been misled by his dislike for a fellow in the Fifth Form.

It was true that Hacker's description of Jim did not tally with what he knew of James. That looked as if there might be an imposture.

On the other hand Hacker had told him about that unexampled outrage in the fog; and that did tally with what he knew of James.

James was the very fellow to boot a man he disliked, under cover of the fog; and to lie about it afterwards.

That talk in the taxi, therefore, had not convinced Mr. Philpott that Hacker's suspicions were well founded. It had made him feel more and more doubtful.

(Continued on next page.)

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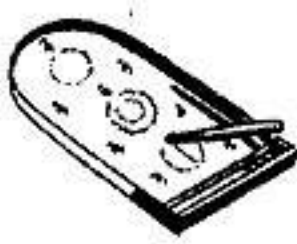
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However, the matter was to be put to the test when he saw Warren. Face to face the truth would be established beyond the possibility of doubt.

And if it turned out that the Warren of Greyfriars was the Warren of Oakshott, and that the whole thing was moonshine, Mr. Philpott was going to speak some very plain words to Mr. Hacker before he left to catch his train home.

For the present he was coldly polite.

They stopped on the big landing from which several passages opened. Mr. Hacker pointed to the Fifth Form passage.

They had made arrangements in the taxi. Mr. Philpott would have preferred the boy to be sent for; but Hacker pointed out, very reasonably, that if Warren heard that an Oakshott master was on the spot, he would avoid the interview at any risk. Philpott had to catch an early train; he could not wait very long. And if the "impostor" got wind of his presence, it would be easy for him to dodge till the Oakshott beak was gone.

It was settled, therefore, that Mr. Philpott should proceed immediately to Warren's study.

If Warren was there he would see him at once; if he was not there, he would see him as soon as he came in. In the meantime, nobody would know that an Oakshott master was there—which was urgent, if the young rascal was not to be put on his guard.

"Study No. 4, sir, in that passage," said Mr. Hacker.

"Very good!" grunted Mr. Philpott.

"I will await you in my study, sir," said Mr. Hacker. "You will let me know the outcome when you have seen the boy?"

"Certainly!"

Mr. Hacker went down the lower stairs with a bitter smile on his face. So far as he could see the bird was in the snare. The Fifth Form fellows were coming up to the studies from the changing-room now. Potter and Greene passed him on the stairs as he went down.

The master of the Shell went to his study, to wait.

He had little doubt of the result. He was sure—almost sure—that Warren of Greyfriars was not Warren of Oakshott.

But if he was in error—if Warren, after all, was genuine—there was no harm done—to Hacker, at all events. He was not appearing personally in the matter at all.

Warren, if genuine, would not be surprised at his old Form-master from Oakshott looking in to see him while he was at Greyfriars to see a master there. He would not know that Hacker had brought him there for that purpose.

Warren, if not genuine, would be shown up, and, in that case, Mr. Hacker was prepared to come forward as the man who had discovered the cheat, and taken measures to expose it.

Mr. Hacker paced his study rather restlessly. He was certain—almost certain—what Mr. Philpott would have to say when he came to him. But he was anxious to be quite certain.

Tap!

A knock came at his study door as he paced.

His door opened. Mr. Hacker spun round eagerly.

"You have seen him?" he exclaimed. "You have ascertained that the young rascal is not—" Mr. Hacker broke off suddenly.

"Eh!" ejaculated Hobson of the Shell.

Mr. Hacker glared at that hopeful member of his Form.

"You young rascal!" he exclaimed angrily. "What do you mean by it?"

Expecting Mr. Philpott every moment, he had supposed that it was the Oakshott master at his door. But it wasn't. It was just Hobby with an "impot" in his hand.

Hobson blinked at him, amazed.

He was accustomed to sharpness and acidity from Hacker. But this, as Hobby told Hoskins and Stewart in his study afterwards, was the jolly old limit—jumping down a fellow's throat when he brought in his lines.

"Wha-a-a-t do I m-m-m-mean by it, sir?" gasped Hobson. "You gave me the lines this morning, sir—"

"What?"

"You told me to bring them in before

tea, sir," said Hobson aggrieved. "And here they are, sir."

Mr. Hacker looked at him as if he could have bitten him. He had forgotten all about Hobson and his lines. He snatched them from the unfortunate Hobby's hand.

"Leave my study!" he snarled.

"Yes, sir; but you told me to bring them before tea, and—"

"Go!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

He pushed Hobson out of the study and slammed the door on him. Hobby went away greatly surprised and indignant. Mr. Hacker hurled the lines into his waste-paper basket, and waited impatiently for the Oakshott beak.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Genuine Article!

"O LD Philpotters!"

The startled exclamation greeted Mr. Philpott, the master from Oakshott, at the door of Study No. 4 in the Fifth.

Mr. Philpott had tapped at the door and opened it; and in the doorway he coughed spasmodically.

Almost a fog of smoke smote him, and he coughed and gasped.

The hulking, beefy fellow sprawling in the armchair, turned his head, to look at him through the haze of cigarette smoke.

James was expecting to see Jim Warren. It was a quarter of an hour since Harry Wharton had left James there, and gone to call Jim.

James, as he turned his head, was grinning, quite expecting angry looks from Jim at the sight of his study reeking like a tap-room.

But he jumped with a startled exclamation at the sight of the man in horn-rimmed glasses at the door.

He knew Mr. Philpott, of course, at a glance. Only last term he had been at Oakshott School, and Philpotters had been his Form-master.

He was amazed to see him.

What an Oakshott master was doing at Greyfriars he could not imagine. He had never even seen Mr. Hacker, and knew, of course, nothing of the proceedings of that acid gentleman, or of the trouble between him and Jim Warren.

"Old Philpotters!" he repeated blankly, rising from the armchair.

Mr. Philpott stepped into the study.

He coughed again and stared at James through the haze with a knitted, frowning brow.

He was deeply angry.

That long and uncomfortable journey from Essex, changing trains to London—all for nothing. Here was James Warren.

What became of that man Hacker's absurd suspicions now—that had dragged him all that weary way—for nothing? Here was James—the James he knew!

He stared at him—almost glared at him. He was angry with Hacker, angry with James, angry with things generally. Could anything be more annoying than to be brought such a distance on a fool's errand—to discover a mare's nest at the end?

For this was James—the genuine James! No impostor, evidently—just James!

Naturally, it did not occur to Mr. Philpott that Warren of the Fifth had gone out that afternoon and left that other Warren to wait for him as long as he liked. No such thought could possibly enter his mind.

He had come to Warren's study to see Warren. Here was Warren!

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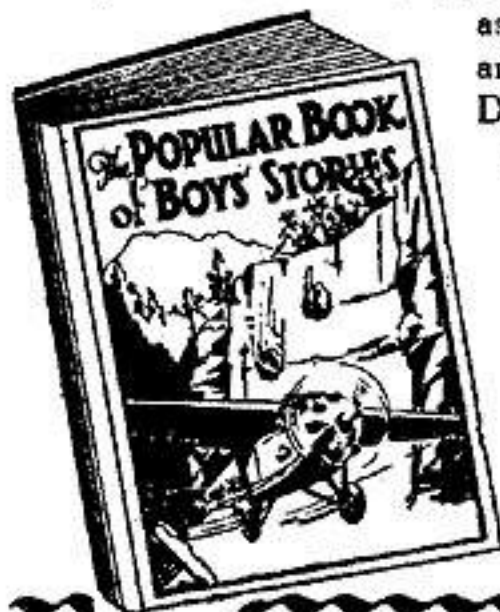
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James replaced the cigarette in his mouth, and blew out a cloud of smoke, right in the Oakshott master's face. Mr. Philpott backed a pace or two, gasping and choking. "You—you—you insolent young knave!" he gasped. "I have a great mind to make a complaint to your present headmaster!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared James, realising the mistake Mr. Philpott was making.

"You young rascal!" said Mr. Philpott. "You have not changed your ways since you were at Oakshott, I see!"

James stood staring at him. Aggressive bully as he was, he had always been rather afraid of Philpott at Oakshott. He was daunted now by the stern frown of his former "beak."

"Smoking!" snapped the Oakshott master. "Pah! Evidently you have not changed—pah!"

James pulled himself together. The cheeky, defiant expression habitual to his face returned. He remembered that he did not belong to Oakshott now, and that his former beak had no authority over him. Once he had trembled at Philpott's frown. Now Philpott was no more to him than the man in the street.

With that reflection, James' usual impudence came back.

"Keep your wool on, Philpotters!" he said coolly.

"What—what!" exclaimed the Oakshott master. Perhaps Mr. Philpott knew that the Fifth at Oakshott called him "Philpotters." But they did not call him that to his face. James did—now!

"Trot in, old bean, if you like!" grinned James. "Make yourself at home, Philpotters! Take a pew!"

"You impudent young rascal!"

"Can it?" suggested James. "Do you think you can slang a fellow now—now he's left school? We're not at Oakshott now, Philpotters! Take a pew and have a smoke!"

"Wha-a-t?" gasped Mr. Philpott.

"I can't say I'm glad to see you," went on James. "I never liked your ugly mug poking into my study at Oakshott."

"My—my what?"

"Your ugly mug!" said James cheerfully.

Mr. Philpott almost gurgled.

"Upon my word!" he stuttered. "I could almost wish you were still an Oakshott boy, Warren! I would cane you!"

"I dare say you would!" chuckled James. "I fancy you'd like to! Ha, ha! But you can't do it here, you see. You've ragged me for smoking at Oakshott! Silly old ass!"

"I—I—I—"

James replaced the cigarette in his mouth and blew out a cloud of smoke, right in the Oakshott master's face.

Mr. Philpott backed a pace or two, gasping and choking.

James roared with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" gurgled Mr. Philpott.

"Come to think of it, I am glad to see you!" chortled James. "I can tell you now what I think of you! Old ass!"

"Warren—"

"Silly old idiot!" said James.

"Upon my word—"

"Cantankerous old blighter!" said James. "Pie-faced old freak! Blinking old owl in your barnacles!"

Mr. Philpott gasped for breath between cigarette-smoke and fury. This was what Hacker had let him in for!

"You—you—you insolent young knave!" he gasped. "I have a great mind to make a complaint to your present headmaster!"

James stared at him for a moment, not understanding. Then, as he realised the mistake Mr. Philpott was making, he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How dare you laugh!" shrieked the Oakshott master.

"Ha, ha, ha!" bawled James.

He almost doubled up with merriment.

"You insolent rascal!" hooted Mr. Philpott.

"Ha, ha, ha!" bellowed James.

The Oakshott master's error made him fairly howl. He did not think of setting it right. It did not suit James for Jim Warren to be given away—which certainly would have happened had Mr. Philpott learned that he, James, was in that study by chance during Jim's absence. But he howled with merriment over the mistake.

Mr. Philpott's temper failed him—which was not surprising, in the circumstances. He made a step towards James, with uplifted hand.

Smack!

James ceased to laugh quite suddenly. That sudden box on the ear sent him staggering.

"Ow!" roared James. "Oh! You cheeky old fool—wooh!"

Mr. Philpott turned and strode, or, rather, stamped, from the study. He closed the door after him with a slam that rang the length of the Fifth Form passage.

"Cheeky old rotter!" gasped James, rubbing his ear. "Cheeky old ass! Well, I've told him what I think of him, anyhow!"

And James sat down again and lighted a fresh cigarette.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hard on Hacker!

MR. HACKER turned quickly to his study door—as there was a knock on it—or, rather, a bang.

His door flew open.

It was the man he expected this time. It was Mr. Philpott. And his face was so excited and angry that it made Hacker stare. Evidently there had been an interview in Warren's

study that had very much discomposed the gentleman from Oakshott School.

"Sir!" gasped Mr. Philpott.

"You have seen the boy?" exclaimed Mr. Hacker eagerly.

"Yes, sir!" almost bawled Mr. Philpott. "I have seen him! I have seen Warren, sir! And I am bound to tell you, Mr. Hacker, that you have made a fool of me, as well, sir, as a fool of yourself!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I have made a long journey," said Mr. Philpott, "I have a long journey yet to make. I should count that as nothing if there were a reason for it—a sensible reason, sir! But to be put to so much trouble and waste of time for no better reason than a foolish suspicion—"

"What?" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"An absurd suspicion, sir!" hooted the Oakshott master. "I doubted whether there was—whether there could be—anything in such an absurd idea when I received your letter. But your positive assertions on the telephone—"

"Am I to understand—"

"You are to understand, sir, that you have wasted my time and exposed me to a very disagreeable interview with an insolent young rascal!"

"Then Warren—" articulated Mr. Hacker.

He had been so certain—almost absolutely certain. The final test was for an Oakshott master to see Warren of the Fifth and identify him if genuine, expose him if not. That test did not seem to have worked out according to Hacker's anticipations.

"You—you—you saw Warren in his study, sir?" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"I saw Warren in his study, sir," snapped Mr. Philpott, "and I found him, sir, the same disgraceful and impudent young rascal that I knew him at Oakshott!"

"The—the same boy—"

"The same boy, sir!" hooted the Oakshott master. "Certainly the same boy! The same boy that was a continual trouble to me in my Form at Oakshott, sir, and that I was very glad to see the last of! I was glad, sir, when Sir Arthur Warren decided to remove his son to another school—and I may as well say frankly that, had he not so decided, the young rascal would not have been allowed to remain at Oakshott. The impudent young knave—"

Mr. Hacker felt his house of cards falling to pieces round him. Philpott had seen Warren in Study No. 4 in the Fifth, and this was the result!

Hacker had expected the Oakshott master to be annoyed if the whole thing turned out to be moonshine. His expectations were fully realised, and, more, Mr. Philpott was not only annoyed, he was intensely angry—so

angry that he had no politeness left to waste on the man who had, as he believed, told him a cock-and-bull story and wasted his time, and generally made a fool of him.

"Then—then—then—" Hacker stammered. "The boy Warren is—is definitely the boy you knew at Oakshott—the son of Sir Arthur Warren, of Warren Croft?"

"Most certainly, sir, and he has not changed since he has come to a different school!" snorted Mr. Philpott. "He greeted me, sir, with the unbounded insolence I might have expected of such a boy! He retains, sir, his old grudge against the master who often had to punish him for bad conduct at his former school! He insulted me to my face, sir, as I might have expected, and I boxed his ears, sir!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"I hesitated, sir, to come here! I wish now, sincerely, that I had refused to come! Only a sense of duty, sir, forced me to do so—your positive assurance, sir, that some imposture was being practised! I find, sir, that you were talking nonsense—"

"Mr. Philpott!"

"Nonsense, sir!" snorted the Oakshott master. "Mere foolish suspicions, founded upon I know not what! But I remember, Mr. Hacker, from our Oxford days, that you were always, even as a young man, of a suspicious and carping nature! I tell you so plainly, sir! I regret, sir, that I have taken any notice of your absurdity!"

"I had reason to doubt—"

"Rubbish, sir! Nonsense! You have exposed me, sir, to disrespect and insult, from a boy who is, unfortunately, no longer under my authority, and whom I cannot punish as he deserves! But I have boxed his ears, sir! I am glad to say that I have boxed his ears soundly!"

"But—" stammered Mr. Hacker.

"Enough, sir! I have nothing further to do here! Did I leave my hat here? Oh, here it is! I wish you a very good afternoon, Mr. Hacker!"

"My dear sir—" stammered Mr. Hacker.

Mr. Philpott made no answer, save a snort. He whisked out of Mr. Hacker's study, jamming on his hat as he went.

The master of the Shell stood rooted to the floor.

This was the end of his suspicions of Warren of the Fifth. He had got an Oakshott master on the scene to show him up. That master had identified him as the former Oakshott boy. It was a crushing blow to Mr. Hacker.

He heard the buzz of a taxi outside, and stepped to his window.

Mr. Philpott had stepped into the waiting taxi, and it was buzzing away to the gates with him. Hacker had a

glimpse of his face as he sat in it—set and angry.

The taxi disappeared.

The Oakshott master was gone.

Mr. Hacker drew a deep, deep breath. Mr. Philpott was gone to catch his train home—not that Hacker wanted him to stay. He was of no use to Hacker now.

Warren, it seemed, was, after all, Warren. The suspicious circumstances still existed.

But they counted for nothing in the face of the positive identification of Warren by an Oakshott master. The disappointment was keen and bitter. The fellow who had booted Hacker was not, after all, to be shown up as an impostor!

James sat and smoked in Study No. 4, in the Fifth, for another half-hour. By that time, James was tired of waiting for his cousin.

Harry Wharton had not returned to tell him that Jim had gone out for the afternoon; and Jim had not appeared; and James, at last, came out of the study.

Potter and Greene, in the doorway of the next study, glanced at him. They knew that he was Warren's cousin, having seen him before. Potter felt called upon to speak a civil word.

"Did you come to see Warren?" he asked.

"Yes, I jolly well did!" growled James, far from civilly. "And I've been waiting for the blighter about an hour. Where is he?"

"Sorry," said Potter. "He can't have known you were coming—he's gone out for the afternoon."

"Gone out for the afternoon!" roared James.

"Yes, in a car with some fellows."

"The cheeky hound!" roared James.

"Eh?"

"He knew I was coming!" roared James. "I sent him a card to tell him so. Has the cheeky cad gone out on purpose?"

Potter and Greene grinned. Really, it looked like it.

"The rotten, cheeky cad!" roared James, in great wrath. "By gum, I'll teach him that he can't treat me like this!"

He stamped away down the passage, and stamped down the stairs, and out of the House. In the quad he came on Harry Wharton & Co., who smiled at him. He returned the smile with a savage scowl.

"You can tell that cousin of mine that I'll make him sit up for his cheek!" bawled James, careless how many ears heard him. "Tell him I'm not standing this sort of cheek from a beggarly poor relation! See?"

He stalked away to the gates.

It was only the desire of the Famous Five to see the last of him as soon as possible, that saved him from being collared, up-ended, and given what he asked for. But they were too anxious to see him go, to think of delaying him, even for such a good object. And James went!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bagging the Booter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Mr. Hacker gave a grunt of irritation.

It was the following morning, in break, and Mr. Hacker was in the worst temper of his life. The Shell had had the keenest edge of his tongue that morning!

Walking under the elms, in break, Mr. Hacker was thinking over his defeat. He had seen Jim Warren that morning—looking very cheery and bright as ever. Jim did not even know that an Oakshott master had visited the school the previous day, though Mr. Hacker, of course, supposed that he did. Warren had no idea of what he had been saved from by James' visit to the school. James had been gone

(Continued on page 28.)

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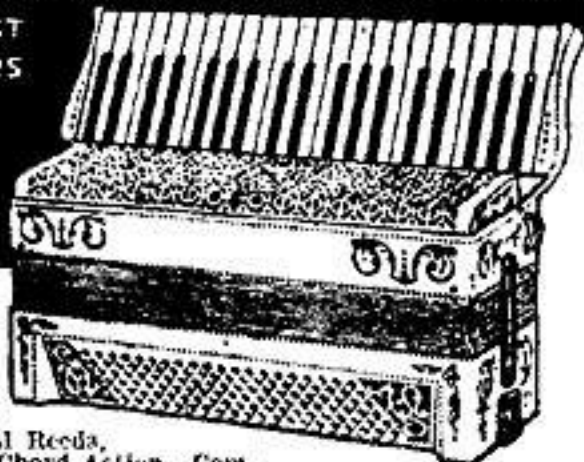
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DAN of the DOGGER BANK!

By David Goodwin.

The Face at the Window!

THROWN overboard by enemies of his father—Donald Graham, a millionaire shipowner—young Kenneth Graham is picked up off the Dogger Bank by the Lowestoft fishing trawler, Grey Seal.

His past life blotted from his brain, the youngster is given the name of "Dogger Dan," and signed on as fifth hand under Skipper Atheling, Finn Macoul, Wat Griffiths and Buck Atheling.

Aware of his nephew's fate, and knowing that he will be heir to the shipowner's money when his brother dies, Dudley Graham conceives a plan to get Kenneth out of the way for ever.

Engaging the services of Jake Rebow, commander of the Black Squadron, a fleet manned by men whom no honest trawler would take on board, he promises to pay over £500 on receiving proof of Kenneth's death.

Rebow fails in his efforts, losing two of his craft—Banshee and Bargreave—in consequence.

Determined to gain his ends, however, Dudley Graham calls on Rebow again, and raises his price to £1,000.

"Mon," said Rebow, "ye must be made o' siller!"

"Nonsense, man! I have a decent income, of course; but it's a fleabite to what I'd own if I had my rights. I ought to be rolling in it. I should be, too, if that cub had never come into the world. But can you do the job and make it dead sure?"

"I'll follow it up till it's done!" said Rebow.

"He is on the trawler Grey Seal at present."

Rebow stared.

"You needn't stare like that. I know as much about the game as you do. I've had the tip, and I've been watching her—from a distance, of course. Confound it, man, if it wasn't that I'm well known, I'd tackle the business myself inside of an hour, and finish the job while you are jibbing and boggling at it!"

"Na," said Rebow, with contempt, "ye're not the sort to risk your neck. That's my trade, I'm an auld hand at it. Leave it to me!"

Five minutes later Dudley Graham stood on the bridge of his yacht again, and his swarthy, black-haired little dago skipper rang the engines to full speed ahead. The yacht leaped away into the night, and Dudley leaned over the dodgers and became a prey to his thoughts. For over an hour he remained motionless.

Then he looked up. The yacht had come upon the Dogger Fleet, and passed through it. Away beyond, as the darkness closed behind on the vessels she had left, a solitary trawler, sailing close-hauled, lay a little to windward of the yacht's course.

Dudley looked at her—he had a weatherly eye for the sea and its vessels—and started slightly.

"The Grey Seal! I'd know that high-peaked mainsail in a thousand! It's the smack I was watching yesterday through the glasses!"

A cold sweat stood on his brow as



"We're done for, Dan!" groaned Buck, as the water rose steadily. "We'll be drowned like rats in a trap!"

the yacht ploughed steadily onwards towards the trawler. As she now headed, the two craft would clear one another by a hundred yards. But a white-hot thought shot through Dudley's brain. He thrust his skipper aside, and grasped the spokes of the wheel.

Round came the yacht till she headed straight for the trawler. Her tall iron cutwater, raking outwards like a great beak, clove through the water with a long, steady hiss. She bore down on the Grey Seal like an albatross swooping at a gull, and from under her bows, as she struck her prey, came a wild shout of anger and dismay.

"Five millions to me!" muttered Dudley, his features white and tense as he felt the prow of the vessel strike the Grey Seal. "Five millions cold, and the cub goes to the fishes!"

"Down! Hard down your helm!" roared Atheling. "They're into us!"

High above the Grey Seal loomed the bows of the black steam-yacht, lifting through the water with a threatening roar. The sudden movement of the steamer and the quick shifting of her course took the trawler utterly by surprise. Far overhead towered the tall masthead light of the yacht, and her cruel iron cutwater leaped upon the smack like a hawk upon a pigeon.

Jim, standing by the quarter, flung up his arm as though warding off a blow. It was he who had uttered the first cry of warning.

Wat Griffiths was at the helm, and almost before the captain's order had left his lips, the quick-handed Welshman jammed the tiller hard down, and the Grey Seal shot round in answer to the touch.

But it was too late!

With a rending crash, the yacht struck the trawler on her quarter, sending the fishermen reeling along the deck.

By great good luck, the quick sweep round of the Seal, when her helm was put down, saved her from a direct blow, or she would have been cut in two like a carrot. The yacht's cutwater struck her sideways, tearing away the stout wooden bulwark, and wrenching the covering-board from its fastenings.

The Seal heeled violently away from her aggressor, which shouldered her aside and rushed past, and Dan was flung down like a ninepin. Then, as the trawler lurched the other way, he rolled right outboard through the gap in the rail.

Buck made a wild grab to save his chum, but the boy was shot overboard like a sack of coke, and plunged down, with the black water roaring in his ears.

Dan was not hurt much, and, with a strong kick, he came to the surface.

The impetus of his fall had driven him clear of both vessels, and as his head appeared, he glanced up at the high black hull of the steam-yacht that soused rapidly past him through the night.

In that one glance he caught sight of a white, strained face staring down at him over the canvas dodgers of the yacht's bridge. Both hate and horror were written on its features as plainly as though printed in black letters. It was the face of a man who believed he had murdered his enemy, and was aghast at his own crime.

A flash of recognition lit Dan's eyes. He tried to shout, but the curling backwash of the yacht struck him in the face, and, as her foamy quarter-wave surged down on him, he was rolled over and over in a lather of sizzling froth.

When he came to the surface again and drew breath, the yacht was rushing away at full speed.

From the deck of the Grey Seal, rocking helplessly on the swells a hundred yards away, arose an angry shout for the steamer to heave to.

Naturally, the vessel that had done the damage took no notice, and the flames that began to roar out of her smoke-stack showed that the stokers had orders to pile it on and take her away out of reach of trouble.

Then Buck's voice sounded above the rest, and the half-crippled trawler swept round and came back along her tracks. Her crew had only just noticed the loss of their mascot.

"Dan! Dan!" came a cry from the smack.

"Ahoy!" returned Dan. "Here—away out on your lee bow!"

Down came the Grey Seal, and a few seconds later Dan, streaming and limp, was hauled aboard through the gap by which he had fallen out.

"This is a fine night's work!" said Atheling savagely. "If I had that crew of gardeners here, I'd nail them to the mast by their ears! If it wasn't such a fool's trick, I should say they'd done it on purpose. I'd give twenty pounds to know her owner's name!"

"It was my uncle!" cried Dan excitedly, his clothes streaming water upon the decks as he stood. "The white-faced man on the bridge! I saw him as I came to the top!"

"Uncle!" ejaculated Atheling. "What d'ye mean, lad? What's an uncle o' yours doing with a yacht that costs a thousand pounds a year to run?"

"He owns her," said Dan. "I know he had a yacht. He—I—"

He stopped confusedly, trying to collect his thoughts. A glimmering of his lost memory had come back to him at the sudden shock of seeing that strained face on the yacht's bridge; but the black curtain that shrouded the past seemed to drop on him again, and he became silent.

The Seal's crew—who from the beginning had guessed him to be a passenger fallen overboard from a pleasure steamer—began to think he was crazy, in spite of Finn Macoul's judgment.

"Why, Dan, old boy," cried Buck, "have you got the jumps again? What's his name, if he's your uncle?"

Dan shook his head helplessly, and said no more. A foreboding of evil weighed upon his heart, and he could not speak.

"Well," said Captain Atheling dryly, "if I had your uncle's skipper here, my lad, I'd wear out the biggest rope's-end we've got on him! P'r'aps the owner was trying to steer her himself."

"He had the wheel!" muttered Dan. "I saw him."

"You go below, my boy," said the skipper, kindly patting Dan on the shoulder. "Take off those wet clothes, an' get a mug o' hot coffee. You're upset wi' that fall overboard—an' no wonder! We were lucky to get you aboard again!"

Buck linked his arm in Dan's and took him to the companion-way.

The boy went below, stripped, rubbed himself down with a rough towel, and drank a huge mug of steaming cocoa. Then Buck led

him to his bunk, where for eight hours or more Dan slept peacefully.

When he awoke, he was as fresh and bright as a cricket. He went on deck, and the crew greeted him cheerily.

A brilliant sun lit the sea, and the Grey Seal was bowling along before a fresh breeze with all canvas set.

Dan glanced at the compass in the binnacle.

"Heading south-east!" he exclaimed. "Where are we bound? Leaving the old Dogger already?"

Shore Leave!

JOHAN ATHELING, standing at the tiller, jerked his head towards the damage the yacht had done.

"Got to get that patched up," he said. "The topside planks are loose, an' she's not fit to meet weather. At this gait we'll be at Amsterdam by night. We've a good load of fish—thanks to your luck, my lad!"

"Amsterdam!" said Dan. "I didn't know any British smacks took fish there."

"Not often," chuckled the big skipper. "But I know the markets there, and the dealers know me. We'll get a fine price for the soles, for there ain't many on the Dutch banks just now, an' they'll be sent inland to Germany. It's the cheapest place for repairs from the Skaw to Cape Grisnez, too. Buck, put the big foresail on her!"

Away went the Seal, her nose held steadily southwards, and in the afternoon the long, yellow line of sand-dunes that front the Dutch coast between Ymuiden and the Texel were sighted. It was glorious to lie on the warm decks, or take spells at the helm, and feel the smack lay her sleek side down and pelt along in the hot sunshine.

As the sun sank in the west the wind fell light, and when darkness settled on the sea the Grey Seal was still creeping in towards the land.

The lights of Ymuiden twinkled ahead over the calm sea, and the red-and-green tide lights on the two piers of the entrance guided the trawler in. Soon she had reached the town, which is the North Sea port of Amsterdam, and leads up to the capital by way of a big ship canal.

The Seal glided in between the pier-heads, and took up her berth for the examination by the Customs. Then she tied up for the night, and all hands turned in—an appreciated luxury after a couple of weeks at sea.

The morning broke fresh and fair, and the Grey Seal was astir early. She passed through a couple of swing-bridges, and was tracked clear of the town. Before her lay the ship canal, and she hoisted her foresail and ran up it with a spanking breeze right aft.

About midday the Grey Seal passed on to one of the thousand waterways of Amsterdam. She glided on to the tall quays that abut on an arm of the Zuider Zee, and made fast among a forest of Dutch masts. Her own particular piece of quay she had all to herself.

Buck had said little during the morning, and when all was made snug he turned to Dan with a moody air.

"Do you know, I've an idea we've been followed," he said, looking round to see the crew were out of earshot.

"Followed!" echoed Dan. "Why?"



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"I went aloft before we ran into Ymuiden last night," said Buck, "and I saw astern of us a vessel we both know to our cost. I needn't tell you her name."

"Jake Rebow's craft?" said Dan, beneath his breath. "Surely she wouldn't follow us here?"

"She's up against us," returned Buck gloomily. "An' the Black Squadron never lets an enemy get by."

He shut his lips, and Dan could get nothing more out of him.

All the rest of the morning Atheling kept the boys busy; but he was not satisfied with the offer he got from a salesman for his fish, good though it seemed. Bluff seaman though he was, there was no Dutchman in Amsterdam who could get to windward of John Atheling in a deal, and he knew prices would be better still on the morrow. His fish were in ice, and he could wait. But he put carpenters to work at once on the Seal's damaged side.

By evening the boys got leave to go ashore. Atheling paid Dan his wages, and, as he pocketed the clean-earned money, the millionaire's son felt a thrill of pleasure that his father's lavish gifts in the forgotten life of the past had never brought him.

"Bloated capitalists, ain't we?" chuckled Buck, as the boys made ready to go ashore, rigged out in their best pilot cloth kit. Dan in a suit that Buck lent him. "I reckon we— Ah, look here! What did I tell you?"

The grin left the boy's cheery face, and he shut his jaws with a snap as he gazed down the waterway. Gliding gently up under jib and foresail, for there was hardly any wind between the houses that rimmed the quay, came a long black trawler, her topsides grey with the brine of the sea.

"The Adder!" muttered Dan, as the newcomer slid past. "You were right, Buck!"

In silence they watched the sinister-looking craft go by. Jake Rebow, gaunt and evil-eyed as ever, steered her past, looking neither to right nor left. He did not seem to see the Grey Seal and her crew, but well the boys knew that that was pure pretence.

Atheling and Macoul, the Fin, standing by the companion-hatch, watched the newcomer grimly, but said no word.

The Adder lowered her foresail, and tied up to a quay on the other side of the waterway, a couple of hundred yards farther up.

"This is one of his haunts," muttered Buck, as he watched Rebow give his orders to his crew. "He knows the worst parts o' Amsterdam as I know my bunk, an' he's hand-in-glove with every rat an' thief along the wharves."

The boys stepped ashore, and went up into the town. They strolled into a concert hall, and were looking on at the antics of a perspiring gentleman who performed rather palpable conjuring tricks, when a stout Dutchman, who had strolled into the place and sat down after a look round him, left his own table and approached them.

"Goot evening," said the Dutchman genially. "You vos from an Englander boat down by der quay, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Buck, eyeing the man critically.

"So?" said the stranger. "You vos bring some fish, ain't it? Dot feller Vanderhagen, he only offer you tirty schillin' der trunk for soles, dey tell me. Oh, der tief! See my boss. He shall gif you tirty-five!"

"You'd better speak to the skipper about that," said Buck, nudging Dan.

"Ah! But I haf nod der time, now.

My boss, he sit at his office still, not far from here. You come and see him, den you see your fader."

"How did you know he was my father?" asked Buck.

"Eh?" said the man hurriedly. "You vos joost like him. I know der Captain Atheling long time. Julius Schenk, dot's me. You come now, or my boss he go 'way."

The two boys followed the fat man who, smiling greasily, led them out and down a short cut from the busier parts of the town to a maze of mean houses and wharf-yards fronting the salt waterway that ran in from the Zuider Zee.

Darker and meaner grew the slums, and stronger the smells, as they went. Eventually they reached a row of dingy-looking houses, and the stout Dutchman knocked at the door of one of them.

An evil-looking lascar opened the door, and the Dutchman genially motioned the boys to enter.

"Your boss keeps a queer sort of office for a fish salesman," said Buck, pausing on the threshold. "Are you playing a straight game, Mr. Julius Schenk? You've got hold of the wrong crew if you're not!"

"S sh!" returned the man. "Yes, yes! It's all right I tell you. My boss he is vot you call a miser! He not spend any money on a goot office—he not spend anytings at all if he can help it. Dot is vhy he is rich. But he gif you goot price, because he know it pay him. Go on. Oop der passage—der door right at der end."

"Quite so," said Buck quietly, and he took Mr. Julius Schenk by the arm and drew him swiftly in front. "You go first, an' lead the way."

The two boys, walking side by side, keen and alert, followed him. They went half-way up the narrow corridor.

Suddenly the fat Dutchman gave a quick bound forward, as though he were leaping an obstacle on the floor. The boys stopped, and started back hurriedly.

It was too late. A pivoted board swung open under their feet, and with a cry, Buck shot down into a cavern of pitchy darkness, evil-smelling as a tomb, and fell heavily upon a damp, stone floor.

Dan staggered for a moment on the very brink of the chasm, strove desperately to recover his balance, and then plunged down headlong after his friend and struck the unseen floor of the trap with a cruel thud.

Dazed and half-stunned, he raised his eyes to the open trap door through which he had fallen. And there, grinning down at him through the dim light above, he saw the evil face of Jake Rebow.

A mocking laugh echoed round the walls of the cell, and the trap-door shut with a clang!

Like Rats in a Trap!

STIFLING a groan—for he was badly bruised and shaken—Dan struggled to his feet.

A stale, clammy smell pervaded the place, whilst the darkness was inky in its denseness.

Remembering he had a candle-end and some loose matches in his pocket, Dan fished them out and struck a light. The feeble flame of the candle showed him the manner of trap he had fallen into. It was a wide, square cellar, with a low ceiling, in which the heavy oaken trap-door showed black against the dingy plaster around it.

Three of the walls were of plastered

stone. The lower half of the other one was composed of heavy iron gratings or bars, like the front of a cage, and, just behind the bars, were what appeared to be iron shutters, with cogs and a worm-and-wheel gear, to raise them up and down. They were shut down tight into grooves in the floor, and muddy water oozed round their edges. The stone flags of the gloomy cell were damp and covered with ooze and slime.

Buck picked himself up slowly as the candle was lit, and the two boys made a thorough examination of the place.

"By George," said Buck, in an awed voice, "it's a sluice-cellar!"

"What d'you mean?" asked Dan, with a shiver, for the clammy cell was deathly cold.

"A cellar opening on the bottom of some old wharf, with sluices to let the water in or out as the tide rises or a flood happens along. A lot of these low-down gangs use them for hiding contraband. The water's high outside now. Look at it oozing round the edges! How the place smells, too!"

"We've been neatly trapped!" said Dan gloomily.

"I wish I had hold of that fat Dutchman!" said Buck savagely. "I'd handle him till his own mother wouldn't know him!"

"What's that?" cried Dan suddenly, as a strange creaking, rumbling sound broke the silence.

With one accord the boys turned to the iron shutters. The cog-wheels of the rods that joined their tops were revolving, and slowly, heavily, the great iron plates moved upwards, lifting their lower edges from the floor. A thin stream of water spouted from underneath them, slight at first, but growing wider and stronger till it spouted into the cellar with a gush and a roar.

"They've opened the sluices!" cried Buck. "They'll drown us hero like rats in a pail!"

He sprang forward and gripped one of the iron bars, tugging it with all his force, with a hazy idea that it might become loose, and thereby give them a chance to dive through the sluice and get out into the waterway.

"Bear a hand here, Dan!" he shouted. "It's giving!"

The two boys tugged at the bar with all their might; but, though it gave slightly to the pull, it was plain that no human strength could dislodge it. They tried the others, but all were sound and strong.

"Is there no way out of this infernal death-trap?" cried Dan. "Get up on my shoulders, Buck, and feel where the rods go up from the sluices!"

"No good!" grunted Buck, climbing up on Dan's back and following the rods with his hand. "They run-through a chock in the ceiling."

He scrambled down again. The swirling water was up to the boys' knees now, and the roar of it filled the cellar with uncanny echoes. Higher and higher it came, till the level of it rose above the opening of the sluices. Then the roar ceased, giving way to a swirling, sucking sound as the water swept round the walls, rising steadily.

A few minutes more, and the boys were swimming round like rats in a water-butt, and the rank smell of the muddy water filled their nostrils and sickened them.

"We're done for!" groaned Buck. "They've cornered us like rats in a trap!"

(Dan and Buck are up against it this time. But they're not the boys to give up without fighting! Look out for some startling developments next week!)

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BUNTER GETS HIS OWN BACK!

(Continued from page 24.)

before he returned from the joy-ride with Hilton and Price.

Mr. Hacker was reluctant to abandon his suspicions of Warren. But he felt that he had to abandon them now. And that booting remained unavenged.

That was what Mr. Hacker was thinking of, as he paced moodily under the elms. He stopped, and leaned against an old tree, with a knitted brow and glinting eyes. Was that booting to pass unpunished?

Deep in bitter and unpleasant thought, it was naturally annoying and irritating to Hacker to be interrupted by the chatter of juniors. Billy Bunter's fat voice, on the other side of the big elm on which he was leaning, did not soothe his savage breast.

"Oh, roll off, Bunter!" came Bob Cherry's reply.

"Beast!" Had they been Shell fellows, Mr. Hacker would have looked round the elm, and snapped to them to be gone. But he could not snap be gone at Quelch's boys.

"I say, you fellows, do stop jawing that football rot," said Bunter peevishly. "I say that beast Coker kicked me—"

"Good!" "Beast!" roared Bunter. "The brute made out that I was in his study, because he found me there—"

"Oh, my hat!" "He jolly well kicked me!" hooted Bunter. "Booted me right down the passage—"

"Well, you go and boot him!" chuckled Bob. "You're a great man at booting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I wish I could catch him in the fog," said Bunter. "I'd jolly well boot him like I did Hacker! I say, you fellows, do you think we're likely to have any more fog?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Mr. Hacker, on the other side of the elm, seemed transfixed. Billy Bunter, little dreaming what the elm trunk hid from his eyes and spectacles, ran on:

"I say you fellows, you collar that beast Coker, and hold him! Then I'll jolly well boot him! I'll jolly well land one on his trousers, like I did on old Hacker's coat-tails!"

Mr. Hacker woke to life, as it were. He whipped round the elm.

"I say—" Bunter was going on. He stopped suddenly. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles at the

sight of the master of the Shell. "Oh! Oh crikey!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at Hacker. They had had no idea that he was there. They knew now. So did the hapless Bunter.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Bob. "Bunter's done it now!"

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "You!"

"Oh crikey! Oh lor'! Oh, no, sir! It—it wasn't me, sir! I never—wasn't—leggo—yarooooh!"

Hacker gripped his collar. All the bitter wrath that had been turned on Jim Warren, the supposed booter, was now turned on Billy Bunter, the true and genuine booter. Mr. Hacker hooked him away to the House.

Bunter went—yelping!

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"Poor old Bunter!" murmured Nugent.

"Bunter always did talk too much!" said Johnny Bull. "He's done it now!"

"I—I suppose it was bound to come out, sooner or later," said Harry Wharton. "The silly ass should have kept it dark. A chap can't brag of a thing and keep it dark at the same time. But—poor old Bunter!"

The chums of the Remove, deeply concerned for the hapless Owl, followed to the House. The news soon spread that the fellow who had "booted the beak" had been spotted. All the Remove, and some other juniors, knew it already. To others it came as startling news.

Mr. Hacker had marched Bunter to the Head's study. Mr. Quelch, his Form-master, had been sent for. Quite an army of fellows waited, as near as they could venture to Dr. Locke's study, to hear the verdict.

It seemed an age before that study door opened, and Billy Bunter came out. His fat face was perspiring as he came down the passage.

Twenty or thirty voices greeted him: "Sacked?"

Bunter blinked at them.

"I say, you fellows! Oh dear! I say, I've been jawed and jawed! I say, I'm going to be flogged! Oh dear!"

"Is that all?" asked Harry Wharton, relieved.

"All!" gasped Bunter. "You silly idiot! I say, that brute Hacker wanted the Head to sack me! He wanted the Head to sack Warren the other day—and now he wanted him to sack me!"

He's—he's dangerous, you know! Trying to get fellows sacked! I don't think he ought to be allowed to be a beak here at all!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I told him it was an accident, too," said Bunter indignantly. "I told the Head how I ran into him, in the fog, and my boot happened to bang on his coat-tails by accident—"

"Oh crikey!"

"He didn't believe me!" said Bunter.

"Not really?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"No! Fancy that! Made out I was lying—"

"Oh scissors!"

"But Quelch brought it out that Hacker had pulled my ear! He asked the Head whether masters should pull fellows' ears—especially fellows not in their Forms. Hacker didn't like that!"

"Good old Quelch!"

"I thought that would make it all right, especially as I explained that my boots landed on Hacker's coat-tails entirely by accident. Then Quelch suggested that a flogging would meet the case. The beast, you know! And the Head agreed—and Hacker had to! Quelch has got me a flogging—"

"You blithering idiot!" howled Bob.

"Quelch has got you off the sack!"

"I'm going to be flogged!" wailed Bunter.

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter. "A chap don't get justice here! I told the Head I never did it, and that I only did it because Hacker pulled my ear, and that it was absolutely an accident, and he—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" howled Bunter. "I can tell you—I think it's rotten ungentlemanly for a headmaster to doubt a fellow's word! It's enough to make a fellow untruthful!"

And Billy Bunter rolled dolorously away.

The flogging was duly administered; but Billy Bunter had one comfort, when the effect had worn off. He was able, now, to tell the world, with impunity, that he was the bold, bad man, who had booted a beak!

But Bunter was never likely to boot a beak again! It was the beginning—and the end—of Billy Bunter's career as a booter of beaks!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss: "BLACKMAIL!" the next yarn in this popular series. You'll vote it grand!)

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HE WAS "ALL OUT" FOR "ALL IN" FOOTER

By JOHNNY BULL

Last Compulsory Practice day, Fisher T. Fish let himself go over Soccer.

"I guess it's just the softest game ever!" he sneered. "The way you guys play football would earn a prize for Elegance and Deportment in the Yewnited States!"

"It's different over there—just a few! When Amurricans play football, they play TOUGH football—yes, siree! Why, I've known men maimed for life in ordinary friendly games in the Yewnited States!"

"But what about fouls?"

Frank Nugent asked innocently.

Fishy roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! I'll say that's funny! Fouls ain't been thought of yet in Amurrican football! We like our football 'all in'—kicking, biting 'n' everything! That's us! Your football is like a picnic compared with it. I'll tell the world! It's a pity you can't introduce the 'all in' idea here. I guess it would brighten up the game a few. Yep!"

I had a sudden brainwave at that moment.

"Why shouldn't we try it?" I asked. "Ordinary Soccer code, I mean, but anything goes—no fouls!"

The rest of the crowd saw my wink and promptly agreed to the idea.

Fishy's expression changed slightly.

"I guess that's a peach of an idea, Bull, but I just remembered I got a date—"

"Kim on and keep your date afterwards," I urged.

"You can tell us how far we fall short of the tough guys that play in your country."

And we marched Fishy back on to the footer pitch and started a ten minutes' session under "All In" rules!

Of course, the game we played wasn't nearly so tough as the American game. At the same time, our methods did make the ordinary game of Soccer look like milk-and-water!

In the first five minutes, for instance, Fish was knocked down, sat on, trodden on and dragged down the field by his arms, legs, nose and hair. Quite a lively game, you see; but a mere nothing in comparison with the game as played in America.

On the whole, it was a most interesting experiment. The one surprising feature was Fishy's reaction to it.

Instead of sneering and telling us what a soft lot of saps we were, Fishy yelled for help in a way that might have made anybody think the game was too tough for him!

He was pulling our legs, I suppose. But if you'd seen him running wildly off the field at the first opportunity, you could easily have thought "All In" footer was too much for him.

Surprising, wasn't it?

Please "Note"!

Lord Mauleverer wishes to deny that he complains about music-practice on "halfers." On the contrary, he is awfully fond of his afternoon "dohs"!



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 164. EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON. November 23rd, 1935.



BOB CHERRY Tells the World—

HOW BUNTER GOT INTO THE TUCKSHOP

Everyone is wondering how Bunter broke into the tuckshop, the other evening. Let your Uncle Bob clear up the mystery for you!

Here are the facts:

At seven-thirty last Tuesday evening, Mrs. Mumble locked up the shop and retired into her back-parlour to listen-in to the wireless and exercise her skill with a pair of knitting-needles and some wool.

After knitting for half an hour she picked up the evening paper to read the latest news.

At eight-thirty, hearing a suspicious sound, she returned to the shop, to find an intruder scoffing half her stock. Giving vent to cries of distress and howls of alarm, she quickly attracted attention to the tuckshop, and in a brace of shakes Wingate and several other seniors were on the scene.

At eight-thirty-one, the intruder was identified as Bunter.

That's all that's known about it, and the question generally asked since has been: How did Bunter get in?

There was no sign of a forcible entry, and Mrs. Mumble was certain she searched the premises after locking up. How was it done?

I was baffled myself until I reconstructed the scene in the tuckshop as I'd seen it five minutes before closing-time. Then I suddenly saw the solution.

If those who were there at that time will cast their minds back, they'll remember that a barrel was standing in the corner opposite the counter.

"Ah! That's it!" you'll all say. "Bunter was hiding in the barrel all the time, eh?"

Well, old pals, you're wrong! Bunter was NOT in the barrel. His dodge was far more subtle than that!

The fact is, there wasn't a barrel at all. Bunter just squatted down on the floor and remained perfectly still till the tuckshop closed. AND EVERYBODY, MRS. MIMBLE INCLUDED, TOOK HIM TO BE A BARREL AND LET HIM REMAIN THERE!

Now you know!

(Dickie Nugent's going strong, isn't he? Look out for thrilling developments in next week's instalment, boys!—Ed.)



Instal. No. 2 of Dicky Nugent's Amazing Serial: "The School-boy Eggsplorers!"

"Splice my mainbrace! I'll have you clapped in irons if you use any more mewtinous language like that to me!"

gaspd Dr. Birchmell.

"Tumble out, you lubbers, before I give you all a taste of the rope's end!"

"I, I, kap'n!" grinned Frank Fearless, and the Fourth Formers hurriedly tumbled out of their bunks, and dressed themselves before the Head fulfilled his threat.

In five minnits the Fourth Form were on deck, where they found the other Forms already assembling. When they were all in their places, Burleigh of the Sixth called the roll, and reported all present and korrekt. Then the Head addressed them.

Re-Tile Your Hearthplace!

With my Unbreakable Black Blocks! Hard as bullets—non-brittle—nice jet black colour. My sag tells me they're slices of toast, but this seems a better way of using them!—Apply G. WINGATE, Sixth Form.

"Avast, you swabs!" he cried. "Now that we're on the bosom of the mitey deep, I want you to get it out of your noddles that you're going to anchor yourselves to bunks and deck-chairs all day! This is a voyage of instruction, as well as plezzure, remember!"

"I, I, sir!" mernered the assembled skool.

"Of course, I don't eggspect you to spend your days swotting at Latin and mathy-matticks," went on Doctor Birchmell, with a feint grin. "But I do eggspect you to add a little to your nollidge of joggrafy and history. With that end in view, I propose to pipe all boys on deck now and again and give a lecture on the joggrafy and history of the countries we are passing. Yarooooo!"

A white-robed figger, which the boys reckernised as Abdul, the swarthy, sinnister guide who was taking them to Alljeers, had appeared on deck while the Head was speaking, staggering under the weight of a big packing-case. Just as Dr. Birchmell finished, a sudden roll of the ship sent Abdul running forward—and, before the Head knew what was happening, he was spread out on the deck, with Abdul and the packing-case on top of him!

Bang! Thud! Wallop!

"Woowooooo! Yarooooo! Gerroff my chest!" howled Dr. Birchmell.

Willing hands were quickly eggstended to releev the Head of his burden, and the villainous-looking Arab and his packing-case were sent on their way.

Then Doctor Birchmell continued 's address—not without difficulty, for the ship was beginning to roll in quite an alarming way now.

"Now for this morning's joggrafy lesson!" he cried. "The kaptin tells me that we are presently entering the Bay of Biscay. This bay is noted for its ruff and turbulent waters, which are calculated to cause symptoms of sea-sickness in all but the most eggperienced sailors like myself."

"Oh, crums!"

"On the horizon at present you can see the rugged coast of Finland," continued the Head. "Now Finland is noted for its eggcellent fishing and—"

"Eggscuse me, sir," interrupted Mr. Lickham, who was standing near Dr. Birchmell, "but aren't you making a slite mistake? The guide-book I brought with me says it's the coast of France!"

The Head snatched up a tellyscope from a ship's officer who was passing, and peered through it intently. After closely eggaminine the coastline for some time, he nodded.

"The guide book is right, Lickham. Through this tellyscope I can see the native frog-trappers setting out for the day's sport. France it is right enuff! Anyway, boys, after we leave France we shall come to Siam."

"Don't you mean Spain, sir?" grinned Mr. Lickham. "I always thought the French coast was folloved by the Spanish!"

"Then you must be off your onion!" snapped the Head. "You see—mummm!"

"My hat!" eggclaimed Mr. Lickham, in alarm. "Are you choking, sir?"

"Mummmmm! Groooooo!"

"Grate pip! Surely it

isn't possible that a good sailor like yourself has become affected by sea-sickness, sir?"

"Mummmmm! Youidjut! Groooooo!"

The impossible had happened after all! The Head suddenly applied his handkerchief to his mouth, and rushed off at top speed.

"Poor old Head!" chuckled Frank Fearless, as he and Jolly and Merry and Bright made for the companion-way. "Still, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. Nobody wants to swot joggrafy on a plezzure cruise, anyway!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Merry. "What shall we do till brekker, Jack?"

"Let's keep an eye on that chap Abdul—our Arab guide," said Jolly, after a moment's thought. "I'd like to find out what's in that packing-case he was carrying across the deck."

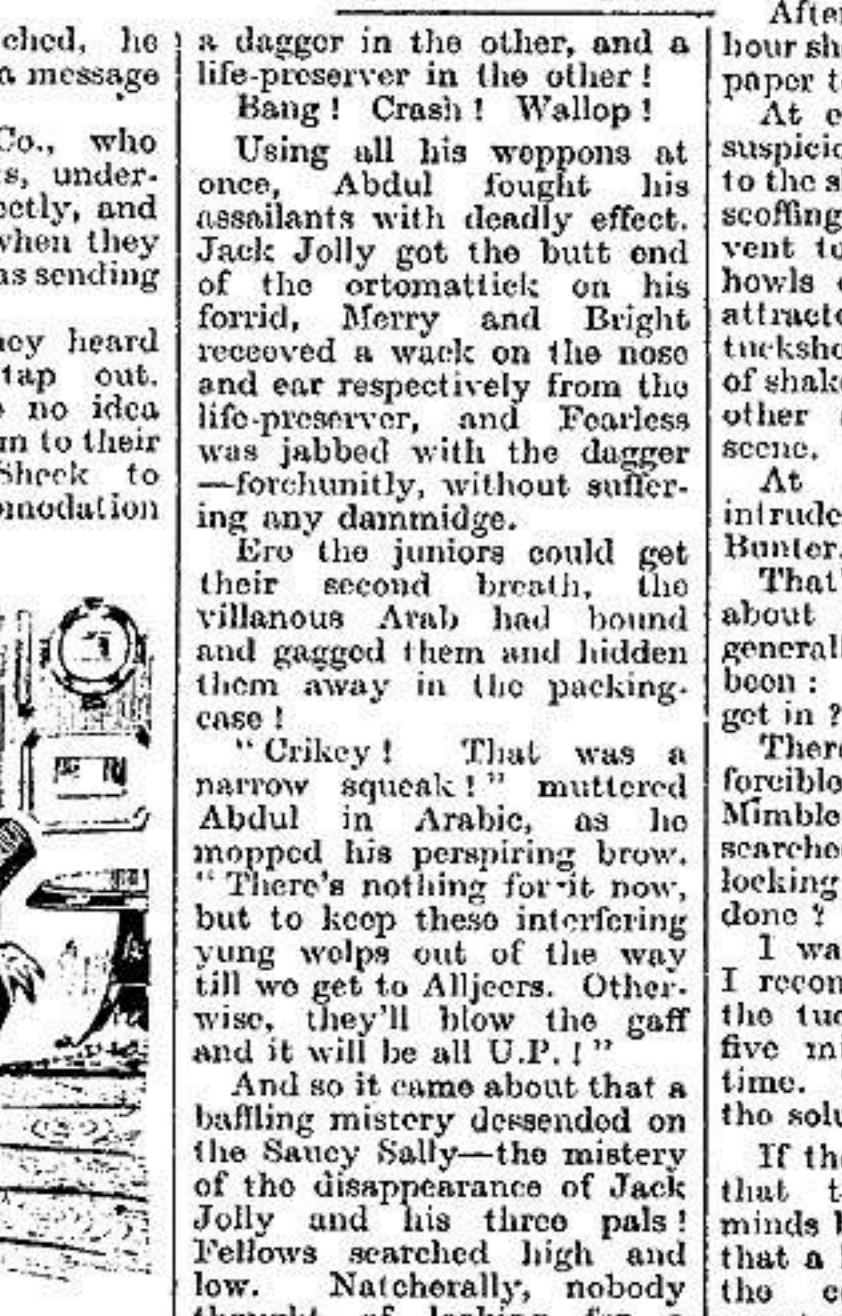
"I don't like the look of Abdul myself, I must confess," said Frank Fearless. "What do you think is in his packing-case, then? Stolen jewels or smuggled arms?"

"Something jolly suspicious, whatever it is!" said Jack Jolly. "Who's in favour of investigating?"

Fearless and Merry and Bright were all in favour, so, without argewing the toss any more, the quartette went below.

Little droorning of the fearful risk they were running, the Fourth Formers went along to Abdul's cabin and cautiously peeped in.

One glance was suffisiant to show them that Jolly's suspicions about Abdul were only too well founded. The Arab was standing over the open packing-case, which they could now see contained a powerful wireless transmitting

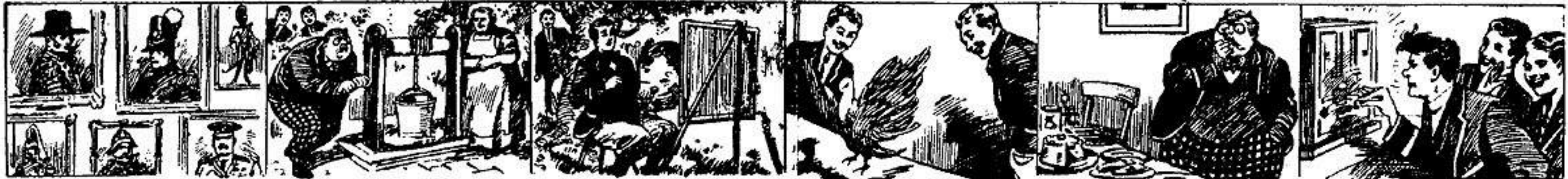


"Grate pip!" breathed Frank Fearless. "Prison accomodation—for US!"

"I know there was something fishy about this trip!" mernered Jack Jolly. "Let's take this beastly rotter to the kaptin, you fellows! CHARGE!"

The Co. needed no further bidding. With eyes blazing and fists clenched, they fairly flew at the trecherous Arab. But, quick as they were, Abdul was quicker! With a lightning-like movement, he wheeled round to meet their attack. An ortomattick pistol gleamed in one hand,

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



The Whartons have been soldiers for generations, and the walls of Wharton Lodge are occupied by paintings of Harry Wharton's warlike ancestors. Harry himself is undecided whether to follow in their footsteps or seek adventure in foreign climes. He has the "fighting" spirit!

When Harry Wharton and Co. saw Billy Bunter winding up water from the well for Mrs. Stubbs, in Friardale, they could hardly believe their eyes! Mrs. Stubbs, however, makes tasty cakes—and Bunter knew he would be "well" rewarded. As Bob Cherry said: "Well, well!"

Cecil Reginald Temple of the Upper Fourth is very proud of the "daubs" he produces, and believes that some of his space-time paintings may eventually be sold as "old masters" for £50,000 or so. Bob Cherry says they are not worth five pence—no "oily" statement, that!

Dick Russell is training a pigeon which he hopes will win races. When Bob Cherry pointed out that Russell was feeding it too well, and that it was getting too fat to race, Russell said he hated to think of its being hungry. "Russell comes of a kind-hearted race!"

Bunter wears the largest spectacles at Greyfriars, which is perhaps appropriate, as he possesses the shortest sight! Skinner says that Bunter can't see an inch in front of his nose—but if there is a feed in the offing, Bunter's sixth sense enables him to "smell it out"!

Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, is immensely proud of the wireless set his Aunt Judy sent him. Coker claims he can get over 200 stations. When he got a succession of grunts and snorls from it, Potter suggested he had got the railway station. Coker "radiated" scorn!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

Lord Mauleverer's "Pick-Me-Up"

Lord Mauleverer, who distinguished himself recently by advertising for a good "pick-me-up," received the shock of his life when a wild-animal trainer called on him with an elephant and asked if he'd like to buy it! Manly gently pointed out that what he had advertised for was a "pick-me-up." Upon which, the animal trainer promptly remarked that his elephant would pick up anybody, and, to prove it, ordered the animal to pick up Mauly!

This yarn is supplied to us by the Skinner-Stott Reliable News Service, and we print it for the sole purpose of showing you how "reliable" this enterprising "news" firm really is!