

HARRY WHARTON & CO. AT GRIPS WITH GANGSTERS!
(Thrilling School-Adventure Yarn Inside.)

The Magnet 2^D



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Introducing HARRY WHARTON & CO., the Cheery Chums of GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Poker, Too!

"NONSENSE!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master frowned.

The Remove, on the other hand, grinned.

They were amused, if their Form-master was not.

On that bright, sunny May afternoon the Remove had gathered in the quad, while less lucky fellows in other Forms sat in the Form-rooms at the usual grind.

It was a "walk."

Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove, was taking his Form for a Form walk—and every fellow in Mr. Quelch's Form was looking unusually spick-and-span, as befitted such an occasion. Even Billy Bunter was wearing a clean collar.

Nobody, of course, liked a Form walk in charge of a Form-master, but as an alternative to grinding Latin in the Form-room it had its attractions.

Bob Cherry remarked that it was, anyhow, out of doors, even if a fellow had to sport a toppler—and anything out of doors appealed to Bob. Most of the Greyfriars Remove agreed. Putnam van Duck, the new junior from Chicago, guessed that it was the goods, especially as it gave him a chance of moseying around without Poker Pike, his gunman guardian, treading on his tail for once.

But it soon transpired that that was a little error on the part of Putnam van Duck.

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For as Mr. Quelch led his flock down to the gates a figure seated on the bench by Gosling's lodge rose, scanned the procession with a pair of very keen eyes that looked like slits in his hickory face under the brim of a clamped-down bowler hat, and stepped forward.

Mr. Quelch looked freezingly at Poker Pike.

Poker Pike gave him a genial nod.

"I guess I'm horning in," he remarked.

It was then that Quelch rapped out "Nonsense!" and frowned, and the Removeites grinned.

"There is no occasion whatever," said Mr. Quelch, "for you to accompany my Form, Mr. Pike."

"Says you!" remarked Mr. Pike.

"I am aware," snapped Mr. Quelch, "that you are here to guard a boy in my Form against possible danger from kidnappers. But Van Duck is perfectly safe in charge of his Form-master."

"You packing a gun?" asked Poker Pike.

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated the Remove master.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the Remove in a yell. They really could not help it. The bare idea of Henry Samuel Quelch, a sedate and middle-aged Form-master, packing a gun took them by storm. They roared.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes turned from the gunman to his hilarious Form.

"Silence!" he hooted.

The juniors suppressed their merriment with difficulty. Mr. Quelch frowned still more portentously at Poker Pike.

"Certainly not!" he snapped.

"Then I guess I got to mosey along,"

said Poker. "Ain't you wise to it that Old Man Vanderdecken over in Chicago is paying me to keep tabs on that Putnam? Ain't the star kidnapper of the United States watching for a chance to cinch that infant? You figure that I'm letting Chick Chew get a holt on him? Forget it, big boy!"

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep.

"I repeat," he said, "that there is no occasion whatever for your presence, Mr. Pike! I repeat that Van Duck is not—and cannot be—in any danger under the charge of his Form-master. I am very far from approving of your presence in this school at all, and I certainly shall not allow you to intervene in matters affecting my Form. I trust I make myself clear?"

"You sure have spilled a hatful!" said Poker Pike. "I'll say you're the guy to chew the rag a few, and then some!"

"Kindly stand back!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Can it, Poker, you geek!" broke in Putnam van Duck. "What you got to do is a fade-out."

"I guess not!" said Poker Pike.

"Van Duck will be all right with a crowd like this, really, Mr. Pike," said Harry Wharton.

"Mebbe," said Mr. Pike, "and mebbe not."

"You need not speak, Wharton!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "Van Duck, be silent! Mr. Pike, stand out of the way at once! I will not allow you, sir, to join in this walk! Go away!"

Poker Pike stepped aside.

Mr. Quelch, with a sniff, marched past him. After Mr. Quelch marched the

Remove. The procession passed out of gates.

Then, after the procession, marched Poker Pike. The Greyfriars gunman brought up the rear.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Billy Bunter, as he blinked round through his big spectacles. "I say, you fellows, he's after us!"

"Shut up, ass!" murmured Bob Cherry.

There were suppressed chuckles and giggles in the procession. Mr. Quelch, tall and angular and stiff, walked ahead. Not having glanced round to the rear of the procession, he was unaware that Poker Pike had joined up at the tail thereof.

Evidently the Remove master was under the impression that his stern rebuke had had its effect, and that the gunman had remained behind, as bidden to do.

The juniors wondered what would happen when Quelch looked round and spotted him.

Mr. Quelch was not a man to have his authority disregarded. Poker Pike, on the other hand, was absolutely determined not to let the son of the Chicago millionaire get out of his sight. So it looked as if a tug-of-war was coming.

This Form walk was going to be more entertaining than most Form walks.

Quelch, stately and dignified, marched ahead. Poker Pike, his hard-boiled face serious under his bowler hat, lounged in the rear. Between them were about thirty smiling faces.

The procession processed down Friar-dale Lane. It was heading for the wood, where there was an old ruined priory. At that spot there was going to be a halt while Mr. Quelch discoursed to his Form on the historical associations of the place, giving them a spot of archaeology.

If there was any fellow in the Greyfriars Remove who was keen on archaeological information, he did not betray the fact by any expression of happy anticipation.

Still, it was, as Bob had declared, out of doors—and even archaeology out of doors was better than Latin indoors on a fine May afternoon.

Much more interesting than archaeology was the anticipation of what was going to happen when Mr. Quelch discovered that Poker Pike was in the offing.

Nobody was in a hurry to "put him wise." Indeed, the Removites began to wonder whether he would discover Poker's presence before they reached the priory. The longer he marched on unaware of Poker the funnier it seemed to his Form. But Billy Bunter had to spoil the joke.

"He, he, he!" came Bunter's chuckle.

"Shurrup, fathead!" hissed Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

Mr. Quelch's head turned.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir?" gasped Bunter. It had not been his intention to draw his Form-master's attention specially to himself. That argument with Poker at the gates had not improved Quelch's temper, and nobody was keen to get his special attention—least of all the fat Owl of the Remove. But Bunter had done it.

The gimlet eyes glittered at Bunter.

"You were laughing, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I never made a sound, sir! I—I was coughing."

"At what, Bunter, were you laughing?"

"Oh lor'! I—I wasn't, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I—I was only sneezing,

sir! I—I mean coughing! That is, I never made a sound, sir!"

"I shall——" Mr. Quelch broke off.

Having turned, he had the tail of the procession under his eyes, and he suddenly became aware of Poker Pike. Thunder gathered in his brow. He could guess now at what Bunter had been laughing. He strode back towards the gunman.

"What does this mean?" he rapped. "What are you doing here?"

"I'll say I'm keeping tabs on that Putnam van Duck," answered Poker.

Mr. Quelch's lips set in a tight line. He had a thick walking-stick under his arm, and for a breathless moment the juniors fancied that he was going to slip it down into his hand and give Poker the benefit of it.

The procession came to an irregular halt. Hilarity faded away from the faces of the Removites. Quelch, with his authority thus flouted under the eyes of all his Form, was bitterly, intensely angry.

Poker, quite a genial "guy" in his own way, was not angry at all—only quietly determined. He did not want to get this hombre's goat! But he was going to keep tabs on Putnam van Duck! Nothing was going to stop that.

The tug-o'-war was coming—and it looked as if it were going to be serious when it came! The Removites looked on breathlessly.

The idea of hiring a professional gunman as bodyguard to a boy in his Form, seems absurd to Mr. Quelch, master of the Greyfriars Remove, who considers it time that Poker Pike is given THE ORDER OF THE BOOT!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hop It!

"GO!"

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

He slipped the stick from under his arm, but it was not, as some of the juniors expected, or as some, perhaps, hoped, to land it with a whack on Mr. Pike's bowler hat! He lifted it to point back down the lane to the school.

Poker Pike, with his hands on his hips, regarded him thoughtfully.

"Meaning beat it?" he asked.

"I mean what I say—go!" breathed Mr. Quelch. "I will not allow your presence here, sir! I will not permit you to intervene in matters affecting my Form! I will not permit you to flout my authority! I order you to go, and at once!"

Mr. Quelch did not raise his voice, but it was sharp and intense with anger. He did not approve of Poker's presence at Greyfriars. He regarded it, in his own secret thoughts, as an act of weakness on the part of the Head to have acceded to Mr. van Duck's urgent request, and allowed a gunman to be posted at Greyfriars to keep guard over the millionaire's son.

That Putnam was in danger from kidnappers was certainly true; it had been proved, since he had been at the school, by the attempts of Chick Chew and his gang to get hold of him.

Mr. Quelch was aware of that. But the extraordinary idea of hiring a professional gunman to keep watch and

ward over a Greyfriars boy did not please Mr. Quelch at all.

It was so very much out of the common. Mr. Quelch did not like things out of the common. He had reached a time of life when he preferred to stick to a groove. The whole thing was, in Quelch's opinion, absurd!

He could not tell the Head so! But he could, at least, exert his own authority in his own sphere. And he was going to!

Hardly doubting that even the obstinate gunman would obey a direct order, Mr. Quelch waited for him to go, his stick still at a level, pointing the way!

Poker did not go.

He stood like a rock!

"You understand me?" said Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with anger. "I sure get you!" assented Poker.

"Are you going?"

"Not so's you'd notice it, bo!"

They stood face to face—the Removites looking breathlessly on. One of them had to give way, that was clear. Neither of them intended to do so. It really looked like the case of the irresistible force brought to bear upon the immovable object!

Mr. Quelch's face reddened. He could not, if he would, surrender, under the staring eyes of all his Form. On the other hand, he could not descend to violence.

Even if he descended to it, in fact, it would not buy him anything, as Poker would have expressed it. For Quelch, though no weakling, would have crumpled up like tissue paper in the hefty grasp of the gunman.

It looked like a riddle without an answer—a problem minus a solution. It was then that the Bounder weighed in.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, probably cared less for authority than any other fellow in the Remove. But he was keener on a row than any other fellow at Greyfriars. Smithy was prepared to vindicate his Form-master's authority, if the vindication of the same afforded a chance for a royal row!

"We weigh in here, you men!" he whispered. "Back me up, and we'll soon stop that blighter cheeking Quelch!"

"A lot you care for a blighter cheeking Quelch!" grinned Skinner. "Catch me tackling that hefty brute!"

"I guess he's got to can it!" said Putnam van Duck.

"He sure has!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Quelch won't like us chipping in!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"We can't let our Form-master be cheeked like that!" argued the Bounder.

"You never check him?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, shut up, Skinner! I'm going to shift him, if he won't clear, and you fellows will have to back me up!" said Smithy.

"The shiftfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, "and the back-upfulness will be terrific."

It was a long pause—while the juniors whispered and looked on. Mr. Quelch was waiting for the gunman to go. Poker, it seemed, was waiting for the walk to be resumed, fully intending to follow on. Slowly Mr. Quelch lowered the pointing stick. As Poker took no heed of it, that attitude began to be a little ridiculous. Redder and redder grew Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance. His anger grew more and more intense.

He was only too conscious of the keen, breathless interest of the whole Form in this scene. He could not back down. Yet what could he do?

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"Will you go?" he demanded at last.
"Nope!"

"I order you to depart instantly."

"You got another guess coming, big boy!"

"I will not allow you," said Mr. Quelch, "to take another single step in this direction! I shall prevent you, by force, if need be."

"You phoned the ambulance afore you started?" asked Poker Pike.

"What—what?"

"I guess you'll need it."

"Upon my word!" Quelch's temper, hard-held, flamed out. He advanced on the gunman in majestic wrath. "Go! Go instantly!"

It was simply incredible to Mr. Quelch that this man would stand rock-like in his way, unmoving. But Poker Pike did! Quelch, advancing, met the gunman, unmoved, and bumped on him. Poker put out a hand and gave him a push.

It was only a push! But it seemed to take the Remove master by surprise. It could not be called a hard push! But it was sufficiently hard to cause Mr. Quelch to stumble, lose his footing, and sit down!

He sat down in Friardale Lane, the most astonished Form-master that ever was!

"Oh!" gasped Quelch.

"I guess," said Poker Pike gravely, "that I don't want no trouble with you, big boy! I guess I got to keep tabs on that Putnam van Duck! Surest thing you know! I'll say—Yurrrrrrooop!"

The Bounder led the rush.

Smithy was keen, as usual, on a shindy. And surely no fellow ever had a better excuse for one! His Form-master had been pushed over—was sitting breathless in the dust! If that was not a jolly good excuse for a shindy, Smithy would have liked to know what was!

Smithy led—and the Famous Five followed. Putnam van Duck rushed with them. Putnam, though the object of Mr. Pike's watchful care, was as fed-up with Poker as anyone—more so, perhaps! Anyhow, he took a hand.

Up-ended by that sudden rush of the juniors, Poker Pike went over on his back, raising the dust of Friardale Lane in a cloud.

He smote the county of Kent with a hard and heavy smite.

"Say, you pesky piccans!" howled Poker, struggling wildly.

Twice before, since Poker Pike had been "keeping tabs" at Greyfriars, he had fallen foul of the Remove—once in the Form-room, where he had horned in during class; once when he had wanted to stop Putnam running as hare in a paper-chase. Now he fell foul of them a third time. Third time is said to be lucky; but it was not lucky for Poker Pike!

For, hefty as he was, he was pinned down by the Famous Five, the Bounder, and Putnam, with hearty assistance from Peter Todd, Squiff, Tom Brown, Lord Mauleverer, Russell, and Ogilvy, and, in fact, almost every fellow who could get a hand on him.

With about twenty hands holding him Mr. Pike wriggled wildly, but wriggled in vain. As he was held, the Bounder produced a whipcord from his pocket.

With that cord Smithy coolly tied Poker Pike's wrists together. Then, bending the gunman's hefty right leg at the knee, he tied the ankle to Poker's belt.

"Now let him get up!" chortled the Bounder.

"Yurrooop!" gasped Poker dizzily.

He was heaved to his feet. He stood on his only available leg, hopping to

keep from falling, amid a roar of laughter.

Harry Wharton turned him round in the road.

"Travel!" he said.

"Urrgh! I guess—urgh!" spluttered Poker.

"Hop it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Poker hopped. He had to hop, or go over! So he hopped! His hickory face was crimson with wrath under his bowler hat. He hopped and hopped.

Mr. Quelch had staggered to his feet. He leaned on a tree, gasping for breath. He hardly realised what was going on for some minutes. Certainly he was not the man to be a party to such a playful trick as tying up a fellow's leg and setting him hopping! But when the crowd of yelling juniors surrounding Poker Pike set him hopping back to the school, Mr. Quelch woke up, as it were, to what was going on.

"Boys!" he gasped. "Boys!"

"All right now, sir!" said the Bounder. "We're not letting that ruffian cheek our Form-master, sir!"

"No fear!" grinned Bob.

"What—what have you done?" Mr. Quelch fairly blinked at the enraged, hopping gunman in the middle of the lane. "What—what—"

"Hop it, you guy!" yelled Putnam van Duck.

"Hop home!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boys!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Cease this—this absurdity at once! I—I am obliged to you, but—but cease this immediately! Release that man! Mr. Pike, will you return to the school at once?"

"No!" roared Poker. "Not by a jugful! I guess I'm keeping tabs on that Putnam van Duck feller!"

Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted.

"I will order the boys to release you, Mr. Pike, if you will immediately take your departure!" he snapped.

"Guess again!" roared Poker. "Pack it up, you pesky guy! I'll say that I'll beat them young piccans up a few."

"Then," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "you may release yourself at your leisure, Mr. Pike! I wash my hands of the matter. Boys, follow me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, please!"

The procession formed up again. The Removites marched after their Form-master—leaving Poker Pike frantically hopping, to keep his balance. Still determined, Poker hopped after the procession. Looking back, the Removites shrieked at the sight of him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's hopping after us!"

"The hopfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch, flushed, angry, annoyed, yet scarcely able to find fault with his hilarious Form in the peculiar circumstances, marched on, with head erect, affecting to hear and see nothing.

Few of the juniors, however, looked where they were going. Everybody was staring back at the weird hopping figure in the rear—dropping behind, but keeping desperately on.

Hop, hop, hop, came the Greyfriars gunman; panting and perspiring, but desperately hopping on.

Mr. Quelch was glad—though the Remove did not share his gladness in the least—when they reached the stile and crossed it into Friardale Wood. The stile stopped Poker.

Even the determined Poker could not hop over a stile. He was brought to a halt there as the Remove walked up the footpath with their Form-master. His bull voice roared in the rear:

"Say, you ginks! You come and let

a guy loose! You hear me too? Say, you pesky young piccans, you let up on a galoot! I got to keep tabs on that Putnam van Duck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Poker's voice died away behind. Mr. Quelch led his flock on to the old priory; and Poker was left to hop!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Ple!

HANNIBAL CHEW—known to his friends in Chicago as "Chick"—stared, and stared again. Then, with an agility and swiftness remarkable in so fat and bulky a gangster, he dodged out of sight behind a massy fragment of moss-grown wall in the old ruined priory in Friardale Wood.

Chick could hardly believe the little piggy eyes that gleamed from the rolls of fat on his podgy face.

Such luck as this was really too much of a good thing. Chick Chew was in the old priory, embosomed in the midst of the green woods that sunny May afternoon, not with any idea that his intended victim might fall into his podgy clutches that day. He was making himself better acquainted with the vicinity of Putnam's school.

It was Chick Chew's way to be thorough. This sort of a dog-goned old ruin, Chick reckoned, was just the sort of spot that a schoolboy might visit on a half-holiday—especially a schoolboy from the western continent. There was nothing of the kind in Putnam's own country.

Towering skyscrapers, Chick guessed, made a more pleasing view than mossy old ruins. But a young guy raised on skyscrapers would naturally want to give such queer things the once-over when he was in the pesky old island where such things were to be found.

That was why Chick was there—picking up local topography, with the idea of "laying" for the millionaire's son on another occasion. Certainly he had not the remotest idea of seeing anything of Putnam van Duck that afternoon.

And now he saw him!

It was not a half-holiday. Chick had picked up a lot of information about Putnam's school. He knew that Wednesdays and Saturdays were half-holidays; and that Tuesday wasn't. This was a Tuesday. So Chick guessed that Putnam, like the rest of the school, would be in his class-room, at lessons! He was quite surprised to see him.

However, one "squint" at the procession of schoolboys, winding down the green woodland path to the old priory, made it clear to Chick, as he noted the stiff, angular schoolmaster with them.

The master was taking his boys for a walk in the time usually devoted to classes. Chick jumped to that at once!

And the master was Putnam's master—the boys were Putnam's Form-fellows, and with them walked Putnam van Duck.

Walking fairly into the hands of the kidnapper!

Chick grinned as he disposed his bulky person in cover behind the mossy wall and watched through clambering ivy.

Chick's luck had not been good since he had transferred his activities to the old-fashioned, law-abiding side of the Atlantic. In fact, it had been bad. Now, it seemed, fortune was smiling again, suddenly and unexpectedly making up for past frowns.

"Search me!" breathed Chick, as he watched.

His hand slid to his hip, where he packed his automatic. He watched

keenly as the Remove-master and the Remove marched in at the ancient gateway through the moss-grown fragments of the old stone arch that had long since fallen. He feared to see the hickory face and bowler hat of Poker Pike in company with the schoolboys.

Chick was not afraid of gun-play. He was prepared, if necessary, to pull on Poker Pike, and exchange whizzing lead with him. But he was not honing for it, as he would have expressed it. Poker was a handy guy with a gun—quite as handy as Chick! And Poker had the law on his side!

Law mattered little in Chick's native land; but in this pesky old island, he knew that it mattered a lot. In Chicago gun-play was his first resource—here, it was his last!

It was really hard to believe in his good and unexpected luck when he ascertained, beyond doubt, that the

the blanched terror in the faces of the schoolboys at the sight of the deadly weapon. He could see the bony knees of that stiff old gink of a schoolmaster knocking together! Chick could see all this with his mind's eye. He was not, in point of fact, destined to see it with any other eye! But he did not know that yet.

An old gink of a schoolmaster, with a stick under his arm, a crowd of unarmed, frightened schoolboys! It was pie to the gangster who had, in his time, held up armed men at the point of a gun. All he had to do was to make them stick their hands up, and walk off with Putnam van Duck under their noses—leaving them with their hands stuck up. Fortune was making up, at last, for a lot of bad luck, at one fell swoop.

Chick Chew's expensive American teeth gleamed as he grinned with glee.

extremely modern American side by side with the Early English!

The juniors looked as interested as they could. Mark Linley, indeed, was actually interested—he had tastes that way. Harry Wharton & Co. could not help feeling that since classes were off, the time would have been better spent at cricket. Skinner and his friends would have preferred to spend it with cigarettes, in the study. Billy Bunter had not the slightest doubt that it could have been better spent in the tuckshop.

Still, it was better than Latin prose. All the Remove agreed on that. Sunshine and green foliage and mossy ruins beat Latin prose hollow—even with archæology added thereto!

"Early English—" Mr. Quelch was going on, when he broke off in sudden surprise. Chick Chew weighed in just then, and Early English was completely



Chick Chew stepped through the gap in the old wall, a levelled automatic in his fat hand. "Stick 'em up!" he rapped. Mr. Quelch stared at the kidnapper, dumbfounded. His stick, extended to point out an excellent relic of Early English architecture, remained extended, pointing at a sample of modern American gangsterism instead!

watchful gunman was not with the party.

The whole crowd of schoolboys came into the ruins, with Mr. Quelch, and nobody followed them in. For once, at least, Poker Pike was not keeping tabs on the millionaire's son.

If this wasn't pie, Chick would have liked to know what pie was!

A mile away he had a car waiting, with Bud Parker at the wheel. Here was the gilt-edged schoolboy in his grasp. He had only to cinch Putnam, walk him off through the wood, and park him in that car. In an hour's time, he would be safely landed at the hidden retreat long ago prepared for him. It was as easy as falling off a log.

"Pie!" murmured Chick. "Clam pie! I should smile!"

He drew out the automatic. There was no occasion to use it—the sight of it would be enough! Chick could picture

The unsuspecting schoolboys were wandering towards the mossy fragment that hid his bulk. They were due for a sudden surprise soon!

Mr. Quelch's voice reached his ears. The Remove master was pointing out objects of interest with his walking-stick—of interest, at least, to the Remove master. It appeared, from Mr. Quelch's discourse, that several styles of architecture were combined in that old priory. Early English, it seemed, had Norman superimposed on it.

In the broken wall behind which Chick crouched, was the remnant of an ancient window, clustered with ivy, through which Chick was peering.

Mr. Quelch's stick pointed to that very spot!

"Here," said Mr. Quelch, "is a very excellent example of Early English!"

He was quite unaware of the

discarded, as an object of attention, for modern American!

Chick stepped through the gap in the old wall, the sunlight gleaming on the levelled automatic in his fat hand.

"Stick 'em up!" he rapped. Mr. Quelch gazed at him dumbfounded.

His stick, extended to point out that excellent relic of Early English architecture, remained extended, pointing at the sample of modern American gangsterism. He seemed petrified.

There was a howl from the juniors.

"Chew!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Chick Chew!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Gee!" ejaculated Putnam van Duck.

Up went Van Duck's hands over his head. Van Duck had been trained in a land where the command to "stick 'em up" was understood immediately, and

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obeyed with promptness. The black muzzle of the automatic was enough.

But Van Duck's hands were the only hands that went up. Greyfriars fellows were quite unaccustomed to hold-ups! They had not learned, as it were, how to play their part in the game.

They stared.

Billy Bunter, with a howl of terror, revolved on his axis and flew. Skinner and Snoop stood with knocking knees. Lord Mauleverer smiled—as if he found the startling scene amusing. The Bounder clenched his hands, his eyes gleaming. Most of the fellows stood stock still. It was a complete surprise—and all the fellows knew that a pressure of Chick's fat finger would spray death among them, if the gangster chose.

"What—what—" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

His eyes almost popped from his face at the gangster. Chick's gleamed over the levelled gun.

"I guess I said stick 'em up!" came his grating voice. "I'll mention that I ain't waiting."

"Who—who—who are you?" stuttered the Remove master. "What—what does this mean? How dare you produce a deadly weapon in the presence of schoolboys?"

"It's Chick Chew, sir!" gasped Putnam.

"The kidnapper, sir!" said Harry.

All the Famous Five knew the fat gangster by sight.

"You hear me toot, you schoolmaster guy?" hooted Chick. "Stick 'em up! You hear me say stick 'em up?"

"Certainly I hear you!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "But I do not follow your meaning. If you are threatening me with that weapon—"

"Hay?"

"If you have the audacity, the

effrontery, to threaten me with that weapon, I will have you taken into custody—"

"Wha-a-t!" stuttered Chick. "Carry me home to die! Loco, I guess! I'm saying stick 'em up, you pie-faced old geek!"

"I hear you distinctly," answered Mr. Quelch coldly. "But, as I have said, I do not follow your meaning."

Chick gazed at him over the gun. This guy, a schoolmaster, who taught boys in school, did not know what was meant by "stick 'em up!" Such abysmal ignorance amazed Mr. Chew. But, really, it was quite natural. Mr. Quelch knew many languages. English was his mother-tongue; French was familiar, he was a whale at Latin and Greek. But he had never learned American. Actually, he did not know that "stick 'em up" meant that he was to put his hands up over his head!

Neither was he frightened. His bony knees were not knocking together. His grip closed hard on his stick. His gimlet-eyes glittered. Not frightened in the least, Mr. Quelch was very angry.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Chick. "You pesky old piecan, I guess I mean grab atmosphere! Got that?"

Quelch only stared at him.

"Does anyone here know what this man means by such extraordinary expressions?" he inquired.

"He means put up your hands, sir!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Sure!" snapped Chick. "Put 'em up! Stick 'em up! Grab atmosphere! Claw the air! Reach for the sky! Got it now?"

He stepped nearer to Mr. Quelch, the levelled gun looking the Remove master full in the face. His piggy eyes glittered over it. Mr. Quelch's hands did not move.

"I understand now," he said coldly and contemptuously. "Certainly I shall obey no such order. You must be strangely ignorant of this country, my man, if you imagine, for one moment, that you can terrify an English schoolmaster, in charge of his boys. I conclude, if you are the man named Chew, that your object is to kidnap this American boy. I think you must be insane if you think you will be allowed to take a Greyfriars boy away from the protection of his Form-master."

"You sure have spilled a bibful," said Mr. Chew, "and I'll mention that I ain't here to chew the rag. Stick 'em up! I'd sure hate to spill your juice, but if you don't stick 'em up instanter I—"

Crash!

Quelch had not stirred till that moment. Now he stirred—suddenly. Before Chick Chew could begin to guess that the schoolmaster aimed at trouble Mr. Quelch's stick crashed on the automatic, knocking it out of his hand.

There was a gasp from the Remove.

It was done so swiftly, so suddenly, that even the wary gangster was taken by surprise. The automatic crashed down five or six yards away.

Even as it crashed Mr. Quelch leaped forward, stick upraised. It came down on Mr. Chew's soft, slouched hat, banging on the head within, and Mr. Chew, with a wild yell, staggered back. As he staggered Mr. Quelch followed him up, lashing again and again with the stick, crash on crash on the head of the howling gangster.

It was not, after all, pie for Chick! It felt like anything but pie!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Putting Paid to Chick!

"WAKE snakes!" gasped Putnam van Duck.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Good old Quelch!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Removites gazed and gasped. Quelch was no coward, they knew. And they knew that he had a tart temper. But they had never seen him coming out like this. Putnam van Duck was the most surprised. He had seen many things strange to him since he had been in the Old Country; but he had never dreamed of seeing a schoolmaster, armed only with a walking-stick, putting paid to an armed and desperate gangster—and that gangster Chick Chew, the star kidnapper of the United States.

But Quelch was putting paid to him. There was no doubt about that. Quelch had, as the grinning Bounder expressed it, his monkey up!

Indignant wrath glowed in his face.

In his own native city Chick might be a terrifying character; he might be, in his own language, a bully boy with a glass eye, and a tin terror on ten wheels! He might be a whole team and a cross dog under the wagon! But to the indignant Remove master he was an impudent ruffian, who had had the unparalleled audacity to think of kidnapping a boy while in his Form-master's charge! Such audacity called for chastisement. Mr. Quelch handed it out, with vigour.

Whack, whack, whack, rang his stick on the gangster.

Chick Chew jumped, and dodged, and bounded. Had his automatic been in his hand, the Remove master would have rolled over, riddled by lead. But his automatic lay far out of reach, and Bob Cherry had already planted a prompt foot on it. Physically, no doubt,

THE AMATEUR ROGUE!

"GET young Cholmondeley kicked out of Greyfriars or I'll get you expelled!" That threat hung over Carne the prefect. And the man who uttered it was Cholmondeley's own cousin—seeking to ruin the junior in the eyes of Sir George Cholmondeley.



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the hefty gangster would have been more than a match for Quelch, if they had clinched. But Chick had no chance of clinching. The lashing stick knocked him right and left.

Neither would a clinch have helped him, for the whole Remove were there, ready and eager to lend helping hands. "Come on!" shouted the Bounder.

"Stand back!" rapped Mr. Quelch over his shoulder. "Keep back, all of you! Leave this man to me!"

Unwillingly the juniors held back. But their aid was not needed. Chick was jumping back, jumping away, dodging, winding, twisting, to save his aching head from the crashing stick—without being able to save it.

Quelch followed him up, lashing and lashing.

Chick's frantic yells awoke the echoes of the ruined priory and the surrounding woods. He staggered, he stumbled, he jumped and bounded. He roared and he howled.

He fairly turned tail at last, and ran! Guys in Chicago joints could hardly have believed it, had they seen it—but there it was. Chick Chew, gangster and kidnapper, racketeer and bootlegger, Kidnapper No. 1 of the United States, was running as if for his life, panting, gasping, and howling—with an angry schoolmaster on his track, whacking him as he fled.

Lashes descended like rain on Chick's podgy back as he went. They rang like the crack of his own automatic.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

It was fortunate for Chick that Mr. Quelch was past the sprinting age. He won the race!

Quelch's last lash missed him. The Remove master halted, panting for breath. Chick, yelling, disappeared into the wood. He did not even pick the direction of the car in which Bud Parker awaited him. He did not know what direction he took! He did not care! All he cared about was getting out of the reach of that surprising schoolmaster guy.

He got out of it at last. He vanished into the thick wood. Mr. Quelch, breathing hard after his exertions, tucked the stick under his arm, and walked back into the old priory, where the breathless Remove awaited him.

The Removites gazed at their Form-master as he came. Quelch had surprised them, as well as the gangster. They were rather proud of Quelch at that moment.

"Three cheers, you men!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"What-ho!"

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

And the Remove gave them with a will.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!" The old priory and the woods rang with the roar.

Mr. Quelch frowned. He stared grimly at his cheering Form. Quelch's only feeling was annoyance at the whole occurrence.

"Boys!" he rapped.

"Hurrah!" roared the Remove.

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean? Why are you making that ridiculous noise?"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "Only cheering you, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"I guess you're the only guy that ever put it across Chick Chew, sir!" said Putnam van Duck.

"Do not be absurd, Van Duck! And I shall be glad if you can contrive, now that you are a Greyfriars boy, to speak English, or something like it!" snapped

Mr. Quelch. "I find it difficult to follow your meaning."

"I—I—I guess——"

"Say no more! Be silent, all of you! Cherry, what are you doing with that dangerous weapon? Hand it to me at once!"

"Only shoving on the safety-catch, sir!"

"Give it to me immediately. It must be handed over to the police!"

Mr. Quelch took the automatic, and put it in his pocket. Then he glanced at his watch.

"Time has been wasted!" he snapped. "Are we all here? Where is Bunter? Where is Skinner? Where is Snoop? Where is Fish?" Quelch's gimlet eyes glittered round. Several of the Form were missing. "Is it possible that any boys have taken advantage of the late occurrence to disperse?"

"I guess they had the wind up, sir——" began Putnam.

"If you cannot speak to your Form-master in English, Van Duck, do not speak at all. I noticed, Van Duck, that you placed your hands above your head when that ruffian uttered the extraordinary words which I did not, at the time, comprehend. You should not have done so."

"I guess he had us covered with his hardware, sir——"

"I have told you to speak English, Van Duck, or to be silent. You should have done nothing of the kind. Such an absurd action could only encourage the man. Do not let it occur again!"

"Oh!" gasped Putnam.

"We will now," said Mr. Quelch, "resume." He pointed with his stick to the mossy wall, from behind which Chick Chew had so startlingly emerged. "Give me your attention, please, and cease staring about and whispering. We are not here to waste time in idle talk. Now, this is an excellent example of the Early English style——"

Putnam van Duck gazed at his Form-master. It was difficult for the boy from Chicago to believe that he was going to carry on as if nothing had happened. But Mr. Quelch certainly was. He would have disdained to allow any gangster to flatter himself that he would be allowed to interrupt an English schoolmaster, engaged in giving instruction to his boys.

Quelch—a little breathless, certainly—carried on. But his boys did not give him a lot of attention, and remained rather vague on the subject of the Early English style in architecture. They were feeling excited, if Mr. Quelch disdained to feel anything of the kind. Some of them were wondering, too, whether the gangster might not reappear.

But there was no danger of that. Chick Chew, in an exhausted state, was taking a rest in the deep wood, and when he got going again, it was to totter away, with his fat hands pressed to an aching, spinning head.

Mr. Quelch finished his lecture to the Remove, and they walked on their homeward way, without seeing anything more of the man from Chicago. It had been quite an entertaining and thrilling Form walk—and, for the first time in history, the Remove looked forward to the next time when their Form-master would take them for a walk.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Revenge is Sweet!

"He, he, he!" chuckled Billy Bunter.

Poker Pike frowned.

It was the day after the Form walk, and all that day Poker Pike's

hard-boiled countenance had worn a grim frown.

Many other faces at Greyfriars had worn smiles—fellows smiled whenever they sighted Mr. Pike about the quad, or sitting on his usual seat by Gosling's lodge.

Poker was a serious-minded guy, and he saw nothing of a comic nature in his experience as a hopper. Everybody else did.

Poker, really, had had an awful time. He had hopped and hopped for quite a long time, till a kindly disposed passer-by had at last released him. Not knowing where to look for the Remove, he had gone back to the school, deeply concerned for Putnam—though his concern was relieved, when, a little later, the Remove came marching home, Putnam safe and sound along with them.

All the school had heard the story by the following day, and all the school smiled over it. Wingate and the great men of the Sixth smiled—even the masters smiled; and the fags chuckled and chortled. Dozens of fellows asked Poker how he liked hopping as a pastime. Hobson of the Shell asked him whether his favourite game was hopscotch. Poker was tired of the subject—more than tired, when Billy Bunter happened along, and cackled.

Serious guy as he was, Poker had a cheerful nature, and liked to see smiling faces round him. But that day he had had more than his fill of smiling faces. His hard-boiled face grew grimmer and grimmer—and now, as Bunter cackled, it was at its grimmest.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, how do you like hopping? He, he, he! I say, you looked an awful ass! He, he, he!"

Grunt from Poker.

He was walking by the elms, with his bowler hat screwed down on his head, over a knitted brow. The fat Owl of the Remove, had he been a little less shortsighted, and a little less obtuse, might have taken warning by his grin look. But Bunter rattled on cheerily:

"He, he, he! I say, if you knew what a silly idiot you looked—he, he, he! I saw—Owl! Leggo!"

Poker reached out with a long arm, and caught the fat junior by the collar. Having had enough on the subject of hopping, he was going to give Bunter a strong hint to that effect.

"Owl! Beast! Leggo!" roared Bunter, wriggling in the mighty grasp. "I say, I'll kick your shins, you beast! Leggo my neck!"

"I guess," remarked Poker, "that you spill too much, big boy! I guess I'm going to shake you up a few, and then some."

Shake, shake, shake!

"Urrgh!" gurgled Bunter, as he shook. "Gurrgh! Leggo! I say, if you make my specs fall off—gurrgh!—you beast!—and bust them—urrgh!—you'll have to pi-pip-pay for them—wurrgh!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Yaroooh! Help!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows—whooooop!"

Mr. Pike released Bunter suddenly, and he sat down with a bump that almost made the quadrangle shake.

"Wow!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Pike resumed his walk under the elms. Bunter sat and gasped for breath, spluttering, and blinking at him through his big spectacles.

The Greyfriars gunman took no further heed of Bunter. He was done with him.

Bunter, on the other hand, was not done with the gunman. Bunter was breathless, shaken, wrathful.

He tottered to his feet at last.

"Beast!" he roared.

Mr. Pike, sedately pacing under the elms, passed him by, like the idle wind which he regarded not.

Bunter rolled away to the House. Poker, if he regarded him at all, regarded him as done with. But that was an error on Poker's part. Bunter was not done with.

Even the worm will turn! Even Bunter was not to be shaken by the neck without getting his own back, if he could.

He would have liked to punch Poker's nose. But that was too large an order for Bunter. Indeed, he could not have reached it without a ladder, or at least a pair of steps. But there were other ways.

In Study No. 7—Bunter's study in the Remove—there remained an egg uneaten. It was remarkable for anything of an edible nature to remain in Bunter's study uneaten. But that egg was no longer edible. It had been overlooked in the study cupboard for some weeks. When it turned up, Peter Todd declared that it was no longer fit for active service, so to speak. Even Bunter regretfully had had to agree. There was no need, however, to waste it. Toddy declared that it would come in useful next time Coker of the Fifth barged into the Remove passage looking for trouble.

So there it was! When Billy Bunter rolled out of the House again that egg was clutched in his fat hand, and there was a truculent gleam behind his big spectacles.

"Hallo hallo, hallo! What have you got there?" inquired Bob Cherry, as the fat Owl rolled past him in the quad.

"Oh, nothing!" answered Bunter hastily. "Don't you barge in, Cherry! I haven't got an egg here—"

"What?"

"And I'm not going to chuck it at that beastly Yankee," added Bunter. "You mind your own business."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

He stared after Bunter as the fat junior rolled hurriedly on.

"Bunter, you ass!" he roared. "Chuck it! I mean, don't chuck it! Do you hear, you blithering bandersnatch?"

Billy Bunter heard, but he did not heed. He blinked at Poker Pike, still sedately pacing, with one eye on the gateway. Poker seemed to fancy that Chick Chew might walk in at that gate, any day or any hour, with the intention of cinching the millionaire's son—an idea that made Greyfriars fellows smile.

Poker certainly was not regarding Bunter; but Bunter was regarding Poker with a deadly glare through his big spectacles.

Standing by one of the elms, he waited for Poker to pass. Bob Cherry, from a distance stared at him.

Poker walked past the tree where Bunter stood. Up went the fat hand with the ancient egg in it.

Whiz!

Even Bunter could not miss at point-blank range.

The egg landed fairly on Poker Pike's nose. It burst there. The shell flew to fragments; the contents splashed and spurted over the hickory face.

"Yooo-yooop!" spluttered Poker, staggering. "Wake snakes and walk chalks! Gurrgh! What the great horned toad—Yurrgh!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter breathlessly.

He stayed only for one cackle, then he flew. He headed for the safety of

the House as fast as his fat little legs could move.

"Whooooogh!" spluttered Poker, dabbing wildly at the streaming egg, and half-suffocated by the scent that arose therefrom. "Urrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Poker spluttered and dabbed, and glared round for the hurler of the egg. With egg-streaming face he rushed in pursuit of Bunter.

Bunter flew. After him flew the Greyfriars gunman.

Bunter had a good start, but Poker Pike's wiry legs simply flashed. He gained on the fat Owl hand over fist.

Bunter, as he reached the House steps, cast a terrified blink over a fat shoulder. He saw an eggy and infuriated face only a yard from him. With a squeak of terror he bolted up the steps.

After him leaped Poker Pike.

"Owl! Help! Wow!" gasped Bunter, as he bolted into the House, like a fat rabbit into a burrow.

Coker, of the Fifth, who was just coming out, barely escaped a collision. He dodged just in time, and glared at Bunter.

"You young ass!" roared Coker. "You—"

Then Poker Pike flew in.

Coker had barely escaped a crash from Bunter. He did not escape a crash from the second comer. Poker hit him fair and square.

"Oh!" gasped Coker, as he rocked.

"Owl! What—" He rocked and rolled, and over him stumbled Pike.

"Search me!" gasped Poker.

"Owl! Oh! Yow! What the—Yooop!" spluttered Coker.

Poker was up quickly. Coker was still gurgling as the gunman leaped up, glaring round for Bunter.

But the delay, brief as it was, had given the fat Owl time. Bolting into the Rag, Bunter slammed the door and turned the key.

The next moment there was a bang at the door.

"Say, you young gink!" roared Poker Pike.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"I'm sure going to lam you a few!" yelled Poker.

"Yah!"

Bang!

A dozen fellows in the Rag stared at Bunter. Bunter, safe behind a locked door, howled defiance at his enemy.

Bang! came at the door.

"Yah! Rotter! Beast!" howled Bunter, through the keyhole. "Go away, you cheeky rotter! Get out of it, you ruffian! Yah!"

"By the great horned toad, I'll sure—"

"What is this disturbance?" It was Mr. Quelch's voice. "Pike, what are you doing here? How dare you make such a disturbance! Leave the House!"

"I guess—"

"Leave this House, I say! Go at once! How dare you bang on that door in such a way! Leave the House immediately!" barked Mr. Quelch.

Bunter listened breathlessly. There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Poker Pike was gone.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I bunged an egg right on his boko—he, he, he!—a jolly whiffy egg—he, he, he! I say, he got it right on the boko—he, he, he!"

From the window of the Rag the fellows there had a view of Poker Pike, tramping away from the House, dabbing at his hickory face as he went. They chuckled as they watched. Poker headed for his quarters in Gosling's lodge—doubtless in search of a wash,

which he certainly needed. Billy Bunter cackled loud and long.

The beast had had the cheek to shake him! Bunter had bunged an ancient egg at him in return and got away with it. But the happy Owl of the Remove would probably not have cackled so joyously had he known what was to follow.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

"Skip!"

"I SAY, you fellows, wait for me!" "Gym fathead!" "I'm coming!" "Oh roll on, then!"

The Famous Five could not help being surprised. Generally Billy Bunter avoided the gymnasium like a plague-spot. There were occasions when he was not allowed to avoid it, and then he went unwillingly, and with many discontented grunts. Physical jerks, really, were not in Bunter's line.

Now he seemed quite keen.

Surprised as they were, the chums of the Remove were quite ready to encourage Bunter in this new stunt. Bunter did not like exercise, but there was no doubt that he needed it. The more physical jerks he did, the less likely he was to burst his gym outfit.

The fat Owl blinked round through his big spectacles as they went down to the gym. It did not occur to the juniors for the moment that Bunter was in search, not of physical jerks, but of a bodyguard.

The fact was, that Bunter, having enjoyed his success in retaliating on Poker Pike, had discovered that there was a fly in the ointment, as it were. Mr. Quelch had ordered the gunman out of the House, and Poker, rather surprisingly, had gone. But Bunter was not intending to pass the rest of his natural life in the Rag, and he had a rather uneasy foreboding of what might happen next time he encountered Poker.

He had glimpsed the gunman in the Remove passage, and given that passage a wide berth, guessing that Poker was looking for him. Now he blinked round uneasily for the hickory face and the bowler hat. But Poker was not in the offing at the moment.

"I say, you fellows, if that beast turns up you'll barge him off, won't you?" said the fat Owl.

"Which beast?" asked Harry. "Loder of the Sixth after you?"

"That beast Pike!" said Bunter. "He cheeked me, you know, and I bunged an egg at his chivvy! I shouldn't wonder if he's shirty."

"He looked shirty when he got after you!" grinned Bob Cherry. "So that's why you've hooked on for gym, is it, you fat spoofer?"

"Oh, no! I'm fearfully keen on gym!" said Bunter hastily. "I don't need it so much as you fellows, of course, being so athletic. Still, I'm keen on it! I haven't come along with you fellows simply because I want you to keep that beast off. It's because I like your company, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter. "If it comes to gym practice, I fancy I could leave you standing."

"Good!" said Bob. "We'll see what Bunter can do on the trapeze, you men."

"I'm not thinking of the trapeze exactly—"

"Well, the parallel bars!"

"I don't care for that specially—"

"A bit of vaulting!" suggested Bob.

"Well, no," said Bunter, "not today!"



As the automatic flew from Chick Chew's hand, Mr. Quelch leaped forward, stick upraised. It came down on the gangster's soft slouched hat, banging on the head within, and Mr. Chew, with a yell, staggered back. The Remove Form-master followed him up, lashing again and again with the stick. "Ooooh! Whooooop!" Chick's frantic yells awoke the echoes of the ruined priory.

"Then what the thump are you going to do in the gym?" asked Harry.

"Well, I'll put you fellows through your paces and give you some tips," said Bunter, as they entered the gym.

The Famous Five looked at Billy Bunter as if they could have eaten him. They were great men in the gymnastic line, and the idea of being put through their paces and given tips by Billy Bunter seemed to get their goat, as Putnam van Duck would have expressed it.

"You cheeky fat idiot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"The cheekfulness of the esteemed fat Bunter is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Right as rain!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Bunty shall put us through our paces. We'll do everything Bunter does——"

"Eh! I didn't mean that!" said Bunter.

"I do!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gather round, you men!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Bunter's going to put us through gym practice. Get going, Bunter!"

A dozen fellows gathered round, with grinning faces. Billy Bunter cast a blink at the doorway. A bird in hand is said to be worth two in the bush, but Bunter was beginning to think that the playful Bob in hand was worse than Poker Pike in the bush.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I think——" began Bunter.

He broke off, as he glimpsed a bowler hat passing the open doorway.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

Poker was in the offing!

"You can cut, you fat ass!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm frightfully keen, you know." A moment before, Bunter had been thinking of cutting. But that glimpse of a bowler hat outside had decided him to remain.

"Well, get on with it," grinned Bob. "We know you can teach us a fearful lot, Bunter; but example is better than precept any day. What about skipping? I'll keep it up as long as you do."

"Kids' game!" said Bunter.

"Jolly good exercise—none better! Here's a rope!"

"I—I don't want it!"

"You do!" declared Bob. "And you can have it round you, like that——"

"Yaroo!"

"Or handle it in the usual way. Which do you prefer?"

"Beast!"

"Ha ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter took the skipping-rope. Skipping was, as Bob declared, a jolly good exercise. It was likely to do Bunter a lot of good. But, like many people, Bunter did not care much for the things that did him good.

Still, there was no doubt that he preferred the skipping-rope in his hands rather than laid round his fat legs. So he took it.

"Begin!" said Bob.

"I—I say——" gasped Bunter.

"Go it! I'll count up to a thousand!"

"You silly idiot!" gasped Bunter, almost overcome at the bare idea of skipping up to a thousand. "Look here——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's the gun merchant!"

"Oh lor'!"

Poker Pike lounged in at the doorway. The fellows in the gym stared at

him. It was the first time that the Greyfriars gunman had honoured that building with a visit. Evidently he had spotted the fact that Bunter was there—and he was on the fat Owl's trail. The egg had been washed from Poker's hickory face, but the grim frown remained.

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say——"

"Want anything, Pike?" asked Harry Wharton.

Poker nodded in his slow way.

"Yep!" he answered. "I guess I'm looking for that fat guy. Say, you going to skip, big boy?"

"Ow! Yes—no—gerrou!"

"Here, what are you up to?" yelled Bob, as the Greyfriars gunman slipped his hand to his hip and jerked out his celebrated six-gun.

"You guys stand clear!" said Poker. "I guess that fat piccan is my mutton."

"Yaroo!"

"Vamooso this here ranch, you Bunter!" said the gunman. "I guess bullets would skip some on this floor when I fan you."

"Fuf-fuf-fan me!" gasped Bunter. "Why, you beast—I say, you fellows—oh erikay——"

"Step outside!" said Poker, flourishing the gun.

Bunter did not step out of the gym—he bounded! That flourish of the six-gun was enough for Bunter.

"Look here, you ass——" gasped Bob Cherry, as the crowd of juniors followed Poker Pike, after Bunter.

"Pack it up, you uns!" said Poker stolidly. "I'm saying that that fat gink passed me an egg on my frontispiece, and I'm sure going to fan him a few! I guess you guys want to stand clear."

"I say, you fellows——" spluttered Bunter.

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His little round eyes almost popped through his big, round spectacles. Bunter knew what "fanning" was like! Poker on one occasion had "fanned" Loder of the Sixth with his gun in the quad. Bunter had thought that funny. But he did not think this funny.

"Look here, Pike—" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Park it!" said Poker.

He waved the gun at Bunter.

"Skip!" he roared.

"I—I say—"

"Skip!" roared Poker Pike.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

Bang!

There was a gasp from the crowd of Greyfriars fellows as the six-gun roared. The bullet crashed on the ground, hardly an inch from Bunter's foot. The fat Owl of the Remove let out a squeal of terror—and skipped!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fanned a Few!

"SKIP!" roared Poker Pike.

"Ooooooh!" gasped Bunter.

He skipped.

There was a surge back of the crowd of juniors as the gun began to roar. Nobody wanted to stop a chance bullet.

Guns were familiar to Poker Pike. He handled a gun just as he breathed. But they were not quite so familiar at Greyfriars School. Everybody preferred to be out of the line of fire.

Bunter, unfortunately, could not get out of it. He was right in it, and had to stay right in it.

He skipped. Some of the fellows were laughing—some were breathlessly excited. Poker Pike was quite serious. "Fanning a guy" was an old game with Poker, and he did not seem to realise that what might be quite the thing in a Chicago joint, or out in the wild and woolly West, was rather out of place in a school quadrangle. Dr. Locke had spoken to him with great severity on the occasion when he had "fanned" Loder of the Sixth. But perhaps Poker

had forgotten that severe lecture. Anyhow, he was going to "fan" Billy Bunter, and that was that!

Crash!

Bunter tangled his clumsy fat legs in the rope, and came down suddenly and hard. There was a roar.

"Yarooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the on-lookers.

There was a snort from Poker Pike.

"Get going, you pesky young piecan! You hear me hoot?"

"I—I can't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've broken my—my leg! And—and some ribs! And—and my neck—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

The six-gun roared again, and the bullet almost grazed a fat leg. Bunter bounded.

He was on his feet in a twinkling, with a swiftness and agility surprising in a fellow who had just broken his leg, his ribs, and his neck! Perhaps, however, there were not really so many breakages as that!

"Urrrrgh!" gasped Bunter. "I say—urrrgh!"

Poker flourished the smoking gun.

"You skipping?" he roared.

"Ow! No! Yes! Oh lor'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Bunter!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter skipped again. This time he did not tumble. He dared not. With desperate energy, Bunter skipped, amid yells of laughter. The only serious face present—apart from Bunter's—was Poker Pike's. The Greyfriars gunman was quite serious.

"Oh lor'!" spluttered Bunter. "Oh crikey! I say, you fellows—groooh! I say—ooooh!"

With his eyes almost popping through his glasses, his fat face streaming with perspiration, Bunter skipped, and skipped, and skipped. He gasped and spluttered for breath—but he skipped!

He slowed down at last—but only for a second!

Bang!

The six-gun roared: and it had an electrifying effect on Bunter! He skipped again with redoubled energy. A

bullet crashing an inch from his feet was more than enough to spur the fat Owl on to exertion.

"Urrrrrrrgh!" he gurgled as he skipped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Keep it up!"

"Blessed if I ever knew Bunter could keep it up like that!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Some skipper!"

"The skipfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skip skip, skip, went Bunter, frantically—skipping for his fat life! Grimly the gunman watched him, gun in hand.

Again Bunter slowed down. Exercise like this was more than flesh and blood could stand—Bunter's flesh and blood, at any rate. But he was quickly spurred on again!

Bang!

"Yaroooooooh!"

"Skip!" roared Poker.

"Ow! Oh crikey! Ooooooh!"

Bunter skipped and skipped! More and more fellows gathered round—at a safe distance from the gun! They stared, and chuckled, and yelled. Everybody at Greyfriars—except Bunter—knew that the fat Owl was badly in need of exercise! He was getting it now!

The rope fairly whizzed! Up and down went Bunter, skipping, the hickory face under the bowler hat watching him grimly.

Far in the distance, the Head stood at his study window—staring. The reports of the six-gun rang all over Greyfriars, awakening every echo in the old school. At another window, stood Mr. Quelch, petrified. Wingate of the Sixth came rushing on the scene.

"What the thump—" yelled the Greyfriars captain.

"Keep clear, you!" rapped Poker Pike.

"But—" stuttered Wingate.

"I—I—I say—" gurgled Bunter. He slowed down again. "I say—"

Bang!

"Yaroooooooooh!"

Bunter accelerated.

"Go it, Bunter!" roared Bob. "Skip, old fat bean, skip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can't do this!" howled Wingate. "Stop it at once! Do you hear, you mad ass? I tell you, stop it!"

He grabbed at Poker's shoulder. Poker swept round his left arm, and the Greyfriars captain sat down suddenly.

"Man down!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrrgh!" gurgled Billy Bunter, skipping wildly. "I—I s-s-say, you f-f-fellows, I kik-kik-kik-can't kip kip—keep it up! I—I—I—groooh! Oh lor'! Oogh!"

"Skip!" roared Poker.

"I—I—I—"

Bang!

"Oh crikey! Stop it, you beast, I'm skipping, ain't I?" shrieked Bunter. And he skipped with frantic energy.

Bump!

The fat Owl stumbled, caught his feet, and rolled over. Poker Pike regarded him thoughtfully.

"I guess that lets you out, big boy!" he remarked, and he packed his gun. "I'll say you done got some exercise you was wanting."

"Urrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Quelch!" gasped Bob.

From the direction of the House, Mr. Quelch was striding on the scene, coming down like a thunderstorm. But



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the performance was over. Poker had packed his gun; and he walked away as the Remove master came. Mr. Quelch was left to gaze at Bunter—sitting and spluttering in a tangled skipping-rope, and a sea of perspiration, amid a yelling crowd.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Quit!

IMPossible!" said Mr. Quelch. "I fear so!" agreed the Head. "Such absolutely outrageous conduct—"

"I agree!"

"Such outrageous, unparalleled—"

"Quite so, Mr. Quelch!" said the Head, soothingly. "I perfectly understand your feelings in the matter. I share them. But—"

The Head paused—and Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted. He was in the headmaster's study—and the topic, of course, was Poker Pike, and the fanning of Billy Bunter. That was the one topic at Greyfriars at the moment. Even cricket—even First Eleven matches—paled into insignificance, as a topic. Not for the first time, the Greyfriars gunman had brought down the house. Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with anger, "this—this—this person discharged firearms in the quadrangle, and he was plainly warned that if it occurred again, he would have to leave the school."

"True!" assented the Head.

"Now, sir, it has occurred again, more outrageously than before. On the former occasion, the victim was a Sixth Form prefect! On the present occasion, he is a junior boy in my Form! I have a right, sir—"

"Quite so, Mr. Quelch! I agree! Yet the matter presents difficulties," said the Head, slowly. "This man Pike is a—a—a somewhat unusual character, but I am sure that he means no harm. He has strange ways—"

"A ruffian, sir—"

"Hem! No actual harm has been done, and I am convinced that it was not his intention to do any, Mr. Quelch! Nevertheless—"

The Head paused again. Mr. Quelch compressed his lips bitterly. He was resolved that the weird proceedings of the Greyfriars gunman should come to an end! He was absolutely determined upon that! He was prepared to go to the length of handing in his own resignation, unless Poker Pike was ordered to go. He had never approved of the gunman's presence in the school. Now the gunman had transgressed all limits: passed unheeded the headmaster's solemn warning—and he had to go! Quelch was determined on that!

"It is a difficult matter, sir!" went on the Head, slowly. "Mr. Vanderdecken van Duck undoubtedly has reason to believe that his son is in danger from kidnappers! Several attempts have been made by the man—Bite—is his name—Bite—"

"Chew, sir!"

"Chew!" agreed the Head. "The man Chew! The boy Van Duck undoubtedly is in danger from this man Chew—what a very singular name! Indeed, your own experience only yesterday, sir—"

"My experience yesterday, sir, is a sufficient proof that no reckless and lawless ruffian from Chicago is required here, to protect a boy in my Form!" said the Remove master.

"But—"

"Against my wish, sir, against my order, the man Pike persisted in forcing

his company upon my boys, in a Form walk! He was guilty of what amounted to violence towards me personally. But he was not required, sir! He was not on the scene when the man Chew appeared, in the old priory. I am quite capable, sir, of protecting a boy under my charge! I think, sir, that as much was clearly demonstrated on the very occasion to which you refer."

Dr. Locke nodded.

"That is certainly true, Mr. Quelch."

There was a pause.

"Personally," said the Head, at last, "I should be disposed to speak very seriously to the man, and give him another chance. But I acknowledge that you have the right to insist, my dear Quelch. If you insist, I shall tell Mr. Pike that he must leave the school immediately."

"The decision is entirely in your hands, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "But so far as I am concerned, I do insist, most emphatically, that this lawless man should leave Greyfriars without an hour's delay."

"Very well!" said Dr. Locke. "That decides the matter, and I will see Mr. Pike and request him to leave."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Quelch left the Head's study—satisfied. Poker Pike was to go! That was settled now.

Quelch was very far from being a vindictive man. But a gunman from Chicago was altogether too far outside his experience for Henry Samuel Quelch to make the necessary allowances for his wild and woolly ways.

Had Quelch been convinced that the safety of a boy in his Form depended upon Mr. Pike remaining in the school, no doubt he would have swallowed his wrath and indignation from a sense of duty. But he was not convinced of anything of the kind.

His firm belief was, that Putnam van Duck, within the walls of Greyfriars School, was perfectly safe from all the kidnappers in the United States. He was perfectly safe under the care of his Form-master—and no wild and woolly gunman was needed.

Really, Mr. Quelch had some grounds for thinking so. Had he not, with his own hand, beaten off, and, in fact, chased Kidnapper No. 1 of the United States, when that enterprising gangster attempted to rope in the millionaire's son?

He had! Poker Pete was superfluous! He was not needed—and if he was not needed, what was the use of keeping so extraordinary a character about the school?

The Head did not feel so sure. Still, after what had happened, he had to admit that Quelch had the argument on his side. Quelch had saved the American junior from kidnapping. Poker had kicked up a tremendous shindy. Talking to the gunman seemed of no use—the Head had already talked to him at very considerable length; he had, as Poker described it, spilled a hatful! And this was the result! Poker had to go!

Having reached that decision, it only remained for Dr. Locke to carry it into effect. He left his study, left the House, and walked down to Gosling's lodge.

Immediately he was outside the House there was a breathless squeak from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows! The Beak's after him."

But Bunter's warning was not needed. Scores of eyes were upon the headmaster at once. The gravity in his majestic countenance, and the direction he was taking, left no doubt of his object! He was going to see Poker!

There was a buzz of excitement, and a rush from all sides. Ever since the "fanning" of Billy Bunter, an hour or more ago, there had been a buzzing crowd in the quad, breathlessly discussing what the Head was going to do. They had no doubt that he was going to do something drastic.

Loder of the Sixth told his friends, Carne and Walker, that the ruffian would have to go this time! He ought to have been kicked out for having fanned Loder a week or two ago; but he had been let off with a caution, as it were! Now he had broken out again! The Head could not possibly overlook it, Loder declared, with great satisfaction.

Other fellows, however, were not so pleased. Coker of the Fifth said that it was rather a shame. Coker had been down on that gunman, but he had come to change his opinion, and when Coker changed his opinion, of course he expected everybody else to follow suit. So Coker told Potter and Greene that it was a shame, and glared at them as if daring them to deny it.

Harry Wharton & Co. were quite sorry. They liked Poker Pike! He was rather a conglidrop, they admitted! He had manners and customs that were wildly out of place in a school. They had cheerfully lent a hand making him hop, when he checked their own special Beak. But they liked him all the same, and they realised, too, that he was far from conscious of having given serious offence.

"After all, what does Bunter matter?" argued Johnny Bull.

"Beast!" was Bunter's rejoinder to that.

"I dare say Pike thought a little exercise would do him good," argued Johnny. "And if he thought so, he was right."

"The rightfulness was terrific!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Bunter does not matter at all."

"Yah!" said Bunter. "I can tell you fellows he's jolly well going to be kicked out, and I'm jolly glad, so yah!"

Quite an army followed the headmaster, at a respectful distance, as he progressed majestically towards Gosling's lodge. Most of the fellows, it seemed, were sorry that it was the boot for Poker—if it was!

Loder of the Sixth was glad. Billy Bunter was glad. But really, they seemed to be the only fellows who were.

The Head seemed unconscious of the army behind him. He did not glance round. He arrived at Gosling's lodge, where he found Mr. Pike on his usual seat in his sunny corner, with an eye on the gates.

Poker rose to his feet as the headmaster arrived.

He did not remove his hat. Poker's hat was a fixture. It never seemed to occur to him to take it off, indoors or out. But he touched the brim with a finger. Hard-boiled hombre as he was, Poker Pike had a great respect for the silver-haired headmaster of Greyfriars. He had never seen such a guy before coming to Greyfriars, and at first he had almost doubted whether he was real! He was something utterly outside all Poker's previous experiences. But he had shown, on many occasions, a deep respect for the Head, and he showed it now. Which made the Head's task a little more difficult.

"Squat, sir!" said Poker hospitably, pointing to the bench from which he had risen.

"Eh!" ejaculated Dr. Locke.

"I guess you come to chew the rag a piece," said Poker amiably. "And I'll

say, sir, that there ain't no guy around this here caboodle that I like better to hear spilling chinwag."

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke.

"He, he, he!" came a fat chuckle.

Dr. Locke glanced around; apprised by that fat cackle from William George Bunter that he had an audience.

He frowned, and waved a hand.

The "army" retreated to a more respectful distance. They could not hear, but they could see! They watched with the deepest interest. Several fellows kicked Bunter, and he squeaked.

"I guess," said Putnam van Duck, "that it's pulling up stakes for Poker! I reckon I shan't be sorry not to have him treading on my tail. But I sure do hate to see him booted."

"Same here!" said Bob.

"The samefulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

And the Head's majestic back being turned again, the army encroached a little nearer, intensely anxious to hear as well as to witness the interview between the Head and the Greyfriars gunman.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

To Go or Not to Go!

"QUIT?" said Poker Pike.

He stared at the Head. His slits of eyes opened wide. His gash of a mouth set like a closed trap. Standing with his hands on his hips, the gunman faced the Head. "Quit?" he repeated.

"I am sorry!" said Dr. Locke gently. "But you will recall, Mr. Pike, that on the last occasion when you discharged firearms here—"

"When I—what?" interjected Poker. "Oh! I get you! You mean when I burned powder?"

"Hem! Precisely? You are aware that I warned you very seriously that if such a thing occurred again, I should be compelled to request you to take up your quarters elsewhere—"

Poker Pike rubbed his pimple of a nose thoughtfully. The old guy had him there. That was a cinch!

"You don't mean that you want me to beat it?" he asked.

"I regret very much—"

"Put your cards on the table, sir!" said Poker. "You aiming to say that you want me to vamoose the ranch?"

"To—to—to what?"

"Absquatulate!" said Poker.

"I—I hardly follow your meaning, Mr. Pike! What I desire to say is—"

"I got to git!"

"Git!" repeated the puzzled headmaster. "Oh! Get! No, Mr. Pike, I do not want you to get anything! I simply desire you to find other quarters as soon as possible. Say to-morrow—"

"Meaning that I got to git—to quit—to absquatulate—to vamoose the ranch—to hit the trail?" asked Poker. He wanted to get it clear.

"Oh!" gasped the Head. "Quite!"

"Waal," said Mr. Pike slowly, "there ain't no guy I'd sooner oblige than you, sir! I think a whole lot of you, sir, and then some. But I ain't quitting!"

"Eh?"

"I guess I got to keep tabs on that Putnam van Duck!" explained Poker. "How'd I keep tabs on him if I quit?"

"The boy is quite safe here, Mr. Pike—"

"Says you!" remarked Mr. Pike.

The Head coughed.

"Yes, certainly I say so, Mr. Pike! In any case, I can no longer permit

your presence here. Deadly weapons are out of place in a school. The discharge of firearms in the quadrangle is excessively dangerous and alarming. If you care to take up your residence in the vicinity of the school, I have, of course, no objection to make. But you must leave Greyfriars."

Poker shook his head.

"I'll say I'm powerful sorry to disoblige a gent I respect as much as I respect you, sir!" he said. "But it don't cut no ice! I got to keep tabs on that Putnam van Duck."

"Really, Mr. Pike—"

"Nor I guess it don't hurt that fat young piecan Bunter to skip a few!" said Poker. "Forget it, bo! I ain't vamoosing this here ranch."

"Sir!" gasped the Head.

"Same to you!" said Poker.

"I am in authority here, Mr. Pike," Dr. Locke's manner was growing stiff and very firm. "I request you to leave."

"Request all you like, sir!" said Poker cheerfully. "I ain't got no kick coming, fur as that goes."

"You will leave to-morrow."

"Nunk!"

"You will not presume to remain here Mr. Pike, now that my permission is withdrawn?"

"Surest thing you know!" answered Poker.

There was a breathless gasp among the Greyfriars fellows—many of them within hearing of this remarkable conversation. The Head, with his back to them, did not see them. Poker, with his hickory face to them, saw them, but did not heed them.

All the fellows knew that Poker was a tough guy. But few had anticipated that he would venture to pass by the commands of the august headmaster, like the idle wind which he regarded not.

But he did! His manner was respectful, but determined—quite determined. He was there to keep tabs on Putnam van Duck! He respected the Head—but where Putnam was concerned, the Head did not come into the picture. He was sorry—powerful sorry, as he said—to displease this silver-haired old guy! But he wasn't quitting! Not by a jugful!

There was a long pause. The pink showed in Dr. Locke's cheeks.

"You must go, Mr. Pike!" he said at last. "I shall expect you to vacate your quarters here to-morrow."

"Forget it, sir!" said Poker.

Dr. Locke breathed hard.

"You cannot remain here, Mr. Pike," he said.

"Says you! You see," said Poker, as if he were patiently explaining matters to an obstinate child, "I got to keep tabs on that Putnam van Duck! I guess I got to hang up my hat where he hangs up his hat! That's a cinch! You get me?"

Dr. Locke breathed harder.

"I shall expect you to be gone to-morrow, Mr. Pike," he said.

"I should smile!" said Mr. Pike.

"I have no more to say!" said the headmaster of Greyfriars, with great dignity.

"You've sure spilled a bibful!" agreed Poker.

Breathing still harder, the Head turned, to pace majestically back to the House. He found himself face to face with more than half Greyfriars.

He stared at the army.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

"What are all you boys doing here? What—?" There was a general scamper, before he could complete the question.

With an unusually high colour, the headmaster walked back to the House.

It was seldom that he was at a loss; but he was rather at a loss now. Poker Pike, ordered to quit, declined to quit. Exactly how that extraordinary man from Chicago was to be dealt with was rather a problem to the Head! Indeed, he was feeling a little annoyed with Mr. Quelch for having put such a problem up to him.

As soon as he was gone there was a rush back to the lodge. Poker Pike, seated on the bench, was surrounded by excited juniors.

"Poker, you pie-faced geck, you got to quit!" Putnam van Duck hooted at him. "You hear me, Poker? You got to beat it, you big stiff!"

"Forget it!" answered Poker.

"But you can't stay here against the Head's orders!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"You got another guess coming!" said Poker.

"You'll be shifted fast enough, if you don't go!" called out Loder of the Sixth.

Poker glanced at him.

"You honing to do the shifting?" he asked. "You asking me to fan you a few, like I did before, you piecan?"

Poker's hand went to his hip. Loder of the Sixth walked away rather fast. Apparently he did not want any more fanning.

"Then you're not going?" exclaimed Bob.

"Not so's you'd notice it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I say, you fellows, we'll jolly well chuck him out!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"I say, we'll jolly well—"

"It's all Bunter's fault," said Bob Cherry. "Let's kick Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry— Yaroooh! Beast! Stop it! Yoop!" Billy Bunter fled for his fat life.

In the studies at tea there was only one topic—Poker Pike, and his order to quit, which evidently he was going to disregard.

What would the Head do?

That was a question of intense and burning interest. Obviously the gunman, ordered to quit, had to quit! Equally obviously, he wasn't going to quit! No doubt he could be, as Loder remarked, shifted. But a guy like Poker would require some shifting! Excitement on the subject was intense—every fellow wondering what was going to happen on the morrow.

On the morrow, in the sunny May morning, Poker was seen taking his usual pasear, as he called it, in the quad. His hickory face showed no perturbation.

There was quite a buzz of excitement in the Form-rooms that morning. Never, or hardly ever, had the fellows been so keen to get out in break.

Was Poker still there? That was the question!

He was!

When the classes were dismissed and the fellows came out with a rush, the rush led almost everybody down to Gosling's lodge.

There sat Poker on his usual bench.

"Not gone yet?" gasped Peter Todd.

Poker glanced at Peter.

"Nope," he answered briefly.

"Not going?" yelled Bob.

"Nix!"

It looked as if Poker was right! The Greyfriars fellows went in for third school—and when they came out again Poker was still there. He was still there when the bell rang for dinner!

When the juniors came out after dinner there he still was—quiet, calm, unperturbed. Evidently Poker meant what he had said! He was not going! He had to go—but he wasn't going! And in breathless excitement the whole school wondered what was going to be the outcome!



As Poker Pike was about to pass the tree, Billy Bunter's fat hand went up, with the ancient egg in it. Whizz! The egg landed fairly on the gunman's nose and burst there. "Yooo-hooop!" spluttered Poker Pike, staggering. "Gurrgh! Yurrgh!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Corn in Egypt!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Just the man we want!" said Bob Cherry.

"Just!" said Frank Nugent heartily.

"The justfulness is terrific!" Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles, and backed away a pace. This cordial greeting did not seem to reassure him—it seemed to alarm him a little.

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" he exclaimed.

Bunter had been looking for the Famous Five. A postal order he had been expecting that morning had failed to arrive. Bunter was stony! And, as misfortunes never come singly, Bunter had not had enough dinner that day!

Shakespeare has remarked that when sorrows come they come not single spies, but in battalions! Thus it was with Bunter!

Broke to the wide, unable to raise even the price of a single, solitary jam-tart, Billy Bunter had been kept short of grub at dinner! He had only eaten enough for four or five fellows when Quelch stopped him.

Quelch fed with his Form! Often he had had a sharp eye on Bunter, and out short the helpings when, in Quelch's opinion, they too far exceeded the limit. Bunter, left to his own devices, would have had helpings after helpings, till they ran almost into astronomical figures. Quelch had often barged in, in the most disagreeable way, before Bunter was able to bring about a famine in the land. To-day he had barged in earlier, and more sharply, than usual. He was shirty—and Bunter got the benefit of it.

In the Form-room that morning the Remove had found Mr. Quelch very

tart. At dinner Bunter had found him tarter.

Bunter had rolled out dismally, with an aching void under his usually well-filled waistcoat. He had eaten hardly as much as the Famous Five together! It was all that beastly gunman's fault, for making old Quelch so shirty!

Bunter hated that gunman with a deadly hatred. Lynching, Bunter thought, was too good for him. Something lingering, with boiling oil in it, was more suitable for a man who was the cause of Bunter going short of foodstuffs!

That was why Bunter was looking for the Famous Five! He felt that if he did not get a snack before afternoon school, something serious might happen! In such an emergency he hoped that even those beasts would play up.

So when the chums of the Remove, instead of telling Bunter to buzz off, or roll away, as usual, greeted him smilingly, the fat Owl ought really to have been pleased!

Instead of which, he backed away in alarm! He suspected a rag!

"No larks!" he repeated, backing out of reach. "I say—"

"The larkfulness is not terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!" Hurree Jamset Ram Singh assured him solemnly.

"Hungry, old man?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Hungry ain't the word!" said Bunter dismally. "Famished is more like! You fellows saw me at dinner! I ate nothing! Not that I ever do eat much, as you know—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I'm not greedy—like some chaps," said Bunter. "But a fellow wants enough to eat! You heard Quelch! He stopped me at the fifth helping—"

"Wasn't it the fifteenth, as usual?" asked Bob.

"No!" roared Bunter. "It wasn't! It's all that putrid gunman's fault! He's got Quelch's rag out! I'm starved, in consequence! That's what they call justice here! I say, you fellows, I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I'm hard up at the present moment—actually stony! And hungry—hungry as a —"

"As a Bunter?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"Beast! Hungry as a hunter! I feel quite faint!" said Bunter pathetically. "I say, you fellows, this isn't a time to be mean! You wouldn't like to see me collapse in the Form-room this afternoon from sheer weakness, brought about by want of food, would you?"

The Famous Five chuckled. Certainly they would not have liked to see such a harrowing catastrophe. But they did not really think that there was any danger of it.

"You can cackle!" said Bunter bitterly. "Cackle—while I've got a tummy-ache from sheer hunger! Talk about Pontius Pilate fiddling while Berlin was burning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "If you can't do anything but cackle at a chap—"

"Come on, old fat bean!" said Bob Cherry. "Didn't I tell you you were just the man we want?"

"Where?" asked Bunter suspiciously.

"Tuckshop!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows standing a feed?"

"Exactly!"

"Oh!" repeated Bunter.

It was great news—welcome news; it

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(Continued from page 13.)

came like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. But Bunter was still a little doubtful. It was such good news, that it seemed rather too good to be true! Fellows often saw Bunter scoff their tuck; but seldom or never did they show enthusiasm on the subject!

At the present moment the chums of the Remove looked as if they regarded Billy Bunter as a man they delighted to honour! That, of course, was just as it should have been! Still, it was unusual! Billy Bunter could not help thinking that there was a catch in it somewhere!

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton.

"I—I say, you fellows, no larks! If—if you mean it—"

"Honest Injun!" said Johnny Bull solemnly.

"Oh, all right!"

Bunter's fat face beamed. With a cheerful, grinning countenance, he rolled away with the Famous Five to the school shop.

Really, it was a very happy coincidence! On the very occasion when Bunter was most in need of something substantial in the way of refreshment, the Famous Five were actually looking for him, to feed him! No coincidence could have been happier!

They entered the tuckshop together—five fellows smiling, and one grinning from one fat ear to the other! This clearly was Billy Bunter's lucky day.

"Now, before you start—" said Harry Wharton.

"Eh?"

"There's something I want to say—"

"Leave it till afterwards, old chap!" said Bunter. "I say, what about beginning with a cake? Those plum-cakes—"

"Hold on a minute! You see—"

"I say, you fellows, I'm fearfully hungry," said Bunter, "and we haven't much time, either—it's not much more than an hour to class!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped the Five.

Bunter, it seemed, was prepared to go on demolishing foodstuffs for an hour or more!

"No sense in wasting time!" urged Bunter. "It would be rather rotten to hear that beastly bell for classes before we've finished the feed—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I'll have that plum-cake—it's only a two-pound one—and while I'm scoffing it, you fellows can order the feed!" suggested Bunter.

"Oh scissors!"

"Look here, Bunter, I was going to say—" gasped Harry.

"Well, you look here, Wharton," said Bunter warmly, "if you've brought me here to jaw, I can say it's pretty rotten, after making out that it was going to be a feed. I jolly well think—"

"Stuff him with cake, and shut him up!" said Johnny Bull. "He won't leave off talking till his mouth's full."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

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"One of those plum-cakes, please, Mrs. Mimble—" said Harry.

"Oh good!" Bunter started on the cake at once. "I say, you fellows, you order the feed—I shall be ready in a minute!"

A two-pound cake evidently did not constitute a "feed," in Billy Bunter's estimation. It simply occupied his attention while the feed was got ready! He gobbled, but, at the same time, blinked anxiously at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles. Bunter liked plum-cake—and it was a nice plum-cake—but he was anxious about a feed.

"Well, get on with it, then," said Bunter. "I shall be ready in a minute."

"But you've got to play up on your side!" explained the captain of the Remove. "We want a quid pro quo from you—see?"

"I haven't a quid at the present moment—"

"Eh?"

"But I'll lend you a quid with pleasure, when my postal order comes," said Bunter. "Remind me!"

"Oh, my hat! I don't mean a quid!" gasped Wharton. "Quid pro quo—see? I mean, something in return! It's about Pike—"

"Pike!" repeated Bunter. "What about Pike? Blow him? Look here, you're not asking Pike to this feed! Besides, he wouldn't care for jam-tarts, doughnuts, and meringues! We're going to have jam-tarts, doughnuts, and meringues, ain't we?"

"If you like, but—"

"I'll have jam-tarts after this cake, then! A dozen to begin with," said Bunter. "I say, I'm nearly ready for that feed."

"About Pike!" said Harry Wharton firmly. "Look here, Bunter, we don't want the chap to be booted out of the school—"

"I do!" said Bunter.

"He's not a bad lad, really," said Bob.

"Awful rotter!" said Bunter, his voice a little muffled by cake. "Putrid Yankee! I hate him!"

"There'll be an awful row, if he won't go, when the Head's told him to go," said Nugent. "We don't want that."

"I don't mind," said Bunter.

"Now, look here," said Harry, "we all know jolly well that the Head would go easy with Pike, only Quelch is so ratty with the man. And Quelch is so jolly ratty, because of what Pike did to you yesterday—"

"Yes, the beast!"

"Well, we all think," said Harry, "that if you went to Quelch and begged him to overlook it just this once, it would be all right. You see, it's on your account that he's so awfully down on Pike! You, as the injured party, have a right to beg him off—see?"

"I'll watch it!" said Bunter.

"Ten to one, Quelch would go easy, and we know jolly well that the Head would, if Quelch did. Then the whole trouble would blow over, and the Head would withdraw his order, and Pike would stay on, and—"

"I don't want him here!"

"Never mind that—"

"I do mind it!" said Bunter firmly. "Don't talk rot, you chaps! I say, what about those jam-tarts next?"

"You'll go to Quelch—"

"No fear!"

The Famous Five looked at Bunter. He was finishing the cake, and was ready for the next item on the programme. But he was not ready to go to Mr. Quelch and beg off the gunman.

And as that was the single, sole, and solitary reason why the chums of the Remove were wasting foodstuffs on

Bunter, there was a pause in the proceedings. Bunter wiped an ocean of crumbs from a fat face with his sleeve.

"I'm ready!" he said.

"To go to the esteemed Quelch?" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"No, you ass! For the feed!"

"Good-bye, Bunter!" said Harry. "Come on, you men! Nothing doing!"

The Famous Five walked to the door. Billy Bunter gazed after them, through his spectacles, in consternation, almost in horror. The feed was off! That gorgeous spread was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream! It dawned on Bunter's fat brain that begging off Poker Pike, with Quelch, was a sine qua non—without that nothing!

It was not because he was such a nice chap that the chums of the Remove were feeding him. It was because they wanted him to beg off Poker Pike—and, as the fellow who had been the victim of Poker's gun-play, he was the only fellow who could do it!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows! Don't go! I say, I'll go to Quelch this minute—I mean, as soon as I've fed! I say, come back, old chaps—I say, I'm hungry—I say, I like that beastly brute no end—I mean, that splendid chap Pike—I've always admired him! I—I quite enjoyed what he did yesterday—I—I'm going to ask him to do it again! Honest Injun! I say—"

The Famous Five, exchanging grinning glances, came back. And Billy Bunter, with a gasp of relief, started on jam-tarts!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

BILLY BUNTER was looking sticky and shiny when he rolled out of the tuckshop with the chums of the Remove.

He was breathing with some little difficulty, but with great satisfaction. It had been a great spread—a gorgeous spread—a tip-top spread. For nearly half an hour Billy Bunter had parked foodstuffs—and even Billy Bunter had no room for more.

Harry Wharton & Co. had watched him, without joining in the spread. They were not keen on feeding so soon after dinner, for one thing; and funds would not run to it, for another. They were rather in funds, fortunately; but they had to pool resources, to see Bunter through.

Which was really very kind-hearted and disinterested of the Five. If this wheeze worked—and they did not see why it should not—it would save a lot of trouble all round. They liked Poker, and did not want to see him booted out. They liked Van Duck, and believed that he would be safer with Poker on the spot. They had a very strong impression that the Head would be perfectly willing to allow Poker to carry on, if only the angry Remove master could be placated. And as Quelch was so deeply incensed, on account of what had happened to Bunter, surely he would take a milder view, if Bunter, the injured party, begged him to do so!

It looked hopeful, at least!

Such a happy ending to the trouble would be a general benefit. For if the Head remained determined that Poker should go, and Poker remained determined that he wouldn't quit, it was clear that serious trouble was ahead.

The Famous Five had the happy feeling of being public benefactors—if only this stunt worked successfully.

They walked Bunter off to the House—at a slow pace! Bunter had exerted himself in the tuckshop—but his exertions there had tired him. He crawled.

Moreover, Bunter was not in a hurry to arrive at Quelch's study. He had been quite enthusiastic about the feed—he was less enthusiastic about seeing Quelch. The "quid" appealed to Bunter less than the "quo."

"I say, you fellows," Bunter ventured, as they neared the House, "on second thoughts—you know second thoughts are best, old chaps—I—I think that brute Pike had better go. You see—"

"Stick to it, old man!" said Bob Cherry.

"You—you see, Quelch may be ratty—"

"Bit too late to think of that!" growled Johnny Bull. "If you don't go to Quelch, you'll have to hand back that spread."

"Eh? How can I hand it back, you silly ass!" ejaculated Bunter.

"We can up-end you, old fat man, and shake it out of you!" explained Johnny. "And we jolly well will, if you don't go to Quelch!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"A bargain's a bargain, Bunter," said Harry, "and if it comes off all right, there's tea in the study."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

Even Bunter was not hungry at the moment. But he knew that he would be hungry again by tea-time.

Wharton had touched the right chord!

"Of course, I'm a fellow of my word!" said Bunter, with dignity. "Having given you fellows my word, I'm not likely to break it, I hope."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob.

And the fat junior rolled into the House—and the Famous Five guided him, slowly but surely, to Masters' Studies. But at the end of Masters' Passage, Bunter paused again.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come on!"

"Oh, yes! But, I say, if old Quelch is shirty—" Bunter seemed uneasy on that score. "You never know with a beak, you know! They—they're safer to keep away from, you know, like—like those Alsations—"

The Famous Five chuckled. They wondered what Quelch would have thought of that comparison.

"You never know, with an Alsatian!" Bunter argued. "They might bite, and they might not! It's the same with beaks! I'll tell you what, you fellows, we'll talk it over again—later—over tea, frinstance."

"Quelch doesn't bite!" grinned Bob Cherry. "And, ten to one, he will think it jolly decent of you to speak up for the man who made you skip yesterday."

"It will look jolly generous and decent!" remarked Nugent.

"Noble!" said Bob.

"Oh!" said Bunter. He had no objection to looking generous and noble. "I—I say, if you fellows think so, all right! After all, it is rather noble, ain't it, to speak up for that beast that popped off his gun at me? Do you fellows think Quelch will think it noble?"

"Well, what else can he think?" said Nugent.

"That's so!" agreed Bunter. "After all I always was a noble chap—"

"Eh?"

"I dare say Quelch has noticed it, you

know, and he won't be surprised to see me act in a noble manner! What?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Hem! Come on!"

Bunter came on, at last. He seemed to need an escort right up to Mr. Quelch's door. But the Famous Five were there to give him the necessary escort; and as he seemed a little slow to tap, Harry Wharton tapped for him.

"Come in!"

Mr. Quelch's voice answered from within the study. Certainly, it did not sound like the growl of a disturbed Alsatian. But it seemed to have a rather disconcerting effect on Bunter.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he stammered.

"Get in, you fat ass!" breathed Johnny Bull. "If you don't go in, Quelch will think it's somebody larking—"

"Oh lor'! But I—I say—"

Bob opened the door, stepping back quickly. Billy Bunter, in the open doorway, was revealed to the gaze of his Form-master.

"Bunter! What do you want?"

"Oh, nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean— Ow!" A surreptitious push started Bunter into the doorway. He rolled into the study.

Mr. Quelch stared at him not agreeably. It was only too clear that the Remove master was "shirty." As it happened, he had a view, from his study window, of Poker Pike in the distance—evidence that the Greyfriars gunman was not gone, and was not, apparently, thinking of going. Which, naturally, in the circumstances, roused Quelch's deepest ire.

"What is it, Bunter?" he asked curtly.

"I—I—I—" stammered the hapless Owl. "I—I—I've come here, sir—"

"What do you mean, Bunter? I can see that you have come here! Have you anything to say?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes! No! I—I mean, I—I was going to ask you, sir, about that beast—"

"What?"

"I—I mean Pike, sir—that man Pike—" stammered Bunter.

Mr. Quelch's brow registered thunder.

"Pike! Upon my word, has that man been guilty of some fresh outbreak of ruffianism?" he exclaimed. "This is too much! Speak! Tell me at once what has occurred, Bunter!"

Outside in the passage the Famous Five exchanged dubious glances. They had had great hopes of this wheeze! But they could not help feeling that this did not sound encouraging.

"Oh! Yes! No, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I mean—"

"What has he done now?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Nothing, sir!"

"Nothing! Then what have you to complain of?"

"Oh, dear! I didn't—I don't—I mean, I wasn't—that is, sir, I—I mean—I—I—I came here to say— Oh lor'!"

A pair of gimlet-eyes almost bored into Billy Bunter. Mr. Quelch was very keen of hearing, and faint sounds from outside warned him that Bunter had not come alone to his study. He suspected a "rag." Already Quelch was far from being at his bonniest. And the mere suspicion of a rag brought a look to his face that terrified the fat Owl almost out of his podgy wits.

"If this is some absurd jost on your Form-master, Bunter—" began Mr. Quelch, in a voice like unto that of the Great Huge Bear,

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I wanted to say— Oh crikey! I—I mean, about that man Spike, sir—I mean Pike—I—I want to put in a word for him, sir! I—I thought you'd think it noble, sir!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"And—and generous, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Being a noble chap—"

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir! The beast gave me an awful time yesterday, sir, and I'd be jolly glad to see him kicked out. I—I mean, if you'd be so kind as to give him another chance, sir! Speak to the Head—"

"Bunter!"

"Wharton thinks the Head would let him stay, sir, if you asked him. All the fellows think the Head's a bit soft, sir—"

Mr. Quelch, bereft of speech, gazed at his hopeful pupil. Outside, in the passage, five juniors brandished helpless fists, out of sight. Bunter was not a whale on tact, at the best of times; and now, reduced to a state of almost hopeless confusion by Mr. Quelch's thunderous glare, he hardly knew what he was saying at all.

"That—that's how it is, sir!" stammered the hapless Owl. "I—I—I've come here to beg him off, sir, if—if you don't mind! Not because they stood me a feed at the tuckshop, sir, or anything of that kind, but because I'm a noble chap, sir! I mean—I—I wish I hadn't come now!" groaned Bunter, as Mr. Quelch rose from his table with an expression on his face that might have made the fabled Gorgon green with envy.

Bunter had reason to wish he hadn't come!

Mr. Quelch found his voice.

"The boys outside will step into this study!" he said, very distinctly.

"Oh!" gasped the boys outside, taken by surprise. It was their first intimation that Quelch knew that they were there.

They stepped in! There was no help for it. Gimlet-eyes glittered at them as they entered. Nobody looked happy.

"Wharton! I gather, from the absurd and ridiculous remarks of this foolish boy, that you and your friends instigated him to this act of impertinence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"We—we—" stammered Wharton.

"I shall cane Bunter—"

"Oh lor'!"

"But I shall cane you with greater severity, as you are chiefly to blame," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"Bunter, you will bend over that chair!" Mr. Quelch picked up his cane. "Bend over immediately!"

"I—I say, sir, it—it wasn't me!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't—I mean, I didn't—I—I—I mean, I—I never—"

"Bend over!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter bent dismally over the chair.

Swipe!

"Yaroooooh!"

"You may go, Bunter!"

Bunter bolted.

"Now," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "you first, Wharton—"

It was quite a painful scene. How the wheeze might have worked if Billy Bunter had been blessed with as large an allowance of common sense as an ordinary bunny rabbit, remained unknown. Certainly it had not worked!

Quelch, so far from being placated, looked absolutely implacable. He had given Bunter one swipe! He gave the Famous Five three each! He put quite a lot of beef into them! The juniors

could only wonder, dismally, where an elderly sportsman like Quelch packed all the muscle.

A little breathless after his exertions, Mr. Quelch pointed to the door with his cane. Five suffering juniors wriggled away.

They wriggled down the passage.

In the Remove Form Room that afternoon, half a dozen juniors sat very uncomfortably on the forms. In a wriggling, painful state, they were not thinking much of the valuable instruction Mr. Quelch was handing out. They were thinking still less of rescuing Poker Pike from the order of the boot! The career of the Famous Five as public benefactors had been cut short suddenly.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Cinched!

"YOU—are—not—gone!"

Mr. Quelch seemed to bite off the words, one by one, as he stopped to address the hickory-faced man sitting in the sunset by Gosling's lodge.

Mr. Quelch, in hat and coat, was going out. He had to pass Poker Pike as he went; and his natural impulse was to pass him with calm, unseeing disdain. But he paused to speak.

The state of affairs was extraordinary. It was intolerable. Ordered to quit, Pike had not quitted. That day he was to have gone—and he had not gone! True, the Head had not specified exactly at what time of day he was to go! But the day was drawing to its close, and he showed no sign whatever of vacating his quarters at Greyfriars School.

Excitement on the subject was growing keener. Dozens of fellows came along, from time to time, to give Poker the once-over. Generally, he was to be seen, either walking in the quad, or sitting on Gosling's bench. If he was out of sight for ten minutes, a wild rumour spread that he was gone. But he always turned up again.

His hard-boiled face was expressionless as he met Mr. Quelch's glittering glance. Every other guy at Greyfriars might be excited, but Poker was as calm as usual. It might almost have been supposed that he had forgotten that the Head had given him notice to quit.

He shook his head and his bowler hat in reply to Mr. Quelch's question. Really, it hardly needed an answer, as Pike was there, under Quelch's eyes. And the gunman was a man of few words.

"Are you going?" breathed Mr. Quelch.

Another shake of the bullet head and the bowler hat!

Quelch breathed hard and deep. He had a secret misgiving that the Head would have been willing to make wide, very wide allowances, for the gunman guard of the millionaire's son.

And he wondered, with bitter anger, whether the Head might possibly let the matter slide—might let this unspeakable, lawless person, remain. The mere thought was intensely irritating to Mr. Quelch. If the Head showed signs of any such weakness, Quelch was the man to keep him up to the mark!

"Will you answer me, sir?" rapped Mr. Quelch, not satisfied with head-shakes.

"Sure!" said Poker.

"Are you leaving?"

"Nope!"

"You have received instructions—orders—"

"I got to keep tabs on that Putnam

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van Duck!" said Poker simply. "I'm sure powerful sorry to get that old schoolmaster duck's goat! Surest thing you know. But I ain't vamoosing the ranch none."

"I am going now to Courtfield," said Mr. Quelch; "unless you are gone when I return, force will be used!"

"Forget it, big boy!" answered Poker. "I guess that don't cut no ice with this baby! Mebbe you'd like to put in a word with the schoolmaster guy."

"What?"

"I sure do hate to get his goat," explained Poker. "I respect that old guy a whole lot. Mebbe if you chewed the rag with him a piece, and put it to him square, he'd get another guess."

Mr. Quelch gazed at the gunman. Poker, in the cheerful simplicity of his heart, was suggesting to Mr. Quelch to make his peace with the Head!

The Remove master did not answer. Words could not have expressed his feelings. He turned away with compressed lips, and walked out of the gates.

Several Greyfriars fellows, who were out of gates after class, glanced at him in the road. It was not Mr. Quelch's custom to walk along a public road with Jove-like thunder on his brow. On the present occasion, he was doing so. He was so deeply incensed, that he quite forgot his usual careful regard for appearances.

"I'll say the guy's got his mad up!" whispered Putnam van Duck, who was there with the Famous Five.

Putnam certainly did not intend his remark to reach his Form-master's ears. The juniors were on the other side of the road, and the boy from Chicago only whispered, but Mr. Quelch seemed to be endowed with almost superhuman keenness of hearing that afternoon. He spun round towards the Removites.

"Van Duck," he rapped, "what did you say?"

Putnam jumped.

"Oh great snakes!" he ejaculated.

"What! You said nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, apparently taking that as an answer to his question. "You made a disrespectful remark, Van Duck."

"I—I—I guess—" stammered the American junior.

Mr. Quelch pointed to the gateway.

"Go in at once! Remain within gates! You other boys will also go in! You are gated!"

"But, sir—" exclaimed Harry Wharton. Putnam had—unintentionally—asked for it, but the other fellows had said nothing. Evidently Quelch was not in a mood of sweet reasonableness.

"Silence, Wharton!" he rapped.

"But, sir—" began Bob Cherry.

"Go in immediately, all of you!"

With deep feelings the six juniors went in at the gates. Mr. Quelch watched them grudgingly till they had gone in, then he walked away with his long strides by the road over the common.

Courtfield common looked very green and pleasant under the May sunset, but the beauties of Nature were entirely lost on Mr. Quelch in his present angry and bitter mood.

He did not notice the red-and-purple glow of the sunset, he did not notice the green of the grass, or the glimmer of the foliage in the trees, neither did he notice other pedestrians on the road; he was quite wrapped up in his own incensed reflections.

He remained, therefore, in complete ignorance of the fact that a clean-shaven man with very keen eyes, loafing among the furze by the wayside, stepped into the road and walked after him.

Even had Quelch looked round, he would not have taken any particular

notice of that clean-shaven man. He had never seen Tug Keary before, but Tug had seen him. Tug had been keeping "tabs" on the school for some days, watching comings and goings. Now he was strolling behind Mr. Quelch on the road across the common, which grew rather lonely at a distance from Friar-dale and the school.

Unaware of the fact that he was shadowed, Mr. Quelch walked rapidly on. He was half-way to Courtfield when he heard a shrill, prolonged whistle behind him.

He gave it no heed.

But a man in horn-rimmed glasses who was smoking a cigarette in a clump of trees off the road heeded it. As soon as he heard that whistle Bud Parker sat up and took notice, as it were.

Mr. Quelch, walking on his way regardless, noticed a man in horn-rimmed glasses step into the road ahead of him, but as he had never seen the man before he gave him no special attention.

The horn-rimmed man, however, gave Mr. Quelch some. He stepped into the Form-master's way, and Mr. Quelch paused to avoid walking into him.

"Excuse me, sir," said the horn-rimmed man politely, "mebbe I'm speaking to Mr. Quelch?"

"That is my name," said the Remove master curtly.

"I reckoned so," agreed the horn-rimmed man. "I'll say you're young Putnam van Duck's schoolmaster at Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch looked at him hard. He noticed that the man spoke with a nasal twang, and did not need telling that he was an American. He could hardly suppose that one of the kidnapping gang had the audacity to address him on a public highway in broad daylight; but he was a little startled, though not at all alarmed. Quelch was not a man easily alarmed.

"I fail to see how that can concern you, a stranger to me," he answered stiffly. "And I have no time to waste."

"But it's so, ain't it?" asked the horn-rimmed man.

"I decline to be questioned, sir," answered Mr. Quelch. "Kindly allow me to pass."

He was aware of a sound of running feet on the road behind him, but he did not connect that sound with himself or his interlocutor. Tug was coming on at a run.

Bud Parker did not allow Mr. Quelch to pass; as the Remove master moved to go round him Bud shifted to block his way again.

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed. He was growing very angry, and he realised by this time that the man was a suspicious character. He slipped his walking-stick down from under his arm and took a business-like grip on it.

"Will you allow me to pass?" he rapped.

"I guess I want to chew the rag with you a piece, sir, if you got a few minutes—"

"I have no time whatever to waste, and I decline to converse with a stranger!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Stand aside, sir!"

"Guess again!" said Mr. Parker.

"What?"

"I'll say you got another guess coming!" said the horn-rimmed man.

Setting his lips, Mr. Quelch walked straight at the man; he gripped his stick, prepared to use it if necessary. His war-like look seemed to daunt Mr. Parker, who backed quickly away, though still keeping in front of the Remove master and barring his progress.

Quelch marched on—and Bud Parker retreated before him, backing. It was

the expression on Bud's face that drew Mr. Quelch's attention to the pattering footsteps behind him, now close at hand. He turned his head quickly.

Tug was almost upon him; as Mr. Quelch turned Tug leaped.

He staggered the next moment, with a fearful yell, as Quelch with startling swiftness landed out with the walking-stick. It was a hefty swipe, and it damaged Tug. He yelled and stumbled.

But at the same moment Bud Parker weighed in. Mr. Quelch's back was to him for the moment, and Bud leaped at it. An arm was thrown round the Form-master's neck from behind and he was dragged over in the road.

"Pronto, Tug!" panted Bud Parker.

Tug grasped the Remove master the next moment. The stick was wrenched from his hand and flung away. In the grasp of the two gangsters Mr. Quelch crumpled on the dusty road.

"Rascals!" he panted. "Scoundrels! Help!"

"Pack it up, you old gink you!" growled Tug savagely.

"Quick, you geek!" hissed Bud Parker.

In the grasp of the two gangsters the struggling Form-master was dragged off the road. Headlong, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, he was dragged into the clump of trees from which Bud Parker had emerged at the signal whistle of his confederate.

In the midst of that clump the breathless, panting Form-master was pinned down under Tug's knee. Bud lingered behind, glancing swiftly up and down the road and across the common, fearful that the scene, brief as it had been, might have been witnessed. But there was no one at hand, and the horn-rimmed man followed his confederate into the thick clump of trees, where they were screened from passing eyes.

Mr. Quelch—breathless, amazed, indignant, stuttering with wrath—still struggled feebly. But his struggles ceased as a cord was knotted round wrists and ankles and a gag was thrust into his mouth. Like a man in the grip of a horrid nightmare, he lay dazed and dizzy—and the voice of the horn-rimmed man came to his dizzy ears.

"Beat it, Tug! Get Chick and put him wise that we've got the school-master. Burn the wind, you!"

"You said it, Bud!"

Tug disappeared. Mr. Quelch, hardly believing that this amazing happening was real, lay in the grass, wriggling feebly, watched over by the man in the horn-rimmed glasses.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Losing Poker!

PUTNAM VAN DUCK glanced out of the school gates.

Greyfriars fellows were to be seen here and there, but the tall, angular figure of the Remove master had disappeared in the direction of distant Courtfield. The American junior turned back and rejoined the Famous Five.

He gave no heed to the gunman seated impassive on the bench by Gosling's lodge, but Poker Pike was watching him; his eyes had been on Putnam in the road before Mr. Quelch ordered the juniors to go in. So long as Putnam remained in sight Poker remained where he was, but if the millionaire's son started to walk away Poker was ready to get into action at once—treading on his tail, as Putnam called it, wherever he went.

"Coast's clear, you guys!" said Putnam. "I guess that pesky old piecan has beat it."

"We're gated," said Bob Cherry.

"I guess that cuts no ice. You guys coming?"

The Famous Five paused. They were not feeling pleased at being "gated" for nothing at all. Still, orders were orders, and authority was authority.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"It's rather thick," he said, "but we'd better stick in. We can get some cricket, instead of going for a walk, old bean."

"Guess again," said Van Duck.

"My dear chap," said Johnny Bull, "Quelch is shirty, and it can't be helped! We can get a walk on Courtfield Common any day. Chuck it!"

"Any day won't do, I guess," answered Van Duck. "I'll say it's now or never." He lowered his voice,

though Poker Pike was not within hearing of the group. "You guys heard what Quelch said to Poker. He's got his mad up. Poker's got to go—and he won't go! I got a stunt."

"Oh!" said Harry.

The Famous Five eyed Van Duck rather dubiously. Their own "stunt" for solving that difficulty had turned out a ghastly frost. They were still feeling twinges from the result.

"Wash it out!" said Johnny Bull. "I'm fed-up!"

"The fedfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"Aw, pack it up, and let a guy spill a syllable or two!" said Putnam. "I sure don't want a rookus here. Poker's

(Continued on next page.)

(1)

If you ever want to shine
In the rotten rascal line,
Or to try your hand at posing as a blade,
You will find that Harold Skinner
Has a method that's a winner,
It's a pastime he has very often played.
You must learn to smoke and bet,
For a furtive cigarette
Is a very special sign that you're a man!
You must wander out at night
Though your knees knock with fright,
It's essential to the "sporting fellow's"
plan!

(2)

You may call a chap a funk,
But be sure to do a bunk
If he shows an inclination for a scrap!
You'll employ your leisure time
In the heights of bliss sublime—
In a corner of the box-room, playing nap!
Don't care twopence for the Head,
Though you tremble and go red
Every time you feel in danger from the cane,
If you drink and bet and smoke,
You'll be always stony-broke,
But at any rate you won't have lived in
vain!

(3)

When a fellow stoops to folly
It is always melancholy,
As the poet says, and really it is sad
That such poor delights as these
Have continual power to please
Harold Skinner, for he's quite a clever
lad.
At his work he can be smart,
He has quite a turn for art.
He can act, as even Wibley will agree,
He can write and verify,
Though not quite so good as I,
(Or should it be not quite so good as
me?)

(5)

Three large trunks were open wide
With the lids back, and inside
They were empty,—or I should say, they
were not!
For I saw those shady funks
Calmly sitting in the trunks,
There was one trunk each for Skinner,
Snoop and Stott!
And between them, in its place,
Was an empty packing-case
As a table for the cards to rest upon.
"What's the big idea?" I cried.
"Have a smoke!" the cad replied.
"Take one now; in half-a-minute
they'll be gone!"

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Once more our long-haired poet breaks into verse. This week he brings before your notice

HAROLD SKINNER,

the cad of the Remove.



(4)

Well, I sought him everywhere
Till I tried the box-room—there
I discovered him at last with Snoop and
Stott.
Skinner said: "Come in, old chap!
Come and take a hand at Nap!"
But I only stared and answered: "Well,
great Scott!"
There was reason in my cry,
And I'm going to tell you why
I was puzzled and surprised at what I saw.
It was not the dingy three
Or their cards which staggered me,
It was not the smokes they feebly tried to
draw.

(6)

Then I coughed instead of spoke
(For the air was thick with smoke).
"It is easier sitting on the trunks than in.
Are you potty then, or what?"
At which Skinner winked at Stott,
And the "sports" surveyed my features
with a grin.
Then I heard a step outside.
"That's the Quelch-bird!" I cried.
And said Skinner: "Yes, it's just as I
had feared!"
Then they each ducked out of sight.
Closed the lids upon them tight.
And in half-a-tick they'd all three
disappeared!

(7)

I stood gasping at the stunt
Till I heard a nasty grunt,
And found Quelch gazing at me from
the door.
As he sniffed the tainted air,
He surveyed me with a glare.
"So I find you smoking here!" I
heard him roar.
I attempted to explain
That I hadn't, but in vain.
"Come with me, and I will cane you!"
he decided.
But I locked each trunk before
I went with him, and what's more,
When I let them out they each got
worse than I did!



an obstinate guy, and if he allows he won't beat it, he won't, and that's a cinch! If it came to gun-play—"

"Gun-play!" gasped Nugent.

"I guess Poker might forget that they don't handle guns in this country, if guys started in to boot him," said Putnam.

"Oh crikey!"

"Well, I got a stunt," said Putnam. "I guess it might be a winner. Poker won't absquatulate—you can bank on that! What's the big king-pin going to do; if he don't? Well, I reckon if we could take Poker out and lose him, that would make it O.K.—what?"

"He wouldn't be easy to lose," grinned Bob.

"S'poso I start on a lcttle pasear with you guys—what's Poker going to do?" said Putnam. "Tread on my tail, as usual. Well, we lead him hoofing it a few miles, and then dodge him—drop him somewhere. I guess we can wangle it. What'll he do then? We get back without Poker being wise to it, I'll say he'll go on hunting for this baby."

"Surest thing you know," grinned Bob.

"And when he chucks it and hikes back, he finds the place all shut up, bolted and barred," said Putnam. "He won't be able to get in. It's outside for Poker, and without a row. How's that for high?"

"Not a bad wheeze," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Goodness knows what's going to happen if he's still here when Quelch comes in! Quelch meant every word he said."

"So did Poker, I guess."

"We're gated!" said Harry. "But —" He glanced round at his chums. There was a general nod.

"Let's," said Nugent.

And the Famous Five and Putnam van Duck walked out of the gateway. Only Mr. Quelch knew that they were "gater," and Mr. Quelch was gone. They walked out, and took the road to Courtfield.

Looking back, a minute or two later, they beheld a hickory face under a bowler hat. Orders from the Head had no more effect on Poker Pike than water on a duck; but Putnam, starting for a walk, detached him promptly from his bench. The gunman swung along the road after the juniors.

They grinned as they walked on. Never once, since he had been at the school, had Putnam been able to get out of gates without the watchful Poker shadowing him, and only once had he been stopped—on the occasion of the Form walk, when he had been left behind, hopping Gunman as he was, gangster as he had been, Poker was a faithful and dutiful guy.

Where the juniors were going, he had no idea; but he knew that wherever they went, he was going also, so long as Putnam was with them. A dozen yards behind the party he kept watch. Wary as he was, however, it was certain that Poker had no suspicion that the millionaire's son was taking him for a walk to "lose" him.

The juniors reached the corner of the common, and turned off into Oak Lane, which led past Popper Court to the river. They did not care to keep on across the common by the road, as that was the direction taken by Mr. Quelch. They did not want to risk meeting the view of the Form-master who had "gated" them, and supposed that they had remained obediently within gates.

They strolled cheerily along the shady lane till they were half a mile

from the high road. At that distance the open spaces of the common were out of sight of anyone on the road. So at that point the Removites turned from the lane, and walked on to the green common.

After them walked Poker Pike.

It was quite a pleasant walk, and the juniors would have been glad to put in a good many miles, but for the fact that they had to get back to the school in time for calling-over. Once having "lost" Poker on the wide spaces of the common, however, a swift trot homeward by way of the towpath along the Sark, would land them at Greyfriars in time for roll.

"Here's the place," said Bob Cherry.

They reached the pond in the middle of Courtfield Common. Round it grew trees and bushes and bracken.

Grinning, the juniors disappeared into the thickets.

They heard a patter of feet behind them.

So long as they were in sight in the open, Poker Pike was content to keep his distance. But when they disappeared from view he put on speed at once. Poker would not have been surprised if the kidnappers had been lurking in those very thickets round the pond. Poker saw kidnappers everywhere.

Once out of the gunman's sight, however, the juniors acted swiftly. Instead of keeping on, they clambered into the branches of a beech.

They were deep in cover of the thick branches when Poker came trotting through the thickets below.

Through the foliage they had a glimpse of his bowler hat as he passed. He trotted on.

The juniors suppressed their chuckles.

Poker, quite unaware that their intention was to lose him, had not the slightest suspicion that they had taken to the branches. He figured that they had gone through the thickets, and continued on their way beyond.

Keeping silent, they listened. In a few minutes there was a sound of a calling voice.

"Say you Putnam van Duck!" shouted Poker. "Say, what's got you? You pesky young gink, you hear me toot? Say, what's come to you, you ornery young piecan?"

The juniors grinned in cheery silence. Poker evidently was puzzled.

Beyond the thickets the common stretched before him, glowing in the May sunset. He saw nothing of the juniors there. But they might have dipped into any of a dozen hollows, or passed beyond any of the clumps of trees, or fringes of hawthorns. Puzzled and perplexed, the gunman strode on at last, searching for them.

"Gone!" murmured Bob Cherry, as he glimpsed a bowler hat from the beech beyond the edge of the thickets.

"The gonefulness is terrific!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

From the high tree the Removites watched for some time, while the bowler hat remained in sight. Poker Pike was trotting to and fro, quartering the ground like a hunting dog in search of the vanished schoolboys. He found no trace of them, and the black bowler disappeared at last across the common.

"I guess," remarked Putnam van Duck, "that we've sure lost that guy."

"Looks like it," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

It was clear that Poker had no idea of turning back. He was going on hunting for the juniors. No doubt it would dawn on him, sooner or later, that they had been deliberately pulling

his leg; that they had dodged him somehow, and cut back to the school. Then, no doubt, Poker would hoof it back to Greyfriars—by that time, however, to find the school shut up for the night, and no admission for a gunman who had been ordered to quit.

The juniors slipped down from the beech, and cut off at a trot towards the river—the direction opposite from that taken by Poker Pike. They chuckled as they went. The wary gunman had fallen right into the trap, and the problem was solved. Whatever might have come of Poker's defiance of the Head's order to quit, it would not happen now.

Quickly the juniors trotted home, by way of the towpath. They reached the school in good time before Gosling came down to lock the gates. They strolled cheerily in to calling-over. Billy Bunter met them as they came in.

"I say, you fellows, heard?" asked Bunter.

"What and which?" asked Bob.

"He's gone."

"Who's gone?"

"That beastly gunman!" said Bunter, grinning. "I fancied it was all gas, you know. I jolly well knew he'd have to go! Well, he's gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted the fat Owl. "I can tell you he's jolly well gone! You can believe me or not, but he's jolly well cleared. I knew he would, of course. You fellows didn't, but I did."

"What a lot Bunter knows," remarked Bob Cherry.

"The knowfulness is terrific!"

"Well, you'll find I'm right," declared Bunter.

And undoubtedly Bunter was right. Poker was gone. While Mr. Prout called the roll in Hall, and Harry Wharton & Co. answered to their names, Poker was still searching the wide expanses of Courtfield Common for them. And they wondered how long he would keep it up before he came back to Greyfriars, to find himself locked out of the school.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Third Degree!

MR. QUELCH blinked, in the midst of the tree-clump. The sunset was still red on the open common, but under the branches, in the clump of beeches and ashes, it was growing dim.

The Remove master was still in a dazed and dizzy state of mind, hardly able to believe that he was not dreaming this awful occurrence.

But it was no dream; it was only too terribly real! He lay in the grass under the shadowy trees, bound hand and foot, with a gag in his mouth. Near him was a horn-rimmed man, watching and listening.

He was in the hands of the Chicago kidnappers—Mr. Quelch knew that; why, he could not begin to guess.

That the gang were watching the school for a chance to kidnap Putnam van Duck was pretty well known. But why they should have "cinched" Van Duck's Form-master was an insoluble mystery to Mr. Quelch.

Putnam, in the hands of the gangsters would have been worth half a million dollars to Chick Chew. Putnam's Form-master was worth nothing. But there he was—tied up like a turkey—waiting for the arrival of the leader of the kidnapping gang.

The sound of a car on the road came to Mr. Quelch's ears. He gave it no heed. A dozen times, at least, he had heard cars pass; the road was hardly more than twenty yards from the spot where he lay. But he was quite out of sight, and he could make no sound. There was no chance of help. He was in the hands of the gangsters till they chose to let him go.

This time, however, the buzz of the car stopped quite close at hand. Then came a brushing in the underwoods among the trees. Mr. Quelch realised that Chick had come.

It was Chick. Chew! Leaving the car by the roadside, the fat gangster followed Tug into the clump of trees.

"You got him here?"

Mr. Quelch heard the voice. He had heard it only once before—in the old priory in Friardale Wood—but he knew the unmusical tones of Mr. Chew.

"Yep," answered Tug, "and Bud keeping tabs on him, Chick."

"O.K., Chick!" grinned the horn-rimmed man, as the fat gangster loomed up in the shadows.

"I should smile!" remarked Chick.

Mr. Quelch's eyes glittered up at him. If the Remove master was alarmed, his face did not betray it. All that was indicated in his face was a deep and intense anger.

"Stick him up!" said Mr. Chew.

Bud and Tug grasped the Remove master, lifted him from the grass, and backed him against a tree. At a sign from Chick, the gag was taken from his mouth.

"You don't want to yaup, feller!" remarked Chick. "I guess as soon's you yell, you get a tap on the cabeza that will keep you quiet!"

Mr. Quelch gasped for breath.

"Scoundrel!" he panted.

"I'll say you can cut that out!" said Mr. Chew. "I got you, bo, and I'm doing the talking! I'll tell a man, you're a mighty handy guy with a stick when you got your fins loose, and I'll mention that I got a jump on my cabeza as big as a turkey's egg, and then some! But you ain't cavorting around with a club jest now! Nope!"

"Rascal!"

"Don't spill any more! Leave it to me to chew the rag!"

"If this," gasped Mr. Quelch, "is an act of revenge, I warn you that there is a law in this country to deal with ruffianly rascals such as you!"

"Guess again!" said Chick. "You sure did land me a few sockdolagers with that stick of yours, feller! But I ain't got no kick coming on that account. I sure wouldn't waste no time on you if that was the whole packet."

"Then what does this outrage mean?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"You're going to be useful!" explained Mr. Chew. "That's where you come in, feller! I got to get a cinch on Putnam van Duck. You're his schoolmaster, and I guess that baby jumps to your orders, some!"

Mr. Quelch could only stare at him.

"You get me?" asked Chick. "I been after that bird, and I ain't got him. It sure ain't no easy proposition, him parked in a big school, and a gunman of Poker Pike's heft keeping tabs on him. Night I horned in, there was Poker loosing off lead, and I guess I had to beat it. I'd have had him sure, Toosday, but you put it across me with that stick of yours. I ain't got him yet. But if you'd ever heard guys in Chicago talk about Kidnapper No. 1 of the United States, I guess you'd be wise to it that Chick Chew never gets left! You're going to help me cinch that young guy!"

"What?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"That's why!" said Chick. "You seeing light, bo? I'll say we ain't cinched you because we like the colour of your hair! Nope! You being that young gink's schoolmaster, I guess he will hop when you say hop—what?"

"I fail to understand you! Certainly Van Duck will obey my orders, if that is what you mean."

"S'pose you write him a note, telling him you want him?" said Mr. Chew. "He sure will mosey where you tell him."

"I—I presume so. But—"

"That's the lay-out," explained Chick, with a nod. "That's why we got you, feller! You write a note to that young geck—"

"I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"You put it that you've seen the inspector of perlice at Courtfield, who wants to see him particular about this kidnapping business—"

"Nothing of the kind!"

"You're waiting at the police station for him," pursued Chick, utterly disregarding the Remove master's interruptions, "and you send that note by a taximan—him to come in the taxi."

"Never!"

(Continued on next page.)

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P.106a

"I guess he knows your fist all right, you being his schoolmaster—"

"Certainly! But I will never—"

"And a note from his schoolmaster, telling him to hump along to the police station, won't make nobody smell no mouse," said Chick. And Bud and Tug nodded and grinned. "Jest an ordinary taxi—all above-board!" Mr. Chew chuckled. "I'll say that young guy will start pronto for the police station, though I allow he won't get so fur."

Mr. Quelch gazed at the gangster in wrath and horror.

He understood now why he had been seized.

The scheme was one, indeed, that could not possibly fail if the Remove master did his part.

The local police had the kidnapping matter in hand. There would be nothing surprising in Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, wanting to see the American junior on the subject. In any case, the boy had to obey instructions written by his Form-master, whom he would believe to be with the inspector, waiting for him to arrive at the police station.

That note was to be sent by a taxi-man from the rank at Courtfield. There would be nothing suspicious in the taxi or the driver—as likely as not, a man known by sight at the school.

The taxi-driver would know nothing, except that he was dispatched with a note to Greyfriars School.

Putnam van Duck, it was absolutely certain, would step into that taxi, and would believe, as the taxi-driver would believe, that he was being driven to Courtfield Police Station.

But on the lonely road across the common, lonelier than ever at the fall of dusk, three gangsters would be waiting for the taxi.

To hold up the taxi, knock the driver on the head if he offered resistance, and transfer the millionaire's son to a waiting car would be easy enough.

In horror and indignation, Mr. Quelch saw the whole scheme—saw that it could not fail, if that note was written and sent to Greyfriars. At the same time, he wondered that even a hardened and desperate crook could believe for one moment that a schoolmaster would, or could, lend assistance in kidnapping a boy under his charge.

He did not realise yet the methods Chick Chew was prepared to use to overcome the resistance he expected.

"You get me?" asked Chick, after giving the Greyfriars master a minute or two to get it down.

"I understand you," said Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with anger, "but I fail to understand your folly, your crass stupidity, in fancying for one moment that I would lend myself to such a scheme!"

"Schoolmasters," said Chick, "ain't rich, as a rule. Any good offering you a pocketful of dollars?"

"Scoundrel!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"That don't cut no ice, Chick, with a guy of that heft!" said Bud Parker.

"You said it," agreed Chick. "If that guy's asking for the third degree, I ain't the galoot to say nope! But I always was humane, and if that old piecan would click for a thousand dollars, I ain't mean."

"Rascal!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

Chick scanned his angry face. A guy that could not be bought was, perhaps, something new in Mr. Chew's experience. But he could see that this particular guy, at all events, was not to be bribed.

"I got a fountain-pen here, feller," he remarked. "We got it all cut and dried, ready for when we get a cinch."

on you. I better put you wise. You got to play up. You get third degree till you do! Get me?"

"Third degree!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Jest that! If you'd ever been in the can at Chicago, with the cops trying to squeeze information out of you, you'd be wise to it! You're going to learn right now!"

Mr. Quelch gasped.

He had heard dimly of "third degree." He realised, though he could hardly believe, that he was to be put to the torture till he consented to play the gangster's game.

Chick Chew was a business man. He would not have taken the trouble to revenge that beating at the old priory. Revenge was not business, but in carrying out his plans he was absolutely ruthless.

Mr. Quelch understood now. The gangsters knew that neither threats nor bribery would be of the slightest use. They depended on third degree to gain their point. And it was evident that they depended on it with absolute confidence. So far as Chick could see, it was simply a matter of time before the Remove master consented to do what was required of him. Probably, too, of a very short time.

"You getting down to brass tacks?" asked Chick.

"Villain!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I am helpless in your lawless hands. Do your worst. Not to save my life will I put pen to paper!"

"I'll say your life ain't in no danger, old-timer! But I guess you won't be able to use your arm ag'in for a month of Sundays if you keep us long at third degree," drawled Chick. "Stick that rag in his mouth, Tug. We sure don't want no publicity, and I'll say he'd yell a few if that trap of his wasn't corked."

The gag was packed into Mr. Quelch's mouth again.

Then, at a sign from Chick, Tug seized his left arm, and began, with perfect coolness, to twist it.

This was third degree!

The pain was excruciating. Slowly at first, then harder and harder the gangster twisted.

The perspiration started out on Mr. Quelch's forehead in great drops. He tried to cry out, but only a suffocated mumble came through the gag.

Chick and Bud watched him calmly. No doubt they had been through many such a scene before.

"Nod your cabeza when you're through!" said Chick. "Soon as you're ready to ridite that little hilly-do, jest give a nod. I'll sure wait."

Mr. Quelch made no sign.

He strove to struggle, but that was futile. His wrists were bound together. Tug's grip, like an iron vice, was on his elbow, twisting. It seemed to Mr. Quelch, as the pressure intensified, that the bone would crack. The pain was not merely terrible—it was intolerable, unendurable. It was more than human flesh and blood could stand.

Chick watched him coolly. He gave the hapless victim about a minute to surrender, but the Remove master made no sign.

Could he endure? He had to endure. He could not betray his trust. But as the torture intensified, Chick had no doubt that surrender was coming.

Was it coming? Mr. Quelch himself could hardly have told. But with startling suddenness there came an interruption. There was a rustle in the trees, and as the gangsters spun round, the barrel of a six-gun glimmered in the dusk, and a sharp voice rapped:

"Stick 'em up, you uns!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Hands Up!"

"STICK 'em up!" growled Poker Pike.

Poker's slits of eyes glittered over the levelled six-gun. His finger was on the trigger.

Bud Parker, his startled eyes almost bulging through his horn-rimmed glasses, shot up his hands above his head, almost before the words were out of Poker's mouth. Tug let go Mr. Quelch's elbow as suddenly as if Quelch's arm had become red-hot, and followed Bud's example with almost ludicrous swiftness.

Chick Chew was the only man that hesitated. His fat face purpled with rage. But his hesitation was brief, and it was well for the star kidnapper of the United States that it was brief. Up went the fat hands over the fat gangster's slouched hat.

The three gangsters stood, hands up. Poker was hardly six or seven feet from them, his gun swaying a little from side to side to cover all three. Chick rather prided himself on being "quick on the draw," but he had no chance to pull his automatic, and he knew it. Poker had what he would have called the "drop," and he would have loosed off lead without an instant's hesitation at a sign of gun-pulling. And only too well the Chicago gangsters were aware of it.

They obeyed like lambs!

"Keep 'em up!" drawled Poker.

Looking past the gangsters over the gun, he stared at Henry Samuel Quelch.

The Form-master, helpless in his bonds, leaned sagging against the tree. His face was white. His brain almost swam.

The sudden cessation of third degree made Mr. Quelch giddy with the relief. Poker Pike's voice was not musical, but the music of the spheres could not have sounded so melodious in the ears of the Remove master as Poker's metallic tones when he rapped out "Stick 'em up!" Poker was not handsome to look at, but never had so glad a sight dawned upon Mr. Quelch's vision as that of the hickory face under the bowler hat.

Poker's sudden appearance was a surprise to the gangsters, and certainly a surprise to Mr. Quelch. And Quelch was a surprise to Poker!

Certainly he was not looking for Quelch, or thinking of him. He was looking for Putnam van Duck.

He had been looking for him ever since the playful Removites had "lost" the gunman on Courtfield Common. It was dawning on Poker's rather solid brain, by that time, that the juniors had pulled his leg, dodged him, and cut back to the school by unseen paths. But he was not sure, and he was going to keep on the search till dark. As like as not, Poker figured, young Putnam had fallen in with watchful kidnappers, and when from a distant knoll he spotted a fat figure getting out of a car on the road over the common, Poker had no doubt of it.

Poker had horned in, nothing doubting that the gangsters had Putnam van Duck in that clump of trees.

Now he saw that they hadn't. They had Putnam's schoolmaster, which was quite a surprise to Poker.

Surprise, however, did not make the Greyfriars gunman less wary. He looked at Mr. Quelch, but he watched the gangsters like a cat at the same time. Any guy there who had reached for a gun would have "got his" sudden, as Poker would have put it.

They did not reach for guns. They stood with their hands up, gritting their teeth with rage.



"Villain!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Not to save my life will I do what you require!" The perspiration started out on the Form-master's forehead, in great drops, as Tug twisted his arm. Suddenly there was a rustle in the trees; and as the gangsters spun round, the barrel of a six-gun glimmered in the dusk, and a sharp voice rapped: "Stick 'em up, you'uns!" Poker Pike had come to the Form-master's rescue!

Mr. Quelch gave Poker an eloquent look. He could not speak, but his look was eloquence itself.

"The schoolmaster guy!" said Poker. "By the great horned toad! Say, you, Chick, what's this game?"

Chick ground his teeth without replying.

"You got him dumb!" said Poker. "You, Tug, let him loose! See you don't play no monkey-tricks while you're doing it, or I'm mentioning you won't play no more on this side of Jordan! Surest thing you know!"

Tug silently stepped to Mr. Quelch. In a couple of minutes the Remove master was freed from the bonds and the gag.

He gasped for breath.

"Now, what's this here game?" asked Poker casually. "I guess I got to keep tabs on that Putnam van Duck, but I ain't the guy to horn into any other galoot's funeral. Nope!"

"These wretches," gasped Mr. Quelch, "these—these lawless dastards—seized me, to force me to help them in kidnapping the boy Van Duck!"

Poker Pike nodded.

"I reckon I was guessing that was it!" he remarked. "And if that's the game, I'll say they ain't getting by with it none. You been giving this ole piccan third degree, Chick?"

Snarl from Chick.

"I'll remark it's a low-down game, Chick!" said Poker. "That old guy ain't no friend of mine, but I'll say I'm seeing him through this entertainment. You'uns want to beat it, keeping your fins over your hats. I guess I'm seeing you go, and I'll mention that if you don't keep on reaching for the sky you get yours so sudden it will make your heads swim."

Chick Chew drew a deep, deep breath. His little piggy eyes sparkled with rage

from layers of fat. He had been right on success—at least, he believed so. The intervention of the Greyfriars gunman had put paid to his best scheme. He was tempted to risk everything and pull a gun.

Poker read it in his fierce glare, and his hickory face set like iron. Bud Parker gave a gasp.

"Forget it, Chick! That guy has sure got us! Say, we don't want no gun-play."

"Surest thing you know!" said Poker grimly.

Chick controlled his rage.

He backed away, his associates backing on either side of him out of the trees to the open roadside.

Poker followed them with levelled gun.

Mr. Quelch, panting for breath, and rubbing an aching arm, followed after Poker with tottering footsteps.

Back and back went the gangsters, still "clawing the air," till they reached the car at the side of the road. All three were armed; all three watching for a chance to "pull" if Poker gave them a chance. But the Greyfriars gunman, watchful as a cat, gave them none.

"Keep going!" drawled Poker as Chick, having reached the roadside, made a movement towards the waiting car. "I'll mention that you're hoofing it, you'uns! You ain't travelling in no auto!"

"I guess——" hissed Chick.

"Can it!" said the gunman briefly. "You want to hit the horizon, and hit it quick. I ain't giving you long to get out of range of this hero hardware."

But Parker was already running. After him ran Tug. And after them both, breathing hard with rage, ran Chick.

Poker's levelled six-gun saw them off.

"Say, you schoolmaster guy!" drawled Poker. "You pack into that auto, pronto! Mister Chew's sure lending us that auto."

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Certainly, the car should be handed over to the authorities——"

"That don't cut no ice. Pack in! You figure them guys won't come gunning back, soon's they figure they got a chance! You want to stop a bullet?"

"Ob!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He tottered into the car.

Three figures, black against the sunset, were running. They dared not halt or turn under the levelled six-gun. But once beyond effective range, Poker did not need telling what Chick would be doing.

Poker packed his gun, dropped into the driving-seat, and started the engine. Its roar caused three running gangsters to halt and whirl round. And in the May sunset they had the pleasure—or otherwise—of seeing the car vanish at fifty m.p.h. in the direction of Greyfriars School.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

O.K.!

"I SAY, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"That's the bell!" said Bob Cherry.

"I say, think he's come back?" gasped Bunter.

"Quelch is still out," said Frank Nugent. "Perhaps it's Quelch!"

"Quelch would come in at masters' gate, with his key, after lock-up," said Harry Wharton.

"I guess it's Pike," grinned Putnam van Duck, "and maybe he'll get tired of ringing that bell."

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,475.

CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!

By JOHN BREDON.

"Surrender or Sink!"

A FLOATING leviathan, the giant Australian luxury liner, Sylvia Bay, steamed calmly and steadily through the long, glassy swell of the Indian Ocean, a plume of feathery smoke streaming from her squat yellow funnels, white enamel of her superstructure chequered against her black, glistening hull and rows of gleaming ports, a break of snowy foam piling away from the thrust of her lofty bows.

Captain Cooper, her master, immaculate in white drill and gold-peaked cap, smiled comfortably to himself as he paced the lofty bridge. He was a man with vast responsibilities, with £100,000 in bullion on board, destined for the Central India Bank at Bombay, to say nothing of the lives and comfort of a thousand passengers and crew to occupy his thoughts. Yet he could well afford to smile, for he had never known a more peaceful and uneventful voyage in all his forty years' experience of the sea.

On the promenade deck, undisturbed by the sonorous drone and throb of titanic engines, were gay and care-free passengers, sunning themselves, lounging in deck-chairs, laughing and chatting, playing at quoits. In the luxurious smoking-room Australian millionaires puffed at their cigars, lolled in padded leather armchairs as they perused the latest news bulletin served up by the vessel's radio.

The Sylvia Bay was a floating luxury hotel, the pride of the Australian shipping line to which she belonged.

Captain Cooper turned on a heel, surveying the sunlit, shimmering violet-hued seas with his keen eyes.

All around, the vast, dark-blue bowl of the Indian Ocean was empty to the skyline, excepting a point on their port bow, where a long, grey warship was surging along on a course that would presently bring her athwart the luxury liner's bows.

The captain gazed at her long and steadily through the lenses of his powerful binoculars.

The man-o'-war was heading along at a fast rate, foam streaming from her sharp steel cutwater as she ploughed along at a full thirty knots. A few men in uniform could be seen about her decks and gun-turrets, and high up in her control top might be caught the glint of gold braid in the sun. But from neither her masthead nor at the ensign staff astern did she show any flag.

Exhilarated by the sight, and admiring her grim, yet stately lines, the liner's passengers crowded to the bulwark rails, laughing, commenting, taking snapshots—little dreaming, any of them, of the sinister doom that lurked in the steel belt of armour-plating that caught the sunny ripples of the waves as she rode along.

On the bridge, Captain Cooper pursed his lips.

"Strange thing, Brast," he said to his first officer, as he lowered his glasses. "What ship may that be, I wonder? She carries no flag, and I can see no name. I wonder what nationality she is?"

First Officer Brast gazed keenly at the oncoming cruiser.



Her stern lifted high in the air, smoke and steam pouring through her hatches, as the Sylvia Bay wallowed for her last depth-dive!

"I've seen that packet somewhere before, sir," he answered, his tones slightly puzzled. "Ah, I have it! It's the Zermac, of the republic of Varland, in the Baltic. Yes, I saw her once at Singapore, when she was coaling, on her way to Nemesis Island."

Nemesis Island! The captain and his first officer glanced at one another a little oddly, but without speaking. Almost it seemed as if a cold, dank shadow, in spite of the blazing heat, was cast over them at the very mention of the worst and most dreaded penal settlement in the world.

"The cruiser Zermac," muttered Captain Cooper, after a pause. "But that's peculiar, Mr. Brast. Why doesn't she show the flag of the Varland navy? And what is she doing in this part of the Indian Ocean, if her destination is Nemesis Island, three hundred miles to the south?"

The captain hesitated, half-turning on his heel.

"I'll send her a wireless message," he announced to Mr. Brast. "I don't know what she can want with us, anyway."

He beckoned to the quartermaster on the bridge.

But the order he was about to give never left his lips. Even as he opened his mouth there came from the distance a sudden, echoing crash, as of thunder.

Both ship's officers wheeled round, exclamations of wonder and incredulity breaking from their lips.

A white cloud of smoke had puffed out from one of the twin eight-inch guns, mounted in the cruiser's fore-turret, a jet of flame, and then a shell came screaming over the Sylvia Bay's bows, to plunge sullenly, in a spout of foam, to starboard.

Captain Cooper staggered, as though he had been struck. His eyes bulged unbelievably. It was as though he had been strolling along the secure and orderly streets of Melbourne or Sydney and a policeman had suddenly hit him in the face.

Like an echo that rolled and grew in volume, his cry of astonishment swept the length of the crowded promenade deck. Passengers gaped and choked. Deck-hands ceased their polishing of brass and stared seawards, petrified.

A strange cruiser had fired upon the British flag!

"What—what on earth— Is this captain mad?" Dazedly Captain Cooper asked that question of space. "She's fired on us—a British vessel! An act of war! Thunderation, what's the matter with that devil cruiser?"

"Look!" exclaimed Brast, pointing. "She's signalling to us. A message!"

The black-and-white semaphore on the

fore-bridge of the cruiser was twitching and jerking intermittently, snapping out a signal across the gentle sea-swells.

As in a trance Captain Cooper spelled out the signalled message.

"Heave to! The next shot will be in your hull, under the water-line. Surrender or sink!"

"By the Lord Harry, there's a crew of escaped lunatics on board! There must be!" Frenziedly Captain Cooper beat his temples with a tightened fist. "Anyway, it's no use, Brast. We've got to chuck up the sponge. If they're mad enough to fire on British colours they must be mad enough for anything. By heavens, though, I'll learn the rights of this, and if there's any power left in the British Empire, the Varland Republic will soon be needing a new naval captain."

It needed one already, though neither Captain Cooper nor the Varland Republic was aware of that circumstance. As yet the world was in ignorance of the fact that Von Eimar, the world's master-spy, had headed a mutiny among the convicts, and had now set out in a captured cruiser on his career as a pirate—in the twentieth century!

With a gesture of despair, Captain Cooper rang down the engine-room telegraph to "Stop!" A bell clanged below, and obediently the giant twin engines of the Sylvia Bay sank to a pulsating murmur as she glided slowly to a standstill.

"I've Come for your Gold, Captain!"

VALIANLY Captain Cooper bridled his anger and indignation as a swift motor-pinnace came speeding alongside the tall black hull of the Sylvia Bay.

But, as his gaze rested upon the ragged and motley clad rascals, burned almost black by the sun, who nursed guns and knives across their knees as the craft slid alongside, his wrath gave place to wonderment, mingled with a strange, sinking dread.

Was it possible? But no! It was absurd! Piracy in the twentieth century—he was a fool even to entertain the idea! Resolutely he braced himself to meet the stocky, square-built man with the monocle in one eye, and wearing a white naval uniform, who came swinging up the accommodation-ladder with the agility of a captain.

Behind this newcomer swarmed the strangest pack of men Captain Cooper had ever seen, all half-naked, in dingy cotton slacks, some with broad straw hats, and others with rags of gaudy handkerchiefs twined round their greasy, unkempt heads. Every scowling, low-browed ruffian carried a carbine and ammunition belt, with a pair of revolvers, and a knife or cutlass; and there was not one but had a felon brand with a number burned upon his shaggy brown chest.

Captain Cooper caught his breath. His first fears revived as that burly, white-clad figure sprang up the bridge-ladder to salute him with podgy hand uplifted to gilt-peaked cap; and, with widening eyes he saw that the brass jacket-buttons were crested with the skull and crossbones, with a silver death's head in the stranger's hat-badge.

Pale blue eyes, twinkling in a broad Teutonic countenance, rested mockingly upon his tanned and startled face.

"Good-day, captain!" said the monocled intruder, speaking with only the faintest tinge of a guttural accent. "I must apologise for this somewhat startling and unexpected meeting. Pray allow me to introduce myself. For the

moment I travel under the somewhat melodramatic nom-de-guerre of 'Captain Vengeance,' and this"—he indicated the grim, grey cruiser that lay-to with all her guns trained upon the ocean liner—"is my ship, the Vengeance—"

Captain Cooper exploded with wrath.

"What in the name of dickens does this mean?" he bellowed, reddening with anger. "D'ye know what it means to fire on the British flag?"

Captain Vengeance, as he called himself, lifted a plump hand with a deprecatory smile.

"I think that will render explanations unnecessary," he remarked, pointing over the bridge wing.

The captain's eyes almost started from his head as he saw a limp, black mass creeping to the masthead of the cruiser. A puff of wind blew out its sable folds, and there, brazenly in the bright light of the sun, flaunted the death's head, the grinning white skull with the crossed thigh bones—Jolly Roger, unseen on the seas for over a hundred years!

The tensed silence that had held spell-bound every sailor and passenger aboard the Sylvia Bay, now broke out in a babble of excited exclamations.

"Great George!" ejaculated Captain Cooper, even now unable to credit the astounding truth. "D'ye mean to tell me—"

"Precisely!" said Captain Vengeance, with a smile. "You will pardon the vanity that is one of my besetting weaknesses. I am a pirate, so why should I not adopt the flag of my calling? You will understand that I am here to relieve you of the consignment of gold that you have on board. Movements of ships and their cargoes are reported at Nemesis Island—"

"Nemesis Island!" Light at last dawned upon Captain Cooper's mind. "You—come from—"

"The penal colony—yes!" Gold-filled teeth flashed in Von Eimar's smiling countenance. "We mutinied, and captured this cruiser. Is the situation clear? Then I need not remind you, captain, of the inevitable consequences should you refuse to comply. You know the sort of men who are sent to Nemesis Island—"

Choking, Captain Cooper turned to his first officer.

"Give him the keys, Mr. Brast," he said, forcing the reluctant words between his teeth. "We can do nothing. This confounded pirate has our hands tied. But, by Heaven, man," he growled, springing upon Von Eimar, "Captain Vengeance, or whatever you call yourself, you'll pay for this! I warn you!"

"That will do!" Von Eimar snapped out the words, and Captain Cooper panned his fury as best he could, as two villainous-looking convicts stood on either side of him with drawn automatics. "Luis Ramiro," the pirate leader added, to the gaudy, swarthy Latin beside him, "go to the liner's radio cabin, and see to it that she cannot send out an SOS after we leave. Make atoms of it! You others, follow the officer here, and have out those cases of specie. Look sharp about it!"

Captain Cooper smothered an oath as he watched the convicts hoisting out the heavily clamped boxes of bullion with the rope-handles slung over their broad, bare shoulders, under the round and wondering eyes of the passengers on the promenade deck.

Smiling, Von Eimar lighted a fat cigar, and strolled casually to and fro on the bridge, beaming upon the serene blue heavens.

The Sinking of the Sylvia Bay!

KILLER MORAN, American ex-gangster, and Von Eimar's pirate lieutenant, growled noisily in his thick throat as he hung over the bridge-rail of the Vengeance.

His ugly little eyes narrowed as he watched the bustle on the near-by liner.

"Say, she's coughin' up the boodle, ho," he said to Ronald Westdale, the English gun-lieutenant, who was standing on the foredeck beneath him. "I'll shore allow that Von Eimar is the prize-packet, an' then some. Yep, sir! Thar comes the boss right now. I guess thar're heavin' the dust into the mo'-boat instanta."

Silently the one-time lieutenant of the British Navy nodded, watching the pirate-convicts as they lowered the heavy, rope-handled cases into the bobbing motor-pinnace. Beside him, sitting miserably on the flap of an ammunition-hoist, was Roderick Drake, son of Morgan Drake, of the British Secret Service, Von Eimar's prisoner and hostage.

As they watched, the launch cast off, driving towards the waiting pirate cruiser, with Von Eimar in the stern-sheets.

"Hey!" exclaimed the American suddenly. He was gazing at a short slip of paper that the wireless-room orderly had just placed in his hand. "Gosh, if they ain't sending out a SOS! The weasels! Let the galoots have the works. Say, you Britisher down there, send 'em a shot through thar hull-plates!"

Ronald Westdale glanced up suddenly, lifting his brows.

"What's that, Moran? SOS? What rot! The chief's sure to have seen to it that the radio's put out of action."

The Yankee, however, was yelling out orders to the pirate gunners, orders couched in the hottest gangster slang, which were incomprehensible to most of them. The men on the fore-deck looked to Westdale for instructions, but he waved them back.

In the well-deck, however, a late master-gunner of the Varland navy, who understood the American's import, if not his actual words, sprang to one of the big six-inch guns on the port battery. Already the murderous weapon was trained upon the defenceless passenger liner. Squinting along the gun-sights, the man pressed a thumb upon the firing-push. A stunning explosion followed, and as the smoke drifted away one of the squat yellow smokestacks of the Sylvia Bay crumpled up in a ruin of smoky vapours, rent fragments, and smouldering chips of steel.

Terror reigned upon the great liner. Captain Cooper, white-faced as he clung to the bridge-rail, supposed it to be an act of pirate treachery as he swiftly gave orders for the lowering away of the boats. But, as it transpired later, it was a thoughtless passenger, possessing a portable radio set of his own, who had locked himself in his cabin and sent out that feteful SOS, without the captain's consent or even knowledge.

Ronald Westdale sprang up the ladder to the fore-bridge of the pirate cruiser. Killer Moran was leaning over the bridge-rail, bawling vehemently through a speaking-trumpet. Stripped to the waist, the gunners were already slipping a copper-cased six-inch shell into the oiled breech of the gun.

Grasping Moran by the shoulder, Ronald Westdale twirled the giant American round, knocking his gun from his hand.

"You murderous thug!" His

narrowed, grey eyes glared into the rage-distorted face of the Chicago gangster. "Who are you to give orders to the gunners? I'm the gunnery-lieutenant!"

The Killer snarled between broken, tobacco-stained teeth. His left hand snaked quickly towards a second gun holstered to his hips. Before he could draw it, however, Westdale's fist crashed upon his heavy, bulldog jaw, and down he slumped, resting huddled against a stanchion.

"Donnor! What is this?" Agilely Von Eimar bounded up the ladder, his pinnace having run alongside just before the six-incher was fired. He thrust his burly form between Westdale and Moran, light-blue eyes snapping viciously. "Who gave orders for that gun to be fired? Ach! Answer me, one of you!"

Contemptuously Westdale pointed to the cowering American, who blanched at the look in Von Eimar's narrowed eyes. Slowly the Killer's fingers clutched at the crumpled slip of paper that lay beside him, passing it up to the frowning pirate chief.

"So!" Von Eimar grunted as he read the S.O.S. "I warned him. He has defied me, the fool!" Abruptly he swung to the bridge-end, grasping the megaphone Moran had dropped. "Ahoy, Sylvia Bay! Lower away your boats. I'll give you ten minutes. After that I'll send you a torpedo to answer your S.O.S!"

"Captain! Von Eimar!" gasped Westdale. "You can't do that! It's murder!"

Savagely Von Eimar slowed round upon him, showing the crumpled radio message in his opened palm.

"You see that, Mr. Westdale? He ignored my warning. Very well! I shall teach them that Captain Vengeance is not to be trifled with!" To his crew he lustily shouted: "Forward torpedo-tube, stand by!"

Westdale fell back, biting his lip, fists clenched, face white and set. He could do nothing.

Already the Sylvia Bay was swinging out her boats. Captain Cooper knew that the threat was no idle one.

"Forward torpedo-tube, make ready to fire!"

With gold watch ready in a podgy

palm, Von Eimar stood waiting. Under the directions of a Varlander torpedo-layer, the convicts were sliding a long grey projectile into the sinister cylinder.

Roy Drake attempted to vault up to the bridge. Westdale, at the ladder-head, threw out a restraining arm to check him.

"Steady, chum!" said the ex-naval officer quietly. "You can do nothing. You'll only make matters worse for yourself."

Roy struggled desperately, but Westdale's grip was of iron.

Von Eimar snapped his watch-case shut, and fobbed it.

"Forward torpedo-tube, fire!" he ordered.

Like a silver fish the long steel har-binger of death flashed from the tube. It furrowed through the placid slides and ripples of water, heading for the tall black side of the doomed liner.

Crash!

A stricken leviathan, the Sylvia Bay staggered, then listed steeply to port. Cries of terror rose from her banking decks. Most of the boats had already been lowered, but some were still left. Smoke was pouring from her shattered funnels. She was settling rapidly, her keel-plates breached in a tremendous gap, and exultantly the waters roared in through her shattered sides.

"That's settled her business!" growled Von Eimar, shutting his binoculars with a snap. One huge stride he took to the engine-room telegraph, and rang down "Full speed." "Let her rip, Lebedoff!" he snapped, unplugging the voice-pipe that communicated to the Russian engineer. "Get every ounce of steam out of her boilers that you can! That S.O.S. has put a spoke in my plans. We've got to put a hundred miles between us and this spot before night-fall—before all the warships in these seas come bounding in our wake!"

Plugging the speaking-tube, he turned to fling a final glance at the sinking Sylvia Bay. Her stern was lifted high in the air, smoke and steam pouring through her hatches as she wallowed for her last depth-dive. Around, the sea was littered with lifeboats, fragments of wreckage, bobbing heads, and hastily improvised rafts, while seamen still leaped from her careened decks to flounder struggling in the warm seas. Most of the passengers and crew had got off in barely sufficient time, and the sea was smooth; but the death-roll must have been heavy, nevertheless.

From the scene of the tragedy Von Eimar focused his gaze upon the bridge-ladder, to see Roy Drake clinging to the steel rungs and struggling in the grasp of Ronald Westdale.

DON'T MISS THIS GRAND NUMBER!

In addition to a sparkling long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, there's a great yarn of the early days of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, written by Frank Richards. Ask for our companion paper to-day. Price 2d.

"You brute! You coward! You murderer!" Frantically the lad sobbed out his rage in Von Eimar's set, ruthless face. "You'll pay for this, you cutthroat pirate! You'll hang! Do you hear me—you'll hang!"

Emotion strangled his voice in a sea of sobs.

Von Eimar smiled sardonically, and turned on his heel.

Firmly Ronald Westdale dragged the boy away.

Realising the hopelessness of his position, Roderick Drake ceased his ravings, and relapsed quietly into a moody, abstracted apathy, eyes staring all unseeing before him. In silence he allowed Westdale to clamp a set of handcuffs on to his wrists, and then, stumbling through a blur of unbidden tears to the Englishman's cabin, he flung himself upon a bunk, with the door locked upon him, and turned his face to the wall.

His heart, after the terrible tragedy he had just witnessed, was too full for words.

Mysterious Strangers!

LET us leave Von Eimar and his crew of miscreants, racing through the Indian Ocean with all the speed of the Vengeance's pounding engines, and wing our way through space to the little seaside town of Chalmouth, on the Devon coast.

In a little by-street branching off the town square is a clean, pleasant little eating-house known as Old Joe's, and here, seated at one of its snowy-topped tables, are two men with whom we have business.

Ben Bycraft, boatswain of Morgan Drake's private yacht, the Shadow, was a bluff, breezy, hearty old sea-dog who seemed to belong to old-time wind-jammer days, with his close-cropped, bullet head, mottled face, and grey flinty eyes that seemed to have borrowed the colour of Northern Seas, plying knife and fork in his horny brown fingers as he demolished a meal that might have sufficed for a crew of hungry castaways. Opposite him sat Ned Sparkes, who, in addition to the duties of quartermaster, was also master-gunner aboard the Shadow. Rather a superfluous post for a pleasure yacht, one might have imagined; but the Shadow, as will be seen, was no ordinary yacht.

"Tom's late, Ben," observed Ned, glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece as he stretched out a tattooed hand for a cruet.

He referred to Tom Silver, the young wireless operator of the Shadow, who was a great favourite with the two elder seamen—though a casual observer, noticing how they often wrangled and argued together, would hardly have supposed it.

The boatswain, a man of few words, nodded without speaking as he demolished the last egg and pushed back a greasy plate. A reply was not required, as it happened, for at that very moment Tom Silver burst upon them, and it was the manner of his entry that provided the two sailormen with the greatest perplexity.

The wireless operator was young, fresh-looking, innocent and impudent looking at the same time, and as he approached the table, his air was more in the way of a member of a secret society than that of an ordinary, matter-of-fact ship's wireless officer.



"Sssh, you men!" he breathed, laying a finger to his lips with a dramatic gesture.

Ben Bycraft and Ned Sparkes stared open-mouthed. There was no one in the room to overhear, even had Tom Silver spoken in his naturally pitched voice, except Old Joe, the proprietor, and he was busy at his till, besides being deaf as a post.

"Quiet, boys!" hissed Tom—each of the others was old enough to have been his father. "There's dirty work going on, or I'm a Dutchman!" He lowered his voice still further. "Spies!" he added, in a thrilling whisper, glancing around at the softly lighted room—as if in expectation of seeing a few dark, sinister-looking foreigners crouching about in dim corners and listening to his whispered warnings.

His companions did not seem impressed.

"I tell you it's serious!" Tom Silver was breathless with excitement. "They tackled me half an hour ago, asked me if I belonged to the Shadow, and said they wanted to see the Chief. Look for yourselves!"

Abruptly he crossed the strip of red faded carpet, and peeped through the flowered window curtains at two muffled figures who waited impatiently under the dim rays of a street lamp-post.

"There they are," he continued, as Sparkes and the boatswain joined him. "What d'ye make of them? If you want my opinion, they're a set of anarchists who want to bump off the Chief!"

The faces of his two friends changed. They became serious as they looked furtively through the cold, blurred glass.

"I wonder what they want, scuttle me!" growled Bycraft. "Well look into this!"

The taller of the two strangers threw away his cigar-end impatiently as the suspicious three seamen approached.

"How much longer are we to be kept waiting?" he asked, with some asperity. "Our business is urgent! Are you Morgan Drake's men?"

His companion—a short, dapper individual, with long grey hair—whispered something into his ear.

"Fetch you along direct, sir!" said Bycraft stolidly, as he touched his cap. "The yacht is in the 'arbour, off Hold-the-wind Head. This way, gentlemen!"

"And have the goodness to get us there as soon as possible, my good men," said the grey-haired one, as they followed a curving street to where the salty tang of the Channel was wafted to their nostrils. "Our business is of national importance."

"Ay, ay, sir!" rejoined Ben breezily. Sinking his voice, he added to his two companions in an undertone: "Watch 'em close, boys—that tall 'un, especially. If he draws a gun, 'it 'im 'ard in the elbows! I'll take charge of the old 'un. He's sure to be the artfullest."

Before long a swift motor-launch was foaming smartly alongside the accommodation-ladder of Morgan Drake's white, graceful yacht.

A millionaire's luxury toy, that was the Shadow, seen from a boat or from the shore. Nobody except her crew and a few—a very few—favoured individuals were ever allowed to set foot upon her snow-white decks. Newspaper reporters had long since discovered the futility of attempting to interview Morgan Drake, millionaire, adventurer, explorer, and mystery man, of whom much was rumoured, and yet nothing known for certain.

And for this there was a most excellent reason—for, unbeknown to the world, the Shadow was a pocket battle-

cruiser. She carried six-inch guns fore and aft on disappearing platforms, with searchlights, machine-guns, quick-firers, and anti-aircraft guns. Her powerful twin engines could be worked up to a speed of forty knots, and her crew were all trained Navy men, silent, efficient.

Ben Bycraft took a silver pipe and blew it smartly as they reached the clean, white deck. Shadowy, uniformed figures loomed up from the vagueness of deckhouses, ventilators, and boats neatly stowed on chocks. To a burly master-at-arms Bycraft muttered something

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

ALTHOUGH the space at my disposal this week is rather limited, I must reply to two important queries. A "Magnetite," from Richmond, Surrey, who has nothing but praise for the MAGNET, asks me if I can tell him anything about G. Manville Fenn, writer of so many stories for boys. My correspondent has just read "Devon Boys!" which he describes as the finest boys' yarn he has ever read. Is G. Manville Fenn still alive? Is he still writing? Are his books obtainable? If my Richmond chum will consult any bookseller's list, he will find mention of the works of this author. They are still read, and I often hear inquiries for them. Manville Fenn died in 1909. More than thirty years ago he wrote stories for certain papers of the Amalgamated Press. Like famous Frank Richards, he was a man of wide interests with experience gained in many walks of life.

In reply to a query from W. Woods, of Dublin, there is no such thing as "normal" height, weight, and measurements of a boy of twelve. It is, of course, possible to arrive at average figures. These, however, are not really of value, since it is quite normal for a boy to develop early owing to his environment—i.e., an athletic type develops younger than others. The only real guide is development of muscle and chest in relation to height, not age, though naturally a distinction must be made between juveniles and adults.

Now for

NEXT WEEK'S SPECIAL FEATURES!

The grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled, "BUNTER BEATS THE GANGSTERS!" is a real corker! Poker Pike, Putnam van Duck's gunman bodyguard, is a suspicious guy where his "charge" is concerned—prepared to suspect everyone from the Head of Greyfriars down to Gosling, the porter. And Pike has every reason to be suspicious, as you will learn when you read this exciting yarn. As usual, you can be sure of a whole heap of laughs in the "Greyfriars Herald," and a feast of thrills in our powerful modern pirate story. Our clever Greyfriars Rhymester winds up this bumper programme with an "Interview" in verse written around Sidney James Snoop. Don't get left through failing to order next Saturday's MAGNET in good time, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

that caused that worthy to glance sharply at the two newcomers, and to flex mighty muscles under his blue sleeves as he set a heavy, bulldog jaw.

A door opened from the wireless cabin, and in a golden pool of light stood a tall, stalwart, aristocratic figure, cigar in mouth, hands in the pockets of his white yachting-suit.

"Ah!" cried the short grey man, advancing, with outstretched hand. "Morgan Drake!"

Morgan Drake stood for a split second, completely surprised. Then he, too, opened his hand, with a jovial, deep-chested laugh of welcome.

"Lord Carshire, of all people!" he exclaimed, taking the other's hand as he pitched the cigar over the ship's rail into the glimmering sea. "And Sir Basil Mitchell! What brings the Foreign Secretary and the First Lord of the Admiralty here at this hour of the night?"

In the shadows, three jaws dropped; three pairs of eyes started out of as many heads. Then with single accord three stunned and startled seamen melted away into the dusk.

"I thought somehow there was something distinguished about those two!" said Tom Silver musingly, as they made for their little cubby-hole between decks.

In his cabin, Morgan Drake poured out drinks for his distinguished guests. Through a haze of cigar-smoke the little grey Foreign Secretary gazed at the tanned, healthy, finely carved features before him, which showed nothing of the cares and responsibilities of the mastermind of Britain's Secret Service, except, perhaps, the nests of tiny crowsfeet that shadowed the kindly grey eyes and the silvery streaks about the temples.

"You have the news, Morgan Drake?" asked Lord Carshire.

Morgan Drake studied the slip of paper that the Foreign Secretary laid before him.

"SOS! SOS! SOS!" Sylvia Bay stopped by pirate cruiser—and there the radio message broke off with singular and ominous abruptness.

"Of course! The Shadow's wireless picked up the relayed message." Morgan Drake gazed pensively at the blue rings of tobacco-smoke that floated towards the cabin skylight. "But piracy—in the twentieth century! It seems fantastic!"

"Not so fantastic but that the Sylvia Bay has actually been sunk!" broke in the First Lord impulsively. "A British destroyer from the Andamans has picked up survivors. Incredible as it may seem, the Sylvia Bay was torpedoed by a strange cruiser, after having been robbed of her specie." Pausing portentously, after a moment he added: "Not only that, but the first officer, who was picked up, declares that he recognised the pirate for the Varland cruiser Zermac."

"Ah!" From a cabin locker Morgan Drake produced a chart of the Indian Ocean. Unrolling it, he described an arc on its surface with a pair of brass-mounted compasses. "The position of the Sylvia Bay when she was sunk was here," he said, indicating the latitude and longitude. Deftly he traced his finger to the south. "Nemesis Island is three hundred miles southward," he added significantly.

"Exactly!" Sir Basil thumped the table with his fist. "We have got into touch with the Varland ambassador in London. For twenty-four hours his Government has tried to establish communication with both the Zermac and Nemesis Island—without result!"

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All three exchanged significant glances.

"Von Eimar!" they said, with a single breath.

Wearily Morgan Drake passed a hand over his damp brow. He seemed to have grown suddenly drawn and haggard.

"We know that your son Roy was aboard the Zernac—the Foreign Secretary was beginning gently when there came a tap upon the cabin door."

"Excuse me, sir!" said the steward, as Morgan Drake bade him enter. "But Sparkes thinks this to be of importance to you, sir!"

Hastily Morgan Drake seized the slip of paper from the man's hand. His brow darkened as he passed it to his companions.

"S O S! Cruiser Zernac struck uncharted reef. Sinking rapidly. Von Eimar."

Then followed latitude and longitude.

Lord Carshire let out an exclamation.

"The pirate sunk!" Abruptly he checked the relief in his voice. "But, Morgan Drake, your son—"

Sir Basil boomed in, clumsily sympathetic.

"We'll send out a ship at once, Morgan Drake. He may have escaped."

Slowly Morgan Drake shook his head.

"You may send your ships, Sir Basil, but they will pick up no survivors. Wreckage, perhaps; a lifeboat with the Zernac's name upon it. Von Eimar is cunning enough to leave clues—"

"What do you mean?"

The statesman spoke in genuine bewilderment.

"I mean," said Morgan Drake, slowly and deliberately, "that the devil didn't rescue his servant Von Eimar from Nemesis Island just to pile him up on an uncharted reef! No! Such men as Von Eimar do not die in that way. That message was a fake, to throw off suspicion while Von Eimar makes for his burrow, wherever that may be. But I shall find him!"

A few hours later, with a purple plume of smoke trailing from her single white smoke-stack, the Shadow took the seas, out from Chalmouth Pool, bound on the track of Von Eimar and his crew of modern pirates!

(Be sure and join up in this exciting chase next Saturday, chums. It will be one long reel of thrills! By the way, are your chums reading this powerful modern pirate story? If not, why not?)

ORDERED TO QUIT!

(Continued from page 23.)

Harry Wharton & Co., in the big doorway, looked across the dusky quad, in the direction of the gates.

Clearly, through the still May evening, came the loud clang of the bell at the gates.

And the chums of the Remove grinned.

They had no doubt that Poker Pike had returned, now that darkness was falling—to find himself locked out of the school. Putnam's "stunt," it seemed, had worked like a charm!

"I sure hate it!" remarked Putnam. "Poker's a good little man, if only he'd keep his hardware packed. But he can't bulldoze the Head!"

"I guess he sure can't!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The bell ceased to ring. The juniors strained their eyes through the deep dusk in the quad. They did not suppose for a moment that Gosling would open the gates to the excluded gunman. Head's orders were Head's orders. Poker was out, and had to stay out!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob in astonishment. "What a t—w h o—Great Christopher Columbus!"

The lights of a car came gleaming up the drive.

At the wheel sat Poker Pike. Looking from the window was the face of Mr. Quelch.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

The stunt, after all, had not gone according to plan! Here was Poker Pike again, as large as life! But the amazing thing was that Quelch was with him! Evidently, they had returned to the school together.

The juniors could only stare.

"Oh crikey! Here comes the Head!" breathed Bob.

A crowd was gathering at the door. The news spread like wildfire that the gunman had come back. Perhaps the Head had spotted him from his study window. Anyhow, here he was, and the buzzing crowd of Greyfriars fellows made room for him to pass.

The car stopped. Poker Pike stepped down, and, to the general amazement, gave Mr. Quelch a hand from the car.

The Remove master came up the steps, leaning heavily on the gunman's sinewy arm.

"Mr. Quelch!" gasped the Head.

He could scarcely believe the evidence of his majestic eyes.

"Sir!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "This man—"

"I see him!" said the Head. "Mr. Pike, I was under the impression that you had, according to instructions, taken your departure."

"Dr. Lockel! Pray allow me to speak!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "This man has saved me from violence at the hands of those dastardly gangsters—"

"What?"

"I was seized, sir, by the ruffian called Chew Chick—I should say Chick Chew—who had the amazing effrontery, sir, to imagine that I could be forced into aiding his dastardly schemes—"

"Bless my soul!"

"I was subjected, sir, to what the wretch called 'third degree'—actual infliction of physical pain, sir, to compel me to accede to his demands—"

"Is it possible?"

"It is only too true, sir, and I hardly dare to think of what might have been my fate had not this—this excellent man—"

"This what?"

"This brave and dutiful man, sir, come to my rescue and driven off the ruffians—"

"Oh!"

"I owe my release to him, sir—to his courage, his devotion, to the generous aid he rendered to one who, I fear, has scarcely done him justice," said Mr. Quelch. "If, sir, you could possibly rescind your decision—"

"Eh?"

"And permit this excellent man to remain—"

"Oh!"

"I should take it, sir, as the greatest of favours," said Mr. Quelch. "I should be very grateful, indeed, sir."

"Dear me!" stammered the Head. "If the matter is as you state, Mr. Quelch—hem!—Mr. Pike—hem!—at Mr. Quelch's request, I withdraw my—my instructions! Most certainly! You will remain."

Poker nodded.

"Surest thing you know!" he remarked.

And Putnam van Duck's bodyguard remained at Greyfriars.

THE END.

(Again and again has America's star kidnapper failed to capture his prize. But Chick Chew's a sticker! Look out for the next exciting yarn in this series, entitled: "BUNTER BEATS THE GANGSTERS!" You'll find it in next Saturday's bumper issue of the MAGNET, chums!)

"I take my stand on this!" says **ALLY PALLY**

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FALSE FACES!

This week's Rib-Tickling Instalment of Young Dicky Nugent's Full-of-Fun Serial:

"THE SPARTANS OF ST. SAM'S!"

Sports Day dawned at last, and St. Sam's awoke to find that the weather was simply topping. The fags had an extra wash in honour of the grate occasion, and the playing-fields were bathed in sunshine. Everything seemed favorable to a day of good, clean sport.

Only one thing marred the complete happiness of the St. Sam's fellows—the fact that the Head, like the silly old fogey he was, had insisted on St. Sam's being represented by his so-called Spartans! "If only we had Burleigh's team instead of those nocked-need wrecks!" sighed Loyle of the Fourth, as he gazed across to the playing-fields, from the dormitory windows. "Then we'd be sure of the old skool beating all comers to-day!"

"Perhaps the Spartans will do well," remarked Trow, hoefully. "Considering all the training the Head has given them, they shouldn't be so dusty." "Nevertheless, old chap, I'm afraid they'll drag our name into the mud," said Loyle, with a rueful larf.

Similar sentiments to these were being expressed all over St. Sam's. But there was one who held quite the opposite opinion—namely, Doctor Birchmell. The Head's mood, as he scampered across to the Skool House, was one of sopreme optimism.

"Jevver see a better day, Lickham?" he chortled, as he found Mr. Lickham having brekker in his study. "This is just the weather we needed to ensure the triumph of our splendid Spartans!" "Really, sir?" sniffed Mr. Lickham, who was one of the many who disapproved of the Head's takticks. "I shouldn't have thought the weather made much difference to games of tiddle-winks or noughts-and-crosses!"

The Head stared. "Tiddle-winks and noughts-and-crosses, Lickham? Whatever makes you think that tiddle-winks and noughts-and-crosses figure in to-day's programme?"

"Merely the fact that you eggspert the Spartans to score a big triumph, sir!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "They're the only games in which I can imagine them scoring a triumph and—yareooooo! Leggo by dose!"

"Perhaps that will learn you not to make rash remarks about the team I trained myself!" said

Doctor Birchmell sternly, as he gave the Fourth Form master's nose a final savidge tweak. "Consider yourself lucky, Lickham, to get off so lightly as this. Only the fact that your remarks were not rather has saved your bacon!"

He then left Mr. Lickham to finish his interrupted brekker and went upstairs to Burleigh's study in the Sixth Form passage. There, he was surprised to find the kaptin of the Sixth wearing his outdoor clobber and packing a suitcase.

"Going out, Burleigh?" he asked.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Burleigh, with crushing sarkasm. "I'm just coming in!"

"Then why are you packing your suitcase?" "To brane the next caller with!"

The Head frowned. "I trust, Burleigh, that you are not trying to be dispartient to your headmaster. My reason for calling on you was to find out what you and your colleagues in the old St. Sam's athletick team are going to do to-day. I

hoop that like trow sportsmen you will be present to cheer on the Spartans who have replaced you, to a grate and glorious viktory!" "Well, I must say you've got a nerve to make such a rekwest!" remarked Burleigh. "But if it's any satisfaction to you to know it, sir, all the fellows concerned will be present—including myself!"

"Honest injun?" asked the Head. "Really and trowly! We shan't be to the four-front, of corse, sir; you can hardly eggspert that, under the cirs. But you can depend on it, we shall all be there!"

"Burleigh," said Doctor Birchmell, with quite a catch in his voice, "I congratulate you on a wise and sportmanlike decision—and also on escaping the flogging I should have given had you decided otherwise! See you later!"

And Doctor Birchmell fairly danced

out of Burleigh's study—as eggsgited as a Second Form fag at the thought that Burleigh had come to heal at last!

If the Head had looked back again a few seconds later he mite have had his doubts about his supposed viktory, for he would have found Burleigh stretched out in his armchair, larfing fit to bust!

"Ha, ha, ha!" Burleigh was roaring. "He's as pleased as a dog with two tails becawse we're all going to the Sports! I wonder what he'd say if he knew we were going, not as speektators, but as rivals to his precious Spartans! Ho, ho, ho!"

After he had had his larf out, Burleigh finished his packing, then quitted the study, carrying his suitcase with him. Taking a little-used route, he made his way stelhily out of the Skool House and prosceeded across the quad to a side gate. There he found a

crowd of St. Sam's fellows waiting for him, all carrying suitcases like himself. If Doctor Birchmell had been there, he would have been amazed to reckernise the very athletes he had banned when he had started the St. Sam's Spartans. Forchuntly, the Head was by this time bizzily engaged

in feeding his face in the dining-hall—without a suspicion of the deep plot that was being hatched against him!

With Burleigh and Tallboy, his bosom pal, tramp-ing ahead of them, the athletes marched across the fields to Muggleton. Strapper and Hardnut of the Sixth were amongst them, Fleetfoot of the Fifth and Jolly and Fearless of the Fourth, and many another stalwart of the turf and cinder-track. They all looked in the pink; the meer site of them would have made the Head's Spartans turn green with envy and the Head himself feel mitey blue!

"This way, you fellow!" eride Burleigh, as, arriving in Muggleton, he led the way into a shop which bore the intreoging sign "BEWTY PARLOUR" on its portals. Why Burleigh and his merry men should be going into a bewty parlour would certainly have puzzled those who were not in the secret; but the athletes of St. Sam's showed no trace of serprize as they followed their leader into the shop. They knew what was coming. They knew that Burleigh had already arranged for

the eggspert who owned the shop to disguise them so that they could compete in the Sports at St. Sam's without a sole suspecting their real eyedontity!

Everything was ready for them. Several bewty eggsperts, armed with huge tins of greasepaint and other aids to the art of

altering faces, were waiting beside the empty bar-chairs; and very soon they were bizzily at work on the first batch of customers.

The way they changed the appearance of the St. Sam's fellows was a fare nock-out! Lump of putty were delicately wacked on to alter the shape of their noses, false eyebrows were cunningly stuck on with glue; and wigs were fully pinned on to their heads to cover up their real hair. And, as Tallboy put it, before they knew where they were, they hardly knew who they were!

The bewty eggspert's work was finished at last, and one and all had to agree that it was a masterpiece. Whatever Fate held in store for them that day, they felt jolly sure that nobody would reckernise them as the St. Sam's fellows who had set out with Burleigh that morn-ing!

It was a jolly good wheeze of Burleigh's; there was no doubt about that. But Burleigh had something else up his sleeve, too. After he and his men had left the bewty parlour and arrived at the garag, where their sharrabang was waiting, he drew out of his pocket a bill on which was printed the words "ST. ALF'S ATHLETICK TEAM."

"My hat! You think of everything, old chap!" remarked Tallboy admiringly, as Burleigh prosceeded to stick the bill on the windscreen of the shary eggsperts, armed with huge tins of greasepaint and other aids to the art of

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"It's just a matter of branes!" said Burleigh, blushing under his greasepaint. "All aboard, everybody, now—and don't forget that you're supposed to be from St. Alf's! Do you all remember the names we've agreed on?"

"Yes, rather!" "Good! Let's get going then!"

The disguised skoolboys climbed up into the shary, and a few moments later they were on their way back to the skool.

A harty welcome awaited them at St. Sam's. Choeering crowds swarmed up from all directions as they drove through the gateway, and Doctor Birchmell himself welcomed them from the steps of the Skool House.

"Ah! The boys from St. Alf's!" he cride, greeting them without a sign of reckernition. "Welcome to St. Sam's, my boys! Please make yourselves at home! I want you to treat this place just as if it were your own skool!"

"Thanks awfully, sir!" said Burleigh, in a disguised voice. "That'll be easy, won't it, you fellows?" "What ho!" grinned the St. Alf's team. And they descended from their sharrabang and mingled with the crowds that were now arriving from St. Bill's and St. Pete's and treated the skool just as if it had been their own. And nobody dreamed for a single moment why it was that the boys from St. Alf's felt so much at home at St. Sam's!

(Don't miss the concluding instalment of Dicky Nugent's amusing serial in next week's number!)

Describing the descent of a cloud of locusts in his native South Africa, Piet Delarey said they consumed everything eatable. Smithy said Bunter had the same characteristic when raiding a study cupboard. When Smithy got back to his study later, he found it bare—Bunter had acted on his suggestion! The Owl is now under a "cloud"!

Why Not A Continental Tuckshop?

Asks FISHER T. FISH

When Ma Mimble told me trade was a little quiet last week, she couldn't have hit on a better guy to put her wise on what was wrong—no, sir!

"Ma'am," I said, "What you need around this little joint is a guy who'll bring it bang up to date. You got a show here that ought to bring you in a roll as fat as that ham on your counter! I'll say it's a cinch. Gimme a leetle break. Lemme horn in just a few, and I guess I'll show you how."

The dumb dame looked at me like she didn't understand English, so I started to show her what was on my mind.

"I guess I'll increase your profits by fifty per cent," I explained, as I got busy. "It's a deal, huh? O.K.!"

Boy! What a money spinner I'd worked out. I figured that just what was wanted was al-fresco features—table and chairs outside the shop—the well-known Continental atmosphere! Get it?

I rolled up my sleeves and piled in. I lugged chairs and tables out of that shop like I meant it—yes, sir! For some reason, Ma Mimble wobbled about all over the joint, register-

ing objections. But I just ignored them, that's all! "I guess you'll be opening your eyes soon, ma'am," I said.

Was I on the mark? I'll tell the world! Why, I hadn't got the thing half-fixed before guys were sitting right down in them chairs and calling for a waiter! But something had to happen. It always does in this sleepy old shebang. Along comes the Big Shot, with his eyes jumping right out of their sockets.

"Fish!" yelps Doctor Locke. "How dare you?" I guess I did my best to tell him. But what's the use in a one-horse burg like this? All I collected for my trouble was two hundred lines and strict orders not to do it again!

Anyway, there's the idea for the lucky guy who can use it when the Big Shots around here learn a little horse-sense! Why not a Continental Tuckshop? Hear me holler! WHY NOT?

When Hobson of the Shell told his musical study-mate, Hoskins, that he could get a foreign symphony orchestra on his new radio set, Hoskins looked pleased. The terrific groans and shrieks which Hobson got, however, drove Hoskins out. When Hobson at last got his station, Hoskins was "broadcasting" himself from the music-room!

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Wharton summoned the fatidiot before a Form meeting in the end and told Bunter that something would have to be done about it. Bunter then revealed that he had already taken steps to put things right. "I've written my pater," he said. "To tell you the truth, I've seen a memory course advertised in the papers that seems just the very

thing I want. The cost of it is a mere trifle compared with the good it will do me—ten quid, to be exact!"

BOB CHERRY Tells You WHY BUNTER LOST HIS MEMORY

The first I heard about Bunter suffering from lapses of memory was when he failed to recognise me in the quad.

"What cheer, my old Prize Porker?" I called out, in a friendly kind of way; and all Bunter did was to give me a blank stare!

"I—I'm sorry, old chap," he said. "But I'm afraid you have the advantage of me."

"Wha-a-at?" "The fact is, I don't recall your face!" explained Bunter. "Would you mind telling me your name?"

"You silly fat chump!" I gasped. "What's the game? You know me all right. I'm Cherry—Bob Cherry!"

Bunter passed his hand across his brow. "I say, you fellows, it's from the pater! I know he'd do the right thing!"

And Bunter slit open the envelope and examined the contents. But no ten quid came to light. All that the envelope contained was a bundle of printed papers and the following letter:

"Dear Billy,—I am sorry to hear your memory is so bad, but luckily there is no need to spend ten pounds on the course you mention. I happen to have that very course by me, you see. I am sending it herewith, and I am sure it will improve your memory wonderfully. Your affectionate FATHER."

The ten-quid memory course dropped from Bunter's nerveless hands. He uttered a strangled sort of groan. Black ingratitude was registered all over his countenance. "Beast!" he roared. Then he bolted without even troubling to take a second look at the memory course!

Since that time the dear old Porpoise remembers as well as ever he did. Having told you that, I don't think you'll need any further enlightenment on why Bunter lost his memory!

Hobson is in bad odour in the Shell for allowing his team to be licked by the Remove at cricket. One indignant Shellito says Hobson must be a complete cuckoo to allow a lot of sparrows like us to crow over him. So it really sounds as if Hobson has got the "bird," doesn't it?

