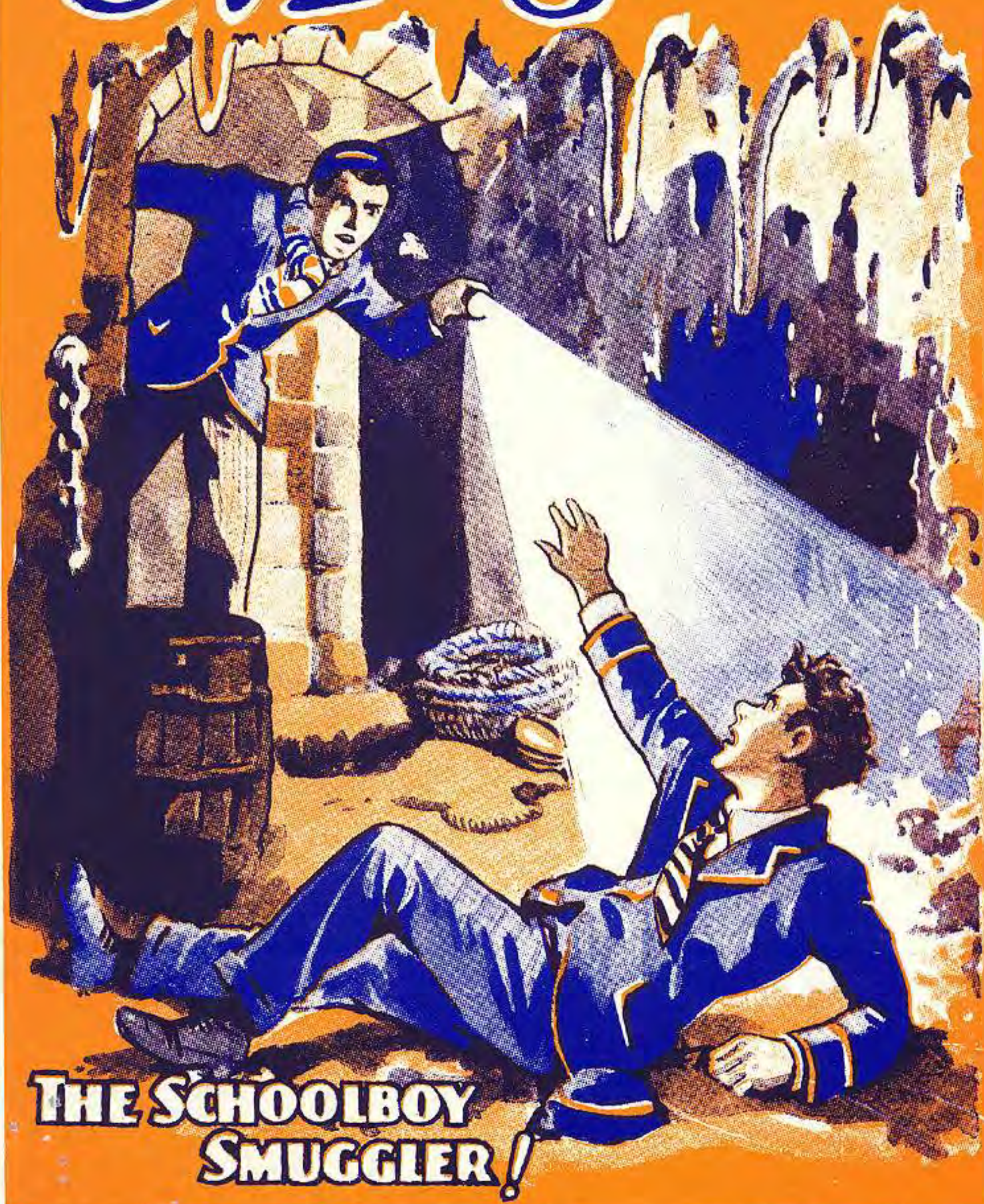


EXTRA LONG! HARRY WHARTON & CO. in another SCHOOL ADVENTURE! EXTRA GOOD!

The Magnet 2^D



**THE SCHOOLBOY
SMUGGLER!**

THE SCHOOLBOY SMUGGLER!

By FRANK RICHARDS



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Pulling Prout's Leg!

"LET'S break bounds—"
"Eh?"
"This afternoon—"
"Wha-a-t?"

"And take a boat out to the smugglers' cave!" continued Harry Wharton. "What about it?"

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh, stared blankly at the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

They were simply astonished.

The Famous Five were in the quad in morning break. Harry Wharton spoke loudly and clearly—indeed, more loudly than he usually spoke. Dozens of fellows were within hearing, and he did not seem to care if they all heard.

More serious still, a master was within hearing. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, had rolled out of the House in break. Prout's portly figure was rolling majestically, quite near the Famous Five, when Wharton made his unexpected and startling suggestion.

Prout heard.

There was no doubt that he heard.

He slowed down in his majestic roll, and turned his plump face towards the group of juniors. A grim frown appeared on his plump face. There was no doubt that the Fifth Form master had heard every word.

Apparently unconscious of him, the captain of the Remove went on, while his astonished chums stared in dismay.

"I know the sea-cave's out of bounds—special order of the Head! Let's go, all the same! No end of a lark!"

"You howling ass!" breathed Bob Cherry. "Shut up!"

"Can't you see Prout?" hissed Johnny Bull.

"Harry, you ass!" gasped Nugent.

"My esteemed and idiotic Whar—"
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ton—" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Heedless of warnings, Harry Wharton went on:

"You fellows game? We mayn't be able to get off from Pegg—might be prefects about. But we can get a boat to run out round the Shoulder, and pick us up on the north beach. Safe as houses there!"

Mr. Prout rolled on.

It was no business of the Fifth Form master to concern himself about the Remove—Mr. Quelch's Form. But Mr. Prout often did concern himself about matters that were no business of his. What he had heard, he had heard. And what he had heard, he had heeded. He did not speak to the juniors, but his portly brow was thunderous as he rolled on.

When he was gone, Wharton's four chums all spoke together:

"You utter ass!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"Prout heard every word you said!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Why shouldn't he?"

"Why shouldn't he?" repeated Johnny. "Are you off your rocker? It's a special order of the Head, putting the sea-cave out of bounds. That means a flogging for breaking bounds in that direction. We're not going to do anything of the kind. Even if we wanted to, we can't, as we're playing football this afternoon. And if we did, haven't you sense enough not to shout it out before a beak?"

"Only Prout!" said Harry. "Prout has nothing to do with the Remove!"

"Doesn't he poke his finger into every pie?" hooted Johnny Bull. "Think he won't tip Quelch that he heard Remove men planning to break bounds this afternoon?"

"Think so?"

"You jolly well know he will!" howled Johnny Bull. "Prout has his eye on

you already, owing to that fat ass Bunter borrowing your raincoat the other day, and leaving it on the beach where Prout found it. He believes that you went out of bounds on Saturday afternoon."

"I told him I didn't!"

"Did he believe you, fathead?"

"Quelch did—and that's all that matters! Prout can believe what he likes, and he blowed to him!" said the captain of the Remove, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"He's going to Quelch now!" breathed Nugent.

The juniors glanced round.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was walking in the quadrangle. Prout's portly figure was bearing down on him.

The juniors watched the Fifth Form beak join the Remove master. Harry Wharton was smiling, but his chums were looking extremely uneasy. They could not hear what Prout was saying to Quelch; but they could guess easily enough. They saw the gimlet eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch turn on them. They saw him frown as he listened to Prout.

"Well, that's torn it!" said Bob.

"The tornfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The absurd fat is now in the ridiculous fire!"

"Blessed if I see it!" said Harry Wharton carelessly. "What does it matter if Prout jaws to Quelch?"

"What does it matter?" hooted Johnny Bull. "He's telling Quelch at this very minute, that you're planning to break bounds and go to the sea-cave this afternoon. Quelch will keep an eye on you—and if he doesn't, you can jolly well bet that Prout will!"

"I shouldn't wonder!" agreed Wharton.

"And you don't think that that matters?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Not in the least—as we shall be playing football with the Fourth this after

noon, and not going out of gates at all!" answered the captain of the Remove cheerfully. "If Prout keeps an eye on us, he can watch us bagging goals. Where's the harm?"

"Oh!" gasped Johnny.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" said Frank Nugent. He burst into a chuckle. "You knew that old Prout heard you, and you were pulling his leg?"

"Has that just occurred to you?" asked Harry Wharton sarcastically. "What a brain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

Mr. Prout, in the distance, was talking very earnestly to the Remove master. Evidently Prout felt it his duty to put Quelch wise about that lawless intention on the part of the head boy of his Form. Often and often Prout felt it his duty to barge into other masters' business—seldom receiving any gratitude for the performance of that duty.

Grinning, the chums of the Remove watched Prout.

Evidently, the Fifth Form beak had not the faintest suspicion that Wharton had deliberately spoken in his hearing, with the disrespectful intention of pulling his portly and pompous leg. Wharton's own chums, in fact, had not suspected it, so it was not surprising that Prout had been taken in.

"That old ass chooses to think that I go hunting for trouble, and tell lies about it, like Smithy," said Harry Wharton. "Well, that's a little bit more for him to chew on. He may get fed-up with looking after the Remove in the long run. It may even occur to him, some day, to keep an eye on his own Form. Coker goes miles out of bounds on his stink-bike. Hilton and Price go to see the glove fights at the Three Fishers. Prout doesn't know—he's too jolly busy looking after other beaks' Forms. But—"

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

Leaving the portly Prout, Mr. Quelch came towards the group of Removites. They waited for him with great equanimity. His gimlet eyes searched the bland, smiling face of his head boy as he came up.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You are aware, Wharton, that I have every confidence in you!" said Mr. Quelch, quite graciously. "At the same time, I am bound to take note of something Mr. Prout has mentioned to me. I have no doubt that there is a misunderstanding. But please tell me how you have arranged to spend your half-holiday this afternoon."

"Certainly, sir! We have a football match with the Fourth Form," answered the captain of the Remove meekly.

"A football match!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! We play Temple's team. It's a regular fixture."

Mr. Quelch breathed rather hard.

"Oh! Very well, Wharton!" he said.

He walked back to Mr. Prout. The Famous Five exchanged grins. They watched the two masters.

Prout had been talking to Quelch—now Quelch was talking to Prout! It was probable that his remarks had a keen edge. Prout's plump face grew redder and redder. The red gradually deepened to purple.

Clearly, the Fifth Form beak was not enjoying Quelch's remarks.

The young rascals of the Remove, grinning, walked away and left them to it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Coker Asks for It!

"I SAY, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, "it's him!" Bunter was regardless of grammar.

"Him!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Him ancient or modern?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I say, it's him!"

"If Quelch heard that, old fat man, he would make you write out 'It is he' a hundred times!" said Bob.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter.

"I tell you it's him! I wonder what he's come to Greyfriars for?"

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced round. A taxicab from Courtfield had driven in at the school gates and stopped at the House. The Famous Five had given it no attention, but Billy Bunter's excited squeak drew their eyes upon it, and upon its occupants, as they alighted.

"My hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton, as he saw them.

There were two passengers in the taxi. One of them was a lean man with a hard, bronzed face that hinted of a seafaring life. The other was an athletic, handsome boy of sixteen, or a little over, whose keen, grey eyes glanced about him with interest as he stepped from the cab.

"I know that chap," said Harry; "so do you fellows. That's young Compton."

"Compton?" repeated Bob Cherry.

"The chap we saw on a yacht in Pegg Bay a week ago, you remember—"

Valentine Compton is a first-class footballer and well worth watching. But Vernon-Smith suspects that the new senior in the Fifth wants watching for other reasons!

the chap who swam out to the boat when Bunter went adrift."

"Oh, that chap!" said Bob. "Yes, I remember him now."

The Famous Five looked with considerable interest at Valentine Compton. Other fellows were interested in him, too. Coker and Potter and Greene, of the Fifth Form, had stopped to look—Coker with a frown on his brow. Herbert Vernon-Smith, of the Remove, had his eyes fixed on the handsome stranger. The Bouncer seemed very interested in him, indeed.

"That's the chap!" said Coker of the Fifth. "I jolly well know him!"

"Same here," agreed Potter. "Plucky chap!"

"He may be plucky, but he was jolly cheeky!" said Coker, frowning. "I was going to punch him if I saw him again. I suppose I can't punch him here."

"No, I—I wouldn't!" gasped Greene.

The new arrivals disappeared into the House. There was quite a buzz among the Greyfriars fellows in the quad. The name of Compton passed from one to another. Valentine Compton had never been seen at Greyfriars before, and nobody knew why he had appeared there now; but his name was well known. Everyone at the school had heard how he had swam out on the tide to the rescue of Billy and Bessie Bunter in a drifting boat.

"I say, you fellows, it's him all right!" said Bunter, still regardless of grammar. "That man with him is his uncle. I think he was skipper of the yacht we saw at Pegg. Looks a hard nut to crack, doesn't he? I say, you fellows, what has he come here for?"

"Ask him!" suggested Bob.

"Well, I can't ask him, as he's gone

in to see the Head," said the Owl of the Remove, deaf to sarcasm. "I say, I've seen him since the day he swam out to the boat, you know. I saw him on the beach last Saturday—the day I went to the sea-cave with Smithy—"

"Shut up, you gabbling ass!" hissed Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy! Don't you remember we saw him on the beach, north of the Shoulder, looking for something he'd lost, that day we went to the—Yoooop!"

Billy Bunter broke off with a howl, as the Bouncer kicked him.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had swanked considerably in the Remove about his trip to the smugglers' cave, in defiance of the Head's order. But he did not want it to be heard outside the Remove. There were Sixth Form prefects in the quad, and there would have been trouble for the Bouncer had Wingate or Gwynne or Loder overheard the fat Owl.

"Ow! Beast!" howled Bunter. "Wharrer you kicking me for, you beast? I say, Wharton, punch his head, will you? He called you a funk the other day."

"You fat owl!"

"Well, you know you jolly well did funk going with Smithy, and I jolly well went with him instead, and I can jolly well say—Yow-ow-ow-ow! Leggo my ear, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that the chap you saw, Coker?" Hilton of the Fifth was speaking. "The chap you told us about, who swam out after a boat—"

"That's the cheeky sweep!" said Coker. "He grabbed my field-glasses to look at the boat when that fat idiot Bunter was drifting out to sea. And I was going to punch him for his cheek, only he punched me first, and my foot slipped and I fell down—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle about in that!" said Coker warmly. "I was jolly well going to give him teco, and next time I see him I jolly well will! I'll jolly well mop him up, and—"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Don't you know what that chap did? He risked his life, swimming out after Bunter's boat—"

"I know what he did better than you, Wharton, as I saw him. If you're asking for a thick ear, you cheeky young swab—"

"Fathead!" said Harry.

"Ass!" said Frank Nugent.

"Chump!" said Johnny Bull.

Horace Coker glared at the juniors. The juniors glared at Coker, so did a dozen other fellows.

Everyone at Greyfriars had heard of young Compton's exploit, and admired his pluck immensely. The episode had been the talk of the school a week ago.

No doubt Coker admired pluck, too, so far as that went. But the fellow had cheeked Coker; he had even punched him! Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, was not to be cheeked or punched like a common mortal! To nobody else did it seem to matter a jot or a tittle. To Coker it mattered a lot. But Coker's announcement that he was going to "mop up" the fellow who was a hero in the eyes of all the school caused every fellow who heard him to glare at Coker.

"You terrific and preposterous fat-head!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You blithering idiot!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry. "Coker's asking for it. What about giving him what he's asking for?"

"Good egg!"

"Here, keep off! Wharrer you up

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to? You cheeky young rotters! Yaroooh! I'll smash you! I'll jolly well—"

Bump!
Horace Coker sat suddenly on the quadrangle. He sat hard. He roared as he sat. The Famous Five collared him and up-ended him, so suddenly that Horace hardly knew what was happening.

"Yurrooop!" roared Coker. "Why, I'll smash the lot of you! I'll—urrrgh! Leggo my ears! Oooooogh! Leggo my hair! Urrrrgh! Leggo my neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Roll him over!" shouted the Bounder.

"I say, you fellows, here's a puddle!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "This way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Shove him in!"
"Leggo! I'll—urrrrrgh! I'll—Oh crumbs!"
Splash!

It was quite a large puddle, left by recent rain. Horace Coker sat in it with a mighty splash.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.
"Cave!" shouted Peter Todd. "Here comes Prout!"

Mr. Prout—still purple from his conversation with Quelch—rolled on the scene. The juniors promptly scattered. Potter and Greene, grinning, took Coker by the arms and lifted him out of the puddle.

Coker spluttered wildly.
"Urrrrgh! Look at my bags! Oh crikey! I'll—"

"Coker!" boomed Prout.
"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Coker, as he saw his Form-master.

"You are in a disgusting state, Coker! Your trousers are dripping with mud, Coker! You are in a revolting state!" boomed Prout.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Coker.

"I have spoken to you before, Coker, on the subject of horseplay in the quadrangle. Have you no sense of dignity, Coker, as a senior boy—a boy of my Form? You should be ashamed of yourself, Coker! Ridiculous horseplay with boys of a junior Form—"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Coker.
"Go into the House, Coker, and clean yourself at once! You are in an absolutely revolting state! Pah!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Coker.
"Do not stutter at me, Coker! Go into the House at once! I am ashamed to have such a boy in my Form!"

Coker, almost foaming, went into the House. He dripped mud as he went. Mr. Prout frowned after him thunderously.

Coker of the Fifth was still cleaning off mud and breathing fury when the bell rang for third school.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Proof for Prout!

"O W!"
Harry Wharton yelled. It was really enough to make any fellow yell.

After third school some of the Remove were punting a footer about in the quad till dinner. The Famous Five, Smithy, and Redwing, Peter Todd, Bolsover major, and five or six other fellows joined in the punt-about.

All was merry and bright till Bolsover major, kicking at the ball, landed his kick on the knee of the captain of the Remove.

It was an accident, of course—the sort of accident that was liable to happen when Bolsover major was bargaining about after a footer—but the fact that it was accidental did not make it less painful.

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Harry Wharton yelled and hopped on one leg.

"Oh! Ow! You fathead! Ow!"
"Sorry!" gasped Bolsover. "Hurt?"

Really it was a superfluous question. It was only too plain that the captain of the Remove was hurt.

"Idiot!" gasped Wharton.
"Well, you got in the way," argued Bolsover major.

"Fathead! Ow! Ass! Wow!"

"Pass that ball!" shouted the Bounder. "You'd better sit this out, Wharton, if you can't take a knock!"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Wharton. Smithy laughed and rushed the ball on. After him rushed the rest of the juniors.

Frank Nugent stopped with his chum. "Hard knock, old chap?" asked Frank.

"Ow! You know what Bolsover's hoof is like!" groaned Wharton.

"Yes—I've had some. Come in and rub some embrocation on it," said Frank. "You've got to play footer this afternoon, you know."

Harry Wharton cast a rather dark look after the Bounder. It was bad enough to be crocked by a clumsy ass in a punt-about, but Vernon-Smith's jeer was even more irritating. Since a certain reckless expedition a few days ago Smithy had not been on good terms with his Form captain, and he lost few opportunities of displaying his hostility.

"Come on," said Nugent, and he drew his chum away to the House.

In Study No. 1 in the Remove, Harry Wharton bared his knee and rubbed embrocation thereon. But a bruise was forming, and he was limping a little when he went down at the sound of the dinner-bell.

He was not exactly "crocked," but he knew that that bruised knee would let him down if he played football—and he had to make up his mind to it.

Fortunately, it was not an important match, in which the best men of the Remove were needed; it was a match with the Fourth Form—and the Remove never had to go all out to beat Temple, Dabney & Co.

But it was disconcerting, all the same; for it was a fine, clear, cold day, and Wharton had been looking forward to the game.

However, as it was not to be helped, he took it as philosophically as possible. When the Greyfriars fellows came out of Hall after dinner he had settled that he was standing out of the game.

"How's the jolly old knee?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Rotten!" answered Harry. "It's all right, though; you can beat the Fourth without me. I'll roll along and cheer your goals."

"Standing out, Wharton?"—it was the Bounder's voice.

"Yes," said Harry curtly. "You'll have to captain the side, Smithy."

"Leave it to me to beat the Fourth," said Smithy. "We shall want another man. I'll shove Redwing in; he's a good man."

Wharton opened his lips, but closed them again. It was the Bounder's way to push his chum's claims, in season and out of season, rather to Tom Redwing's discomfort. As Redwing was a half, and a forward was wanted, Wharton would not have made that selection to fill the vacant place. Still, Redwing could play forward, and he was a good and reliable man; and, anyhow, the team was too strong for the Fourth to have much chance, so the captain of the Remove said nothing.

All the Co. were in the team. When the footballers went down to Little Side, Harry Wharton went with them to look on.

Vernon-Smith, as vice-captain, was taking his place, and the Bounder looked very pleased with himself and things generally, and evidently had little sympathy to waste on a "lame duck."

A dozen or so fellows of the Remove and the Fourth came along to watch the game. Junior Form matches did not attract a crowd.

The whistle went, and Temple, Dabney & Co. were soon fighting for their lives, so to speak. In the first ten minutes the leather went in from the Bounder's foot; five minutes later Frank Nugent sent it in.

"Goals are cheap to-day," remarked Bolsover major, who was standing near Wharton. "Those Fourth Form fozzlers can't play Soccer. Fancy a beak coming down to watch this fumbling!"

"Quelch?" asked Harry, glancing round.

Mr. Quelch sometimes honoured Remove matches with his presence on great occasions—such as the fixtures with St. Jim's, or Highcliffe, or Rookwood.

"No; Prout," said Bolsover.

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

He glanced at the portly figure of Mr. Prout, whom he had not noticed hitherto. Prout had rolled down to Little Side, and was now watching the junior game with keen attention.

Wharton looked at him in surprise.

It was not a game in which a beak might have been expected to take much interest, especially a senior master like Prout.

Prout had no great knowledge of games, but he took a deep interest in senior Soccer. He liked to be on the scene when Blundell, the captain of his Form, was doing his wonders. He would drop into the changing-room to talk to the games men of the Fifth. He would watch a Form match between Fifth and Sixth; and it was well known that it was Prout's great ambition to see the Fifth walk over the Sixth at Soccer—which they never did. Prout's enthusiasm sometimes made the Fifth Form games men smile and sometimes bored them. But Prout had never been known to display interest in Remove or Fourth Form football before.

So Wharton was surprised to see him there; so was every other fellow who noticed him.

"Old Pompous!" said Hazeldene.

"What does old Pompous want here?"

Harry Wharton's brow darkened.

The explanation occurred to him as he saw Prout scanning the footballers with a scrutinising eye.

"The old ass!" he muttered.

He guessed why Prout was there. Prout had not forgotten what he had heard in the quad that morning.

Mr. Quelch had been completely satisfied by Wharton's statement that he was playing Soccer that afternoon. Prout hadn't been.

Prout had rolled along to see whether Wharton really was playing football. That was the explanation of his unexpected presence on Little Side.

He had not yet observed Harry in the bunch of juniors watching the game. He scanned man after man on the football field. His scrutiny satisfied him at last that Wharton was not among them.

"Bunter!" boomed Prout suddenly.

"Oh! Yes, sir?" gasped Billy Bunter. Bunter was there—not to watch the footer; he was looking for some fellow to cash a postal order for him—which, for some mysterious reason, had not yet arrived. He jumped as the Fifth Form master boomed at him. "It—it wasn't me, sir!"

"What?" snapped Prout.

"I never did it, sir! I never laid a

hand on Coker, sir! I only pushed him into the puddle—"

"Where is Wharton, Bunter?"
"Oh!" The fat Owl realised that Prout only wanted to ask a question. "He's playing football, sir."

The short-sighted Owl had not observed that Wharton was not in the field. He was unaware that the captain of the Remove was standing out. Soccer and all things connected therewith passed Billy Bunter by like the idle wind, which he regarded not.

Harry Wharton laughed. He was not more than a dozen feet from Prout; but Bolsover major's burly figure was between, and Prout did not see him.

"Bunter, how dare you attempt to deceive me!" boomed Prout. "Wharton is not on the football field."

coat. He did not believe a word of it himself.

Now, it seemed to Prout, he had fairly caught the young rascal.

Had he not heard him planning to break bounds and visit the smugglers' cave by way of the north beach? Had not the young rascal told his Form-master that he was playing Soccer that afternoon? Was he playing Soccer?

Wharton, of course, could have explained in a few words, but he did not choose to do so.

"I'm standing out of the game, sir," he answered.

"And why?"

"I've got something on this afternoon, sir," said Harry.

That was a perfectly true statement. He had his coat on. But Prout, of

he would not have selected that afternoon for a long walk, except on Prout's account. Still, it was a very pleasant afternoon for a walk—cold and clear and fine. He sauntered at a leisurely pace down Friardale Lane.

At a little distance down that lane he stooped to tie a shoelace. That lace did not need tying; but, stooping, he was able to glance back without appearing to do so.

He fully expected to see a portly form rolling astern like a galleon under full sail. And he did! Prout, conspicuous in his purple overcoat, rolled out of gates and followed him down the lane.

Wharton resumed his way.

Prout had the cheek to doubt his word. Prout believed that he had stood out of football with the fixed intention



Bolsover major barged after the football and kicked. His foot missed the leather, but caught Wharton on the knee. The captain of the Remove yelled, and hopped on one leg. "Oh! Ow! You fathead! Ow!" "Sorry!" gasped Bolsover. "Hurt?" It was only too plain that Wharton was hurt.

"Isn't he, sir?" gasped Bunter. "I thought he was. I—"

"You are an untruthful young rascal, Bunter—"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Bolsover!" rapped Prout.

"Yes, sir?" said Bolsover major, grinning.

"Do you know where Wharton is?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" chortled Bolsover.

"Here at my elbow, sir!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Prout.

He spotted the captain of the Remove at last; he fixed a grim eye on him.

"Do you want me for anything, sir?" asked Harry demurely.

"It appears, Wharton, that you are not playing football this afternoon, as you stated to your Form-master."

Harry Wharton looked at him. It was by sheer chance, owing to that clumsy hack from Bolsover, that he was not playing football. So simple an explanation did not occur to Prout. He had doubts—very deep and suspicious doubts—of that particular junior.

Prout considered Quelch an ass for believing that story of a borrowed rain-

course, did not guess that he was alluding to his overcoat. His answer was as good as a confession to Prout.

Having answered Prout, Wharton glanced up at the clock-tower.

"Time I started," he remarked.

It had been Wharton's intention to see the Form match through, chiefly for want of something else to do. Now, however, he found something else to do. He walked off the ground.

Prout stared after him. Then he rolled after him. Prout knew now—or, at least, he fancied he did—and he reflected grimly that he was going to have proof shortly that would leave Quelch without a leg to stand on. The Form match continued, no longer watched by either Wharton or Mr. Prout.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Boy in the Boat!

HARRY WHARTON smiled as he sauntered out at the school gates, his hands in his overcoat pockets.

With a twinge in his bruised knee,

of breaking bounds in the direction of the forbidden cave. Prout was going to see him do it—if he did it! Wharton, for his part, was going to give Prout a long walk—and walk him right off his plump legs, if he could! By the time he had covered a good many miles, up hill and down dale, Prout might possibly get tired of managing Mr. Quelch's Form for him. It might even dawn on him that he was a suspicious old ass, and had had his leg pulled. Wharton hoped so.

Prout did the shadowing act rather under a handicap. He was big, he was portly, he wore an overcoat that could be seen almost a mile off, and he was short of breath. Any fellow stalked by Prout would have had to be very unobservant not to spot the stalking. But the captain of the Remove seemed to have no suspicion.

He walked on cheerily, without looking back.

At the stile in Friardale Lane he paused for a time, chiefly to rest his knee.

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The footpath through the wood led to Pegg, where it was easy to hire a boat for a run out to the Shoulder and the sea-cave. If a fellow wanted to go by the north beach, on the other side of the Shoulder, he had to order a boat in advance to pick him up there.

From what he had heard in the quad, Prout had no doubt that that was what Wharton had done, as some fellow unknown had done the previous Saturday. So Prout was probably puzzled by Wharton's long halt at the stile, knowing nothing of the twinge in his knee.

The captain of the Remove walked on at last. He did not go by the footpath. He walked on down the lane to the village.

In Friardale High Street he stopped again, and went into Uncle Clegg's. In the village tuckshop he sat by the counter and rested his knee for ten minutes or so, bought toffee, and chatted with Mr. Clegg. By the window he had a view of a portly figure in a purple overcoat rolling into Friardale.

He left Uncle Clegg's and walked on, Prout quite close behind him now.

Leaving Friardale behind, he followed a muddy lane—a very muddy lane—that led down to the sea. A Lower Fourth junior did not mind a tramp through mud, splashing through puddles. A middle-aged Form-master probably did. That was Prout's look-out!

From that muddy lane Wharton emerged on the beach. The grey sea rolled before him, booming on the shingle, and the mighty chalk mass of the Shoulder towered on his right.

He tramped along the beach towards the Shoulder.

It was a rugged, broken beach—sand and shingle, and jutting edges and ledges of chalk. The chalk was wet and slippery. It was not a specially agreeable walk, even to an active junior. It must have been exceedingly disagreeable to the master of the Fifth. That, again, was Prout's look-out! Wharton had not asked him to take that walk!

A rather painful twinge in his damaged knee made the captain of the Remove stop at last for another rest. He clambered on a high rock, which gave him a wide view of the beach and the sea, and sat down there.

To Prout, it was quite clear why he had done this. He was waiting to make sure that the coast was clear before he went to the boat which, no doubt, was in readiness to take him out to the sea-cave.

Prout had to wait till he restarted after the interval. Meanwhile, he was not going to let the artful young rascal spot his pursuit. Prout was also in need of a rest by this time, and rather glad of one. He sat down on a jutting ledge, where he could keep Wharton's cap in sight in the distance. As soon as that cap moved, Prout was ready to move.

The cap did not move in a hurry.

But for his damaged knee, Wharton would have climbed the Shoulder and given the unhappy Prout an awful, breathless clamber to the steep summit in pursuit of him. That being impracticable now, he sat where he was, content to take a rest, and keep Prout hanging up, as it were.

His eyes fixed on a sail dancing in from the sea.

He grinned as he noted it.

It was seldom that a boat came in to that barren and inhospitable stretch of beach. There was no reason for landing there, with Pegg Bay near at hand round the tall Shoulder.

Wharton wondered what the boat was coming in for. But he could guess that Prout, when he spotted that sail, would

not wonder. Prout, of course, would fancy that this was the boat that Wharton had hired, coming round to pick him up, and take him out to the sea-cave. Really, it looked like it.

There was only one figure to be seen in the sailing-boat. Even at the distance it looked familiar to Wharton's eyes, and he wondered whether it was some Greyfriars senior.

But, as the little craft ran closer in to the shore, he gave a whistle of surprise. The boy in the boat was Valentine Compton! At a closer view he knew that graceful, athletic figure, and the handsome face with its smiling but keen grey eyes.

Compton, with his uncle, had called on the headmaster of Greyfriars that morning. They had been gone before the fellows came out from third school, and had not been seen again. Now here he was, without his uncle, sailing the boat in to that lonely beach.

Wharton watched him with interest, not unmixed with curiosity. He knew that Smithy and Bunter, on their Saturday expedition, had met Compton on that very spot, searching the beach for something he had lost. Billy Bunter had told everybody who would listen all about the incidents of that expedition—not once, but many times. Bunter had said that the chap was hunting for a penknife he had dropped in the shingle.

Harry Wharton, however, knew something that Bunter did not know. He knew that, when he and Smithy had visited the sea-cave at midnight by the secret passage from the school, Captain Compton and his nephew had run a boat into the cave from the sea in the dark hours.

They had spoken, in the hearing of the two juniors, of a "packet" which Compton had left on the beach when he had swum out after the drifting boat to save Billy Bunter and Bessie.

It was that mysterious packet for which young Compton had been searching the beach.

Harry Wharton did not, like Billy Bunter, take a keen interest in other people's affairs. But he could not help wondering a little over that curious episode.

The midnight prowlers had not seen the two juniors in the cave. At the first sound they had run the boat out again and vanished into the night—which was so strange a proceeding that any fellow might have been surprised and curious.

Now, as he saw Compton running in to the shore, Wharton had no doubt that he was coming to search once more for that mysterious lost packet. And, liking and admiring the young fellow as he did, he was quite prepared to give up his jape on Prout and join him in hunting for his lost property, if Compton welcomed his assistance.

So, as the boat ran in under the rocks, Harry Wharton slipped from his seat and went down the beach, to meet Compton when he landed.

The moment his cap disappeared, Prout, far in the rear, got into ponderous motion again. But Wharton was not thinking about Prout now.

He tramped down the beach towards the boat. Valentine Compton was standing in it, about to drop the sail, when his eyes fell on the Greyfriars junior coming down the beach.

To Wharton's surprise, he knitted his brows, and instead of dropping the sail, shifted it to catch the wind, and shot away from the shore.

The Greyfriars junior stood staring after him.

That Compton had seen him he knew,

though probably the boy in the boat had not recognised him. He had seen somebody on the beach—and on seeing that somebody he had changed his obvious intention of landing and shot away to sea again.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton in astonishment.

The boat shot swiftly away. In a few minutes it was distant, and too far off for recognition of its occupant.

Wharton could only stare.

Why Compton at the sight of him had cleared off, instead of landing, he could not begin to guess. If the fellow had come there to search for his lost packet, there was no reason, so far as Harry could see, why he should not have got on with it.

Still, it was possible that that was not his object. It was possible that the lost packet had already been found, and that Compton had some other reason for coming to that solitary beach under the Shoulder.

A stertorous grunt reached Harry Wharton's ears as he stood staring after the disappearing boat.

It reminded him of Prout.

Compton was gone—Prout remained. And the captain of the Remove resumed at once his little game with Prout.

He looked round.

The high rock on which he had been seated was between him and Prout. He could not see the Fifth Form beak. But he could hear the portly gentleman's grunt as he laboured over shifting shingle and slippery chalk.

Prout would be in sight in another minute or two. A minute was more than enough. Harry Wharton dropped into a deep crevice in the chalk, and crouched at the bottom of it.

He was out of sight now, unless Prout fairly walked over him!

In that secure cover he waited—grinning.

Grunt!

Prout was closer at hand. He had come round that high rock, and the beach and the sea were spread before his eyes.

Grunt!

The tramping footsteps came to a halt. Wharton kept his head low. He could not see Prout. But he knew that the Fifth Form master had halted, and was standing staring at the disappearing boat, dancing away on the grey, rolling sea.

The boat had run in—and run out. Wharton was not to be seen. What was Mr. Prout to think?

The hidden junior suppressed a chuckle.

"Upon my word!" He heard Prout's fruity voice. "The young rascal! Upon my word!"

That the boat had picked Wharton up and taken him off the beach was clear to Prout. Certainly it did not occur to him that the young rascal was squatting in a crevice only a dozen yards away—in full view if he had lifted his head out of the crevice.

For several long minutes Mr. Prout stood there, staring seaward. Then Wharton heard his receding footsteps and his receding grunt. Prout was gone—gone back to Greyfriars, with a report that even Mr. Quelch would not be able to doubt.

Wharton chuckled. He had intended only to give the Fifth Form beak a long, long walk. But circumstances had played into his hands. Now, as well as the walk, he had given him the impression—or, rather, the absolute certainty—that a Remove boy had gone out in a boat to the sea-cave. As Wharton had done nothing of the kind, he had

nothing to fear from Prout's report, and he chuckled while he sat in the crevice and waited for Prout to get clear before he showed up again.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Found on the Beach!

"GREAT pip!"

Harry Wharton gave a sudden jump.

He stood in the narrow chalky crevice in the beach, staring at a small object that lay at his feet.

Mr. Prout's tramping footsteps had died away in the distance. Assured now that the coast was clear, the junior rose to his feet, with the intention of clambering out of the crevice. His foot knocked against something that moved as it was knocked, and he supposed that it was a loose chunk of rock—for a moment. Then he jumped and stared as he saw that it was a packet, carefully wrapped in oilskin and carefully tied with string.

For a moment or two he stared at it blankly. Then, picking it up, he examined it.

It was not a large packet—hardly twice the size of an ordinary brick. Neither was it heavy. But if this was the packet that Compton had lost, he did not wonder that the fellow had left it on the beach when he swam out after the drifting boat. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for a swimmer to retain it while swimming to the limit of his strength in a running tide. And he had little doubt that it was Compton's packet. It did not seem probable that two different packets had been lost about the same time on that lonely stretch of beach hardly ever trodden in the winter months.

There was nothing on the outside, however, to indicate who was the owner. The oilskin was closely wrapped; the string tied with several knots, which, for additional security, were sealed with sealing-wax. No doubt the contents were of value. But there was nothing to enable a finder to return it to the owner, unless there was an address written inside.

Wharton scrambled out of the crevice, the packet in his hand.

It was not surprising that Compton had never found it. That crevice was one of hundreds such that split the weather-worn chalk cropping up in the shingly beach. The closest search might have failed to reveal it; it might have lain there for weeks, or months, or years,—or, indeed, for ever—had it not been discovered by chance.

Standing on the beach, Wharton looked seaward. But the boat had disappeared now, rounding the mighty mass of the Shoulder.

There was no chance of seeing Compton again and asking him whether that was the packet for which he had been looking. Wharton had little or no doubt of it; but he could not, of course, be sure.

He was left with it—rather puzzled what to do with it. Had he known where to find Compton again, the matter would have been simple.

It looked as if Captain Compton and his nephew were staying somewhere in the neighbourhood, as the boy had twice been seen on the beach, and both of them had called at Greyfriars that morning. But where they might be staying Wharton had not the remotest idea.

Obviously, he could not go in search of Compton and hand over the packet. To open it, by breaking the seals, and look for an address inside, was no business of his. That was an official matter, and all that was left for him to do was to carry it to the nearest police station and hand it over to the authorities.

That he decided to do.

The nearest representative of the police force was Mr. Tozer, the village constable at Friardale. Mr. Tozer had a very extensive beat, and it was not probable that he would be found at home in his cottage when he was wanted. But there was a police station at Courtfield, and Wharton decided to get back to the school, wheel out his bike, and run into Courtfield and hand the packet over to Inspector Grimes. In that gentleman's official hands, it would not be long in getting back to the owner, whether Compton or some other.

Having decided on that, the captain of the Remove tramped off the beach and up the lane that led to Friardale. He gave a chuckle as he sighted a portly figure in a purple overcoat a little distance ahead of him.

It was Prout—rolling heavily, majestically, and breathlessly back to Greyfriars School.

Wharton could have passed him easily enough, damaged knee and all; but he did not think of doing so.

He had an idea that Prout was going back with a portentous report for Quelch. Wharton was not going to stop him.

Had Prout sighted him, the Fifth Form master would, of course, have realised at once that he had been spoofed, and

(Continued on next page.)

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that the young rascal had not gone off in the boat. Prout was not going to spot him!

Wharton slowed down.

He was in no great hurry. There was plenty of time to walk back to the school, bike into Courtfield, and return for calling-over. With his twinging knee, he preferred to take it easy.

So he walked behind Prout, at a respectful distance, grinning. He was prepared to dodge out of sight, if Prout looked back.

But Prout did not look back. He had no reason for doing so. And Prout, by this time, was so fatigued and winded, that his thoughts were concentrated chiefly on getting in and sinking his plump, tired limbs into an armchair.

Prout plugged on, slow and stately.

The grinning Removee stalked him through Friardale, and into the lane beyond that led up to the school.

Up Friardale Lane went Prout, puffing and blowing. His slow and stately progress grew slower and slower, till Wharton had almost to crawl to keep from overtaking him.

At the stile the Remove junior stopped and sat down for ten minutes, to rest his knee, and to give the breathless master of the Fifth a chance to get a little ahead.

Prout disappeared from sight up the winding lane.

But the junior, when he resumed his way, soon sighted him again. Slower than ever, Prout went rolling home. Still at a distance, Wharton followed on.

His idea was to let Prout roll in, give him a few minutes to get to the House, and then walk in at the gates after him.

Gosling, the porter, would be a witness that he had come in two or three minutes after Prout—while Prout was making his portentous report to Mr. Quelch.

Wharton chortled at the idea.

By that time, too, the football match would be over, and his friends would be about. There would be plenty of witnesses, if needed, that he had walked in almost at Prout's coat-tails!

Greyfriars was in sight now. A group of juniors were at the old gateway.

Prout, majestic, rolled on.

Wharton came to a halt and stepped close to the hedge, lest the Fifth Form master should look round as he went in at the gates. If Mr. Prout did glance round, he saw nothing of the young rascal who was pulling his pompous leg. He rolled in at the gates and disappeared.

The captain of the Remove walked on very slowly. He wanted to give Prout ample time to get to the House.

Three or four minutes after Prout had disappeared, Harry Wharton arrived at the gates, and walked in, smiling, with the packet under his arm.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Where is Wharton?

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter blinked into the changing-room. Bunter was grinning. Something, it seemed, amused the fat Owl of the Remove.

The football match was over, and the juniors were changing. Temple, Dabney & Co. had been beaten by the comfortable margin of three goals to nil. Frank Nugent had taken one of them, which was very satisfactory to the

Co. Redwing had had no such luck, which was not so satisfactory to the Bounder. However, the Fourth had been well beaten, and Vernon-Smith remarked in the changing-room that the Great Panjandrum had not been needed—a remark to which the Co. replied with one voice: "Cheeky ass!"

Nobody heeded Billy Bunter's fat face and squeaking voice at the door. But the fat Owl's next words drew attention.

"I say, Prout's copped Wharton this time!"

The Co. looked round at that.

"What do you mean, you fat, fozzling, frabjous frump?" demanded Johnny Bull gruffly.

"He, he, he!"

"Where is Wharton?" asked Bob Cherry. "He came down to look at the game, but I missed him at half-time."

"He, he, he! I jolly well know where he's gone, and so does Prout!" chortled Bunter. "I say, I saw old Prout stalking him—"

"Rot!" said Frank Nugent.

"He jolly well did!" grinned Bunter. "He asked Wharton why he wasn't playing football, and Wharton said he had something else on, and then he cleared off, and I can tell you fellows that Prout marched after him."

"Silly old ass!" said Bolsover major. "He was after Wharton all right. I noticed that he cleared off when Wharton did."

"You see, he jolly well knew what Wharton was up to," said the fat Owl. "I say, there'll be a row if he's copped him going to the cave. And I can jolly well tell you, he was stalking him. He jolly well knew why Wharton cut the footer."

"You silly ass!" said Bob. "Wharton stood out of the footer because Bolsover landed him a kick on his knee."

"Gammon!" said Bunter. "I heard what he said in the quad this morning. So did Prout, I can jolly well tell you. Wharton didn't see Prout—but I jolly well did. Precious little I don't see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I can jolly well tell you that Prout's copped him this time!" declared Bunter.

"Has Wharton gone out of bounds?" asked Vernon-Smith, looking round.

"Of course he hasn't!" answered Frank Nugent tartly. "He was pulling Prout's leg this morning, and I dare say that old ass fancies he has."

"He cleared off somewhere," said Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows, he hasn't come in yet, neither has Prout!" grinned Billy Bunter. "I fancy Prout's copped him all right! I say, that means a Head's whopping, you know—"

"Oh, shut up, you fat ass!" growled Bob Cherry.

The Co. left the changing-room and went down to the gates. They were, as a matter of fact, feeling a little worried about Wharton. They had certainly supposed that he meant to watch the Form match; but it seemed that he had cleared off soon after the start and gone out. And there was no doubt that Prout would catch him if he could.

Billy Bunter rolled after them, and several other fellows followed, among them the Bounder. In his present state of hostility towards his Form captain, Smithy would probably not have been sorry to see him "up" for a Head's whopping.

"Seen anything of Wharton?" Bob Cherry called out, as he passed Skinner of the Remove in the quad.

"No—and don't want to!" answered Skinner.

Bob delayed a moment to knock Skinner's cap off, and followed his friends down to the gate.

Gosling was in the doorway of his lodge, and Bob called to him.

"Seen Wharton come in, Gossy?"

"Which I ain't!" answered Gosling.

"I say, you fellows, Prout's copped him all right—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The juniors looked out of the gateway. Coker and Potter and Greene came in from the direction of Courtfield, Coker giving the Removees a glare as he passed them, mindful of the puddle he had sat in that morning. But the chums of the Remove did not heed Horace Coker.

Other fellows came in—Hilton and Price of the Fifth, probably from the Three Fishers; Hobson and some Shell fellows; then Mr. Capper, walking with Mr. Quelch. Then, a little later, a conspicuous purple overcoat appeared in the offing, from the direction of Friardale.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Prout!" exclaimed Bob.

"I say, you fellows, has he got Wharton?"

"No, you blithering bandersnatch!"

"Looks a jolly old weary walker, doesn't he?" grinned Vernon-Smith. And the other fellows grinned.

Prout, undoubtedly, looked weary, and looked as if he had collected a good deal of mud in a long walk.

"The wearfulness of the esteemed Prout is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Prout rolled in, breathless, but still majestic. He gave the chums of the Remove a glance, and they looked at him. They would have been glad to know what Prout had been up to, and whether there was anything in Bunter's belief that he had "copped" the captain of the Remove.

Vernon-Smith, who was blessed with a larger allowance of "cheek" than the other fellows, stepped towards him.

"Excuse me, sir," said Smithy meekly, "we're waiting for Wharton, of our Form, to come in. May we ask if you've seen anything of him?"

"Yes, Vernon-Smith, I have certainly seen him!" said Mr. Prout grimly. "I have undoubtedly seen that reckless and rebellious boy!"

The juniors exchanged glances.

"Is he coming along now, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith. "You see, sir, we're waiting for him—"

"It will be futile to wait for him, Vernon-Smith. You are not likely to see him before calling-over—even if by then!" said Mr. Prout.

And he rolled on to the House.

"I say, you fellows, Prout knows where he is—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Looks as if the old bean's spotted him!" remarked Vernon-Smith. "What has he been up to, I wonder?"

"Nothing in your line, anyhow!" growled Johnny Bull. "If Prout's spotted him, it wasn't at the back door of the Cross Keys."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish he'd come in!" muttered Frank. "That old ass has got hold of something, plain enough—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" roared Bob Cherry.

A dozen fellows stared out into the road at Harry Wharton coming along at



As Vernon-Smith grasped at the oilskin packet tied on the handlebars to drag it loose, Wharton staggered to his feet and ran towards the Bounder. "You cheeky rotter!" he panted. "Hands off, you fool!" snarled Vernon-Smith.

a saunter from the same direction as Prout.

Mr. Prout, by this time, had gone into the House.

Harry Wharton walked in smiling at the gates. All eyes were on him.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Here I am!" assented Wharton. "You fellows waiting for me? How did the game go?"

"Oh, we beat the Fourth, fathead—three to nil!" said Bob. "Never mind that! Have you seen anything of Prout out of gates?"

"Lots!" answered Harry. He glanced round at the school porter, in his doorway. "Gosling, old bean! Did you see Mr. Prout come in?"

"Which I did, a few minutes ago!" answered Gosling.

"And can you see me?" asked Harry. "Eh?"

"Sit up and take notice, Gosling, that I came in a few minutes after Prout!" said the captain of the Remove, laughing.

Gosling stared.

"Quech may ask you!" explained Wharton. "You see, Prout's gone in to report to my Form-master that, at the present identical moment, I'm sailing a boat into the sea-cave, out of bounds. He doesn't know, yet, that I've been walking just behind him all the way from the beach."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. And even Gosling's crusty old face broke into a grin.

"So you've been pulling Prout's leg?" chuckled Bob, as the captain of the Remove came in with the rest.

"Just that!" assented Wharton. "He set out to trail me down like a jolly old Chingachgook, and I led him a dance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"But what have you got there?"

asked Nugent, with a glance at the oilskin packet under Wharton's arm.

"A boat ran in to the beach while I was there, and I dropped into a crevice, to give Prout a chance of thinking that I'd gone off in the boat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I found this in the jolly old crevice," went on Wharton. "I fancy it may be the packet that young Compton was looking for. I'm going to take it to the police station."

"You found that packet on the beach?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Was it on the north beach, near the Shoulder?"

"Yes—where you and Bunter saw young Compton searching last week."

"Then it must be Compton's!" exclaimed the Bounder. His eyes were glued on the oilskin packet.

"Most likely! Anyhow, Mr. Grimes will find out to whom it belongs, and see that it gets back to the owner."

"Oh, gad!" muttered the Bounder.

He stood and stared after Wharton as he walked on with the Co. There was a very strange expression on the face of the Bounder of Greyfriars. For some reason, the sight of that packet seemed to have given Smithy food for thought.

Five minutes later, Harry Wharton had wheeled out his bicycle and started for Courtfield.

The Co. strolled in the quad while they waited for him to come back to tea. Their stroll took them along the path that ran under the windows of masters' studies. Opposite the window of Mr. Quech's study, they came to a halt—apparently specially interested in that window.

"Dear old Prout!" murmured Bob. The Co. chuckled.

Through the window they could see a portly form in the study. Prout, evidently, had called in on Quech.

They could guess what he had to tell the Remove master.

The sash suddenly shot up. Mr. Quech looked out.

"Cherry!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Is Wharton out of gates?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Did Wharton play in the football match this afternoon?"

"No, sir!"

"Why not, Cherry?"

"He had a hack on the knee, sir, and it crooked him for football!"

Prout's boom was heard within:

"A pretence—a palpable pretence! I repeat that I—"

"You will tell Wharton to come to my study immediately he returns, Cherry."

"Yes, sir!"

The window closed and the Co. walked away, smiling.

Had Mr. Prout looked into the Rag shortly afterwards he might have beheld a crowd of Remove fellows, yelling with laughter over what the Co. were telling them. But Prout did not think of looking into the Rag. The Fifth Form master rolled away to his study and his armchair for a much-needed rest—convinced that he had, this time, pinned down that young rascal, Wharton, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business!

"HOLD on, Wharton!" Harry Wharton glanced round in surprise.

He was half-way across Courtfield Common, when he heard a bicycle on the road behind him, and the Bounder's voice. He was going at a leisurely pace—the twinge in his knee THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,501.

was not severe, but it made him disinclined for hard riding. Herbert Vernon-Smith came whizzing up from the direction of the school, slowed down, and rode alongside.

"Want anything?" asked Harry.

The junior captain of Greyfriars was puzzled. Since the midnight adventure in the sea-cave, when the reckless Bounder's nerve had been rather too severely put to the test, Smithy had been far from friendly. Wharton certainly did not expect the Bounder to seek his company in a bike spin.

"Yes!" said Vernon-Smith curtly. "Stop, will you?"

Wharton pedalled on.

"I'm going to Courtfield," he answered coolly. "I can't hurry with a game knee—and I want to get back to tea. If you've got anything to say, you can cough it up while we're riding, I suppose."

"It's rather important!" grunted the Bounder.

"Blessed if I can see what it is, then! Are you anxious about my knee, and whether I shall be able to play at St. Jude's next week?" asked the captain of the Remove sarcastically.

"You know I'm not!" said the Bounder. "It's about that packet you've got tied on your handlebars!"

"What about the packet?" asked Harry in astonishment.

Billy Bunter, before he started on the bike, had suggested opening that packet, and "having a squint" into it. But inquisitiveness was not one of the Bounder's failings.

"It's Compton's, most likely!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Most likely," agreed Wharton.

"Well, if it's his, he ought to have it!"

Wharton looked at the Bounder. Vernon-Smith was a little breathless. He seemed to have made up his mind, after thinking the matter over, to cut after Wharton on his bike; and he had ridden fast to overtake him. Why he was concerned to such an extent was a mystery to Harry.

"I don't quite see what you mean, Vernon-Smith!" said Wharton quietly. "If this packet is Compton's, he's going to have it, of course. Inspector Grimes will see that it gets to the owner."

"Perhaps—perhaps not."

"Potty?" asked Harry. "Lost property has to be taken to the police, hasn't it? Where else could it be taken?"

"To the owner!" said Smithy. "I can jolly well tell you, Wharton, that if that packet's Compton's, he'd rather have it in his own hands than passing through others."

"You don't know anything about it, so far as I can see. I should take it to Compton, of course, and ask him if it was his, if I knew where he was. I haven't the foggiest idea where he is. Do you think I can keep something that doesn't belong to me in my study till the owner may happen to turn up?"

"I fancy Compton would be better pleased if you did."

"What utter rot!"

"Look here, Wharton, that fellow Compton is a decent chap. You know what he did for Bunter and his sister Bessie—risked his life, and jolly nearly chucked it away. He left that packet on the beach when he swam off. You don't want to do a chap like that any harm—"

"Blessed if I make you out!" Wharton was more and more astonished. "Where's the harm in getting his property back to him by the quickest possible way?"

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"Oh, you're a fool!" snapped the Bounder.

"Thanks! Any objection to leaving me to finish this ride alone?"

"I tell you, you can find Compton, and hand him that packet, if you like. I found him searching the beach last Saturday—and he is sure to come again, as he hasn't found it—"

"He came to-day," said Harry. "He was in the boat that ran in. But he cleared off without landing when he saw me—goodness knows why. If he'd still been there, I'd have handed it to him, of course."

"Can't you see, from that, that he didn't want to be seen finding the packet, if he found it at all?"

"Why the dickens not?"

"I'll put it in words of one syllable, suitable to the intellect of Quelch's head boy!" said the Bounder with savage sarcasm. "That packet may contain something Compton doesn't want seen. It might be something that spells trouble, if it's spotted."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Can you see now?" snarled the Bounder.

"No, I can't! I think you're talking rot! That chap Compton looks one of the best—straight as a string, square as a die! If this is his packet, whatever is in it belongs to him. Are you asking me to believe that he's pinched something?"

"No, you dummy! Nothing of the kind!"

"Then what do you mean—if you mean anything?" asked the captain of the Remove impatiently.

"Oh, you're a fool! Have you forgotten what happened that night in the sea-cave—the night you bamboozled me into going there?" snapped the Bounder. "They ran a boat in from the sea past midnight—Compton and his uncle. They bolted like scared rabbits when we made a sound. They came there to explore the secret passage to the school that I'd told young Compton about in the afternoon. Do you think that was all they had to do there?"

"I suppose so."

"Then why did they bolt at a sound?"

"Goodness knows! They didn't want to be seen, I suppose; but I can't imagine why, and I don't care much. It's no bizney of mine."

"You haven't thought it out?"

"Why should I?"

"Well, I have," said Vernon-Smith. "I thought of it at the time, and I've thought it over pretty carefully since. Do you know why that sea-cave is called the smugglers' cave?"

"Because it was used by the smugglers long ago, fathead!" answered Harry, staring at the Bounder blankly.

"Can't you put two and two together?"

"I believe my arithmetic's equal to that when I go all out. But I don't see—" Harry Wharton broke off as the Bounder's meaning flashed on him.

"Oh crumbs! You think—"

"What does it look like?"

Harry Wharton whistled. He rode on in silence for several minutes, thinking it over.

"Impossible!" he said, at last. "You're dreaming, Smithy! Smugglers in these days—"

"There are any number of smugglers these days, fathead! Smuggling went out when free trade came in. Now free trade's gone out, smuggling has come back as strong as ever—as it was bound to do."

"Yes; but—but—" Harry Wharton laughed. "Modern smugglers pack

the stuff among the shirts in their suitcases on the Channel boats. They don't run into the coast in luggers in the dark, and land at midnight in sea-caves. Draw it mild, Smithy!"

"I'm not saying it's so. I'm saying that that's what it looks like. Modern smugglers don't run luggers in—but they may sail in steam-yachts. I tell you that packet may be dangerous to the owner, if it's seen. Why do you think young Compton landed on the beach at the foot of the Shoulder that day with the packet, instead of landing at Pegg?"

"I hadn't thought about it."

"Think now!" sneered the Bounder.

Harry Wharton's face set.

"If it's as you fancy, Smithy—not that I believe it for a single moment—this packet ought to go to the police. If a man's breaking the law, the sooner he's stopped the better."

"A man who risked his life to save a Greyfriars kid—a chap I've met, and talked with, and been friendly with—I don't agree."

Wharton gave him a look.

There was a reckless and lawless strain in Herbert Vernon-Smith's character. It was his way to snap his fingers at authority—to break rules, simply because they were rules. But if the Bounder was carrying that mutinous spirit to the length of treating with disregard the law of the land, he was not likely to receive much sympathy from Harry Wharton.

"The chap's decent," said Vernon-Smith. "If he's got his secrets, it's not for you to give him away."

"You're a fool, Vernon-Smith!" said Harry bluntly. "If I believed, as you do, I'd hand this packet over to the police, even if Compton was present, and asked for it. But I don't believe a word of it. That man we saw in the cave, who came to the school with him this morning, looks a pretty tough nut; but young Compton is all right—right as rain! A fellow who did what he did for Bunter and Bessie is thoroughly decent. If it turns out that there's something against the law in this packet, I shan't believe that young Compton is a smuggler. I shall believe that this isn't his packet at all, but somebody else's."

"Then you're taking it to the police station, after what I've said?"

"Certainly I am. Lost property has to be taken to the police, and smuggled goods still more so. In either case, it goes to old Grimes."

Vernon-Smith set his teeth.

Whether it was admiration for Compton's pluck, liking for the fellow personally, or the sympathy of his lawless nature for another that he fancied to be as lawless as his own, it was clear that the Bounder was very much in earnest.

"Well," he said savagely, "you shan't!"

Wharton laughed contemptuously.

"Who's going to stop me?"

"I am!"

And as he spoke the Bounder swerved on his bicycle, crashed into Wharton, and both machines went spinning.

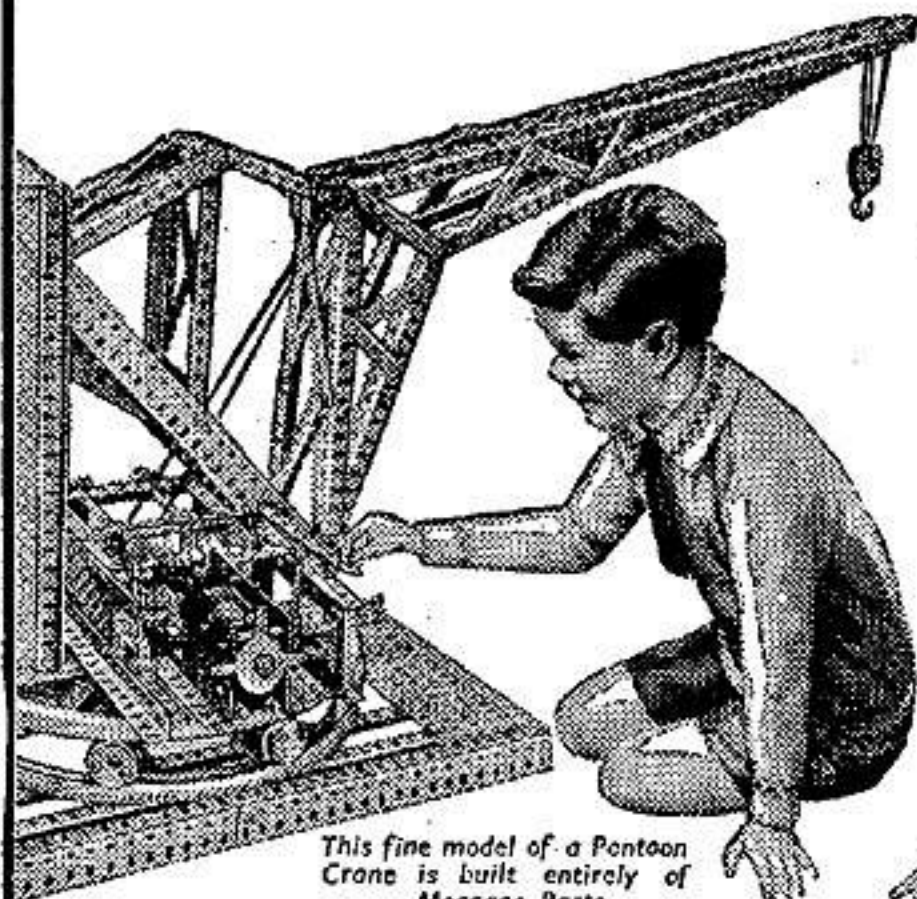
THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Scrapping with Smithy!

C RASH!

Harry Wharton gasped as he sprawled in the road. He was taken by surprise, and he went headlong before he could make an attempt to save himself. His machine (Continued on page 12.)

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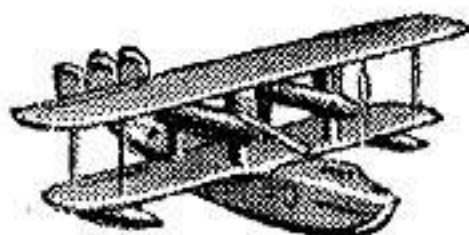
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clanged down by the roadside as he lay gasping, bewildered by the shock.

The Bouncer jumped clear as his machine went. He landed on his feet, and, leaving his bike to curl up, leaped to Wharton's machine, and grasped at the oilskin packet tied up on the handlebars.

Wharton sat up dizzily.

He was bruised and breathless from the sudden fall. But his eyes blazed as he saw Vernon-Smith bending over his fallen machine, grasping at the packet. Luckily it was tied securely, and the Bouncer was unable to drag it loose. As he felt in his pocket for a knife, Wharton staggered to his feet.

"You cheeky rotter!" he panted.

He pulled himself together, and ran towards Vernon-Smith.

The latter had no time to cut the packet loose. Wharton's grasp was on him, dragging him away from the bicycle.

"Hands off, you fool!"

Vernon-Smith struck out as he panted the words.

Wharton staggered from the blow; but he came on again, his eyes ablaze, his hands up, hitting out with all his force.

The bicycles and the packet lay unheeded as they closed in furious strife.

If the Bouncer was hardly a match for Wharton, he had, at least, unlimited pluck and dogged determination. He stood up to the captain of the Remove, and gave blow for blow, and for several long minutes they fought fiercely.

Two or three cars passed on the road, the occupants staring at the fighting schoolboys. Wharton and Vernon-Smith did not even see them.

It was a fierce fight, without rests, and without rounds. Each of the angry juniors put every ounce into it. But the Bouncer was driven back at last.

Still fighting, he was driven off the road on to the grass, and there he went down, knocked fairly off his feet.

He crashed on his back in the grass, panting for breath.

Harry Wharton stood with clenched fists and flashing eyes. It was some moments before Vernon-Smith was on his feet again.

But he was up at last and coming on, with set teeth and lashing fists. The fight was renewed till the Bouncer went down again heavily. This time he lay panting in the grass, unable to rise.

Wharton waited. The Bouncer half-rose, and sank back on his elbow. He was utterly spent.

The captain of the Remove dabbed his face with his handkerchief. His nose was oozing red; his lip cut; his face bruised. He had had the upper-hand in that fierce fight; but he had taken a good deal of punishment. He turned away without a word, and stepped to his machine, and lifted it.

"Hold on!" Vernon-Smith panted, as Wharton was putting a leg over his machine to mount. "Hold on, I tell you!"

With a leg over his bicycle, the captain of the Remove looked back at him.

Smithy staggered to his feet, and stood unsteadily.

"Well, what?" snapped Wharton.

"You rotter!" breathed Smithy. "If I hadn't been playing footer this afternoon, I'd have handled you— But I—"

Wharton smiled faintly.

"You shouldn't start a scrap, just after a footer match, Smithy. I think

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you must be off your rocker to play the fool like this."

The Bouncer gave him a bitter look. It was evident that his defeat rankled. But he was defeated, and he had to get it down. He had no chance of preventing Wharton, by force, from carrying out his intention.

"You're going to take that packet to old Grimes, at the police station!" he muttered thickly.

"I've said so!"

"I can't stop you! But you've got nothing against young Compton—"

"Nothing at all. I think he's a splendid chap! What do you mean?"

"I mean that you may be doing him a lot of harm—"

"Rubbish!"

"I warn you—" hissed the Bouncer.

"Keep your warnings!"

The captain of the Remove pushed off on his bicycle, without waiting for Vernon-Smith to speak again.

Smithy stood looking after him with a black and bitter brow. He stepped to his machine and picked it up. For some moments he stood hesitating, with his front wheel in the direction of Courtfield—as if debating in his mind whether to follow the captain of the Remove further, and try his luck again. But he knew that it was futile; and he swung round the machine, mounted, and pedalled back to Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton rode on into the town.

He was feeling far from merry and bright. His nose persisted in oozing red; one of his eyes persisted in winking; and he was tired and rather untidy. And he was feeling intensely angry with Vernon-Smith.

The Bouncer's suspicion of what the packet might contain, seemed fantastic to him. Certainly, had he shared that suspicion, it would have made him all the more resolved to hand the packet over to the proper authorities. But he did not believe so for a moment. He had no doubt that it was Compton's packet; that the contents were probably valuable, and certainly above-board; and that it was his duty to hand it to the police, to be returned to the owner.

Leaving his machine in the High Street, he went into the police station and asked to see Inspector Grimes.

He was conscious of several amused glances at his reddened nose and winking eye, which did not add to his comfort.

However, he was taken into the inspector's room, where plump and portly Mr. Grimes gave him a nod and a smile, with a twinkle in his eye, evidently noticing the battered nose and winking eye at once.

"What can I do for you, Master Wharton?" asked the Courtfield inspector. "Not a case of assault and battery, I hope? What—what?"

Wharton laid the packet on the inspector's table.

"I found that on the beach this afternoon near the Shoulder, Mr. Grimes," he said. "As there's no name or address on it, I've brought it here."

"Very right and proper!" said Mr. Grimes, with a curious look at the oilskin packet, as he picked it up. "Thank you, Master Wharton! I've no doubt that we shall succeed in finding the owner."

That was all; and Harry Wharton left the police station and returned to his bicycle.

He rode back to the school, glad to have done with the matter, dabbing his nose occasionally as he rode.

When he reached Greyfriars, he found

Herbert Vernon-Smith waiting at the door of the bikeshed.

"You've handed it over?" asked Smithy.

"Yes!" answered Wharton briefly, as he wheeled his machine in and put it on the stand.

"What did Grimey say?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He said that he had no doubt that he would find the owner."

"He didn't open it while you were there?"

"No!"

"You didn't mention Compton?"

"Why should I?"

"No reason why you should, except that you're a silly fool!" answered the Bouncer. And with that unpleasant remark he walked away.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Putting Paid to Prout!

"WHARTON!"

It was Prout's boom.

"Yes, sir!" Harry Wharton smiled.

Mr. Prout spotted him as he came towards the House, after putting up his bike.

The Fifth Form master was standing in the doorway. Prout had taken a long rest in his study armchair after his uncommon exertions that afternoon; but he was still feeling a little tired, a little short of wind, and a little short of temper.

It was getting near lock-up, and Prout was wondering whether that reckless young rascal, Wharton, was still out of bounds in the sea-cave, and whether the reckless young rascal would venture to be late for calling-over, when he saw him coming across the quad.

"So you have returned, Wharton!" boomed Prout.

"Yes, sir!"

"You will go to your Form-master's study immediately, Wharton!" said Mr. Prout. "I will accompany you there."

"You're awfully good, sir!"

"What—what?" snorted Prout. "Do not be impertinent, Wharton!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here you are!" The Co. spotted their chum, and came up.

Harry Wharton turned towards them, taking no further heed of Prout. He had no intention of taking orders from that portly gentleman; and desired to make the same clear to Mr. Prout.

Mr. Prout breathed hard. He was tempted to take that cheeky junior by the collar, and march him in. Still, the Fifth Form master could hardly deal with one of Quelch's boys in that manner.

Breathing wrath and indignation, Prout turned, and rolled away to Masters' Studies.

"Been scrapping?" asked Nugent, with a glance at Wharton's face.

"Yes; Smithy came along and asked to have his silly head punched," said Harry. "What about tea?"

"Quelch wants to see you first!" said Bob, with a grin. "Come up to the study when you're through."

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton headed for Masters' Studies, after Prout. He grinned as he fell in behind the portly figure of the Fifth Form master, and followed.

For the second time that afternoon he was walking at Mr. Prout's heels, unknown to the Fifth Form master. He found it rather amusing.

Prout, unconscious of the fact that Wharton was just behind him, arrived at Mr. Quelch's door, tapped, and



There was a buzz of wrath as Coker rushed at Compton with his leg-of-mutton fists up and his eyes gleaming over them. His fists were brushed away, however, so swiftly that Coker did not know what was happening. Then something that seemed like the klick of a mule caught him on the chin. "Urrrrrgh!" gasped Coker.

rolled in. Harry Wharton reached that door a moment later.

"Quelch!" boomed Prout. "Wharton has returned! I have directed him to accompany me to your study! He has refused! I leave the matter to you, Quelch! If you will send for that impertinent boy—"

Mr. Quelch, looking past Prout, glanced at Wharton in the doorway.

"There is no occasion to send for Wharton, Mr. Prout!" he said acidly. "You may come in, Wharton!"

Wharton stepped in. Prout stared round at him.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "Ah! The boy is here—"

"Cherry told me you wished to see me, sir!" said Harry, addressing his Form-master, and carefully taking no notice of Prout.

"Yes, Wharton. Some misunderstanding seems to have arisen," said the Remove master. "Perhaps you had better explain to me where you have been this afternoon."

Snort, from Prout! There was no misunderstanding, so far as Prout knew! What he had seen, he had seen!

"Certainly, sir!" said Harry cheerfully. "I had a hack in a punt about this morning, and had to stand out of the footer, so I went for a walk."

Another snort from Prout!

"Where did you walk, Wharton?"

"To the beach on the north side of the Shoulder, sir."

"And there," boomed Prout, "you put off in a boat—"

"Is that the case, Wharton?"

"No, sir! When Mr. Prout thought I was going off in a boat, I was sitting in a crevice in the chalk," said Wharton, with cheerful coolness. "If Mr. Prout had looked in, he would have seen me there."

"Absurd!" hooted Prout, while Mr.

Quelch gazed blankly at his head boy.

"An absolutely absurd statement, Quelch! Upon my word! I have never heard so absurd a statement! I repeat, Quelch—"

"Why did you do this, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch, very quietly.

"To pull Mr. Prout's leg, sir!" answered Wharton coolly.

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Boy!" gasped Prout.

"I knew Mr. Prout was watching me, sir!" explained Wharton, with the same cheerful coolness. "I thought that if I pulled his leg, he might get tired of looking after Remove fellows."

There was a deep silence in the study for a few moments. Mr. Quelch's face twitched. Prout's was thunderous.

"You did not go out of bounds, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch, at last.

"Oh, no, sir! I followed Mr. Prout back to the school," said Harry. "I was walking behind him all the time."

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout.

"Mr. Quelch—such a falsehood—such a palpable falsehood—upon my word! The boy came in only a few minutes ago—a few minutes, sir—"

"Let us have this clear," said Mr. Quelch.

"If you followed Mr. Prout back to the school, Wharton, when did you reach Greyfriars?"

"About three minutes after Mr. Prout, sir. I asked Gosling to make a special note of the time, sir. About a dozen fellows saw me come in, as well as Gosling."

Mr. Prout gazed at him. Mr. Quelch smiled.

"Quelch!" almost gurgled Mr. Prout.

"You recall that you asked a boy of your Form where Wharton was while I was with you, and he replied that Wharton was out of gates—"

"I went to Courtfield on my bicycle, sir, after coming in," said Harry, still

carefully addressing Mr. Quelch, and taking no notice of Prout. "As it happened, I found a sealed packet lying in that crevice on the beach, and thought that I had better take it to the police station."

"Upon my word! Such a statement—such an absurd statement—" gasped Mr. Prout. "Such reckless fabrications—"

"I handed that packet to Inspector Grimes, sir, at Courtfield," said Harry.

"I've no doubt he will tell you so if you inquire."

There was another silence in the study. To Mr. Prout, it seemed that he had never listened to such a series of wild and reckless inventions. But the Remove master was a much keener gentleman than Mr. Prout. It was clear enough to him that this boy of his Form, annoyed by Prout's officious meddling, had deliberately made a fool of Prout. He could not, perhaps, approve of such a proceeding, still, he found it hard not to smile.

"If you credit a single word of this, Quelch—" gasped Prout at last.

"Wharton's statements are very easily put to the proof, Mr. Prout!" answered the Remove master. "But as I accept my head boy's word without hesitation I shall take no such trouble."

"Thank you, sir!" said Harry.

Mr. Prout seemed on the verge of choking.

"Mr. Quelch! If you allow yourself to be deluded—deceived—by so palpable a string of prevarications—"

Buzzzzzz!

It was the telephone bell. Prout was interrupted.

Mr. Quelch picked up the receiver.

"Pray excuse me a moment, Mr. Prout!" he said. "Hallo! Yes, Mr. Quelch speaking! Is that Inspector

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE SCHOOLBOY SMUGGLER!



(Continued from page 13.)

Grimes? A—a packet—What? Oh, certainly! Wharton, as it happens, is in my study at this moment. He shall speak at once!"

Mr. Quelch glanced round.

"Wharton!" His voice was very distinct. "Inspector Grimes desires to speak to you on the subject of the packet you handed to him at Courtfield Police Station half an hour ago."

With the corner of his eye Quelch observed Prout's face. The expression on that face was quite entertaining to Harry Wharton's Form-master.

"Yes, sir!" said Harry demurely. He took the receiver, as Mr. Quelch handed it to him, and spoke into the transmitter. "Wharton speaking, Mr. Grimes!"

"About the packet you handed me, Master Wharton," came the inspector's voice. "It has been examined, and the matter is of some importance. Have you any idea whatever of the owner's identity? There is—hem!—no clue to owner in the packet, and we are very—hem!—anxious to trace him. If you have any idea of his name—"

Wharton started, as he remembered the Bounder's words. Was it possible that—

But he dismissed the idea the next moment. If the packet contained valuables, and no clue to the owner, Mr. Grimes would naturally want to know whether the Greyfriars junior could tell him anything. And as he had little, or, rather, no doubt that it was the packet for which young Compton had been searching, he had to give the Courtfield inspector what help he could.

"I thought it might belong to a chap named Compton, Mr. Grimes," he said. "I can't say for certain, of course, but Compton lost something on that beach last week, and that may be it."

"Where is Compton to be found?"

"I don't know. If I'd known I should have taken the packet to him, and asked him if it was his—"

"Oh!" The inspector's ejaculation sounded quite startled. "Is this—this Compton known to anyone at Greyfriars?"

"I think so, sir; he called here with his uncle this morning. Mr. Quelch may know—"

Wharton glanced at his Form-master.

Mr. Quelch took the receiver.

"If the lost property found by Wharton belongs to Compton, Mr. Grimes, it will be easy to find him," he said. "Captain Compton called on Dr. Locke this morning with a view to placing his nephew at Greyfriars. Undoubtedly Dr. Locke is acquainted with his address."

"Thank you, sir, then I will speak to Dr. Locke."

The Courtfield inspector rang off.

Mr. Quelch put up the receiver.

He glanced at Mr. Prout.

The Fifth Form master's face was a study. A full-rigged ship, suddenly caught by a tempestuous head wind, could not have been more thoroughly

taken aback than was Mr. Prout by that telephone call from Courtfield.

Prout had nothing to say. It was seldom—very seldom—that Mr. Prout was at a loss for words. Now he was completely at a loss. That series of wild and reckless fabrications had turned out to be the frozen truth, as even Mr. Prout could not doubt, after that talk on the telephone. He stood purple and confused, and Mr. Quelch, taking pity on him, hastily signed to Wharton to leave the study. Which Wharton did—grinning cheerfully as he went.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Calls it a Day!

"**T**HAT tick!" said Coker of the Fifth.

"Look here, Coker—" said Potter.

"That swab!" said Coker.

"For goodness' sake—" said Greene.

"That cheeky cad!" roared Coker.

Horace Coker was wrathful. His rugged face was flushed with wrath. Potter and Greene uttered soothing words, and made soothing gestures—almost as if they were dealing with a fractious child.

But it booted not; Coker was not to be soothed.

"I'll smash him!" said Coker.

"Now, look here," said Potter, "don't play the goat, Coker! Every man in the Form likes that chap—every man at Greyfriars, in fact! If you start a row with him you'll get lynched, see?"

"Don't be a fool, Potter!"

"Look what he did," said Greene warmly. "Pluck, if you like! There's not a man at Greyfriars could have brought off that swim, with the tide running out—not even old Wingate!"

"I fancy I could have done it, Greene."

"Oh crikey!"

"I'm not saying he's not plucky, either. What I'm saying is that he's a cheeky tick, and I'm going to whop him!"

"You can't" howled Potter.

"You shan't!" roared Greene.

"You'll see," said Coker.

It was Monday, and on that Monday a new fellow had arrived at Greyfriars. That new fellow was Valentine Compton of the Fifth Form.

Harry Wharton had had a hint of it from what Mr. Quelch had said. He had mentioned it to his friends, and they had agreed heartily that young Compton was the kind of chap they wanted at Greyfriars, and that they would have been jolly glad to welcome him into the Remove had he arrived as a junior.

Mr. Prout probably was glad to welcome him into the Fifth; certainly most of the fellows in that Form gave him a warm welcome.

For Compton's name and fame had preceded him, so to speak. Ever since the day he had swum out on the tide to the rescue of Billy Bunter and Bessie he had been rather a hero in the eyes of the school. As soon as it was known that he was coming to Greyfriars, it was clear that he was going to be popular.

Coker did not take the general view. Coker seldom did. Besides, Coker could not forget how that cheeky tick Compton had knocked him over—pitching him out of his way, in fact, like a sack of coke!

It was in vain that Potter and Greene tried to explain to Coker that, on that occasion, Compton had had no time to

waste, even on so important a personage as Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth.

Coker's importance in his own eyes was unlimited, and a fellow who had laid hands on Coker was a fellow to be whopped, smashed, and spificated at the earliest possible opportunity.

Not that Coker was a fellow to bear grudges. He was prepared to wash out the whole matter once he had whopped and spificated Compton. But the whopping and spification had to come first. That was as fixed and immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

Compton had made his first appearance in the Fifth Form Room that day. He looked an athletic fellow, and the games men already had an eye on him. But he showed some keenness in class, too, which caused Prout to have a favourable eye on him. In fact, he looked like winning golden opinions from all sorts of people—with the exception of Horace Coker!

So far Potter and Greene, with tact and great skill, had steered Horace clear of Compton. Now Horace was to be steered clear no longer. After class Compton was in the games study, which was a sort of Common-room for the Fifth. Blundell, the captain of the Form, already on friendly terms with him, had marched him there for a "jaw" with the choice spirits of the Fifth.

Potter and Greene would have been glad to join that circle. But they felt it their duty to look after Coker. They were trying to keep him out of the games study. But Coker was not to be kept.

"You'll see!" repeated Coker grimly. "If that swab—that tick—fancies that he can punch a Greyfriars man, he's got another guess coming—see? I'm going to whop that swab!"

"Have a little sense!" hooted Potter. "You can't row with a man on his first day in the school!"

"Can't I?" said Coker. "You'll jolly well see!"

"Rotten bad form!" said Greene.

"Don't be an ass, Greene!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"Shut up, Potter!"

Coker headed for the games study.

Potter and Greene grabbed his arms. He shook them off like troublesome flies and marched on.

The door of the games study was open. Within, a crowd of the Fifth could be seen gathered round the new man.

Valentine Compton—handsome, athletic, with a cheery smile on his slightly sunburnt face—looked a very attractive fellow. Evidently most of the seniors had taken a liking to him. It had already transpired that he was a footballer, and they were talking Soccer.

Coker, in the doorway, stared in, with a sarcastic frown. Nobody in the Fifth ever wanted to hear Coker on Soccer. Yet here they were, jawing Soccer to a new swab who had only been in the school a matter of hours. Coker lost no time in interrupting that "jaw."

He tramped in, pushed Hilton to one side, Fitzgerald to the other, and planted himself directly in front of the new senior.

Glances concentrated on Coker from all sides. But Coker was heedless of glances—impervious to them.

Compton looked at him. Possibly he did not know Coker again. He could see that the burly Greyfriars man looked hostile, and perhaps he wondered why. But he certainly did not look alarmed. He smiled.

"So you're here?" said Coker grimly.

"Yes. I came to-day," said Compton, in his pleasant way.

"You don't remember me?"
 "Have I met you before?"
 "You have!" said Coker. "I'll
 freshen up your memory for you, you
 tick!"

"Roll that rhinoceros out!" said
 Blundell.

And two or three Fifth Formers con-
 verged on Coker.

Coker glared defiance.
 "I've got something to say to that
 swab!" he roared. "Don't you men
 barge in! You knocked me over a week
 or two ago, Compton!"

"Oh, I remember!" assented Compton.
 "You're the chap I saw on the Shoulder
 that day. Sorry! You see, I was
 rather pressed for time."

"You knocked me over!" bawled
 Coker. "And if I'd been able to find
 you afterwards, I'd jolly well have
 whopped you for your cheek! Now
 you've come here and asked for it!"

"Will you shut up, Coker?" roared
 Blundell.

"No," said Coker, "I won't!"

"Barge the fathead out!" said
 Hilton.

"I'd like to see you barge one side
 of me out, you lackadaisical tailor's
 dummy!" bawled Coker. "Now,
 Compton, you cheeky swab, you've got
 it coming!"

There was a buzz of wrath from the
 seniors in the games study as Coker
 advanced on the new man, with his leg-
 of-mutton fists up, and his eyes gleam-
 ing over them. Heedless, Coker rushed.
 He had given the new fellow fair
 warning of what was coming; now he
 was going to hand it over!

Had those leg-of-mutton fists landed
 on Compton's handsome face, that
 countenance would certainly have
 looked much less handsome afterwards.
 But, to Coker's surprise, they did not
 land there.

They were brushed out of the way so
 swiftly that Coker did not know what
 was happening. Then something that
 seemed like the kick of a mule caught
 Coker on the chin.

Coker went over backwards.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Potter, in the
 doorway.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Greene.

"Man down!" grinned Hilton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker lay on his back on the
 floor of the games study. He did not
 quite know how he had got there. He
 knew that his chin felt as if it had been
 pushed through the back of his head,
 but he hardly knew why.

"Urrrrrgh!" gasped Coker.

He sat up.

"Urrrrrgh!" repeated Coker.

His hand went to his chin. He rubbed
 it dizzily. He blinked at Compton.
 That youth, with his hands in his
 pockets, looked down at him with a
 smile. The rest of the seniors roared
 with laughter. Coker's sudden downfall
 seemed rather funny—to everyone but
 Coker.

"Urrrrgh!" said Coker, for the third
 time.

Potter and Greene, chortling, came
 in and picked him up. He staggered
 between them unsteadily.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Oooooogh!"

"Now get out, you silly ass!" said
 Blundell, laughing.

"Urrrrgh! I'll get out when I've
 whopped that cheeky swab—not
 before!" gasped Coker. "Leggo,
 Potter! Leggo, Greene!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"Leggo, blow you!"

Coker jerked himself loose, and fairly
 hurled himself at the new Fifth
 Former.

Compton's hands came out of his
 pockets like lightning.

What he did with them, Coker never
 saw—their motion was too swift for
 Coker's eyes to follow. But if he could
 not see, he could feel. What he felt
 was another kick of a mule, landing this
 time on his nose.

Bump!

Coker sat down.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!"

Coker put a hand to a streaming nose.
 He seemed hardly able to believe it
 as he blinked at the claret on his
 fingers.

"Oh gum!" said Coker. "Oh crikey!
 Ow!"

"Let's call it a day, shall we, old
 bean?" asked Compton agreeably.
 "What's the good of rowing?"

Potter and Greene picked Coker up
 again. This time he allowed them to
 lead him from the games study. Even
 upon Horace Coker's stolid brain, it
 dawned that he had better call it a
 day!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Compton Wants to Know!

"YOU'RE Wharton, I think?"

Compton of the Fifth
 stopped to speak, in the quad
 in break, the following morn-
 ing. The Famous Five came out to-
 gether, and they all put on their
 politest smiles as the new man in the
 Fifth addressed Harry.

So far Wharton had seen the new
 Fifth Former from a distance, but had
 not exchanged words with him. He was
 rather interested to know whether the
 packet he had left with Inspector
 Grimes really did belong to Valentine
 Compton, but he did not seek him out
 to inquire. There was no doubt that
 Inspector Grimes had obtained Captain
 Compton's address from the Head, and
 that the lost property, therefore, had
 gone back to its owner.

"Yes, I'm Wharton," said Harry.
 "You've seen me before, though I dare
 say you've forgotten."

"No, I haven't forgotten," said
 Compton, smiling. "I don't often
 forget faces. I didn't know your name,
 but I've asked Blundell to point you
 out to me. You're the kid who found
 a packet on the beach one day last
 week, I think?"

"Right!" said Harry. "I hope you
 got it safe?"

Compton raised his handsome eye-
 brows.

"No, not quite," he said. "I think
 I ought to thank you for your kind
 intentions. I suppose you thought it
 was mine. But it was rather a surprise
 to my uncle and myself when Mr.
 Grimes asked us about it."

"Wasn't it yours, after all, then?"
 asked Harry. "Of course, I didn't tell
 Mr. Grimes it was—I didn't know. I
 told him I thought it might belong to
 you."

"That's what I'm rather curious
 about," said Compton. "You don't
 know what was in the packet, I
 suppose?"

"Haven't the foggiest. Something
 valuable, I should think, as it was
 sealed up so carefully," answered
 Harry.

"Yes; I rather think so, as Mr.
 Grimes seemed so serious about it," said
 Compton, with a nod. "But what on
 earth put it into your head that it might
 belong to me? That's what puzzles
 me."

Harry Wharton paused before he
 answered, and coloured a little.

Compton was smiling, but his grey eyes
 were very keen on the junior's face.

"I suppose that would puzzle you a
 little, Compton," said Harry at last.
 "But it's quite simple. I dare say you
 remember meeting two Greyfriars
 fellows on that beach a week or so ago
 —Smithy and Bunter?"

"I remember."

"You were looking for something
 you'd lost."

"Was I?"

"Bunter told everybody so," answered
 Wharton. "He thought that you'd lost
 a penknife."

"Oh, yes, I remember now," Compton
 nodded. "But a penknife isn't a sealed
 packet. Why did you suppose that the
 packet was mine?"

"Because, as it happened, I heard you
 say you'd left a packet of some sort
 there, the same night!" said Harry.

Compton started.

"What the dickens do you mean? I
 never saw you—"

"No; but I saw you," said Harry. "I
 don't mind telling you, Compton; but
 you understand that it's rather a secret,
 as I was out of bounds at the time. I
 should get into a fearful row if it came
 out!"

"You can trust me, kid!" said
 Compton, smiling again.

"I'm sure of that, of course; but I
 thought I'd mention it, as it would be
 a Head's flogging if it came out. I went
 to the sea-cave that night, with another
 Remove fellow—"

"The sea-cave under the Shoulder!"
 Compton started again.

"Yes! The other chap had been call-
 ing me a funk for not going with him in
 the afternoon, so I dared him to go with
 me at midnight—like a silly ass!" said
 Harry. "Anyhow, we went, and you can
 bet it made us jump when a boat ran in
 from the sea after midnight—"

"Oh!"

"The jumpfulness was probably ter-
 rific!" remarked Hurree Janiset Ram
 Singh—a remark that made Compton's
 eyes turn on him.

The Nabob of Bhanipur's variety of
 the English language had a rather sur-
 prising effect on new fellows.

"Smithy—I mean, the chap who was
 with me—and I got out of sight," went
 on Harry. "Of course, we didn't know
 what it might mean. It was a bit
 startling, at that time of night, in a
 place that's hardly ever visited even
 in the daytime. We thought we'd better
 see who it was before we were seen."

"I quite understand that!" assented
 Compton. "So you saw my uncle and
 myself land in the cave that night?"

"Yes," said Harry. "And we couldn't
 help hearing a few words you spoke.
 You mentioned a packet you'd left on
 the beach the day you swam out after
 Bunter's boat, and which you hadn't
 been able to find since."

"Oh!" said Compton.

The smile was still on his face.

"When I saw who you were," con-
 tinued Wharton, "I knew it wasn't
 necessary to keep out of sight, and I
 said so to Smithy. But you cleared off
 in the boat before we had a chance of
 getting near you."

Compton laughed.

"So that's the explanation?" he said.
 "By gum, I'll let my uncle know that,
 in my first letter home! That whisper-
 ing voice wasn't the ghost of the cave,
 then; it was a schoolboy out of bounds!
 Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Harry.
 "Smithy suggested that you might have
 fancied it was the smugglers' ghost, but
 I thought it rot. I couldn't make out
 why you bolted like that in the boat."

"My uncle is a seafaring man, with a touch of a sailor's superstition," said Compton. "But the fact is, I was startled, too. It was rather startling, you know, as we hadn't the faintest idea that anybody was in the cave. I was going to explore a secret passage that Vernon-Smith had told me about, but we chucked it for that night. Now that I belong to Greyfriars, I suppose I shall have to give it a miss—as I hear that the headmaster has placed it very strictly out of bounds." He laughed again. "So that's how you fancied that the packet was mine?"

"Well, as I heard you mention a packet—"

"Yes, yes, I understand now—a very natural mistake," assented Compton. "I was astonished by what I heard from Inspector Grimes; but it's quite simple now. By the way, if you ever do find my packet on that beach, you will know where to bring it—without bothering Mr. Grimes again. Also the penknife that I dropped while I was hunting for it. But I dare say they will never be found."

"Then you've never spotted it?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I'm going to try again, on a half-holiday," said Compton. "The fact is, my packet is rather valuable. My uncle trusted it to me, to send by registered post, and he was rather crusty about it, though, of course, I had no choice about taking a chance with it in the circumstances. I couldn't swim out to that boat with the dashed thing under my arm. But I shall never hear the end of it from my uncle unless it's found!"

With a nod to the juniors, Compton walked away and joined Blundell in the quad.

Harry Wharton stood looking after him. The new fellow was so frank, so cheery, so attractive a fellow in every way, that it was impossible to doubt him. Neither, so far as Wharton could see, was there any reason for doubt. It was odd, certainly, that someone else should have lost a packet on that lonely beach, as well as Compton. But odd as it was, it was possible enough.

Certainly, if that mysterious packet contained what the Bounder surmised, it could not possibly belong to Valentine Compton. Harry Wharton felt sure of that. He smiled at the idea of that handsome, athletic fellow, with his pleasant smile and pleasant manners, having a hand in a disreputable smuggling game. Smithy was a silly ass!

Satisfied on that point, the captain of the Remove dismissed the matter from his mind, and joined his friends in punting a footer till the bell rang for third school.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Not "On"!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Just the man we want to see!" exclaimed Bob Cherry heartily. "Has your postal order come, Bunter?"

"Eh?"

"We're relying on it!" said Bob Cherry solemnly. "Otherwise, it's tea in Hall for this Co. Say it's come!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The Famous Five chuckled. Funds, as it happened, were short with that famous Co.; but they were not really relying on Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order to see them through. It would have been an exceedingly frail reed to lean upon.

"The fact is, there's been some delay

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in the post!" said the fat Owl. "My postal order hasn't come yet! It's rather rum, as I'm expecting it from one of my titled relations! But—"

"Then it's tea in Hall!" said Bob. "I suppose it's too late to phone up Sir Bunter de Grunter, and remind him—"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said Bunter. "I say, come this way, will you? I want to speak to you."

Which considerably astonished the Famous Five. Bunter being aware that they were in a stony state, there was really no occasion for him to speak to them at all. And if he did, there seemed no reason why he should not get on with it on the spot! However, they were obliging fellows—and they followed Bunter.

At a little distance, Compton of the Fifth was standing, talking to Blundell, the captain of that Form. The new fellow shared Blundell's study in the Fifth, and they already seemed on pally terms. Bunter led the surprised five towards the two seniors.

Within hearing of them he stopped, and they stopped.

"I say, you fellows, that's Compton!" said Bunter.

"You howling ass!" said Johnny Bull. "We know that! What about it?"

"I mean, that's the fellow who saved my life!" said Bunter impressively. "You fellows ought to have seen him. Pluck, if you like!"

"The pluckfulness was terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what the esteemed dickens—"

"As a plucky chap myself, I can appreciate pluck!" said Bunter. "He saved my life and Bessie's life! Plunged into the raging sea, you know—"

"Eh? Was it raging?" asked Frank Nugent. "So far as I remember, it was a jolly fine day for November."

"Plunged in at the risk of his life," said Bunter. "The sea was running mountains high—or—very nearly! Did he care? Not he! Brave as a lion! Just bursting with pluck! I can tell you fellows I'm fearfully grateful!"

Compton heard every word of this. He glanced round, smiled, and then frowned a little, and walked away with Blundell. It looked as if he had no special use for either Bunter's admiration or his gratitude.

"You blithering ass!" said Bob Cherry. "What's this game?"

The Famous Five could not help being amazed. It was true that Compton had saved Bunter from danger—in all probability, saved his fat life, but Billy Bunter had not, so far, seemed keenly appreciative. He had, indeed, several times alluded to Compton as an ass and a fathead for not having got the boat ashore sooner. Bunter had been fearfully hungry on that occasion, and, to judge by his remarks, it might have been supposed that that was Compton's fault.

So this was a complete change. Gratitude, it seemed, was welling up in Bunter's podgy breast—rather late in the day. Perhaps it was better late than never; but it was surprising, all the same.

The fat junior blinked after the Fifth Form men through his big spectacles. As soon as he was sure they were out of hearing, he chuckled.

"I say, you fellows, Compton will like that all right—what?" said Bunter. "They like it laid on thick, you know! He, he, he!"

"I don't think Compton likes it, you fat ass!" said Harry Wharton, staring at the grinning Owl.

"That's all you know!" said Bunter.

"Gratitude goes down! People like it—and they like it in chunks, like pineapple. That ass Compton thinks that he saved my life—"

"He did, you fat foozler!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, rot! I expect I should have got ashore all right!" said Bunter. "I know I kept on asking him to get ashore, and he didn't—making out that the wind wouldn't let him, or something. I was fearfully hungry—starved, in fact—and so was Bessie. I can tell you, I was jolly nearly perishing by the time I got back to Greyfriars. Silly ass, if you ask me."

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the fat Owl.

These, it seemed, were Bunter's real sentiments—the genuine article. But he had not uttered them in Compton's hearing. In Compton's hearing he had turned on the "soft sawder." Why, was a mystery.

"Still, he thinks he saved my life—silly ass!" went on the fat Owl. "I say, you fellows, let's go by him again."

"What on earth for?"

"Give him some more," explained Bunter. "You fellows join in, see?"

"Join in?" gasped Wharton.

"That's the idea, old chap! Pull his leg!"

"Pip-pip-pull his leg?"

"Haven't you any sense?" asked Bunter impatiently. "You fellows are stony, and going to tea in Hall—and I've been disappointed about a postal order. We're in the same boat. See? That chap Compton is rolling in it."

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Bob.

The meaning of Billy Bunter's remarkable antics began to dawn on the Famous Five at last.

"He's jolly well off," explained Bunter. "I know all about it. You fellows remember that steam-yacht, the Firefly, that came into Pegg—the day Compton landed there? Well, that belongs to his uncle. Pretty expensive outfit, what? Look at his clothes, too!"

"His kik-kik-clothes!" stuttered Bob.

"Yes—he dresses as well as Hilton! And he's got a motor-bike, like Coker. Stink-bikes cost money! I dare say you fellows haven't noticed that Compton is jolly well off," said Bunter sarcastically. "You fellows never notice anything. Precious little that I don't see, I can tell you."

"You fat, foozling, frumpious fat-head—" began Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm letting you fellows into this!" said Bunter warmly. "It was my life he saved, not yours—at least, he fancies he did! But I'll let you fellows into it, as you're hard up—if you back me up, of course. Now, let's pass him again, and let him hear us—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I'll put it on thick, about his pluck and all that, and you fellows join in—sort of chorus, see?" explained Bunter. "It will buck him no end! You know how any fellow likes praise, especially about his pluck—and gratitude always goes down! It's rather rare, you know—in fact, there really isn't any—"

"Oh!"

"That's what makes people like it so much—they never get it!" Bunter further elucidated. "Well, I don't mind turning it on. We're all up against it, and this means tea in a Fifth Form study, if we work it all right. See?"

"Great pip!" gasped Bob.

The Famous Five gazed at William George Bunter, as if his fat visage

fascinated them. They understood at last.

"When we've battered him up to the chin," continued Bunter, "he will be ready to feed from our hand. I know human nature, I can tell you. Then, when he goes in to tea, we drop into his study—"

"Do we?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, old chap! I shall go and tell him how grateful I am to him for saving my life—he, he, he!—and I'll take you fellows as pals. Can he do less than ask us to tea?"

Bunter grinned complacently. The Famous Five gasped.

No doubt there were fellows who were amenable to such treatment. They

did not think that Compton was one of them, however.

But Billy Bunter had no doubts. Bunter was evidently greatly taken with this great idea.

"Mind, it's not only one tea!" he went on. "We may work this again and again—at least, until something else turns up, see? All you've got to do, is to lay it on thick. The thicker the better, really—like butter on toast, you know. He, he, he! Are you fellows on?"

"No!" gasped Wharton. "Not quite!"

"The onfulness is not terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"You fat sweep!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, you fellows! I tell you I saw the chap giving an order in the tuckshop for tea—lots and lots! Now, look here! Don't be silly idiots—this is a good thing! Let's walk past him, and say—yarooooooop!"

Billy Bunter roared as five pairs of hands suddenly grasped him, and sat him down in the quad.

Bump!

"Yooo-hooop!" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you up to, you beasts? Yow-ow-woop!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked away—to tea in Hall. Compton's study in the

(Continued on next page.)



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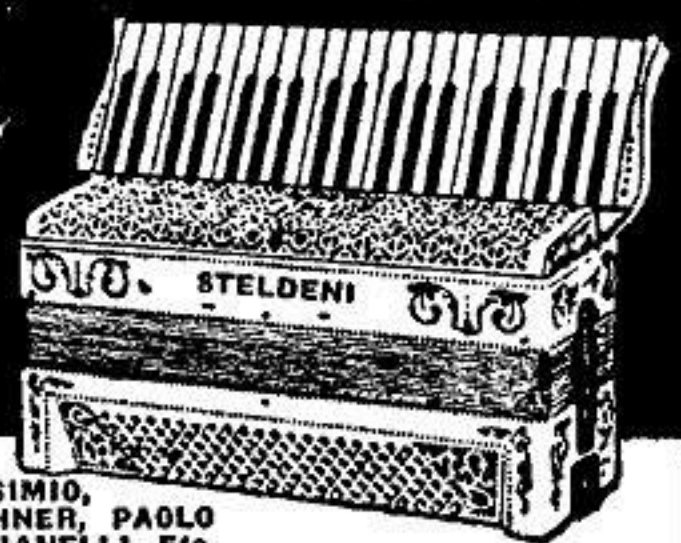
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Fifth was, no doubt, a land flowing with milk and honey; but—for some reason that Bunter could not understand—the Famous Five were not “on.”

“Ow! Beasts!” gasped Bunter. “I’ll jolly well leave you out now! Beasts! Rotters! Yah! Ow! Oh crikey!”

Billy Bunter sat and spluttered. It was some minutes before he recovered sufficient breath to carry on with the big idea.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Laying It on Thick!

“SMITHY, old chap!” Herbert Vernon-Smith did not trouble to answer.

He was leaning on one of the old elms, his hands in his pockets, his eyes fixed on Compton of the Fifth, with a rather curious expression in them.

Since that afternoon on the Court-field road, the Bunder had not spoken to Harry Wharton on the subject of Compton. He had, in fact, hardly spoken to him at all, for since the “scrap” they had been on worse terms than ever.

Harry Wharton had almost forgotten the Bunder’s strange surmises on the subject of Captain Compton’s nephew by that time. But Smithy had not forgotten. The fact that Compton had become a Greyfriars fellow would have convinced Wharton that he was above suspicion, had Wharton suspected him at all. But it was very far from convincing Smithy. It had, in fact, rather confirmed his surmise than otherwise.

He remembered very clearly Compton’s keen interest in learning of the secret passage from the sea-cave to the school. And although that midnight visit to the cave had been interrupted, he had not the slightest doubt that the captain of the Firefly and his nephew had visited and explored the place since. And now—Compton was at Greyfriars! That circumstance gave Herbert Vernon-Smith food for rather deep thought.

He liked Compton, as nearly every fellow in the school did. He did not care two straws if secret smuggling was the source of the wealth that the new fellow evidently possessed. Believing that the fellow had a secret to keep, he had gone to the length of scrapping with the captain of the Remove, to help him to keep it.

He had not the slightest doubt that that mysterious packet had been the one than Valentine Compton had left on the beach—nor the slightest doubt that it contained smuggled goods of some kind, since the Comptons, uncle and nephew, had disclaimed ownership, or any knowledge of it. Whether Smithy was right or wrong, he had no doubts on the subject.

Apart from his liking for a fellow whose pluck he admired, a certain strain of lawlessness in his own nature put him in sympathy with a fellow who pursued a risky business. But he was not feeling quite satisfied in his mind, since Valentine Compton had become Compton of the Greyfriars Fifth.

Outside Greyfriars, it was all very well. But Smithy was a Greyfriars man, and he did not like the idea of the school being used as a screen for such enterprises. And that, he was assured, was why Captain Compton had placed his nephew at Greyfriars School. And the more Smithy thought of it, the less he liked it.

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Compton, passing him with Blundell, gave him a friendly nod. As a Fifth Form senior, he had little to do with the juniors; but he remembered that Vernon-Smith had given him a lift in his boat into the sea-cave, and shown him the secret passage, and that, having established a sort of acquaintance, Compton acknowledged the same.

The Bunder’s eyes were fixed on him curiously, when Billy Bunter rolled up. Smithy, deep in his own thoughts, did not heed the fat Owl. But Bunter was not to be passed unheeded.

“I say, Smithy, that’s Compton!” said the fat Owl, loud enough for the new senior to hear. “I say, do you know what he did the other day?”

Vernon-Smith started violently. He knew, or believed that he knew, what Compton had done—smuggled goods ashore from his uncle’s yacht. That was in his mind at the moment, and, for a moment, he supposed that Billy Bunter was alluding to what he was thinking of.

“What do you mean?” he exclaimed. “What the thump do you know about the chap, you fat, spying worm?”

“Eh?” Bunter blinked at Smithy’s startled face in surprise. “I mean—”

“What do you mean?” snapped the Bunder. “What have you been prying into now?”

“Oh, really, Smithy—I was going to tell you about Compton saving my life the other day—”

“You silly ass!” roared the Bunder. “Beast!”

Compton had passed on out of hearing, so Smithy was of no further use for Bunter’s peculiar purpose.

Leaving the Bunder scowling with annoyance, Bunter rolled on.

“Toddy—I say, Toddy!” squeaked Bunter.

Peter Todd and Tom Dutton were coming along, about to pass Compton and Blundell. This was another chance for Bunter.

“Toddy, old man, did I tell you about Compton saving my life?” squeaked the Owl of the Remove. “That chap Compton—”

“You told me he fancied he did, and that he was a silly fathead!” answered Peter.

“Shut up, you silly idiot!” gasped Bunter, in alarm.

This was not what he wanted Compton to hear.

Compton undoubtedly heard. He laughed as he strolled on with Blundell.

Billy Bunter gave Toddy a devastating blink through his big spectacles.

“You silly ass!” he gasped.

“What’s the trouble?” asked Peter.

“Fathead! Ass! Idiot!”

Bunter rolled on, leaving Peter staring.

The two Fifth Form men strolled on, talking Soccer. After them rolled the fat Owl, looking for another chance.

They passed Lord Mauleverer, who was walking at his usual leisurely pace.

Bunter cut on and overtook Mauly.

“I say, Mauly, old chap, hold on!” gasped Bunter. “I say, see that chap—that new chap—his name’s Compton—”

“Yaas.”

“He saved my life!” said Bunter.

“Yaas.”

“Plunged into the roaring sea, and swam miles and miles and miles, to rescue me when I went adrift the other day!” said Bunter impressively.

“Yaas.”

“I say, Mauly, it was fearfully plucky! I’m awfully grateful to Compton for saving my life, Mauly.”

“Are you?” asked Mauly in astonishment.

“Think how plucky it was!” said Bunter. “My idea is that the chap ought to have a medal or something, Mauly. I jolly well think—”

Bunter did not finish that sentence. Compton had passed out of hearing.

Leaving Mauly astonished, Bunter rolled on.

Compton and Blundell were going to the House. By the steps stood Skinner and Snoop and Stott, of the Remove.

Billy Bunter joined them.

“I say, Skinner, see that chap Compton?” he asked.

“I am not blind!” assured Skinner.

“He saved my life the other day!” said Bunter.

“Rotten!” said Skinner.

“Eh?”

“Might have found something better to do!” said Skinner.

“Why, you beast—”

Compton grinned, as he passed, going into the House with the captain of the Fifth.

Billy Bunter glared at the humorous Skinner, and followed him in.

Coker of the Fifth was at the doorway. He gave the new senior a grim look in passing. That cheeky swab had not been, after all, whopped; and Coker, with lingering twinges in his nose and chin, was not thinking, at present, of getting on with the whopping. He was still wrathful; but he had decided, on the whole, to treat the fellow with distant disdain; which really was all that Coker could do, in the circumstances.

“I say, Coker!” squeaked Bunter. Coker was the only fellow at hand—and the fat Owl was thinking, of course, of his own affairs, not Coker’s. “I say, Coker, see that chap Compton? I say, do you know what a splendid chap he is?”

“What?” grunted Coker, glaring.

“He saved my life!” said Bunter.

“Swam out after a boat, you know, in the raging sea—miles and miles and miles! Splendid chap, isn’t he? Wonderful pluck, you know! Finest chap at Greyfriars—don’t you think so, Coker?”

Coker did not state what he thought on that subject. He extended a large hand, and took a fat ear between a finger and thumb.

“Yooooop!” roared Bunter, as Horace Coker twisted that fat ear. “Ow! Leggo my ear, you beast! Wow!”

“Take that!” said Coker, twisting again.

“Yaroooh!”

“And that!” said Coker, with another twist.

“Yow-ow-ow!”

“Now shut up and clear off, before I kick you!”

“Wow!”

Billy Bunter cleared off before Coker kicked him.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

BILLY BUNTER rolled up the Fifth Form passage, and stopped at Compton’s study.

Compton had gone in to tea—and Billy Bunter, having seen the order given in the tuckshop, was aware that it was going to be a good tea—quite a spread.

It was worth a little soft sawder, in Bunter’s opinion, to get a whack in that spread. It was, indeed, worth a lot. Bunter had not been sparing with the soft sawder; he had laid it on



Coker extended a large hand and took a fat ear between a finger and thumb. "Yooooop!" roared Bunter, as Horace twisted that fat ear. "Ow! Leggo my ear, you beast! Wow!" "Take that!" said Coker, twisting again. "Yaroooh!" "And that!" said Coker, with another twist. "Now shut up, and clear off before I kiek you!"

thick—in fact, perhaps a little too thick. Still, as it was Bunter's opinion that it couldn't possibly be laid on too thick, that was all right.

He blinked hopefully into the study. Compton was alone there. Blundell had gone along the passage to call Bland to tea.

Bunter rolled in. Compton was standing by the window, looking out into the quad. He glanced around at the fat junior. Bunter's first glance was turned on the study table. The spread was ready—and, as he had anticipated, it was a handsome spread. Billy Bunter beamed at it.

"Well?" said Compton, staring at him.

"Oh! I—I say, Compton, I came here to—to thank you!" gasped Bunter. "I say, I never properly thanked you for saving my life! I—"

"The speech may be taken as read!" said Compton.

"But, really, you know, it was so awfully plucky!" said Bunter, blinking at the new senior. "I've been telling all the fellows how wonderfully plucky you were, Compton!"

"You young ass!"

"Eh?"

"Cut!" said Compton.

"But I—I—I say, I'm awfully grateful, you know!" said Bunter. "I—I feel that I ought to tell you how grateful I am, Compton! Such wonderful pluck—"

"Chuck it!"

"Such marvellous courage—"

"That will do!"

"But I say—"

"Shut the door after you!"

Compton turned back to the window. Billy Bunter blinked at the back of his head. He did not seem to be getting on as well as he had expected.

"I—I s-y, Compton—"

"Don't bother!" said Compton, over his shoulder.

"But I—I say, old chap, I feel bound to tell you how grateful I am, and how I admire your wonderful pluck!" said Bunter. "I said to Wharton: 'That chap Compton is the pluckiest chap at Greyfriars, and chance it!' My very words! I said to Cherry—"

"Get out!"

"I said to Cherry: 'Look at that chap Compton! That's the chap who swam miles and miles in a stormy sea to shave my wife—I mean, to save my life! I said to Nugent—'"

Compton turned round from the window. He fixed his eyes on the happy Owl, with an expression which did not indicate that he liked flattery, as Bunter had expressed it, in "chunks like pineapple."

"You silly young ass!" said Compton. "What are you trying to gammon me for? What are you driving at?"

"Oh, really, Compton! Don't you think I'm trying to stuff you!" said Bunter anxiously. "Nothing of the kind! I'm awfully hungry—I mean, awfully grateful—Blessed if I see anything to cackle at, Compton! I hope you don't think I came here to tea! I never even noticed that it was tea-time! I said to Inky—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Compton.

"I said to Inky: 'That chap Compton ought to have a medal—V.C. or something like that!' I—I say, Compton, c-c-can I sit down? I—I'd like to tell Blundell about your saving my life, when he comes in. I want to tell him about your wonderful pluck, old chap."

Billy Bunter drew a chair to the table and sat down. Compton came round the table from the window.

Bunter eyed him rather uneasily through his big spectacles. With all his faith in the efficacy of flattery and

soft sawder, he was beginning to feel doubts.

His doubts were justified. Compton grasped the chair by the back and tilted it. Bunter rolled.

Bump!

"Ow!" roared Bunter, as he sat on the carpet, with a concussion that made the furniture rock. "Wow! Oh! Ow! Beast!"

Compton drew back his foot.

"Cut!" he said.

Bunter gave him one blink—and cut. He was out of the doorway almost in a bound.

The new Fifth Former laughed and walked back to the window.

Billy Bunter, in the passage, glared at him with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Billy Bunter was not quick on the uptake. But even the fat and fatuous Owl could see that the new fellow in the Fifth had no use for soft sawder. It was clear that flattery, even in chunks like pineapple, would not buy him anything, so to speak. It had been a sheer waste.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter. "Yah! Rotter! Beast!"

It was rather unfortunate for Bunter that Blundell and Bland arrived at the study at that moment.

The captain of the Fifth stared at Bunter. He could scarcely believe his eyes, and his ears, at the sight of a Remove junior hooting defiance in at the door of a Fifth Form study—his study!

"Here, what the dooce!" ejaculated Blundell. "You cheeky little tick—"

He let out a foot.

Thud!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

He bolted.

Bland of the Fifth, grinning, let out

a foot as he fled, and accelerated his flight.

Bunter, yelling, did the Fifth Form passage at about 60 m.p.h.

It was a disconsolate and dismal Owl that arrived in Hall for tea. Door-steps and dishwater, as the juniors called the school tea, were Bunter's lot—after all his happy anticipations.

Bunter was not feeling in his bonniest mood when he rolled out of Hall after tea.

When he sighted Compton of the Fifth again, in the quad, his little round eyes gleamed through his big, round spectacles at the new Fifth Former.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry clapped the fat Owl on a fat shoulder. "Did you tea with that new man in the Fifth, old fat bean?"

"Catch me teaing with the swab!" snorted Bunter. "I'm rather particular whom I tea with!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five chortled. They had not expected Billy Bunter to get away with his astute scheme for bagging a spread in the Fifth. Evidently they had been right.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter spoke loudly to catch Compton's ear. "I say, see that chap Compton!"

The chums of the Remove stared at him. They fancied, for a moment, that Bunter was beginning again, on the "soft sawder" tack! But the Owl of the Remove was done with soft sawder, so far as Compton of the Fifth was concerned.

"See that silly swab?" continued Bunter.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"That silly idiot makes out that he saved my life!" jeered Bunter.

"Wha-a-at?" gasped the five juniors together.

"Of course, he never did anything of the sort! He can't swim for toffee, and he's got no more pluck than a bunny rabbit, and I can jolly well say—yow-ow-ow-ow! Wow! I say, you fellows—varoooooop!"

Why the Famous Five all kicked him

together, Bunter did not know. But he knew that they did!

Five feet landed on William George Bunter in such swift succession that they seemed to land almost all at once!

Billy Bunter roared. Harry Wharton & Co. walked on, and left him to roar.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Chance for Coker!

"COKER looks bucked!" remarked Bob Cherry.

Coker did!

After dinner on Wednesday, Horace James Coker, of the Fifth Form, surveyed the universe with a genial eye.

Plenty of fellows noticed it. It leaped to the eye in fact. Harry Wharton & Co. noticed it, and wondered what had happened to make Coker of the Fifth look so merry and bright.

That Coker was in an uncommonly genial mood was demonstrated, not only by his looks, but by the fact that he bestowed a kind nod on the Famous Five as he came on them in the quad.

Generally, Lower Fourth fellows were miles, if not leagues, beneath Coker's notice. Such inconsiderable microbes Coker passed by like the idle wind which he regarded not. Now Coker bestowed a kind, if lofty and patronising nod, on the heroes of the Remove.

"If you kids would like to see some decent Soccer this afternoon, roll along and watch the Fifth Form pick-up!" said Coker. "Worth watching for once!"

Which surprised the chums of the Remove more than ever. They had already decided to give the Fifth Form pick-up a look-in that afternoon. It was known that the new man, Compton, was playing in one of the sides, and that Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, was very keen to see how he shaped.

At games practice, the previous day, the new man had shown up remarkably well, and the Fifth Form skipper was in hopes of finding in him a good forward for the Form eleven.

Taking a friendly interest in Compton

of the Fifth, the Famous Five intended to watch the pick-up, and see how he turned out at Soccer, having no doubt that he would be worth watching.

But they did not expect to hear that from Coker!

Coker's feelings towards the new man in his Form were well known. He made no secret of the fact that he regarded Compton as a swab and a cheeky tick.

"Oh! Think so, Coker?" asked Wharton in surprise.

"I don't think—I know!" answered Coker. "You fags come along! Jolly good thing for you to see some first-class Soccer! Nothing like watching a really good man at the game to improve your own play, see?"

"Oh, we're coming!" said Bob.

"That's right!" said Coker. "Blundell's had sense enough, for once, to put in a really good man! He doesn't often, as I dare say you know."

"You think he's bagged a good man?" asked Harry, more and more surprised.

"I know he has!" said Coker. "I fancy I know something about Soccer, and a man's form at the game! I haven't much to learn about Soccer, I fancy."

"What a fertile fancy!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Don't be cheeky, Cherry!" Coker frowned for a moment. But geniality returned at once. It was clear that Coker was greatly bucked. "You see, this may make a lot of difference," he condescended to explain to the juniors. "Now Blundell's giving a really good man a chance, he may have sense enough to pick him for the Form eleven. That may mean beating the Sixth in the next Form match with Wingate's crew! Blundell's keen on that, of course, though so far he hasn't had brains enough to know how to set about it."

"Oh, Blundell will spot him all right, if he's a good man!" said Harry.

"I hope he will!" said Coker. "He's a bit of a fool—still, I certainly hope so. You kids come along to Big Side, and if you want to see Soccer played as it should be played, keep your eyes on the inside-right."

"Inside-right!" repeated Harry. "I heard that Blundell was trying Compton at centre-forward!"

Coker stared.

"Eh? Who's talking about Compton?" he snapped.

"Eh? Weren't you?"

"You silly young ass!" roared Coker.

"But you were saying—"

"You cheeky little idiot! Don't talk about Compton to me! That swab can't play footer! If he barges in my way, I'll jolly well lay him out, I know that!"

The Famous Five blinked at Coker. Clearly there was a misunderstanding somewhere.

"But who's at inside-right, then?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Me, you young ass!"

"Oh crikey! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five roared.

They understood now.

Coker had not been talking about Compton! He had been talking about himself! Really, they felt that they might have guessed that one! Coker generally was talking about himself!

It was seldom that Coker of the Fifth had a chance to display his wonderful powers as a footballer, even in a pick-up. Only Coker knew what a tremendous footballer he was. Other fellows looked on him as a barging, blundering ass, and his performances on the football field as resembling those of an escaped rhinoceros. Every now and

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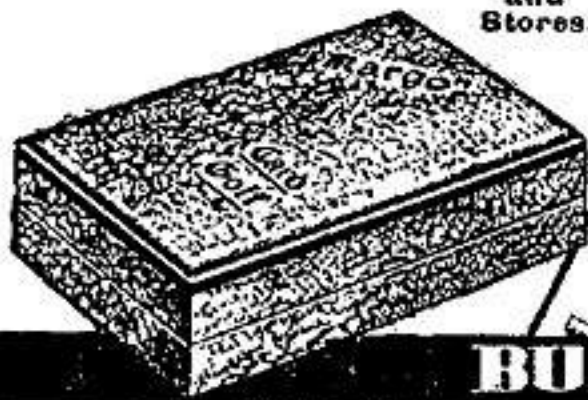
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then, when Blundell was short of a man, he would reward Coker's keenness, by giving him a chance. That, apparently, had happened this afternoon. Hence Coker's unwonted geniality, and his "bucked" condition.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites. They could not help it. The idea of expending a half-holiday in watching Coker play what he was pleased to call football, watching him getting in everybody's way, and falling over his own feet, and picking up tips therefrom to improve their own play, was too much for them. They roared.

Coker glared at them.

Coker could see nothing to laugh at. Harry Wharton & Co. could. They could see Coker.

But Coker, though he could see no cause for merriment, could see that that merriment was disrespectful to himself. He glared—and then he grabbed.

He grabbed Harry Wharton with one hand and Bob Cherry with the other. He was going to bang their heads together, which was the very least they deserved for their cheek.

But as Coker grabbed the juniors, the juniors grabbed Coker.

Horace did not seem to expect that. Things often happened which Horace Coker did not expect to happen.

Bob Cherry hooked Coker's leg, Harry Wharton shoved, and Horace found himself suddenly sitting in the quad, without quite knowing how he had got there.

"Oooogh!" gasped Coker. "I'll—oooogh!"

Staying only to knock Coker's hat off, the chums of the Remove departed. They were gone by the time the dizzy and breathless Horace resumed the perpendicular.

Coker glared round in wrath, but the wrath faded from his rugged brow as Potter of the Fifth shouted from the door of the changing-room:

"Come on, Coker! Aren't you getting changed?"

"Oh, all right!"

Coker went in and got changed. His genial equanimity had returned by the time he issued forth with the Fifth Form men in football array. For this day was a great day—it was Horace's chance of letting all Greyfriars see what a footballer he was, and he was going to make the most of it. He could afford to disregard and forget cheeky Removites. Chances did not often come Coker's way, and this—Coker hoped, at least—meant laying the foundation of a Soccer career.

Coker walked down to the football ground as if he were walking on air.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like Soccer!

"WATCH Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why don't they lay him out?" asked Bob Cherry plaintively.

Harry Wharton & Co. were there to watch Compton. The Bounder had come along for the same reason, and so had some other fellows. More and more fellows came along as the game progressed, and the news spread that that new man, Compton, was putting up a great game. Blundell & Co. had rather an unusual audience for a pick-up. Even Wingate of the Sixth, captain of the school, was seen towering over the juniors, with his eyes on the new Fifth Former. For the Greyfriars captain to be interested in his game was an immense distinction for a fellow who had only come to the school that week. And

the fact that Wingate thought him worth watching brought a whole mob along.

That Valentine Compton was a great man at the game was clear to the eyes of all who knew anything about Soccer. Nevertheless, well worth watching as he was, many eyes were on Coker. Fellows could not help looking at Coker's football. They could not help wondering how he did it, why he did it, and how and why the other men did not lay him out and have done with him. His own side, especially, were, in the general opinion, entitled to "lay him out" and have done with him!

Blundell played centre-half. He had Compton in front of him at centre-forward, and on Compton's right was Horace Coker. That he was a first-class inside-right, Coker had no doubt; but probably he thought he was equally good at outside-right, for he barged Greene, who filled the position, unceremoniously out of his way, and did Greene's work for him.

Likewise did Coker think that it was up to him to take some of the work off the centre-forward's hands. Compton found that he had to keep a very wary eye on the man on his right. That man was liable to hurtle into him at any moment and get the ball off him—of which Coker would then make a generous present to the other side.

Before ten minutes had elapsed Blundell could have kicked himself for having given Coker that chance, even in a mere pick-up game. Still more earnestly did he desire to kick Coker.

So far from reciprocating these bitter feelings, however, Coker, in his large, generous way, dropped back occasionally among the halves, and relieved Blundell of his job, as well as the other halves at times. It seemed that Horace regarded Soccer rather as a one-man game, and himself as the one man.

The fact was that Coker had absolute confidence in himself, and was far from feeling the same confidence in the rest. It was not really selfish play; it was large-hearted and generous. There was no doubt that Coker did a lot of strenuous work.

The other side in the pick-up was captained by Fitzgerald of the Fifth. Blundell had thought of letting Fitz have Coker, but Fitz had declined the gift without thanks; in fact, Fitz declared that if Blundell wanted to play a hippopotamus, he could play the hippopotamus himself, and be blown to him. As Coker was in Blundell's side, Fitz rather hoped to wind up that pick-up with a wide victorious margin. Coker did little damage to the enemy, but to his own side he was a really deadly foe.

Gwynne of the Sixth was referee. Gwynne grinned considerably at Coker's antics. But he ceased to grin when he got one of Coker's barges. Anybody near Coker was liable to be barged, and a barge with Horace's beef and weight behind it was no grinning matter.

"Goal!"

"Good old Compton!"

"That man can play Soccer," remarked the Bounder. "Jolly good goal!"

"Coker jolly nearly stopped him!" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With Coker barging about like a wild elephant at his right hand, Compton had scored rather under difficulties. It was, as Smithy remarked, a good goal—a fact that was apparent to everyone but Coker.

Coker was dissatisfied. He tapped Compton on the shoulder as they went back to the centre of the field.

"That won't do!" said Coker sternly.

"Eh—what?" Compton looked at him.

"This is Soccer," explained Coker. "I don't know where you've played, or whether you've ever played before at all, but we play Soccer here. Flukes like that are no good. You should have left that to me. You practically took the ball away from me. It won't do—see?"

"Fathead!" said Compton politely.

"Shut up, Coker, for goodness' sake!" hissed Greene.

"Don't jaw, Greene. I'm talking to this cheeky swab. Don't get in my light again, Compton. If you do I'll jolly soon shove you out of it!"

"Shut up, Coker!" roared Blundell.

Coker looked round.

"Did you tell me to shut up, Blundell?" he asked.

"Yes, I jolly well did!"

"Well, don't do it again!" said Coker.

"I don't like it. I suppose you're a captain—of sorts. Well, then, tell this silly swab not to keep on getting in the way of a better man."

Blundell gave him a look that the fabled basilisk might have envied.

"You blithering owl," he said, "I was an ass to play you! Small game with the Second is your game—only you're no good for it. Do you want me to send you off the field?"

"I'd like to see you do it!" bawled Coker.

Probably Coker would have seen Blundell do it, but the whistle went, and the game re-started after the goal.

Coker, snorting with indignation, fairly threw himself into the game. So far no goals had come Coker's way, though he had no doubt that with proper backing he would have landed two or three by that time. But what was even a first-class player to do when fellows would never let him have the ball if they could help it, and kept on getting in his way, and he kept on falling over them?

Now, however, Coker meant business. It was nearly the end of the first half, and that half was not going to finish without Greyfriars School seeing what Coker could do at Soccer. Wingate himself was watching, and if he caught the captain's eye there was a chance for the first eleven. That swab Compton—a cheeky new tick, who really ought not to have been playing at all—was not going to spoil Coker's chances—not if Coker knew it!

"Oh, good man!" roared Bob Cherry.

Greene had the ball on the wing. He parted with it to Coker, who should have taken the pass and centred to Compton. Instead of which, Coker contrived somehow to tangle his long legs, and he sat down on the football field instead of taking the pass. Compton, however, intercepted it, and went on with it, leaving Coker sitting.

Coker leaped up like a jack-in-the-box. He charged fiercely after Compton. His indignation was past words.

That new tick had robbed him of the ball again, and was, of course, going to fuzzle it. As a matter of fact, it was an almost certain goal; but as Compton kicked for goal, Coker hurtled into him like a runaway lorry, and the new fellow went over headlong. Coker had the ball.

He had it for a millionth part of a second; then one of Fitz's halves relieved him of it, and sent it away to midfield.

Coker did not even see what happened to it. He stood and blinked.

Compton sat up dizzily.

"Ow!" he gasped. "You mad ass! Wow!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Goal!"

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Fitz had put it into Blundell's goal. Hilton and Greene ran to Compton and helped him up. He stood gasping. Blundell rushed up to Coker. He stood jabbering at him—almost gibbering—breathless, and almost speechless with fury.

"That silly fool——" said Coker, pointing to Compton.

"Get off the field!" shrieked Blundell.

"Wha-a-t!"

"Get off! Get out! Hook it! Clear away! Go! Bunk! Get out of sight!"

"You silly idiot——" said Coker.

"Get off!" raved Blundell.

"Shan't!" retorted Coker. "Catch me getting off!"

Blundell foamed.

"Will you clear off?" he gurgled.

"No," said Coker, "I won't!"

"Get off, Coker!" roared Gwynne.

"Don't be a fool, Gwynne!"

Coker, in that pick-up, had hoped for a chance of showing fellows what he could do at Soccer. He had shown them. Everybody round the field was rocking with laughter. But Blundell was not laughing; he was foaming with rage.

"Kick him off!" he gasped.

"Here, look out!" roared Coker.

"What the dickens—— Here, stoppit! Greene, you ass—— Potter, you fool—— Blundell, you dummy—— Bland, you swab—— Hilton, you idiot—— Yow-ow! Yaroooooh! Oh, my hat!"

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

What was left of Horace Coker was deposited, wriggling and gurgling, on the hard, unsympathetic earth.

The game was resumed without Coker. It was two or three minutes before Coker was able to sit up and take notice; several minutes more before he staggered to his feet. Then Coker tottered away; he went, gasping and gurgling, back to the House.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Deep Down!

"**O**LD ass!" Mr. Prout was the object of Coker's disrespectful remark.

Coker of the Fifth, having changed after his exploits on the football field, had retired to his study—like Achilles to his tent—and feeling even more sore and savage and sulky than Achilles of old.

Standing at his study window, Coker looked on Greyfriars and the distant football field—and the world generally—with a jaundiced eye.

It was only a pick-up that was being played—merely practice. But it was drawing a crowd such as was accustomed to gather to witness first eleven matches. Coker had a view of the field, and he saw the crowd gathering and thickening as the second half began.

Wingate had been joined by other great men of the Sixth. Hobson of the Shell had arrived with a swarm of Shell fellows; Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth had turned up; an army of fags

of the Third and Second had swarmed on the ground. Even Billy Bunter was there; even Sammy Bunter, his fat minor in the Second Form, rolled along with Dicky Nugent and a mob of that Form. Even Mr. Quelch had walked down to Big Side with Mr. Capper. Now, from his window, Coker beheld the portly figure of Prout rolling in the same direction.

All this would have been easily comprehensible to Coker had Coker been still doing his wonders on the football field. Such an attraction might reasonably have drawn all Greyfriars to the spot.

But Coker was off the scene; he had been hustled, hustled, banged, and booted off the scene. It was that swab Compton who was drawing the crowd—a fellow who in Coker's opinion, couldn't play Soccer. Coker could hear his name yelled from the distance. He was, Coker supposed; pulling off some more flukes, which the silly asses fancied to be Soccer. Coker, at least, knew better.

Now even plump old Pompous had uprooted himself from his study arm-chair and rolled forth to behold the exploits of that new man in his Form.

Coker snorted scorn over Prout's unconscious head as he went. He turned from the window in disgust.

If all the rest of Greyfriars wanted to see that new man at it, Coker, at all events, did not; Coker was fed-up with him.

He tramped out of his study.

There was absolutely nobody about—nobody in the House—nobody in the quad. Coker did not like solitude; but if he wanted company, evidently he had to head for the football ground and watch Compton.

Coker grunted angrily.

He walked out into the quad to kill time, but the uproarious shouting from the football field drove him in again. He was tired of hearing Compton's name, accompanied by "Goal!" The fellow must have bagged three or four—all flukes, of course. Coker, with a frown on his face, and his hands driven deep into his pockets, wandered in a deserted House.

He came to a stop in the library corridor.

Properly speaking, Coker of the Fifth should not have walked down that corridor at all; nobody outside the ranks of the Sixth Form prefects was allowed there without leave. In that corridor was the secret panel which led to the underground passage to the smugglers' cave under the Shoulder. It was strictly and severely out of bounds.

But Coker cared not two hoots—or one, for that. Putting that secret passage out of bounds for juniors was right and proper; putting it out of bounds for Fifth Form men was mere rot.

Coker came to a stop and surveyed the secret panel. Every fellow at Greyfriars was interested in it—even that new swab Compton. Compton had heard of it, and Wingate of the Sixth had taken him along to look at it—Coker knew that.

After the discovery made by the Remove fellows in the sea-cave, Coker, like most of the Greyfriars fellows, had intended to explore those hidden and mysterious recesses. The Head's order, placing the cave out of bounds, had irritated Coker extremely. He had, indeed, proposed to Potter and Greene to go, all the same. They had declined—and football matters had put it out of Coker's mind. Now he thought of it again. He had nothing to do; time hung heavy on his hands, and he really was keen to explore that secret passage. The Head's order made no difference to

Coker. He respected his headmaster, of course; but his view was, that if Dr. Locke fancied that Fifth Form men could be shepherded like fags, Dr. Locke had another guess coming.

"Blessed if I don't!" said Coker.

He went up to his study for a flash-lamp, descended again to the library corridor—and did!

He knew where to touch the hidden spring in the carved oaken scroll on the panel. He pressed it; the panel opened, and Coker stepped into the aperture in the old stone wall.

The spring worked from within, as well as without. Coker snapped the panel shut after him.

He could not, of course, leave it open to apprise any beak who passed that way that some fellow had gone out of bounds. The Head's order, so far as it applied to seniors, was, of course, rot—but Coker did not want to explain that to his headmaster.

He turned his light on the oaken door at the end of the passage in the thick stone wall. He remembered having heard it said that the bolts on that door were rusty and grated loudly as they were moved; but they slipped back easily and softly as Coker jerked at them, and he wondered whether some fellow had slipped in and oiled them, with a view to opening that door quietly. It looked like it.

Coker passed through and reached the top of the spiral stair that wound away into the darkness in the thickness of an ancient buttress.

He flashed his light down and descended.

It was, he had heard, a mile to the sea-cave by the underground passage. He had lots of time to go and to return before calling-over. Potter and Greene might miss him; but even that, Coker reflected bitterly, was not likely—ten to one they would be hanging round that new swab Compton.

"Oh!" gasped Coker suddenly, as he slipped and nearly fell.

The spiral stair was narrow and steep, the old stone steps were damp and clammy, and in places slippery.

Coker barely recovered his balance.

That little incident might have warned Coker that it was not without reason that the Head had placed the secret passage out of bounds. A fall and an injury in such a place would have been an extremely serious matter. It might have dawned on Coker that his headmaster had a wiser head than his own, but that was not likely to dawn on Horace Coker.

He stepped on more carefully, descending the spiral stair, which seemed almost endless. He was near the bottom, when suddenly he slipped again.

He threw out his arms to save himself and dashed the flash-lamp on the stone wall; it was instantly extinguished, falling from his hand.

"Oh!" spluttered Coker, as he was plunged into dense, overwhelming darkness.

He grabbed after the fallen flash-lamp, banged his head on the stone, slipped, stumbled, and rolled.

Coker hardly knew what was happening for the next few moments. His senses, such as they were, were completely scattered by that fall in the dark. There was a crash as he landed on stone flags at the foot of the stair. He had reached the underground passage—suddenly!

"Ow!"

He sat up dizzily.

There was a severe pain in his right leg. He realised that he must have twisted it as he fell.

"Ow!" gasped Coker. "Oh blow! Wow!"

Christmas Ahead!

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Billy Bunter drew a chair to the table and sat down in front of the good things. "I want to tell you about your wonderful pluck, Compton, old chap—" he began flatteringly. Compton grasped the chair by the back and tilted it forward. "Ow!" roared Bunter, as he shot off.

He tried to stagger up. His right leg promptly let him down. He gave a yelp of pain.

For long, long minutes Coker sat, like the heathen of old, in darkness.

His flash-lamp was hopelessly lost, even if it was not damaged, as it probably was. Without a light, and with a damaged leg, Coker realised that he could not carry on. All that remained was to give up that expedition, crawl up that endless spiral stair, and get back into the school.

Coker decided on that. But it was easier to decide than to do. As he groped for the stair, a fearful pang shot through his leg, and he yelped.

He reached the stair. But at the first attempt to clamber up and drag his helpless leg after him, the pain in that leg was so severe that Coker, tough as he was, nearly fainted.

He desisted.

"Oh, blow!" groaned Coker.

Horace Coker was not quick on the uptake. For quite a long time his chief feeling was annoyance. Gradually, however, it changed to alarm.

He could not get back up that endless stair. He knew that. He was alone in the dark, deep down below the school, far—very far—from the possibility of making his voice heard, if he shouted with all the strength of his lungs. Nobody knew that he was there. Nobody was likely to guess that he was there. What—what was going to be the outcome of this?

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Coker.

Perhaps it dawned on Coker, at long last, that the Head had acted wisely in placing that dangerous quarter severely out of bounds. But if that knowledge dawned on Coker, it dawned too late to be of any service to him.

Utterly helpless, Coker lay on the cold, clammy stone in the dense darkness and groaned.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Prout is Positive!

MR. PROUT frowned. Harry Wharton grinned. Prout's frown was the cause of Wharton's grin.

The captain of the Remove was turning the corner into the library passage when Prout spotted him.

It was after tea. Most of the Greyfriars fellows were talking about the Fifth Form game that afternoon and the exploits of the new man, Compton. That happy youth had bagged no fewer than five goals in the pick-up, and everybody knew that he was a coming man in Greyfriars football. Blundell had jumped at him, so to speak, for the Fifth Form team, and it was no secret that Wingate had his eye on him for the first eleven.

Harry Wharton was as keenly interested as any other fellow, and he would have been with the crowd in the Rag, discussing the topic, but for a very simple reason. Wingate wanted a book from the library, and had sent him to fetch it.

Remove men did not fag and prided themselves on the fact; but any Remove man was more than willing to do anything for old Wingate. So Harry Wharton went—and Prout, seeing him turn into the library corridor, frowned.

"Wharton!" boomed Prout.

"Yes, sir?"

"You are aware, Wharton, that juniors are not allowed in that corridor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then where are you going, Wharton?"

"To fetch a book for a prefect, sir."

"Oh!" said Prout.

Wharton grinned, and turned the corner. He knew what was in the Fifth

Form book's mind as well as if Prout had told him.

The secret panel was in that corridor. Prout suspected him—more than suspected him. Twice had Prout, as he believed, spotted him, and each time the young rascal had wriggled out of it. Now, Prout had not the slightest doubt, the young rascal was going out of bounds again—this time by way of the secret passage from the school.

Prout, as usual, laboured under the difficulty of being unable to mind his own business. But that was not all. Twice he had nailed this young rascal—twice the young rascal's Form-master had stood by him, and he had escaped his just punishment. Prout's dignity was at stake now. Quelch had been sarcastic—quite unpleasant about it. Prout was going to demonstrate to Quelch that he, Prout, was right, and that Quelch was wrong. If, as Prout suspected,—or, rather, knew,—that young rascal was going to the secret passage, Prout was going to nail him, beyond the shadow of a doubt this time.

If he was, as he stated, going to the library for a book, he would be back with it in a few minutes.

Prout waited.

The young rascal did not come back with the book. Five—ten minutes passed—and Wharton had not come back!

Prout could hardly doubt now.

He rolled into the library corridor. If Wharton was not in the corridor, or in the library, where was he? That question answered itself—to Prout's mind, at least!

Prout rolled on—grim! There was nobody in the corridor. He looked into the library. Sometimes the Head's librarian was there—but he was not there now. Nobody was there!

Grimmer grew Prout!

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Wharton. it was true, might have obtained the book for which he had been sent, and walked on, going away by another route, instead of returning by the corner where Prout had waited.

He might have—but why should he? It was a longer way to get to the Sixth, going round by the Form-rooms; and if he had fetched a book for a prefect, he had to get back to the Sixth!

Prout had little doubt—or, rather, no doubt—that the junior, having, as he fancied, "stuffed" him with that story of fetching a book, had gone through the secret panel. What did it look like?

What would Quelch say to this?

Prout rolled back down the corridor, to head for the Remove master's study!

But he paused. In dealings with a sarcastic man like Quelch, and a wary young rascal like Wharton, he could not be too careful. The possibility, at least, existed, that Wharton had gone back a different way—perhaps even guessing that Prout had been waiting round the corner, and finding a disrespectful amusement in pulling his leg!

Prout stopped at the secret panel and opened it.

Proof positive was obtainable there!

If the junior had gone that way, he must have unbolted the oaken door on the secret stair and left it unbolted behind him. Prout had only to look.

Stepping into the aperture in the wall, Prout struck a match and looked.

Grimmer grew Prout's brow!

The bolts, as he fully expected, were unfastened. Someone had passed through, and was even now on the other side of that oaken door. If Prout wanted proof, he had it!

Certainly Prout was not likely to guess that a member of his own Form had passed through the secret way, and was now deep down under the school. Naturally such a thing never occurred to Prout!

Grimly he shot the bolts!

The young rascal could not get back now. Prout had him!

Now, having thus stopped the badger's hole, so to speak, the Fifth Form master rolled triumphantly away to Quelch's study. No prevarication on the part of the young rascal could save him now. He could not get back through a bolted door. Prout was going to be vindicated!

He tapped at Quelch's door and entered.

Mr. Hacker was in the study, in conversation with Quelch. That conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Prout.

"Pray excuse me, Quelch!" Prout was suave. He could afford to be with all the cards in his hand. "I feel bound to report to you, a boy of your Form—the boy Wharton—"

"Mr. Prout," interrupted the Remove master, "I desire to hear no report on that subject. I am quite capable—"

"As you please, sir," said Prout, with dignity—"as you please! I felt bound to mention that the boy Wharton has gone down to the secret passage by way of the panel in the library corridor. If it is your desire that this boy should flout—flout, sir—the headmaster's direct commands, I have no more to say."

"I have not the slightest doubt, sir, that this is another absurd misapprehension!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Very well, sir. I may mention that I have secured the door, which I found unbolted."

Mr. Quelch started a little.

Prout noted it—grimly!

"You found the door unbolted, Mr. Prout?"

"I did, sir."

"That is certainly very singular," said the Remove master.

"I see nothing singular in it, sir, as Wharton undoubtedly passed through, and is at the present moment on the farther side of it!"

There was a pause in the study. Prout stood portly, grimly triumphant. Quelch bit his lip, wondering uneasily if Prout was right this time.

Mr. Hacker smiled. Hacker's smile widened into a grin—and his grin very nearly became a laugh. That was because Hacker, from where he stood, could see into the quadrangle through Mr. Quelch's study window.

In the quadrangle, Hacker could see five Remove boys in a group—one of them Harry Wharton!

They were all laughing.

It seemed rather amusing to Hacker! Prout gave the master of the Shell a glance of rebuke.

"Really, Mr. Hacker, this is not a matter for merriment!" said Prout, with asperity. "Such reckless disobedience to the headmaster's orders—"

"Pray excuse me, sir!" said Hacker. "But hearing you inform Mr. Quelch that the boy Wharton is at the present moment bolted out of the school—"

"Assuredly so, sir!"

"And seeing him standing not a dozen yards away," continued Hacker, "in full view, sir, in the quadrangle—"

"What?"

"Almost under this window, sir—"

"Really, Mr. Hacker—"

Hacker made a gesture to the window.

Mr. Quelch glanced through it; Prout glared through it. Quelch smiled; Prout blinked.

The Famous Five, in the quad, were chuckling. Wharton was telling his friends something that made them chuckle.

No doubt he was telling them how he had gone back to Wingate's study by a roundabout route, in order to leave Prout waiting for him by the corner of the library corridor.

"I think that is Wharton," murmured Mr. Hacker.

"I think so," smiled Mr. Quelch.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout. It was difficult for the Fifth Form master to believe the evidence of his eyes as he stared at Harry Wharton. He stared at him as if that cheery junior had been the ghost of the captain of the Remove. "It—it—it—is—is—is—Wharton!"

"Perhaps you are satisfied now, Mr. Prout, that Wharton is not out of bounds," suggested Quelch.

"Oh!" gasped Prout. "Really—oh—yes—quite! But—but I thought—Upon my word! I found that door unbolted—on that point I am positive! The door was unbolted! The boy must have unbolted it deliberately to give me a false impression—"

"I hardly think so, sir! But if so—"

"There is no doubt of it, Mr. Quelch!" boomed Prout. "The door was unbolted—that is a positive fact! Wharton must have done it as he passed down the corridor to mislead me—deliberately, sir—intentionally—"

"If so, sir," said Mr. Quelch, in a



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grinding voice, "the boy's object may have been to make it clear that he is responsible to his own Form-master, and not to the master of any other Form!"

"Sir!" gasped Prout.

"Sir!" retorted Quelch.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a sudden yell from the quad. The Famous Five had spotted Prout's face at the window. They could guess why he was there. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout glared. He gasped. He almost gurgled. He faded out of the study. He closed the door after him with a bang. That bang did not prevent him from hearing Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker laughing together as he departed.

Mr. Prout rolled back to his own study, fuming. He was more wrathful and indignant than ever. But he was getting a little tired of tracking down that wary young rascal, Wharton of the Remove.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Where is Coker?

"COKER!"

No reply.

"Coker!" repeated Mr. Prout, in a raised and irritated voice.

But the accustomed "Adsum" did not come.

Prout was taking roll in Hall. Prout possibly would have been pleased if a Remove man had failed to answer to his name, especially if that name had been Wharton. He was not pleased when a man in his own Form failed to answer—far from it.

"Coker!" boomed Prout, for the third time, as if by booming he could draw "Sum" from a fellow who was not there.

He knew that there was a sarcastic smile on Quelch's face. His own portly face reddened. He had to mark Coker of the Fifth absent.

It was annoying—very annoying. After Prout's concern about Mr. Quelch's boys and their reckless proceedings, Quelch's boys were all present at calling-over, and a boy of his own Form was absent!

Prout mentally resolved to make Coker sorry for himself. It was annoying and exasperating. Roll-call finished, and the school was dismissed, some of the fellows wondering where Coker was.

Nobody had seen him since he had been assisted off the football field that afternoon. As he had not been visible, he had presumably gone out of gates. If so, he had not returned for lock-up.

It was not very uncommon for a fellow to be late for roll on a half-holiday. But it was very uncommon for him to be late for prep; and when the Greyfriars fellows went to the studies for prep, Coker had not appeared.

Potter and Greene missed him at prep in their study. They had not missed him before, as Coker had bitterly foreseen, but they did miss him then. Still, they were not fearfully sorry to miss him; prep was an easier business without Coker in the study. Coker, had he been there, would have been talking about the pick-up; about what he would have done had a mob of rotten players given him a chance; and about that "swab" Compton, whom he was still determined to whop one of these days. Really, it was a relief to Coker's chums that he had gone wandering that evening.

But after prep Coker had still not returned. There had been no ring at the gate; Gosling had not let him in.

Apparently, he was making an evening of it.

Some of the Fifth Form footballers had wanted to see Coker to tell him what they thought of him. Some of them considered that he had not been booted enough on the football ground, and that a little more booting would do him no harm. So there was an idea for some time that Coker was keeping out of the way.

But that idea had to be given up after prep, when it was found that old Horace had not yet come in. Obviously, he could not be staying out so late of his own accord. Blundell gave up the thought of booting Coker, and wondered what had happened to the silly ass instead.

As bed-time drew near, Coker was the topic. The Fifth Form men discussed him in the games study; the Sixth in the prefects' room; the juniors in the Rag; the masters in Common-room.

Prout was growing more and more intensely annoyed. If Coker did not come in by bed-time, the Head had to be informed. Prout hated the idea. He inquired up and down and round about the House whether anybody knew where Coker had gone that afternoon. Nobody knew. Potter suggested that Coker sometimes had a car out, and Prout rang up the garage; but at the garage they knew nothing of Coker.

Prout rolled into Common-room, and rolled out again—driven out by Quelch's sarcastic smile. He rolled along to the Rag, to inquire, as a last resource, whether any of the juniors knew anything of Coker's movements and whereabouts. But nobody could enlighten the Fifth Form master.

Prout, with feelings too deep for words, had to inform the Head—officially that a boy of his Form was missing. And every fellow, before he went to sleep, was wondering where on earth old Coker was, little guessing that he was not on earth at all, but under it—so near, and yet so far.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Compton to the Rescue!

HORACE COKER groaned.

He groaned dismally. How long he had lain there, in the cold and the darkness, Coker did not know. It seemed like centuries—and he was sure that it was days, at least. It was, in fact, a good many hours.

His watch was going—but it might as well have stopped, as it could not be seen in the thick darkness. Coker had lost his flash-lamp, and he had no matches. Again and again, the hapless Horace had attempted to crawl up the spiral stair. But he had failed.

He was unaware that, had he succeeded, he would have found the oaken door at the top bolted. His one hope was that somebody might, by a happy chance, find that door unbolted, and guess.

It was just as well for him that he did not know that Mr. Prout had found it unbolted, taken it for granted that Wharton of the Remove had withdrawn the bolts for a trick on him, and shot them home again. Had Coker known that, his hope would have sunk to zero.

He groaned—he groaned again; and yet again.

Mr. Prout, had he been a little more concerned about his own business, and a little less about another's, might possibly have guessed what that unbolted door really meant. But, assured that it was Wharton's work, he gave no

thought in connection with Coker. Neither was it likely to occur to Prout that a boy of his Form had done what he had so sternly denounced a boy of Quelch's Form for having done. Such things were not done in Prout's Form—only in other Forms.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Coker.

He was cold; he was clammy; he was hungry. There was a severe and painful ache in his damaged leg. Worst of all, he was helpless, and could only wait for succour, which might be long, very long, in coming. Indeed, it occurred to Coker, though he tried to drive the awful thought from his mind, that it might not come at all. Unless they found that unbolted door—

Groan!

Anyone descending into that deep darkness, might have supposed that the ghost of the sea-cave was walking. It was a dismal, eerie sound in the silence and blackness.

Every crawling minute seemed an hour to Coker. And hours were passing that seemed like days. He knew that no shout could be heard above; but he had shouted, again and again, till he was hoarse and exhausted. He was silent now, save for a series of dismal groans.

Perhaps Coker, in those dreadful moments, realised the wisdom of his headmaster's injunctions, and his own unwisdom in disregarding the same. He groaned and groaned, and blinked drearily and wearily into the enshrouding darkness, in the faint hope of seeing a light coming, which would mean help and rescue.

Suddenly he started and rubbed his eyes.

A hundred times, at least, his hopes had deceived him when he had fancied that he had seen a light. Was this another fancy? Or was that a glimmer of light, coming down the spiral stair in the black darkness?

He hardly breathed, so intense was his hope and anxiety. He watched, breathless, his heart throbbing.

It was a light!

It gleamed from the dark. He heard a sound of soft footfalls coming down. The music of the spheres could not have been so sweet to Coker. It was help—at last!

A figure stepped from the spiral stair. An electric torch in its hand gleamed full on Coker's white, almost ghastly face as he lay on the stone flags. There was a startled cry:

"Who—what—"

The light was instantly shut off.

"Help!" gasped Coker. "I say, I'm here! Can't you see me? Oh crikey, has your light gone out, like mine did? I say—"

"Is—is—is that Coker?"

"Yes, you ass—I mean, yes! I'm Coker!"

"Great pip!"

The light shone again.

As the figure bent over Coker, he had a glimpse, in the light, of the face of the fellow who held it—a handsome, slightly sunburnt face—a face he knew well enough, but certainly had not expected to see.

"Compton!" ejaculated Coker.

"How on earth did you get here? What are you doing here? Are you hurt?"

Compton no doubt realised that Coker must be hurt, or he would not have been lying there on the cold flags in the dark. His first expression had been one of bleak amazement; but the handsome face showed concern and compassion now.

"I've hurt my leg," mumbled Coker. "I lost my torch, and fell down those dashed steps! Oh crikey! I've been here for days—"

"It's twelve o'clock," said Compton. "You were missed at calling-over; but nobody dreamed you were here."

"Wasn't the door found unbolted?"

"Eh? No. I found it bolted."

"Oh crikey! Some silly idiot must have come along and bolted it, without guessing that I was here. What blithering dummy was it? Must have been an absolute idiot. But never mind that. I say, how did you guess that I was here, Compton?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"You must have guessed, I suppose, as you've come down for me," said Coker.

"Oh, yes; exactly!"

"Were you the only fellow that guessed?"

"I don't think anybody else thought of it, Coker."

Compton did not add that he had not thought of it himself. Whatever might have been his mysterious reason for descending into the secret passage, in the middle of the night, he did not intend to acquaint Coker with it.

It was a natural supposition on Coker's part that Compton had come down for him—as Compton was there. The new fellow in the Fifth was content to leave it at that.

"Well, I think Potter or Greene might have thought of it!" said Coker.

"Still, as I never said anything to them, perhaps they mightn't. I—I say, Compton, it was pretty sharp of you to think of me being here, when nobody else did. I say, it was pretty decent of you to come down for me."

Compton smiled.

Not at all!" he answered.

"Well, it was," said Coker. "Does anybody know you've come?"

"Oh, no! This is out of bounds, you know!"

"That will be all right for you, as you've found me. Still, I dare say it was best not to mention it, till you were sure I was here!" assented Coker. "I say, it's awfully decent of you, Compton! I say, I was going to whop you—now I jolly well won't!"

"Thanks!" said Compton gravely.

"I mean it!" said Coker. "I say, help me out of this, old fellow! I—I think I could hop on one leg, if you gave me a hand! Ow!"

"Thank goodness I've found you, anyhow!" said Compton.

He handed the torch to Coker, and lifted the burly Fifth Former in his strong, sinewy arms. Coker declared that he could hop on one leg, with assistance; but he found that he was mistaken—he couldn't. He leaned heavily on Compton and groaned.

"You'll have to get help!" he mumbled. "I say, be as quick as you can about it! I—I want to get out of this—"

"That's all right!" said Compton cheerily. "I'm going to carry you."

"You can't!" said Coker. "I could carry you, but you jolly well can't carry me!"

"I'll try!"

It proved that Compton could!

Coker was no light-weight. There was plenty of Horace Coker! But the New Fifth Former heaved Coker on his shoulders, rather like a sack of coal, and carried him.

Bent almost double under Coker's weight, Compton of the Fifth tramped up the endless winding stair. He breathed harder and harder as he went—but he did not falter and he did not halt.

Slowly, but steadily, he tramped up, and up and up, with Coker on his back, till the light in Coker's hand, at last, shone on the oaken door. But not till they had passed through that doorway, and through the secret panel beyond into the library passage did Compton of the Fifth set his burden down and lean on the wall, panting for breath, and wiping the perspiration from his brow.

Five minutes later, Mr. Prout, who

said, would have been more judicious. Still, Prout was extremely glad that Coker had been found, and that Compton had thought of where he might be, and looked for him. Prout was very glad of that. Prout was annoyed with Coker; but he was undoubtedly very pleased indeed with Compton.

So was Coker, as Potter and Greene found when they visited their suffering pal in sammy.

"That fellow Compton——" began Coker.

"Oh, never mind him now!" said Potter. "Dash it all, the chap found you in that awful hole, Coker."

"And carried you out of it on his back!" said Greene. "I think you might give Compton a rest now, Coker."

"Will you let a fellow speak?" hooted Coker. "I was going to say that fellow Compton is a splendid chap!"

"Oh!"

"One of the best! He guessed where I was, when every other silly idiot—I mean, every little idiot—hadn't an idea in his silly head! He came down for me. Might have got into a fearful row, too—breaking bounds at midnight. If you fellows have got anything to say against Compton, don't say it to me, that's all!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Not to me!" said Coker firmly. "I know a decent chap when I see one, I hope! Not a word against him—to me!"

"Who's said a word against him, except you?" howled Potter and Greene. "We haven't——"

"Well, don't!" said Coker. "I mean that, don't! If you aren't looking for a row with me, don't!"

Which was Coker all over!

"That chap Compton is some lad!" Bob Cherry remarked, when the Remove discussed the matter in break that morning. "I wonder how the dickens he guessed that Coker was there? Nobody else thought of it."

"Did he?" drawled the Bounder.

"Did he?" repeated Harry Wharton, staring at Vernon-Smith. "What do you mean? You know he did, as he went down for him."

The Bounder laughed and walked away without replying.

Smithy, at least, knew, or was sure that he knew that Valentine Compton had not gone down to the secret passage to look for Coker, and had no doubt that Compton had been extremely astonished to find him there. But Smithy, for the present, at least, was keeping his own counsel on the subject of the schoolboy smuggler.

THE END.

(Look out for another magnificent cover-to-cover yarn, featuring Valentine Compton, the schoolboy smuggler, in next Saturday's MAGNET. It's entitled: "CONTRABAND!" and you'll vote it great!)

Be sure and read:
"GRAND OPERA AT GREYFRIARS!"
By Frank Richards

this week's amazing yarn dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. in

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was sitting up late in the hope of hearing news of Coker, had sudden, surprising, and unexpected news of him!

The Greyfriars fellows heard the news next morning.

Coker was in "sanny"—and likely to remain there some days. He had caught a cold, and he had a rather bad sprain. So hapless was Coker's condition, indeed, that Mr. Prout did not even think of severe penalties for his transgression; Coker had, in fact, collected sufficient penalties on his own!

Nobody had dreamed, for a moment, where Coker was—except, it seemed, Compton of the Fifth. And Compton of the Fifth had not thought of it, it seemed, till a very late hour. Compton, of course, was fully excused for having broken bounds, as he had done it to go to the rescue of Coker.

Prout not only excused him, but praised him warmly. He told Compton that he should, certainly, have come to him, Prout, and told him that he suspected where Coker was. That, Prout



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DR. BIRCHEMALL'S BRANEWAVE!

By DICKY NUGENT

Being Instalment No. 2 of Dicky's
"Sensashunal" New Serial:

"THE RINGMASTER OF ST. SAM'S!"



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 215.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

November 21st, 1936.



GREYFRIARS v. CLIFF HOUSE AT HOCKEY! AND WHAT A GAME!— Gasps FRANK NUGENT

Get out your sackcloth and ashes, lads! Muffle your drums and mute your mouth-organs! How are the mighty fallen!

Excuse this outburst, but I feel like it. Who wouldn't? For years we've looked on hockey as a game for girls and softies. For months we've gently, but firmly, declined to lower ourselves to get up a team and play the Cliff House girls. Now, at long, long last, we've given way, selected a team, and gone to Cliff House to put a stop to their nonsense once and for all.

And they beat us! Naturally, we hadn't thought of anything like that happening. We'd cheerfully imagined that our knowledge of footer would be more than sufficient for the needs of the occasion. Well, it wasn't!

It took us about two minutes to discover that the superior speed and accurate positioning that enable us to beat nearly all comers at Soccer couldn't be adapted to the new game quite as easily as we'd thought. After about five minutes, it dawned on us that we were playing a game that required a certain amount of practice. In ten minutes, all our illusions had gone—and we woke up to the fact that we should be jolly lucky to escape without defeat!

What a game it was! I've played a good many exhausting games of footer, but never one that was quite so exhausting as this game of hockey. And so say all the rest of the team! We may as well face up to the facts and admit that for most of the time we were hurried and flustered and very much at sea!

At the end of the game the girls had scored five times to our one. That was bad enough. But what followed was worse still. Just to complete our humiliation, the girls told us we had played very well for novices—and that, if we stuck to it, we might hope to reach their standard in a year or two!

It can't rest at that. Something will have to be done about it, though it's hard to say what. We can't chuck footer, but it strikes me that's the only way of getting sufficient time to reach the Cliff House girls' class at the hockey game!

IN BRIEF!

At last Wednesday's Senior Debating Club Impromptu Speech Competition, Coker's oration on "Wake Up, Greyfriars!" had one unexpected result. By the time he had finished, most of the members were asleep!

When Temple called on Skinner one evening recently, he sat on a chair that was simply covered with tin-tacks. And he wasn't a bit mollified when Skinner explained that this was one of his "standing" jokes!

Rake writes to express his regret that he didn't turn up in the Rag to deliver his promised lecture on "How to Overcome Pain by Will-Power." He explains that Wingate gave him "six," and he couldn't stop yelling in time to keep the appointment.

When Bunter found that Smithy wasn't allowing him to his study feed, was he very much put out? He asks "CURIOUS." Yes, "Curious"—by six fellows, on his neck!

Fish has invented an apparatus which he claims will stop a gale. We're willing to wager that his first aim will be to "raise the wind" with it.

"Is it true that Lord Mauleverer wants to become a radio star?" Well, we must say he seems to like a "mike"!

TUBB ON TWIGG

Tubb says he thinks Mr. Twigg must be getting short-sighted. When he went into Twigg's study, Twigg said "Where is your cap?" And, believe it or not, it was where anyone could have seen it—on Tubb's head!

TRUST LODER TO "SEAS-ON" SUCH A CHANCE!

Young Gatty thought it a great lark to substitute chalk for Loder's salt, sneezing powder for his pepper, and ink for his vinegar. But when Loder caught him doing it, he got it hot and strong. That's the "Worcester sauce" giving a prefect!

I WAS A SPARTAN— BUT NEVER AGAIN!

Vows TOM BROWN



When I casually mentioned one day last week that I felt the cold in the winter, Bob Cherry told me how to cure it.

"Don't muffle yourself up in extra clobber or mug yourself in front of big fires," he said. "You'll only make it worse. The thing to do is to harden yourself to it. Wear less clobber in the winter than the summer instead of more; and instead of turning your study into a hot-house, try to turn it into a refrigerator."

"My hat! Don't you think that's the way to catch a cold, though?" "Cold?" repeated Bob, derisively. "Catch a cold through hardening yourself? Bosh! Why, a chap who does what I tell you can't catch a cold even if he tries. It's the hothouse plants like Trevor and Snoop that catch cold—not the Spartans!"

Then I understood. "Oh, I see! You're recommending me to become a Spartan?"

"There's nothing like it, Brown, honest in-jun!" Bob said. "I've started it this week and it's great! Up before it's light—a run down to the river and a dip!"

"A dip!" I yelled incredulously. "When there's a coating of ice on the river?"

"Not a very thick one, though—you can easily break it! Believe me, old bean, it's a great life. You get back for brekker glowing all over instead of shivering. As for colds, they're a thing of the past!"

Well, to cut a long story short, Bob converted me. I became a Spartan. I got up hours before brekker, broke the ice to have a bathe, left off my winter pants and went out without an overcoat. I cut out fires in the

study and did everything I could think of to make myself thoroughly cold and uncomfortable. I hardened myself so much that chaps could stick pins in me and I wouldn't feel them. On one occasion Loder kicked me and dislocated his foot, and I knew nothing about it.

But all the same, I've caught a cold! The worst cold I've ever had. In fact, it feels like the worst cold anybody ever had in all history! And I'm through with being a Spartan for all time. When I get well again, I shall muffle myself up in thick layers of clothing and sit over enormous fires.

Finally, just to show what I think of Bob's potty Spartan idea, I shall probably punch him on the nose—when he comes out of the sanny, where he is at present confined with a bad attack of flu!

Doctor Birchermall's wish was answered sooner than he had expected. Just as he finished speaking, two enormous chimpanzees appeared at the open window at the back of the Head's platform; and, while one reached forward to grab his beard, the other made a dive between his legs—and swept him off his feet in no time!

The Head roared with pain and surprise; and the crowd roared with laughter, as they went to the reekow. It began to occur to them that there was plenty of fun in store for St. Sam's when the Head's sercuss really got into its stride!

(The fun is fast and furious in next week's tip-top instalment of this rib-tickling serial!)

a few days and to me to use of the tallest in the skool to keep the show going!" Cheers rolled out defiantly from the grate assembly as Doctor Birchermall pawed for breath.

"Gentlemen!" said the Head, when he had got his puff back. "In helping Mr. Spangler to keep his sercuss going while his regular performers are down with flu, we shall have one grate satisfaction. We shall know that we are frustrating the base desires of a scoundrell named von Schyster, who hopes that the sercuss will go broke so that he can claim it for his own!"

"Shame!" "Let us then go into the sercuss bizzness, determined to make a really brilliant show of it," went on Doctor Birchermall. "By so doing, we shall be helping a most deserving cause!"

"Hear, hear!" yelled the St. Sam's boys—though some of them who knew of the Head's interest in the show couldn't help grinning at the same time.

"Gentlemen!" cried the Head. "I will now announce the list of performers. First, I have decided that the deth-defying bareback rider of the sercuss shall be my dawter, Miss Molly!"

"Good old Miss Molly!" "Next I appoint Burleigh and Talbot of the Sixth to be the strong men of the show. I am sure they will perform many a super-yewman feat with their hands!"

"Hear, hear!" The Head looked around him and his eye lighted on Mr. Justiss, the pompous master of the Fifth.

"Ah, Justiss!" he exclaimed. "You have often regaled us with stories of your fearless riding of wild animals. Can you have been Big Game hunting?"

"Troo, sir," acknowledged Mr. Justiss. "I vencher to assert there is no man in the country more eggperienced than I in the ways of the ungle monsters."

"Good! Then you shall put the lions and tigers through their paces!"

Crash! Somehow that uneggspected announcement seemed to neck the stuffing out of Mr. Justiss, for he collapsed in a dead faint!

"My dear fellow, I had already thought of that," grinned the Head. "My suggestion is that you engage a new set of performers altogether."

"But who's going to supply me with a brand new set of performers?"

Doctor Birchermall's reply was startling.

"Little me!" "You?"

"Why not?" asked the Head cheerfully. "We have sufficient talent in this skool, I feel sure, to make a success of any sercuss. There are acrobats, conjurors, dancers and clowns in plenty. Take Mr. Lickham, for instance, he's a born clown. He would only have to behave as he does when he's teaching the Fourth to keep any audience in fits of laughter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Look here, sir—"

"Sorry, Lickham, but there's no time for arguement," said the Head, blandly. "You'll be a clown in the sercuss; that's fixed! And we'll have a General Assembly to decide on the other turns. How will that be, boys?"

Naturally it suited the St. Sam's fellows very well indeed, and they cheered like the very dickens—while Mr. Spangler shook the Head's hand again and again as though he mite have been working a village pump-handle!

The glad tidings that a sercuss was to be pitched on the footer field with the fellows themselves as performers spread through the skool like wildfire, and, by the time old Fossil started tolling the bell to summon the General Assembly the skool was simply agog with eggitement. Rarely had Big Hall echoed to such a cheer as went up when the Head arrived.

Doctor Birchermall was looking as pleased as a dog with two tails, when he raised his hand for silence. "Gentlemen, chaps and fellows!"

"Hear, hear!" "On the bawl, sir!" "It is with much plezzure that I announce my decision to allow Spangler's Sensashunal Sercuss to take over the footer ground for

claimed the Head, involuntarily.

"And the performing seallions are never happier than when I let them sleep in my caravan," said Mr. Spangler. "I couldn't bear to part with them, sir. But unless I can borrow your football-field, it looks as if I shall have to!"

Doctor Birchermall pondered deeply.

"I should like to help you, of course, Mr. Spangler; but I'm afraid it's quite impossible to have a sercuss in the skool grounds. It would interfere with the skool routine, and—"

"I should insist," broke in Mr. Spangler quietly, "on your having a share of the prophets!"

The Head started slitley. "It's no good of you men shuning that, Mr. Spangler, for it wouldn't influence me in the slitest. How much?"

"Fifty per cent, sir." Doctor Birchermall coffered. "Ahem! Perhaps, after all, it would not upset the skool very much. On thinking it over, Mr. Spangler, I will grant your rekwest! You may move your sercuss to the skool football-field as soon as you like!"

The crowd simply gasped. As for Mr. Spangler, a grate, beaming smile spread over his feetchers.

"You really mean that?" he cried.

indignantly. "Could anyone with a grain of common sense imagine that I was a chimpanzee?"

"Of course not, sir," said Mr. Spangler, doing his best to passify the Head. "I can easily tell you're not a chimpanzee myself because you wear a beard. And the other gentleman duzzent look like one either because his ears are too big."

The Head looked a little mollified.

"Well, it's something to hear you admit that, though it's not much good being wise after the event," he growled. "What compensation are you going to pay us?"

The sercuss chief larfed bitterly.

"If it's munny you want, you've come to the wrong person," he said. "To tell you the truth, sir, at the moment I am absolutely stony. My performers are all laid up with the flu, and I have been ordered off the land where the sercuss is pitched at Muggleton. At present I haven't a bean!"

Doctor Birchermall eyed Mr. Spangler a little more simperthetically.

"Now I come to think of it, I have heard this news already," he said. "A rather unplezzant sossidgo-skoffing gentleman called here this afternoon—Hair von Schyster."

"Von Shyster called here?" hist Mr. Spangler.

"Then I can easily guess why he called! He holds a mortgage on my sercuss. Unless I pay him back his loan in a week, the sercuss becomes his, lock, stock and barrel. I bet he called to tell you not to let me pitch the sercuss on your football-pitch!"

"Right on the wicket!" grinned the Head.

Mr. Spangler uttered a feece growl of rage.

"Sir, I ask you to ignore that scoundrell, and give the matter your Ernest consideration!" he cried, pashunately. "My sercuss is everything to me—everything! You'd be surprised, sir, if you knew how fond of me the animals are. The lions and tigers all eat out of my hand—"

"Oh, crumbs! eggs-



"Reekew, St. Sam's!" "Lemme gerrout!" Such were the cries that came from Doctor Birchermall and Mr. Lickham, as they clawed at the bars of the cage into which the sercuss hands had thrown them.

The fellows in the quad were simply dubbed up with larfter. To see the majestic Head and the respected Fourth Form master locked in a cage because they were thought to be chimpanzees was the most commical site they had ever seen.

"Throw 'em some monkey nuts!" jeered Tubby Barrell. "Perhaps that'll keep 'em quiet!"

"Bai Jove, what frightfully interestin' spessimens!" sang out the Honnerable Guy de Vere. "Reallay, they look almost yewman!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" But the joak was reaching its end now. Mr. Spangler, the sercuss chief, came puffing and blowing through the crowd, jangling a bunch of keys and shaking his fist at the innersent workmen who had made the eggstraordinary blunder.

"Fools! Dolts! Idjuts!" he cried. "These aren't chimps, you chumps! They're yewman beings—the headmaster of this skool and one of his assistants!"

The sercuss hands looked eggstraordinaryly surprised.

"Well, they look very much like them!" one of the pair said.

"I know they do; but you should be more careful!" snorted Mr. Spangler.

He unlocked the door of the cage and drew it open to free the captives. Doctor Birchermall and Mr. Lickham came out of the cage—with such a rush that they both landed on the ground head-first!

Bang! Thud! "Yarooooo!" "Ow-ow-ow!" "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the crowd in the quad.

Mr. Spangler was the one who helped the unforchunit cupple to rise. He was simply full of apologies as he did so.

"I'm Spangler," he eggplained, "the proprietor of Spangler's Sercuss. I want to tell you gentlemen how awfully sorry I am for my men's carelessness in mistaking you for the missing chimpanzees. They ought to have known better."

"I should thing so, too!" cried Doctor Birchermall,