

"CONTRABAND!"

Super Cover-to-Cover
Story of Amazing Schoolboy
Adventure, featuring . . .

Harry Wharton & Co.

The Magnet 2^d



ON THE TRACK of the SCHOOLBOY SMUGGLER!

CONTRABAND!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

Sensational School-Adventure Yarn, featuring **HARRY WHARTON & CO.**, with Vernon-Smith and Valentine Compton, the senior with a secret, taking the leading roles.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Vengeance!

HARRY WHARTON stared. He stared at a pair of trousers.

He stared in astonishment.

Trousers, of course, were not an uncommon sight at Greyfriars School, where there were more than two hundred fellows, all, naturally, provided with the same.

Nevertheless, it was a surprising sight.

Harry Wharton had come up to his study, Study No. 1 in the Remove, for an old footer, to punt about in break that morning. He did not expect to find anyone in the study—and he did not see anyone as he stepped in and picked up the footer. Then he beheld the trousers.

They were in the window. The lower sash of the window was pushed up. The available space was almost filled by the trousers.

Obviously, they belonged to some fellow who was leaning out of the study window—leaning out so far that nothing was to be seen of him from within the study except the trousers. Which were so extensive, and so tight, that obviously they could belong to nobody but Billy Bunter, the fat and fatuous ornament of the Greyfriars Remove.

But for what reason Billy Bunter was leaning out of the window of another fellow's study was a deep mystery. If he wanted to see what was going on in the quadrangle, he could have done so without leaning down over the window-sill. It seemed that Bunter was interested in looking at something directly below the window, close to the wall of the House.

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"You fat ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Get back! Do you want to fall out, you fat chump?"

Bunter did not heed. In fact, he did not hear, with his fat head outside the window, and below the level of the sill.

Wharton stepped towards him, putting down the footer on the table.

Billy Bunter looked as if, any moment, he might take a nose-dive into the quad. If Bunter was going to commit suicide by tumbling headlong out of a study window, Wharton naturally objected to his study window being used for the purpose.

He grasped a fat leg, to make sure that Bunter did not tumble, with his left hand. His right he raised and brought down with a terrific smack on the trousers.

Smack!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He twisted round wildly, banged his head on the sash, and yelped. Then, as Wharton dragged on the fat leg, he bumped on the window-seat. He gave another yelp as he bumped.

"Ow! Beast! Ow!"

"Is that how you thank me for saving your life?" inquired the captain of the Remove.

"Ow! You beast! Wharrer you come up for?" gasped Bunter. "Ow!"

"What are you up to?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh! Nothing! I wasn't looking out to see if Carne was still there! Besides, he pulled my ear, the beast!"

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Wharton.

On the window-seat stood a large rush basket. That basket was filled to the brim. Its contents were rather mixed. The chief ingredients seemed to be cinders and ashes, raked out of a grate. But there was a quantity of soot as well, and a quantity of flour,

and some ink and gum. Harry Wharton looked at that basket, and looked at Bunter.

"You unspeakable idiot!" he said. "Have you got that for Carne of the Sixth—a prefect? Are you off your fat rocker?"

"The beast pulled my ear—for nothing!" said Bunter. "I just asked him a civil question and he pulled my ear—hard!"

"Rot!" said Harry. "Carne's rather a bully, but he wouldn't pull your ear for nothing! If you checked him, serve you right!"

"He jolly well did!" hooted Bunter. "I just asked him a question. You see, Skinner had heard that Carne was being left out of the first eleven, to make room for that new chap in the Fifth, Compton, and he asked me to ask Carne if it was so. So I just asked him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton.

He could imagine the effect of that question on Arthur Carne of the Sixth Form.

Since the new fellow, Compton, had come into the Greyfriars Fifth, and turned out a tremendous and wonderful footballer, all Greyfriars knew that room would have to be found for him in the first eleven. Somebody had to go! The man who had to go was Carne!

Everybody but Carne knew that it couldn't be helped. Carne, perhaps, not unnaturally, was rather sore about it. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, had to leave out his least valuable man. But Carne was far from recognising the fact that he was the least valuable man. He believed, indeed, that he was one of the most valuable!

Wharton roared. He was not

surprised that Carne had pulled Bunter's ear for asking that civil question! He would not have been surprised had Carne booted the fat Owl across the quad, in addition.

"You fat duffer!" said Harry, laughing. "Skinner was pulling your leg! Hadn't you sense enough not to chip Carne about being dropped from the team?"

"Eh? I never chipped him," said Bunter. "I just asked him if it was true that Compton was going to have his place in the team, because Wingate thought he was no good—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! The beast pulled my ear—hard—for absolutely nothing! I'm jolly well going to make him sit up for it, I can tell you! I say, look out and see if he's still there, old chap! I'm rather short-sighted, you know—"

"Better give it a miss!" chuckled Wharton. "Prefects are awfully dangerous animals to play tricks on."

"Oh, it's all right, as far as that goes!" said Bunter confidently. "How's Carne to know who did it? He gets that lot on his napper! Long before he can come up to the studies, I shall cut. Even if he spots the window it came from, he can't guess it was me—he will think it was you or Nugent—"

"What?"

"You or Nugent—if he spots that it came from this study. Very likely he won't. If he does, of course, don't you mention me. That's important."

"You blithering fat owl—" roared Wharton.

"I say, you're wasting time, old chap! The beast may be gone!" said Bunter anxiously. "I saw him walking up and down that path, and came up here to get him from the window—I was just looking out to make sure that he was still there, when you made me jump—"

"I'll make you jump again, you fat ass, if you don't hop out of this study quick!" said Harry Wharton. "Give it a miss—or get him from your own study window, if you must get him—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Travel, fathead, or I'll stick your silly head into that basket, and you'll get that muck on your own fat-headed napper!"

"Beast!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a roar from the passage. "Are you ever coming with that ball?"

Bob Cherry looked in at the doorway. Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh looked in. The Co. had been waiting for Wharton to come down with the footer, and as he had not come down, they had come up.

Harry Wharton turned round to the juniors in the doorway.

"That fat ass—" he began.

For the moment his eyes were off Bunter. Bunter did not lose that moment! Bunter was seldom quick in his movements; but he realised that he had to be quick now, if he was to carry out that masterly scheme of vengeance on Carne of the Sixth, who had pulled his ear for nothing!

He grabbed the basket of mixture and leaned from the window. He blinked down through his big spectacles. The distance was rather great—for the short-sighted Owl of the Remove. But he saw a senior standing below—directly under the study window, as it happened, fortunately—or unfortunately! He could see little of him but his cap, and a letter he was reading, as he stood there. Bunter upended the basket, dropping it as he did so.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"What's that fat chump up to?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

Wharton spun round to the window again—too late! From outside, below, came a startled yell. Wharton grabbed the fat junior and dragged him back. But the basket of mixture was gone.

"He, he, he!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, he's got it! He, he, he!"

"Oh, you born idiot!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"He, he, he! Carne's got it—cinder and ashes and soot! He, he, he! And gum and ink and flour! He, he, he!"

"Oh crikey!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"You mad ass!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

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

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, you'd better clear. Carne may come up here to see who did it! He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study, chortling. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged a glance and promptly followed. Obviously, it was wise to clear before Carne came up to inquire about that mixture. In about three seconds Study No. 1 in the Remove was quite deserted.

Fellows who visit places which are strictly out of bounds run the risk of a flogging, or worse still—expulsion! Yet Valentine Compton, the new senior in the Fifth, is content to take that risk! WHY?

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Compton's Catch!

VALENTINE COMPTON, the new fellow in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, yelled.

Never had any Greyfriars man been taken so completely by surprise. A bolt from the blue would not have been more startling.

Compton of the Fifth, like other fellows, had looked for letters in break. He had found one, and taken it into the quad to read.

Perhaps he had reasons of his own for seeking a quiet spot to read that letter. Anyhow, he walked along the path that ran under the windows of the Remove studies. As it happened, another fellow was strolling there—Carne of the Sixth! But Carne, with a look of dislike at the new fellow, walked away immediately he saw Compton.

If Compton wished to read his letter unobserved, that suited him. He slit the envelope, took out the letter, and proceeded to peruse it. The unexpected happened.

What it was that smote him, Valentine Compton did not know for the moment. It seemed to him, for a second, as if Greyfriars School was falling over on his head!

It was not so bad as that, however. A dusty, smelly, sticky mass squashed on his head, followed by the basket that had contained it, which fairly bonneted him.

He yelled—a muffled yell; a yell muffled by cinders, soot, ashes, ink, gum and flour. He staggered helplessly. The letter he had been reading shot from his hand, and was whisked away by the November wind.

The basket fitted over his head like

a hat—a large size in hats. It came down below his ears. It blindfolded him.

He clutched at it wildly as he staggered.

"Urrrrgh!" came from the interior of the basket. "Grooogh!"

A dozen fellows ran up.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Coker of the Fifth.

"Yuurrgh!"

"It's cinders!" exclaimed Potter.

"And ashes!" said Greene.

"What the thump—"

Vernon Smith of the Remove grabbed the basket from Compton's head. He grinned at the face that was revealed.

Smithy liked Compton, as nearly everybody at Greyfriars did. But he could not help grinning as he looked at him. Valentine Compton was a handsome fellow; but he looked far from handsome now. He looked horrid.

His features were almost indistinguishable under the ashes and flour and other things. He gouged at his eyes and nose and ears, and gasped and gurgled for breath.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Carne of the Sixth. Carne was unaware that that basket of mixture had been intended for him. But he could see that it was a jape—a reckless and extremely disagreeable jape. It amused Carne to see the popular new fellow the victim of such a jape. This looked as if somebody else, as well as Carne, disliked the fellow!

"Oooogh! Whurrrr!" gurgled Compton. "What silly ass—urrrgh!—what mad idiot—gurrgh! I'm suffocated! I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Carne.

"Somebody must have chucked that from a study window!" exclaimed Coker. "One of those young sweeps in the Remove. Look here, Carne, you ought to look into this—"

Carne chuckled. Generally he was rather keen on performing duties that involved the use of the official ashplant. But he was not in the least keen to trail down the japer who had bonneted his football rival.

"I expect he's cleared off before this," said Carne. "Ha, ha! You look as if you want a wash, Compton!"

"Urrgh!" Compton gouged at the mixture, which clothed his head and face like a garment. "Oooogh!"

"Which window did it come from?" asked Potter of the Fifth. He stared up at the Remove windows, far above.

"Hallo! One of them's open!"

"That's young Wharton's study!" said Greene.

"Anybody might have gone into the study!" said Carne, and he walked away, laughing.

Compton cleared his eyes from the mixture and stared round him. Probably he was looking for the letter that had dropped from his hand. But a strong wind was blowing from the sea, and there was nothing to be seen of the letter. He compressed his lips hard.

"Dropped anything?" asked Coker.

"It's all right!" said Compton. "By gun! I want a wash and a change! I'll scrag the tick that's done this, if I get him! Urrgh!"

He tramped away towards the doorway of the House.

During the short time that he had been at Greyfriars, Compton had shown himself a good-tempered, good-natured fellow. But he did not look good-tempered at present. His face was crimson with wrath, where it showed through the horrid mixture that clung to it.

"Hallo!" Wingate of the Sixth met
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him on his way, and stared. "What the dooce—who the dickens—Is that Compton? What on earth's happened?"

"Some fag's idea of a joke!" gasped Compton.

"By gum! I'll hunt out that joker and—"

"Oh, no; it's all right, Wingate! I'll jolly well boot him for it, if I find him," said Compton hastily. "I don't want a prefect to take it up, please!"

"Oh, all right!"

Compton hurried into the House. Dozens of fellows were grinning after him as he went, and he was chiefly anxious to get out of sight. He heard a fat squeak as he reached the door.

"I say, you fellows! Look at Carne! He he, no!"

"You howling ass, that's not Carne!"

"Eh?"

"That's Compton!"

"Oh crikey!"

Compton, unheeding, hurried in. He almost ran into his Form-master, Mr. Prout. Prout jumped at the sight of him.

"Who—what—stop!" stuttered Mr. Prout. "Who is that?"

"Compton, sir! I—"

"Compton!" boomed Prout. "Compton! Upon my word! Hitherto, Compton, I have had a high opinion of you, a very high opinion. I have regarded you, Compton, as a very well-behaved and well-conducted boy! Compton, I am amazed—shocked—astounded! Why, Compton, are you appearing in public in this extraordinary—this dirty—this disgusting state?"

Compton breathed hard.

"It's not my fault, sir. Something—something fell on me—"

"Something fell on you!" repeated Prout. "What do you mean, Compton? How could anything fall on you, in the quadrangle? Do not be absurd, Compton!"

"May I go and wash, sir?"

"You may not leave this spot, Compton, until you have explained yourself!" thundered Mr. Prout. "Explain yourself at once!"

"Somebody chucked a basket of muck on my head, from an upper window!" hooted Compton.

Generally, Compton was very tactful and respectful with Prout. But his temper was failing him a little now.

"Oh!" gasped Prout. "Ah! Do not shout at me, Compton! However, I can make allowances. This, then, is a practical joke?"

"Yes, sir. May I go and wash?"

"Who did this, Compton?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You do not know? Then I shall ascertain! Upon my word! From what window did the—the basket fall, Compton?"

"I never noticed, sir."

"Probably not—probably not, in the circumstances," conceded Prout. "But where were you standing at the time?"

"Near the House, sir."

"That is not very explicit, Compton. You must be more explicit than that. Under what windows—"

"The Remove windows, sir."

"The Remove! Ah!"

That "Ah!" indicated that Mr. Prout was not surprised by anything that happened in the neighbourhood of the Remove!

"May I go and wash, sir?" hissed Compton.

"You may. I will investigate this matter—"

"If you please, sir, I should prefer that—"

"What—what?"

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"It was only a silly jape, sir. I'd prefer no notice to be taken—"

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout.

"But, really, sir—"

"You may go and wash, Compton! You may go at once! You may leave this matter in my hands! Lose no time, Compton! You are in a disgusting state—a state in which no boy of my Form should be seen in public!"

Compton of the Fifth hurried on.

Mr. Prout, portly, pompous, and very angry and annoyed, proceeded to investigate.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Own Up, Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

"But I say, you fellows!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"You blithering idiot!"

"You terrific and preposterous fat-head!"

The Famous Five were all telling Bunter what they thought of him.

The sight of Compton of the Fifth, smothered with that horrible mixture, dismayed the chums of the Remove.

They all liked Compton of the Fifth. That new fellow in Prout's Form had jumped into popularity at a bound; and the fact that the Famous Five knew him, and sometimes received a nod from him in the quadrangle, was rather a feather in their cap.

It was utterly dismaying to see Compton the victim of a Remove jape—and such a ghastly jape! Even Billy Bunter was dismayed.

"I say, you fellows, don't shout!" said the fat Owl anxiously. "Of course, there won't be such a row about a Fifth Form man getting it, as if Carne of the Sixth had got it! Still, Compton will be waxy! He might kick a fellow—"

"I hope he'll kick you all round the quad and back again!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, I—I think he looked waxy!" said Bunter. "Of course, it was all a mistake—still, I—I think he might be wild, all the same, if he knew it was me! Keep it dark!"

"You frabjous, fozzling frump—" said Harry Wharton.

"It was all your fault, Wharton—"

"My fault?" howled the captain of the Remove.

"Yes; yours!" said Bunter warmly.

"I asked you to look out and see if Carne was still there! You know I'm rather short-sighted! How was I to know that Carne had walked off, and that fathead Compton had stuck himself under that window? If you'd helped me—"

"Kick him!" said Bob.

"Beast! I'm sorry Compton got it—he's not a bad chap!" said Bunter. "And it's all wasted, too, and I had a lot of trouble getting that basketful. But mind you keep it dark—that's important."

Herbert Vernon-Smith came out of the House, glanced round, and came over to the dismayed group. There was a sarcastic smile on the Bunder's face.

"You won't get by with this, Wharton!" he said.

There was a latent hostility in the Bunder's look and tone.

"What the dickens do you mean?" snapped Wharton.

"I fancy you know what I mean! I don't know what you've got against that chap Compton, but it was a dirty trick to play on any man!" said Vernon-Smith.

The Famous Five stared at Smithy.

Billy Bunter blinked at him with his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

"You silly ass, Smithy!" said Frank Nugent. "Do you fancy that Wharton played that idiotic trick?"

"I know he did!" answered Smithy coolly. "And Prout knows, too!"

"Prout!" repeated Harry.

"Prout's just been up to the Remove studies. He knew where Compton was standing when he got it! He looked into your study first, Wharton!" added the Bunder, with a sneer. "Prout's got an eye on you!"

"The old ass can have two eyes on me, if he likes!" said Harry. "If he had as many eyes as Argus, he could keep them all on me, for all I care!"

"Mean to say—" began Johnny Bull, looking at the Bunder.

"I mean to say that Prout's spotted the whole thing," said Vernon-Smith. "He found the window of Study No. 1 open—and a splash of soot-and-ink on the window-sill! Half a dozen fellows saw him nosing round. Prout's the man to raise Cain about it. You're for it, Wharton!"

"You silly, cheeky ass—" began Harry.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders and walked away. The captain of the Remove looked intensely exasperated.

If Compton's Form-master had taken the matter up, there was going to be a row. That was certain! And Bunter, of course, had left plenty of evidence behind him. That was Bunter all over. Unfortunately, that evidence had been left in Wharton's study!

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter. "I say, fancy that old ass Prout barging in! He's always barging in! Of course, he would think of you at once, Wharton, as you've been pulling his leg, and he's got a down on you. I say, if there's a row, mind you don't mention my name."

"You fat, blithering octopus—"

"Mind—that's important!" said Bunter impressively. "If Prout goes to Quelch, it means a whopping for somebody! Jolly lucky I didn't chuck it from my own study window—what? If Prout had spotted Study No. 7, he might have guessed it was me! Thank goodness for that!"

"Do you think I want it put on me, you frabjous blitherer?" hissed the captain of the Remove. "If there's a row, you've got to own up you did it!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said Bunter. "I don't want a whopping! Besides, it was all your fault that Compton got it! I meant it for Carne, as you jolly well know! Look here, it's all right! If we're asked about it, we'll all say we were in the tuckshop at the time—see?"

"What?"

"If we all stick to the same story, Quelch is bound to believe us!" argued Bunter. "Dash it all, he can't be ungentlemanly enough to doubt our word!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And I'll tell you what," said Bunter. "Let's go to the tuckshop now—that will make it look better—see? We can make out we were there all the time. And Mrs. Mimble has got a fresh lot of doughnuts in, and—Wow! Leggo my neck, Bull, you beast! Wharver you shaking me for? Wow! Ow!"

"Shake, shake, shake!"

"Ow! Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Oooh!"

"Now, you fat idiot," said Johnny Bull, "that fool Smithy thinks Wharton did it, and so does Prout. So very likely Quelch will! If he does, you've got to tell the truth—see?"

"Ow! Oooogh! I say—Woogh!"
 "The truthfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Otherwise the ragfulness will be terrific!"
 "Ow! Leggo! Wow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the bell!"

It was the bell for third school. Johnny Bull gave the Owl of the Remove a final shake, and the Famous Five headed for the House. Harry Wharton's face was rather clouded as he went. That cloud deepened as he arrived at the Remove Form Room, and found Mr. Quelch already there, and Prout with him. Mr. Quelch was looking extremely irritated and annoyed—the natural effect of a complaint from another beak

who allowed another fellow to take his gruel.

Between Quelch, if he owned up, and the Famous Five, if he didn't, Billy Bunter felt like an ancient mariner between Scylla and Charybdis, with peril on either hand!

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed on his head boy. But they did not fix accusingly. He had to listen to Prout, but he did not believe for a moment that Wharton was the guilty man. However, he had to inquire.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?" said Harry quietly.

"Did you go up to your study during break?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch, a little taken

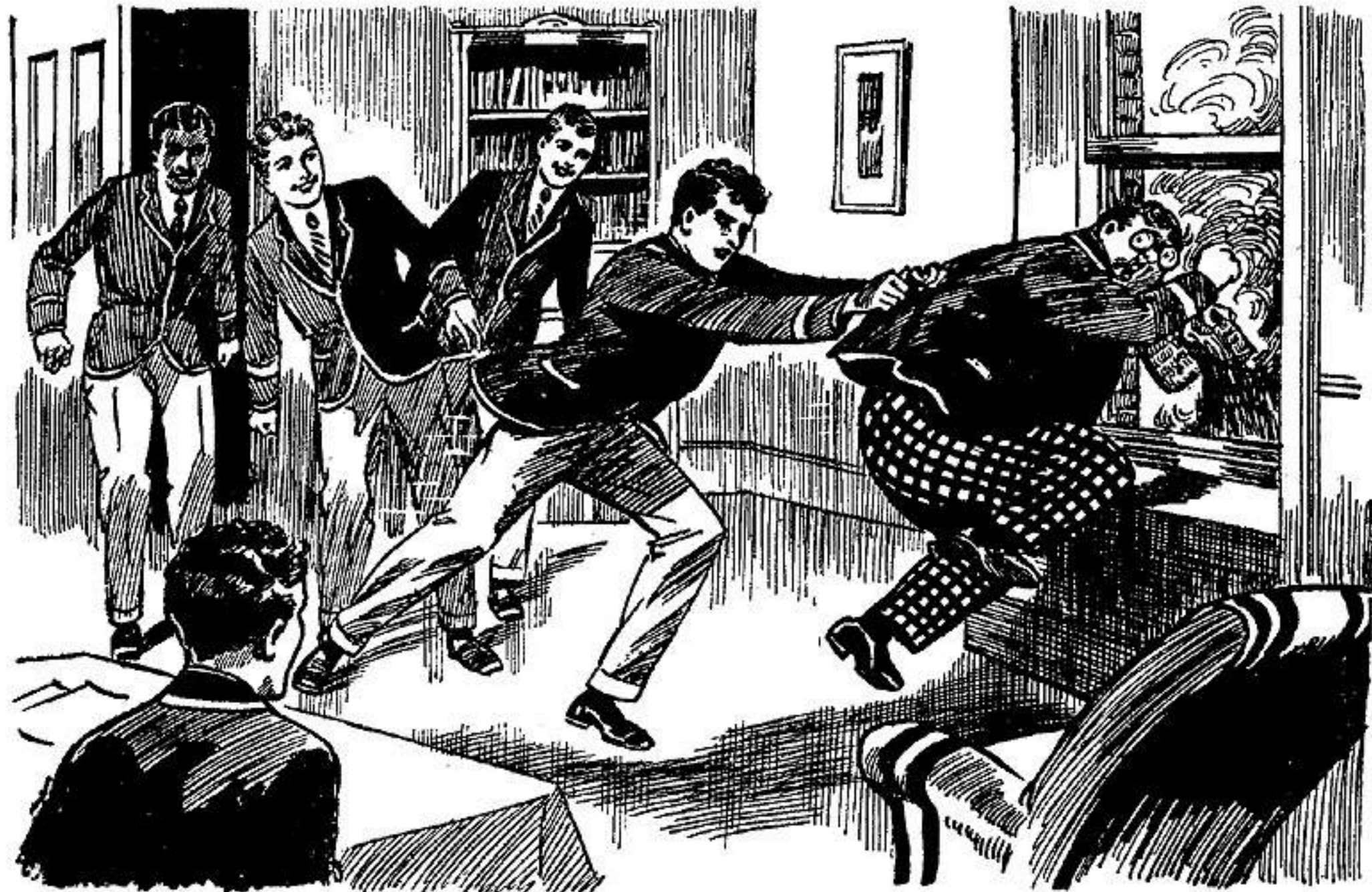
unpleasant and inexcusable trick on a Fifth Form boy?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in angry surprise.

Wharton set his lips.

"No, sir!" he answered.

"What do you mean, Wharton? You admit that you were in your study, from the window of which that wretched prank was played. It was done under your eyes, if not by you. You must have been a party to it, in that case. I am surprised at this, Wharton! I am surprised and shocked!"

"I had no doubt of it, sir!" boomed Prout. "Whether Wharton had associates or not in this revolting trick, this unexampled outrage, is immaterial! Undoubtedly Wharton—"



Billy Bunter leaned from the window and up-ended the basket of mixture. "What's that fat chump up to?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. Harry Wharton rushed to the window and grabbed hold of Bunter's jacket. But he was too late—the contents of the basket were already dropping on the head of the unfortunate victim below!

about the conduct of members of his Form.

Quelch's look showed plainly enough that trouble awaited the fellow who had pitched that basket of mixture on Compton's head, if the culprit turned out to be a member of the Remove.

The Removites took their places, a good many fellows glancing at the captain of the Form. Skinner winked at Snoop. Bolsover major remarked, in a loud whisper, that it was a dirty trick. Most of the fellows seemed to have heard of Prout's discoveries in Wharton's study, and to have drawn the same conclusion therefrom as Mr. Prout.

Billy Bunter gave the Famous Five a beseeching blink. It looked like a whopping for somebody; and, from Bunter's point of view, the important matter was that he—William George Bunter—should not get the whopping!

True, nobody seemed to suspect Bunter, and the Famous Five were not likely to give any fellow away. On the other hand, they were likely, very likely, to rag and scrag and slaughter a fellow

aback. "Why did you go to your study, Wharton?"

"To fetch a football, sir."

"You are aware, Wharton, of what has happened to a boy in Mr. Prout's Form?"

"Yes, sir."

"There appears to be no doubt, from the traces remaining, that the basket was dropped from the window of your study. Had you left your study before this occurred?"

"Obviously, sir, he had not!" boomed Prout. "Obviously—"

"You will oblige me, Mr. Prout, by leaving matters pertaining to my Form in my Form-room entirely in my hands!" said Mr. Quelch acidly.

Mr. Prout purpled.

"Please answer my question, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch, Prout having been reduced to breathless and indignant silence.

"No, sir!" said Harry.

"You were in the study at the time?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"Then it was you who played this

"Have you anything more to say, Wharton?"

"No, sir!"

"Then—"

Four pairs of eyes were fixed on Billy Bunter.

Nobody was going to give Bunter away to a beak. But Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were evidently going to visit wrath and vengeance on the guilty head after class. If Wharton bagged a "whopping" for what he had not done, it was only too painfully clear to the unhappy Owl that he was going to bag another for what he had done. Bunter gasped.

"I—I—I—"

His stutter interrupted Mr. Quelch. The Remove master gave him a glare.

"Silence, Bunter! How dare you interrupt me!"

"But, sir, it—it—it wasn't Wharton!" gasped the fat Owl.

"What?"

"I—I—I know who did it, sir!"

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groaned Bunter. "I—I saw the whole thing, sir, and—and it wasn't Wharton!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Whose Name?

"O H!" said Mr. Quelch. "Oh!" said Mr. Prout. All eyes were on Bunter. Nobody was surprised, of course, to hear that Bunter knew who did it, and that he had seen the whole thing. The Peeping Tom of the Remove was just the fellow to know. Certainly nobody outside the Famous Five guessed for a moment that it was Bunter who had done it. Had he "got" Carne of the Sixth with that mixture, fellows might have guessed. But nobody in the Remove had anything against Compton of the Fifth—least of all Bunter. And it was unknown that that basket had been delivered at the wrong address!

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "That alters the case. You witnessed this occurrence in Study No. 1 in the Remove, Bunter? Were you present?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I was—was right on the spot, sir, and—and I saw the—the chap, sir, and—and it wasn't Wharton!"

Snort! from Prout.

"I must ask you, Bunter, to give the name of the boy you saw at Wharton's study window!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'!"

"You may speak, Bunter."

"I—I—I— Oh dear! I—I mean to say, sir, we—we don't give a chap away in the Remove, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I can't be a sneak, sir!"

"Good man!" whispered Peter Todd. "Stick to that, Bunter!"

And there was a murmur of approval in the Remove.

"Did you speak, Todd?" came Mr. Quelch's voice, like a bullet.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Take fifty lines! Now, Bunter," continued Mr. Quelch, gently and kindly, "I must ask you to give the name. As you see, another boy is under suspicion, and in such circumstances the truth must be stated. If the boy in question does not stand forward and admit the truth, I have no alternative but to insist upon your giving the name!"

"Oh lor'!"

Quelch's gimlet eyes roamed over the class. They rested for a moment on the Bounder, and then on Skinner. But there were no signs of guilt to be discovered in any face in the Remove. Mr. Quelch was, in fact, puzzled. Compton of the Fifth was so generally liked that it was difficult to imagine who could have played that ghastly prank on him.

"My boys," said Mr. Quelch in a deep voice, "I appeal to the boy who committed this foolish prank to stand forward and admit it, otherwise I have no alternative but to order Bunter to give his name."

There was a pause.

Nobody, however, stood forward.

Fellows looked at one another, wondering who the dickens it was, and why he did not step out. So far as they could see, the culprit had nothing to gain by keeping silent, as Bunter certainly had to give the name.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard.

"Very well!" he said. He turned to Bunter again. "Now, Bunter, I understand your scruples and respect them, but I order you to give me the name of the boy who threw the basket from

the window of Study No. 1, if it was not Wharton!"

"It—it—it wasn't Wharton, sir!"

"Then who was it?"

The Remove hung breathlessly on Bunter's answer. The fat Owl gasped. He blinked dismally at Mr. Quelch.

"Speak!" rapped the Remove master. "I command you, Bunter! You have nothing to be afraid of, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter. "Haven't I?"

Mr. Quelch frowned thunderously.

"If you mean, Bunter, that you are afraid of the boy whose name you must give, you need have no fear. Your Form-master will see to that."

"Oh, no, sir! I—I ain't afraid of him!" gasped Bunter.

"Then of what are you afraid, you foolish boy?"

"You, sir!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"Of me? What do you mean, Bunter?"

"Oh dear! You—you—you canded a chap once for telling tales, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Upon my word! Cannot you see, you stupid boy, that this case is quite different? Certainly I disapprove strongly of tale-bearing, and I should certainly cane any boy who came to me for such a purpose. But this matter is quite different when I order you to answer me."

"Then—then you won't cane me, sir?"

"Certainly not!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the fat Owl as if he fascinated them. Billy Bunter was pulling Quelch's leg in a way that even the reckless Bounder would hardly have ventured to do. Excess of funk seemed to have imbued him with the courage of desperation.

"Now give the name, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch. "You are wasting the time of the Form! The name—at once!"

"Bib-bib-bib—" stuttered the fat Owl.

"What?"

"Bib-bib-bib-Bunter!" gasped the Owl of the Remove, getting it out at last.

"What do you mean?" roared Mr. Quelch. "Why are you uttering your own name, Bunter, when I have asked you—"

"Pip-pip-pip—"

"Boy!"

"Pip-pip-pip-please, sir, it was—was me, sir!"

"What-a-at?"

"Mum-mum-mum-me, sir!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch stared at him. Mr. Prout stared at him. The whole Remove stared at him. For a moment there was the silence of astonishment in the Form-room. Then there was a roar:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Silence! I will cane the next boy who laughs! Silence! Bunter, do you mean that it was you who played that wretched prank from the window of Wharton's study?"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!" groaned Bunter.

"Upon my word! Stand out before the Form, Bunter! I shall cane you with the utmost severity!"

"Oh! You—you said you wouldn't, sir!" yelled Bunter.

"What?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"You—you said you wouldn't cane me if I gave you the name, sir!" howled Bunter. "All the fellows heard you, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, you—you—you—" Mr. Quelch almost gurgled. His gaze at that hopeful member of his Form

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resembled that of the fabled basilisk of old. "Bunter, you—you——"

The Removites suppressed their merriment. The expression on Mr. Quelch's face showed that it was not a moment for merriment. But they suppressed it with difficulty.

"Upon my word!" gasped Prout. "Upon my word! This boy—this—this Bunter——"

Mr. Quelch had picked up his cane. He laid it down again. For once Henry Samuel Quelch was at a loss—quite at a loss!

The fat and fatuous Owl had tricked him—an unheard-of and unexampled trick! That did not alter the fact that Mr. Quelch had said that he would not cane Bunter if he gave the name. Bunter had given the name—his own! But what Mr. Quelch had said, he had said. He could not cane Bunter.

Prout looked at him. He looked at Prout.

"This matter, sir——" boomed Prout.

"This matter, sir, ends here," said Mr. Quelch. "Under a misapprehension I gave this boy an assurance, from which I cannot, however, depart."

"I am not satisfied, sir! I——"

"If you are not satisfied, sir, you may, if you choose, place the matter before the headmaster. I can say no more, Mr. Prout, except that third school is now overdue!"

Prout, with thunder in his brow, faded out of the Remove-room.

Mr. Quelch gave Bunter a long, long look. Never, probably, had Mr. Quelch yearned and longed so intensely to cane a member of his Form. But, in the peculiar circumstances, that yearning and longing had to be suppressed.

Third school began in a rather electric atmosphere. During third school Billy Bunter captured a hundred lines for telling Mr. Quelch that it was Pontius Pilate who fiddled while Rome was burning, and another hundred for surreptitiously conveying a chunk of toffee from a sticky pocket to his capacious mouth. But that was all. Quelch was a man of his word, and Bunter rolled out with the Remove without having sampled the cane!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

What Smithy Suspected!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH pushed his books aside, rose from the table in Study No. 4, and moved about the study, his hands in his pockets, and a wrinkle in his brow.

Tom Redwing, his study-mate, glanced at him with a faint smile. Several times of late Tom had seen his chum in that strange, thoughtful mood, and wondered what Smithy had on his mind.

"Penny for 'em, Smithy!" said Redwing, at last.

The Bounder came to a halt and looked at him, but he did not answer.

"What's the trouble, old man?" asked Tom. "Isn't it anything you can tell a pal?"

"No," said Smithy. "It worries me, old bean, but I can't tell you, or anybody. It's another man's secret, and I'm dashed if I know whether I ought to keep it or not. Can you make head or tail of that, Reddy?"

"Well, hardly!" said Redwing, in astonishment. "Another man's secret needn't worry you, that I can see."

"It does!" grunted the Bounder. "I want some advice on the subject. You're no good, Reddy. You wouldn't believe a word of it if I told you, so it's not much use telling you—even if I could.

And—I can't! I can't give a man away."

The Bounder moved to the door.

"Coming down?" asked Redwing.

"I'm going to speak to Wharton before I go down. I'll see you in the Rag."

"Hold on, Smithy!" Redwing's face was grave. "For goodness' sake don't have another row with Wharton. What's the good?"

"I'm not going to row with him, fathead!"

"You were scrapping one day last week. You've been on the warpath ever since the night he dared you to go to the sea-cave by the secret passage, and really that was your own fault, Smithy."

"I know we nearly got copped by that old fool Prout!" growled the Bounder. "But, of course, you'd think it was my fault."

"It was, old man. You called Wharton a funk for not going in the day-time, and he dared you to go at night. It was a mad thing to do, but you asked for it. Can't you let it drop? What's the good of rowing?"

"I tell you I'm not going to row."

"Then why are you going to see Wharton?"

The Bounder laughed sarcastically.

"Isn't he head boy, captain of the Remove, general great panjandrum, and model character all round?" he sneered. "Isn't he the man for a lesser mortal to ask for advice? That's what I'm going to do."

Redwing made no answer to that. He found that statement difficult to swallow. In silence he walked down the Remove passage with his chum, and went on to the stairs, as Smithy stopped at the door of Study No. 1.

Prep had finished in the Remove. Wharton and Nugent were putting their books away when the Bounder looked in.

They looked surprised, but not pleased to see him. Ever since that reckless escapade at the Smugglers' Cave, the Bounder had been hostile to the captain of the Form, and a "scrap" a few days ago had not improved matters.

"Busy?" asked the Bounder.

"No," answered Harry. "We're just going down."

"Hang on a few minutes, will you? Don't let me keep you, Nugent."

"If you've got anything to say, Smithy, you can say it while Nugent's here," said Wharton quietly.

"I can't!"

"Then don't say it at all," said the captain of the Remove curtly. "Let's get out, Frank; the other fellows will be going down now."

Vernon-Smith's face set savagely.

"I've got to speak to you, Wharton. It's not a matter to be rattled up and down the Remove!"

"If you mean about the football——"

"I don't mean about the football!"

"Well, I don't see what else you can have to talk to me about. I don't want to hear what odds Joe Banks is offering on Nobbled Nick," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip.

Frank Nugent laughed.

"All right," said the Bounder. "I'll shout it out for every man in the Remove to hear, if you like. I fancy you'll wish I hadn't, though."

"Oh, rot!"

"It's about the matter we talked of on the Courtfield road, last week, when we came to scrapping," said Smithy.

Harry Wharton started.

Nugent looked from one to the other, puzzled. But it was clear that Harry Wharton understood the Bounder's allusion.

"I'd rather hear no more about that," said Harry. "But you can run on, if

you like. Do you mind, Frank?"

"All serene, old man! If it's a jolly old secret, I'll see that Bunter gets nowhere near the keyhole!" said Nugent, laughing. And he went out of the study and shut the door after him.

"Well," said Wharton impatiently, "what rot have you got to talk now, Vernon-Smith? Certainly I don't want it shouted all over the Remove. If you mean about Compton——"

"You know I mean about Compton!" said Vernon-Smith coolly. "I want your advice on the subject."

"That's easy! Keep your silly suspicions to yourself, and don't be a fool," said Harry. "If you start such a yarn in the school about a splendid fellow like Compton, you'll find yourself pretty unpopular. You've got nothing against him."

"I like the chap—as much as anybody. I've got quite as good an opinion of him as you have. That makes it more difficult." The Bounder dropped his sneering tone and spoke earnestly. "Look here, Wharton, what I told you is the goods. You haven't forgotten that the night we went to the smugglers' cave Compton and his uncle ran a boat in from the sea, and cleared off like lightning when they heard a sound. You haven't forgotten that Compton was seen hunting for a packet he'd lost on the beach, and that you found a packet and took it to Inspector Grimes, at Courtfield, and the Comptons, uncle and nephew, denied all knowledge of it. It was Compton's packet."

"It was not. He told me it was not."

"Could he tell you it was, you fool, when it's as plain as daylight that it contained smuggled goods, smuggled ashore from his uncle's yacht?" snarled the Bounder.

"Rubbish!"

"It's a week since you took that packet to old Grimes. Have you heard whether he's traced the owner?"

"No."

"Have you heard what was in it?"

"No."

"And you won't," said Vernon-Smith. "They've got on to smuggling, and they won't shout it out. Grimey may or may not believe that Captain Compton and his nephew know nothing of it. But he knows that it was some smuggler who got it ashore, and you can bank on that."

"Rot!"

The Bounder breathed hard.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Harry. "I suppose you do, Smithy, though as you say you like Compton, I should think that a reason for not believing a rotten thing about him without proof of any sort."

"There's as good as proof since."

"Oh!" Wharton gave him a quick look. "Something else has happened since, do you mean?"

"Yes, I do. You remember the day that fool, Coker of the Fifth, went down the secret passage from the panel in the library corridor. The born idiot tumbled down the spiral stair and damaged his leg, and couldn't get out again, and——"

"What on earth's that got to do with it?" asked Harry, in astonishment.

"You know who found him there?"

"Yes; Compton of the Fifth!"

"Well, then!" snapped the Bounder. "Coker stuck there for hours and hours—goodness knows when he would have been found, as nobody had the faintest idea that he had gone down. Compton went down at midnight, and chanced on him——"

"Nothing of the kind! Compton guessed where the fathead was, and

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nobody else did, if that's what you mean."

"I mean that Compton never guessed anything of the kind, and never gave the matter a thought!" said the Bounder deliberately. "I mean that he was going down that secret passage at midnight, about his own business, and found Coker there by sheer chance. And his business was——"

"Well, what?"

"To fetch something that had been left in the sea-cave, by a boat from some ship at sea!"

"Oh, my hat! Smuggling?"

"Exactly!"

Harry Wharton stared blankly at the Bounder. Then he burst into a laugh.

"This is getting richer and richer!" he said. "So Compton's a smuggler, and he uses the secret passage from the sea-cave to the school to get in contraband goods! Ha, ha!"

"You think it a laughing matter?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a dark look at the captain of the Remove.

"Well, yes, rather! One of your funniest stories, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton, laughing again.

"You can cackle!" said the Bounder savagely. "I've got it right——"

"Rubbish!"

"So long as Compton was outside Greyfriars, it was no biznoy of mine, and I wouldn't have dreamed of barging in!" said Vernon-Smith. "But he's a Greyfriars man now. I think that makes a difference. Smuggling isn't exactly a crime, I suppose—the fellow's not a crook! But—it's jolly near it! It's breaking the law, anyhow—not the sort of thing we want the name of Greyfriars mixed up in, if it comes out!"

"Hardly!" said Harry. "Glad to see you so particular about the good name of Greyfriars, Smithy! I shouldn't have expected it of you, from the way you carry on at times."

The Bounder compressed his lips hard.

"That's enough!" he said. "What I want to know is this—what's your advice, as head boy and captain of the Form? I can't speak to any other chap about it, even my pal, Redwing, without giving Compton away; and I hate the idea of doing that. If you were in my place, what would you do?"

"Mind my own business!" said Harry at once.

"You don't think it would be your business, if a new fellow came to Greyfriars, to use the school as a screen for smuggling?"

"Well, yes! But I shouldn't believe such a thing without jolly strong evidence."

"Plenty of evidence, to my mind!"

"None—to mine!"

"Oh, you're a fool!"

"Thanks! Shall we leave it at that?" asked Wharton. "I'm going down to the Rag when you're through with this film stunt."

"Put it plain!" snarled the Bounder. "You advise me to hold my tongue, and let it go on?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I advise you to hold your tongue, certainly," he said. "I think you'd be jolly nearly lynched, if you started such a tale about a splendid fellow like Compton of the Fifth. As for letting it go on, there's nothing going on, that I know of; and you can let nothing go on, without much damage done. Forget the whole thing, and don't be an ass!"

"That's your advice?"

"That's it—if you want it."

"It's on your shoulders, then, as well as mine!" said Vernon-Smith. "I

know there's no proof—though I fancy it would be easy enough to get. Do you know that Compton's got special leave to use the library?"

"Why shouldn't he have, if he wants to swot?"

"That means that he can walk down that corridor whenever he likes, past the secret panel."

"Any harm in walking past it?"

"You know what I mean!" hissed the Bounder.

"Oh, yes! You mean that you've got a fatheaded idea into your head about that new chap, and that everything he does, or doesn't do, is evidence that he is what he isn't!"

"All right!" said Vernon-Smith savagely. "Leave it at that! I'm right, and you're wrong—but leave it at that!"

And the Bounder tramped out of Study No. 1, and slammed the door after him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Carne's Rival!

"**S**ORRY!" said Wingate.

Carne of the Sixth scowled. The captain of Greyfriars really was sorry. But his sorrow was not of much use to a fellow who was feeling a keen and bitter disappointment.

Carne stood in Wingate's study scowling at the captain of the school, who sat on the table.

"Then—I'm not going up for the Lantham match?" asked Carne.

"Sorry—no!"

Wingate wanted to put it gently. He had answered a similar question from Loder of the Sixth much less politely. He had told Loder that if he wanted to play in the first eleven, he had better give up slacking and dodging games practice.

But Carne, though he was a pal of Loder's, and tarred with the same brush to a great extent, had pulled up that term, and gone all out on the football field. He had done his best, and no man could do more. And he had improved his form very considerably thereby; and there was little doubt that, had not Valentine Compton come to Greyfriars, Arthur Carne would have realised his ambition.

But Compton of the Fifth had shown such surprising quality at Soccer, that nobody but Carne supposed for a moment that he could be passed over. Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, had bagged him for his Form team, and had been heard to express the opinion that, with the new man in the ranks, the Fifth would very likely beat the Sixth in the next Form match.

Everybody knew that Wingate had an eye on Compton for the first eleven; and though the list was not yet up for the fixture with the Lantham Ramblers, everybody knew that the name of V. Compton would appear in it, when Wingate put it on the notice-board.

But it was a bitter pill for Arthur Carne to swallow, all the same. He found it very hard to get down.

"Sorry, old man!" said Wingate again. "But——"

"Compton, of course?" sneered Carne.

"Compton, of course!" said Wingate quietly. "I'd as soon leave myself out as that new man in the Fifth."

"A fellow who hasn't been two weeks in the school——"

"If he hadn't been two days, or two hours, it would make no difference. Dash it all, Carne, you're a footballer——"

you can see that the man is simply a born genius at Soccer!" said Wingate warmly.

"I don't see it!"

"None so blind as those who won't see, then!" said Wingate. "I shall want you in the next Form match with the Fifth——"

"Bother the Form match with the Fifth! A man wants to play for School! I've been slogging at footer ever since the term started——"

"I know—and I'm sorry! But——"

"Who the dooce is the fellow?" snarled Carne. "Barging in from nowhere, in the middle of the term——"

"Who is he?" repeated Wingate. "If you want to know, he's the best man at Soccer that ever kicked a goal on the Greyfriars ground! That's who he is!"

"Oh, rats!" snarled Carne. And, with that he stalked out of the captain's study.

His brow was dark as he went out into the quad.

Loder and Walker of the Sixth glanced at him, and at each other, and smiled.

They had seen less of their pal than usual this term, as Carne had taken up football seriously, and his pals had slacked about, as usual. They were rather amused to see that Carne, who had given them the go-by, and taken up with the games men, had had his nose put out of joint by the new fellow in the Fifth Form.

"Wingate got the Lantham list out yet?" asked Loder, with a wink at Walker. "I suppose you're in it, Carne? Dear old Wingate's told me he doesn't want me."

"Fool if he did!" snapped Carne.

"Thanks! I'll come over and cheer your goals, old man! We'll make a beano of it on Lantham day, Walker, what?"

"What-ho!" agreed Walker, grinning. "Gratters, Carne!"

Arthur Carne scowled at his friends even more blackly than he had scowled at Wingate, and stalked away across the quad—leaving them grinning.

He passed Coker, and Potter, and Greene of the Fifth. Horace Coker was holding forth on the subject of football; and, for once, wonderful to relate, Potter and Greene thought that Coker was talking sense on that subject.

"Wingate's a bit of an ass," Coker was saying. "Generally he can't see a man's form at Soccer—look at the silly, obstinate way he leaves me out of the matches! But I hear that he's picking that new man, Compton, for the Lantham match. That's all right! Compton can play Soccer!"

"Hear, hear!" said Potter and Greene.

"Not quite my style," went on Coker. "Not a really finished style, if you know what I mean. But a good man—quite a good man."

"Quite!" grinned Potter. "Not quite your style, Coker—but good!"

"And a decent chap all round!" said Coker. "Look at the way he swam out on the tide to get that fat idiot Bunter's boat in when he went adrift. Look at the way he risked breaking bounds in the middle of the night, because he guessed that I'd got stranded in that beastly hole underground, and nobody else in the whole school thought of it. He's a clever chap!"

"Right as rain!" agreed Greene.

"A bit of a swot," said Coker sadly. "I hear that he's got library leave, and digs into some rot—classic muck or something—ever heard of Priscianus? That's the sort of tripe he digs into."



"You—you won't cane me if I give you the name of the boy who threw that basket of mixture from the window, sir?" said Bunter. "Certainly not!" barked Mr. Quelch. "Now give me the name. You are wasting the time of the Form!"

"Pip-pip-pip-please, sir, it was—was me, sir!" gasped the Owl of the Remove. "Wha-a-a-t?"

But, dash it all," added Coker, "why shouldn't a fellow work if he plays a good game as well? What?"

Carne walked on, scowling.

Horace Coker had started with a row with the new fellow; now he was one of his most loyal admirers. Everybody seemed to like and admire that new man in the Fifth.

Sixth Form prefects asked him into the prefects' room; Blundell & Co. made no end of a fuss of him in the Fifth Form games study; juniors looked up to him with tremendous respect; even scrubby little fags in the Third and Second told one another what a splendid chap "that man Compton" was!

And with all of it there was no "swank" about him. Even Carne had to admit that he bore his blushing honours thick upon him without a trace of "side" or "roll."

Carne, however, could not see that he was such a tremendously fine fellow—being almost the only Greyfriars man who couldn't or wouldn't!

He passed a group of Shell fellows; Hobson of the Shell was talking:

"Seen that man Compton at Soccer? Believe me, they've got a rod in pickle for Lantham if they play that Fifth Form man."

Carne of the Sixth stalked on. He had heard enough, more than enough, of this sort of thing!

He heard something else, however, as he came by some juniors near the tuck-shop. Billy Bunter was gazing into the window of that establishment, with a yearning eye. Bunter was outside the school shop, instead of inside, because he had been disappointed about a postal order he was expecting, and there was no "tick" for Bunter.

"Look out, Bunter!" shouted Skinner. Billy Bunter blinked round.

"Here comes Compton!" yelled Skinner.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter bolted.

There was a chortle from a dozen fellows as he flew. The humorous Skinner was only pulling Bunter's fat leg—it was Carne of the Sixth who was coming along, and Compton of the Fifth was not in the offing at all. But at a short distance Greyfriars fellows were much of a muchness to the short-sighted Owl of the Remove. Bunter fled as if for his fat life, followed by a howl of laughter.

Carne stared at that little scene.

His eyes gleamed.

This looked like bullying—a junior fleeing in panic at a hint that a Fifth Form man was coming! Carne was rather given to bullying himself; but although the poet assures us that a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind, it did not have that effect on Arthur Carne.

Carne was a prefect, and it was undoubtedly a prefect's duty to put down bullying—more especially if the bully in this case was the fellow who had barged Carne out of the first eleven! If he could not hold his own against the new man at Soccer, he could at least exercise his prefectorial authority.

"Here, Skinner!" he called out.

"Yes, Carne!" said the grinning Skinner.

"Has that Fifth Form man, Compton, been bullying a Remove kid?"

"Oh, no!" said Skinner. "I hear he's going to boot Bunter when he comes across him. Bunter mopped a cargo of muck over his napper yesterday—"

"Oh! That was Bunter, was it?" said Carne. It gave him quite a kindly feeling towards Bunter.

"He owned up to Quelch," said Skinner.

"If Bunter's Form-master has dealt

with the matter, it's not for Compton to do anything. If that fellow has come here thinking that he can bully Lower boys, he will find himself mistaken," said Carne.

Skinner looked at him. Even Skinner, who had little liking for anybody but Harold Skinner, rather liked Compton of the Fifth.

"I say, he hasn't been bullying, Carne!" Skinner ventured. "Any chap would kick a silly idiot for what Bunter did—"

"That will do!" snapped Carne.

He walked away in the direction Billy Bunter had taken.

Carne was sore and savage, and any stick was good enough to beat his rival with. Carne of the Sixth was going to look into this, and he was going to make the most—the very most—of it!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Boot for Bunter!

BUMP!

"Oh!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oooga!" gasped Billy Bunter.

It was a terrific collision!

The Famous Five were walking towards the school shop, when Bunter happened. Bunter, quite unaware that it was a false alarm, was in full flight. In the belief that Compton of the Fifth was behind him, the fat junior flew, and he barged into the Famous Five before he saw them.

Bob Cherry got the benefit of it. Billy Bunter hit him rather like a battering-ram, and he went over and sat down, roaring.

Bunter staggered back from the shock, spluttering, and sat down also.

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"Ow! Oh!" gasped Bob breathlessly. "You mad ass—ow!"

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Why Bunter was charging across the quad like a runaway elephant, was a mystery. Nobody seemed to be in pursuit.

Bob staggered to his feet. Bunter bounced up like an indiarubber ball. For once the fat Owl was quick in his movements.

"I say, you fellows, gerrout of the way!" he gasped. "I say—leggo, Cherry, you beast—leggo my neck—I say—urrgh!"

"You howling ass!" roared Bob wrathfully. "What the thump did you barge me over for?"

"Ow! I didn't—I mean, I never saw you—I say, leggo—that beast's after me. I say—leggo!" yelled Bunter.

"Nobody's after you, you blithering bandersnatch!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh!" Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles. "I say, you fellows, that beast Compton nearly got me! Oh dear!"

Bunter pumped in breath.

"Compton?" repeated Harry.

"He's after me," groaned Bunter.

"He's been after me ever since it came out that I dropped that stuff on him yesterday. It was all a mistake, you know—I never meant it for Compton—oh dear! But he got it, you know, and it seems to have made him waxy."

"Did you think he would be pleased?" asked Nugent.

"Well, I meant it for Carne," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, are you sure Compton isn't coming? He nearly had me at the tuckshop! Skinner warned me just in time."

"You footling fathead," said Bob Cherry, "Skinner was pulling your silly leg. Compton's not in the quad at all."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, where is he?"

"I believe he's in the games study," said Nugent. "Why not go there and take your booting and get it over?"

"I'll watch it!" gasped Bunter.

The Famous Five chuckled.

Since it had become known that Billy Bunter had deposited the mixture on the new fellow's head the day before, the fat Owl had been leading a hunted life.

By his really masterly strategy, Bunter has escaped the penalty of his sins, so far as Mr. Quelch was concerned. He had rather feared that Prout might take it to the Head; but Prout, on reflection, wrathful and indignant as he was, realised that it would be rather ridiculous to place such a matter before Dr. Locke. He had let it drop, though, in Common-room, he boomed at great length on the subject of Quelch's unruly boys.

That did not worry Bunter. His worry was that the fellow who had got the mixture, though by mistake, would boot him. For a whole day he had dodged Compton of the Fifth.

It was extremely probable that Compton, who was a very good-tempered fellow, had dismissed the matter, after that lapse of time, and was not wasting a single thought on the fat Owl. But it amused fellows in the Remove to pull Bunter's fat leg. Any fellow might have been expected to boot Bunter for such a ghastly trick, and the fat Owl had no doubt that Compton of the Fifth was keeping an eye open for him—and a boot ready!

Which made it quite easy to pull his leg. A dozen times, at least, Bunter had been startled into panic flight by the alarm that Compton was after him. At

the sight of Compton in the distance—or any fellow he took for Compton—Bunter would break into flight. It was quite entertaining to the Remove fellows.

It was not entertaining to Bunter. He blinked reproachfully at the Famous Five as they chuckled.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" he gasped. "I say, you fellows, that beast Compton's been after me a dozen times! I can tell you I'm jolly well not going to be kicked by a Fifth Form cad!"

"Hasn't he kicked you yet?" asked Bob.

"No! You see, I've been dodging the beast! I say, I think a fellow's pals ought to stand by him. What about collaring the beast, and sitting him in a puddle, like you did Coker the other day? Warn him off, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was all your fault, Wharton, as I've told you! If you'd looked out of the window and told me it was Compton instead of Carne, it would have been all right!" groaned Bunter.

"Fathead! Compton's not after you," said Harry. "It would serve you jolly well right to be booted, but I don't suppose he will take the trouble."

"I jolly well know—"

"He's forgotten by this time that there's such a fat slug crawling about the school at all!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I—I say, is that Compton coming?" asked Bunter, blinking round uneasily through his big spectacles.

"Ha, ha! No, that's Hilton."

"Oh, all right! I say, you fellows, what's going to be done?" asked Bunter plaintively. "I can't keep on dodging like this, you know!"

"Go to Compton and take your booting," suggested Bob.

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "That's the trouble—you see, I don't want to be booted!"

"The bootfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!" chuckled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"You've been booted often enough," said Harry Wharton encouragingly.

"You'll get over it!"

"Well, look here, Wharton, as it was all your fault, suppose you go to Compton—"

"Eh?"

"And—and take the booting! If you explain to him that it was all your fault, I—I dare say he'd just as soon boot you as me!" said Bunter hopefully.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I think it's up to you, old chap, as you've landed me in this!" said the fat Owl. "After all I've done for you, too! What about it, old fellow?"

"Nothing about it!" chuckled Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you fellows, suppose I explained to Compton that it was a mistake, and I meant it for Carne?" asked Bunter anxiously. "He doesn't like Carne, and Carne loathes him, you know. Think he'd get over his silly temper if I told him it was all a mistake?"

"I fancy he's got over it already," said Harry. "He's a jolly good-tempered chap. Try it on, anyhow."

"But—but suppose he boots me before I have time to explain?" mumbled Bunter. "He—he might—"

"The mightfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows, you come with me to the games study! Then—then if he gets excited you can collar him—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that Compton coming?" asked Bob Cherry, with a

wink at his chums, as Carne of the Sixth came along.

"Hook it, Bunter!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter darted off to the House. He vanished in at the doorway, leaving the Famous Five chortling and Carne staring.

"What did that young ass bolt for?" asked the Sixth Former, stopping as he came up to the Famous Five.

"I think he sort of fancied it was Compton coming!" answered Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"I see!" said Carne grimly. "Do you know where Compton is now?"

"In the games study."

"I think I'd better see him. This sort of bullying won't do for Greyfriars!" said Carne.

He walked on to the House, leaving the chums of the Remove staring.

"The silly ass!" said Harry Wharton. "What does Carne mean by that?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I fancy he means that he doesn't like Compton bagging his place in the first eleven!" he answered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Which, though perhaps Arthur Carne did not quite realise it himself, was very near the truth!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Who Was the Bully!

"COMPTON!"

"Hallo!"

Valentine Compton glanced round, and so did every other man in the games study.

There were six or seven of the Fifth Form there, talking Soccer.

George Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, frowned at Carne as he walked in.

Blundell was a first eleven man, a tremendous blood, and a great man generally—miles, if not leagues, higher up than Carne of the Sixth in the general estimation of Greyfriars. Nevertheless, Carne was a prefect, and if he insisted on his position, even tremendous bloods of the first eleven had to treat him with tact.

Carne rapped out Compton's name in a dictatorial tone as he came into the games study. That apartment belonged to the Fifth; nobody else had a right there. Still, it could not be denied that a Sixth Form prefect could march in where he liked—on official business.

But if this tick had barged into the games study to throw his weight about, he would very soon be told where he got off, in Blundell's opinion.

The captain of the Fifth frowned, with knitted brow. Like many big games men, Blundell thought it "rot" for prefects to have so much power in their hands. Still, they had, and they could not be booted out by Fifth Form men, even when they barged in where they were not wanted and put on roll.

Judging by his look and tone, Carne had come there to rag Compton—as popular a fellow in the Fifth as old Blundell himself. They all gave him grim looks—excepting Compton. That pleasant-mannered youth gave him a nod.

"I've been looking for you, Compton!" said Carne.

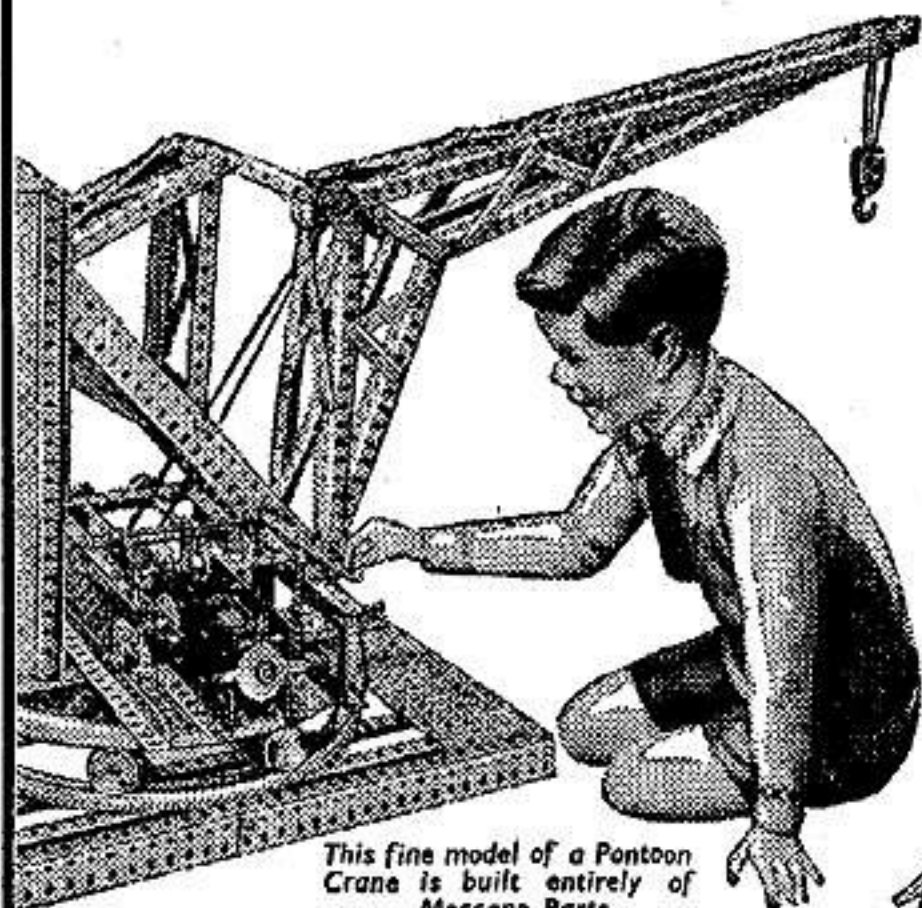
"Then you've found me!" said Compton agreeably.

"I hear you've been bullying among the fags."

"Look here, Carne—" began Blundell, in a growl like that of the Great Huge Bear.

(Continued on page 12.)

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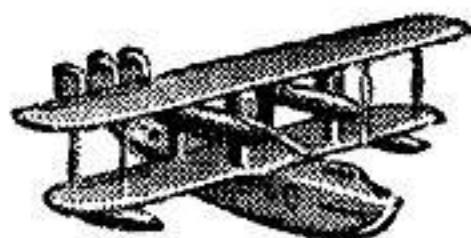
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"Don't butt in, Blundell!" said Carne.

"What?"

"Keep quiet!"

Blundell seemed to find it hard to breathe. This, to a blood of the first eleven—from a tick like Carne, a fellow who had barely squeezed into the eleven by the skin of his teeth, as it were, and had been dropped again like a hot potato when a better man turned up! Blundell stared at Carne with open scorn and contempt.

Only the fact that he was a prefect saved the Sixth Former from going out of the games study on his neck. Blundell could have handled two Carnes, one in either hand! Only, unfortunately, prefects could not be handled!

"You hear I've been bullying among the fags, Carne?" asked Compton, in the same pleasant way.

"Yes!" rapped Carne. "So I hear!"

"What about seeing a doctor?" asked Compton.

"A doctor!" repeated Carne blankly.

"Yes—some good medical man—"

"What the dickens do you mean?"

"I mean, that there must be something wrong with your hearing!" explained Compton. "Better take it in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the Fifth Formers; while Carne's face crimsoned, and he glared at Compton.

"I haven't come here to talk foolery, Compton!" snarled the prefect.

"Oh!" said Compton. "My mistake! Judging by what you said, I thought you had!"

Carne breathed hard, and the Fifth Formers grinned cheerily. That Sixth Form tick was not getting much change out of Compton!

"It's not only what I've heard, but what I've seen!" said Carne. "If you're asking for a prefect's whopping, Compton, you'll get it! I find that you've been bullying a Remove kid—"

"First I've heard of it!" said Compton staring. "Sure it's not a case of mistaken identity? Who's the wretched victim?"

"That fat kid, Bunter, bolts whenever he sees you, as if he's scared out of his life."

Compton laughed.

"I dare say he knows I owe him a booting," he said. "He mopped a cargo of muck over my head yesterday—"

"That's neither here nor there. His Form-master has dealt with that matter, and it's at an end. See?"

"Look here, Carne," bawled Blundell, "are you making out that a fag can drench a Fifth Form man with soot and ink without getting kicked?"

"I've told you not to butt in, Blundell," said Carne coolly. "Now, you hear me, Compton—"

"Nothing wrong with my hearing, thanks."

"You're to leave Bunter alone. I've no doubt you'd been bullying him, to make him mop that stuff over you yesterday. I don't see why he should have done it otherwise. Why should he?"

"Haven't the foggiest!" said Compton. "But he did—"

"Well, you've got to let it drop! See?"

Compton looked at the Sixth Form man. Carne's tone was as dictatorial and unpleasant as he could make it, and it was not easy to tolerate. Still, he was acting within his rights and powers as a prefect.

"If you kick Bunter again—" went on Carne.

"But I haven't kicked him yet!" interposed Compton mildly. "And it may possibly interest you, Carne, to hear

that I never intended to. The fact is, I'd almost forgotten the fat ass."

"Bunter doesn't seem to think so," sneered Carne. "He bolts like a frightened rabbit when he sees you."

"Well, I can't help that, can I?" argued Compton. "I suppose the young rascal knows what he deserves."

"No more of it!" said Carne. "I'm giving you the plain tip, Compton—bullying doesn't go down here, and if there's any more of it, I'll have you up in the prefects'-room, sharp!"

"Any more of what hasn't happened?" asked Compton, with a smile.

"It's not much use telling me that!" sneered Carne. "The kid mopped a lot of stuff over your head yesterday, from a study window. That means that you'd been bullying him—it can't mean anything else."

"I tell you—"

"I'm warning you to chuck it. That's all—you needn't say any more!" snapped Carne. "It's perfectly clear to me that only bullying would have made Bunter do what he did yesterday."

"Why the thump did Bunter do it, Compton?" asked Price.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Hallo, here he is!" exclaimed Fitzgerald of the Fifth, as a fat figure and a pair of large spectacles loomed in the doorway.

Carne stared at Bunter. After what had happened in the quad, he was astonished to see the fat junior coming into the games study. But he could see, at least, that Bunter looked fearfully uneasy.

"I—I say, is—is Compton here?" stammered Bunter.

"Here, you young ass," said Compton. "Don't be alarmed—I don't bite!"

Bunter blinked at him.

The short-sighted Owl did not notice that Carne was in the room. There were seven or eight big seniors there, some of them bigger than Carne—and Blundell, the biggest of the lot, was standing between the prefect and Bunter. The fat Owl's eyes, and spectacles, were fastened on Compton's handsome, amused face.

"I—I say, Wharton thinks that if I told you it was all a mistake, you—you wouldn't be waxy, Compton," said Bunter. "I—I say—keep off, you know! I say, it was all a mistake, and it was Wharton's fault really. I—I never meant it for you, Compton."

"You blithering young ass!"

"I say, honour bright, you know," said Bunter, eyeing him warily, and prepared to dodge at the first movement of Compton's boot. "If Wharton had looked out, when I asked him, and seen you there, it would have been all right. As it was I thought it was Carne—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"That Sixth Form cad, Carne—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"That rotten bully, you know!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fifth Formers.

Carne of the Sixth stood as if transfixed.

Bunter, happily unaware of Carne's presence, and of his basilisk glare, rattled on:

"That putrid toad, Carne of the Sixth—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fifth Formers.

"You see, he was wild at being chucked out of the eleven—as if he can play footer, the silly ass!—and he pulled my ear!" said Bunter. "That was why I was going to get him with that stuff."

The beastly cad asked for it, you know. He thinks he can bully a chap, because he's a prefect—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's a rotten bully, you know, nearly as bad as Loder, and worse than Walker!" went on Bunter. "You—you see, I saw him walking under the Remove windows, and got that stuff ready for him, and then you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Wharton had looked out when I asked him, I shouldn't have made that mistake—I should have known it wasn't that rotten bully Carne—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carne, for a minute, had seemed petrified. Now he woke to sudden action. He made a bound at Bunter.

Bunter jumped.

Carne, bounding at him with flaming face, was his first intimation that the bully of the Sixth was present. He had wondered why the Fifth Form men were roaring with laughter. Now he knew!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He flew.

Carne bounded after him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fifth Form men.

Bunter vanished. After him vanished Carne of the Sixth. Roars of laughter followed them. From a distance another roar, of quite a different kind, floated back. It sounded as if Carne of the Sixth had caught Bunter.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Lost Letter!

HAZELDENE of the Remove looked into Study No. 1.

The Famous Five were there, at tea.

"Any of you fellows lost a letter?" asked Hazel.

Five heads were shaken.

"It's jolly queer!" said Hazel. "Look at it! I picked it up in the quad—looks as if it's been out in the rain."

"I suppose there's a name on it, if it's a fellow's letter!" said Harry Wharton.

"That's the queer thing about it!" said Hazel. "There's no name at all—not even a signature. But it must belong to somebody. Heard of any fellow who's lost a letter in the Remove?"

"Can't say I have."

"Well, look at it," said Hazel. "If you know of any chap who's going to send goods by railway, I'll take it to him—it will be his."

He laid the letter on the table.

The Famous Five glanced at it rather curiously. It was written in a round hand, and from its grubby appearance looked as if it had been blowing about on the winter wind for a considerable time. The paper was damp, the ink a little smudgy from that cause, and there were smears of mud.

"You can read it," said Hazel. "Nothing private in it—only about sending some boxes to Lantham by goods train. But I suppose the chap who dropped it may want it. It was blowing about when I found it."

Certainly, to look at the letter, there seemed nothing of a private nature in it. It ran:

"If you can put the boxes on the twenty-five goods train, they'll be in good time for the second delivery. The oak chest should be at the address in Lantham not later than Wednesday."



In the belief that Compton was after him, Billy Bunter fairly flew, barging into the Famous Five before he saw them. Bump! The fat junior hit Bob Cherry rather like a battering ram, and Bob sat down, roaring. Bunter staggered back from the shock, spluttering, and sat down also. "Oh!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ooogh!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Well, that's rather weird!" said Bob Cherry. "Must belong to some Greyfriars man, if you picked it up in the quad. But who the dickens at Greyfriars can be sending an oak chest by goods train?"

"Hardly one of the fellows," said Nugent. "Must be a master, I should think."

"Queer that there's no name on it!" said Johnny Bull. "A letter generally begins, 'Dear Somebody'—"

"I say you fellows—" Billy Bunter blinked into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Lost a letter, Bunter?" asked Bob.

"Yes!" said Bunter promptly. "If there was a remittance in it, it's mine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, gimme my letter—"

"Here you are!" chuckled Hazel.

Billy Bunter blinked at the mysterious missive. Then he gave a snort of disgust.

"Yours?" grinned Hazel.

"No!" snorted Bunter. "I don't want the rubbish! I say, you fellows, Toddy's gone out to tea. I'll tea with you chaps, if you like."

"The likefulness is not terrific, my esteemed Bunter."

Billy Bunter turned a deaf ear to that answer, and drew a chair to the table. Hazel picked up the letter.

"I'll ask along the Remove," he said. "If nobody claims it, I'll stick it on the notice-board, for the owner to see."

"That's the best thing you can do," agreed Wharton.

Hazel left the study with the letter in his hand, and the chums of the Remove forgot the matter in a few moments. Had they been aware that Compton of the Fifth had dropped a letter when Bunter's basket of mixture fell on his head from the window of Study No. 1

two or three days ago, they might have guessed the ownership; but they were unaware of that circumstance, and there was nothing in that rather curious letter to make them think of Compton.

In Study No. 2, Tom Brown disclaimed ownership; and in Study No. 3, Ogilvy and Russell followed suit. Next, Hazel looked into Study No. 4, where the Bounder and Tom Redwing were at tea.

"Anybody want this letter?" he asked. "Picked up in the quad; owner unknown. Yours, Reddy?"

Tom Redwing glanced at the letter and shook his head.

"Yours, Smithy?"

The Bounder fixed his eyes on the letter; it seemed to interest Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Not mine," he said. "Nobody's name on it. What are you going to do with it, Hazel?"

"Stick it up on the board if it doesn't belong to a Remove man. I'm not going all over the school with it."

Hazel took the letter and went on up the passage.

Vernon-Smith sat with a strangely thoughtful expression on his face. A few minutes later he rose from the table and stood in the doorway, looking out into the passage.

Redwing glanced at him.

"You haven't finished your tea, Smithy," he said.

"Bother tea!" answered the Bounder, over his shoulder.

He kept his eyes on the passage. Hazeldene came back, the letter still in his hand.

"Not a Remove man's?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Well, I've asked all the chaps who are in the studies," answered Hazel. "Nobody claims it. I'll stick it on the board downstairs after tea."

"I'm going down; I'll take it if you like."

"Here you are, then."

Hazel handed over the letter and went to his study to tea. Vernon-Smith walked away to the stairs.

He went down the Remove staircase and stopped on the next landing; there he carefully read that letter through from the first word to the last. His brows puckered with a puzzled expression.

More than a dozen Remove fellows had seen that letter and given it no special attention; but, for some reason or other, the Bounder of Greyfriars was giving it very special attention indeed.

From the way he pondered over it, it might have been supposed that he was trying to read some secret between the lines. On the face of it, the missive was simple enough, and of no interest to anyone but the owner. But there were strange ideas working in the keen mind of Herbert Vernon-Smith.

It was a very odd and unusual letter for a Greyfriars man to receive. Few schoolboys, if any, could have been sending "boxes by goods train," especially an "oak chest."

Back into Vernon-Smith's mind came an almost-forgotten incident. He remembered that Compton of the Fifth had had a letter in his hand when the disaster happened to him under the window of Study No. 1.

He had rushed up to the spot and pulled the basket off the Fifth Former's head, and had certainly not noticed what had happened to the letter—or given it any thought at all.

But he remembered now that Compton had glanced round him, and that Coker had asked him if he had dropped anything.

Had Compton dropped that letter? If so, and if it had been lost, the new man in the Fifth had made no inquiry

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

after it. He might have his reasons for that—good reasons, if Vernon-Smith's strange suspicions were well founded.

Probably, if it had blown away on the wind, he would not expect it ever to turn up again. If it did, there was nothing in it to connect it with him. The Bounder's thoughts worked quickly.

But if he was thinking of a hidden meaning in that apparently simple message, it was unreadable to him. After a few minutes the Bounder took a notebook from his pocket and copied down the letter into it.

Then he went on down the stairs.

There was a lurking grin on his face. Smithy liked the new man in the Fifth. Even if he was what the Bounder suspected him to be, there was no proof, and Smithy could say nothing of what he believed. He had hardly needed Harry Wharton's advice to make him realise that quite clearly. Neither did he desire to take any step that would harm the schoolboy smuggler—if, indeed, smuggler he was. But if it was true, as Smithy felt convinced, that the fellow was carrying on such a game at Greyfriars, he was keen to put a spoke in his wheel.

Outside Greyfriars he could do as he liked, and Smithy would not care two straws. Inside Greyfriars was another matter. That was over the limit, in the Bounder's opinion, and he would put "paid" to it if he could.

That motive on the Bounder's part was good, but probably he was moved just as much by the idea of entering into a keen contest of wits. Feeling perfectly friendly towards Compton personally, he was going to defeat him, if he could, if the fellow really was smuggling through the school.

He stopped at the notice-board and put up the letter there. Three or four fellows glanced at it.

"What the dooce is that?" asked Temple of the Fourth.

"Hazel picked that up in the quad," explained the Bounder. "Must belong to somebody."

"Sounds weird," said Cecil Reginald Temple, looking at it. "Who the dooce here can be sending boxes and oak chests by railway?"

The Bounder did not answer that. A conviction was growing in his mind that that strange letter was in some sort of cipher—a cipher that he intended to elucidate. That was why he had taken a copy.

He strolled away to a window-seat, where he could keep his eyes on the notice-board. A good many fellows who came along to look at the board glanced at the letter and commented on it.

Blundell and Fitzgerald, Potter and Greene, and Compton came along in a bunch to look at the games notices. The Bounder became suddenly alert.

"Hallo! What's this?" said Potter. The Fifth Formers looked at the rather muddled letter.

"Somebody lost a letter and somebody found it," said Blundell. "Any of you men lost a letter?"

None of them had, it seemed. The Bounder's eyes were on Compton as he, like the others, glanced at it. But the handsome face expressed no special interest. Having looked at the games notices, the Fifth Form men walked on.

Vernon-Smith gave it up and cleared off. Compton had not taken the letter—but Smithy had a strong suspicion that he would have done so had he been alone. He did not think that that letter would remain on the board after the new Fifth Former had a chance of annexing it unnoticed.

A couple of hours later, when the Remove fellows were going up to prep, Vernon-Smith glanced at the notice-board again—and grinned.

The letter was gone!

The owner, evidently, had seen it and taken it—and Herbert Vernon-Smith was quite certain that the owner had looked for an opportunity to do so when no eyes were upon him.

And he had not the slightest doubt that that owner was in the Fifth Form, and that his name was Valentine Compton. And, further, he was convinced that that letter, little as it seemed to do so, dealt with the strange business which he believed Valentine Compton was engaged in with his uncle, Captain Compton, of the steam-yacht *Firefly*. And if there was such a secret in the letter, the Bounder of Greyfriars was going to put his finger on it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Carne's Catch!

"SWOT!" said Carne.

Loder and Walker glanced at him.

The three Sixth Form men were standing in a group; they were talking "gee-gees"—a favourite topic with Loder and Walker. Carne had rather given up his interest in that entrancing topic of late in favour of Soccer. But his disappointment in football matters had, perhaps, revived it. Gerald Loder welcomed him back like a strayed sheep into the fold, as it were. And the three of them were keenly discussing the chances of Bonny Blue for the two o'clock, when Carne made that unexpected remark.

The next moment, however, his friends saw the reason and grinned. Compton of the Fifth was passing with a rather big notebook under his arm, and, from the direction he was taking, it appeared that he was going to the library.

He heard Carne's jeer—as he was intended to do—and a faint smile glimmered on his handsome face. But he did not look at the Sixth Form men, or take any other notice of them; he walked on, turned the corner into the long library corridor, and disappeared.

"Filthy sap!" said Carne. "I wonder a rotten smug like that plays footer at all! Prout's got him library leave to mug up. What do you think?"

"Dunno—and don't specially want to," yawned Walker.

"I've heard some Fifth Form men talking about it," said Carne contemptuously. "Ever heard of Priscianus?"

"Can't say I have!" answered Loder.

"Well, that's it!" said Carne. "There's a Priscianus in the library, and that smug's got leave to rake into it."

"No accounting for tastes!" said Walker, with a shrug of the shoulder. "I find Livy tough enough. Who the dooce was Priscianus?"

"Blessed if I know! Compton does!" sneered Carne. "I hear that old

Prout's fearfully pleased with him. Putrid swot!"

"Silly ass!" said Loder. "Where are you going, Carne?"

Carne grinned unpleasantly.

"Oh, I'm going to the library!" he said. "Why not? Prefects have library leave without greasing up to a Form-master. It may help that smug to get on with his smuggling, if I drop a few books about."

"What rot!" said Loder and Walker together.

Headless of their opinion, Arthur Carne walked into the library corridor after the fellow he called a "swot."

There was no doubt that any fellow at Greyfriars who had the remarkable desire to dig into such an ancient author as Priscianus, was liable to be regarded as a swot, a smug, and a sap. There was only one copy of that ancient author in the school, the property of the Head, and it had certainly never been known before for a Greyfriars man to ask leave to look at it. Fellows doubted whether the Head ever did—but they did not doubt that, if he did, it gave him a headache!

But Compton was so amazingly good at games that he was never likely to be called swot and smug, except by Carne, who was ready to snatch up any stick to beat the fellow he disliked.

As Coker generously put it, why shouldn't a fellow work, if he played a good game as well?

Compton's keenness on classic lore made Prout beam—and the Fifth Formers agreed to regard it as an amiable weakness, to be tolerated and excused, in a fellow who played Soccer as Compton did!

Carne walked down the corridor to the library with a sneering grin on his face. It was several days since that scene in the games study—but Carne had not forgotten it, and still less had he forgotten that Compton had the place in the first eleven which he regarded as his own.

Prefects could walk into the library whenever they liked. Certainly, it was rather undignified for a Sixth Form prefect to rag like a fag—but if Carne could not get at his enemy one way, he had to get at him another.

He could not bother Compton in games, but in swotting he could, and he was going to. Digging into Priscianus would be done under difficulties, with Carne opening bookcases, shifting chairs, dropping books, and generally making himself a nuisance.

With that pleasant intention in view, Carne walked into the library—not with the quiet tread with which a fellow generally entered that apartment, but with a heavy tramp.

Once inside, however, he stared in surprise.

Compton was not there!

Carne stared round the room.

It was a large, lofty room, with a good many armchairs scattered about, and some settees. A fellow might have been sitting in a quiet corner, out of sight. But he soon ascertained that Compton was not present. Moreover, he ascertained also that the ponderous volume of Priscianus was in its usual place, undisturbed.

Yet the fellow must have come there. True, there were several passages off the main corridor, and Compton might have walked away by any of them. But why should he go to the library, simply to walk away again, with his big notebook conspicuous under his arm?

A sudden suspicion shot into Carne's mind.

He walked back down the corridor, and stopped at the spot where the secret panel opened.

Plenty of fellows were keen to explore the hidden recesses behind that panel, but for the stern and strict prohibition of the headmaster. That prohibition was stricter than ever since Coker's accident in the underground passage.

Compton, very likely, was as keen as anyone else. Library leave gave him the chance of passing that panel unsuspected, while any other fellow could not enter the corridor at all without danger of being spotted.

"By gum!" muttered Carne.

"If that fellow had gone out of bounds—and it looked like it—this was Carne's chance. He pressed the spring and opened the panel. Beyond was the oaken door at the top of the spiral stair—and Carne had only to strike a match to see that it was unbolted.

Someone had passed through!

Was it Compton of the Fifth?

Carne could scarcely have any doubt that it was. This fellow, who was in his Form-master's good graces, was breaking bounds, like some reckless fag of the lower Forms.

No doubt he fancied himself perfectly safe. Anyone seeing him head for the library with that notebook under his arm would have supposed—as Carne had supposed—that he was going to "swot" as usual. Only Carne's bright idea of "ragging" in the library, while Compton "sapped" there, had caused him to spot the breaker of bounds—the sheerest chance, which no fellow could possibly have foreseen!

Carne laughed softly.

He struck another match, and shot the bolts. Somebody was beyond that oaken door, and he had no doubt that it was Compton of the Fifth. He hoped it was.

Whoever it was, was caught now. He could not get back through a bolted door, and either he had to knock till he was heard, or wait till he was searched for, like Coker!

Carne closed the panel, and walked away, grinning. This was rather better than "ragging" the swot in the library. This meant a serious row for the most popular fellow at Greyfriars—it meant trouble with the Head. Moreover, it was in the way of duty—it was a prefect's duty to spot breakers of bounds! Carne was not a whale on duty, but he performed this duty with great satisfaction. In a very cheery mood, he walked away, to tell his friends of that lucky catch.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape for Bunter!

"O H crikey!" breathed Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove shivered like a fat jelly.

He had cause to be alarmed.

Billy Bunter, at that moment, was in Arthur Carne's study in the Sixth. Certainly he had no business there that he could have explained to Carne.

Since the episode in the Fifth Form games study, Billy Bunter had been dodging Carne of the Sixth even more sedulously than he had previously dodged Compton of the Fifth.

Carne had whopped him, but he had not left it at that. Three or four times since then Carne had come across the Owl of the Remove, and never without pulling a fat ear, or cuffing a fat head, if Bunter was within his reach.

In such circumstances, it was rather reckless of the fat Owl to be in Carne's

study at that moment. But the coast had seemed clear to Bunter.

He had seen Loder, Walker, and Carne in a group. He had seen Carne walk away to the library, and Loder and Walker go into the former's study and shut the door. Nobody else was about. A fat Owl who had a bottle of gum to pour into an inkpot could hardly have hoped for a better opportunity.

Bunter had rolled into Carne's study. He had emptied the ink from the inkpot into Carne's armchair, and replaced it with gum. This was an extremely satisfactory proceeding to a fat Owl whose fat ears had been pulled.

Having performed that satisfactory proceeding, Bunter opened the study door a few inches and blinked into the passage through his big spectacles, to make sure that the coast was still clear before he retreated.

One blink was enough—then Bunter understudied a fat jelly. For the first object on which his eyes, and his spectacles, fell was Arthur Carne of the Sixth Form!

The prefect was coming down the passage, grinning as he came.

Billy Bunter blinked at him in horror.

Carne was dangerous at close quarters at the best of times. If he found Bunter in his study, ink in the armchair, and gum in the inkpot—it was no wonder that the fat Owl shivered!

It seemed too good to be true, when Carne stopped short of his study. He stopped at Loder's door, and threw it open.

Bunter breathed again.

If the beast was going in to see Loder, there was a chance of beating a hurried retreat unseen.

But the beast did not go in! He stood looking in at Loder's doorway, with the grin still on his face. Bunter heard his voice—in reply to some question from a fellow inside the study.

"He's not in the library. Rags are off. I fancy he won't be seen again before calling-over!"

"What the dickens——" came Loder's voice.

"Compton's out of bounds!" said Carne.

"What rot! You saw him going to the library to swot!"

"He's not there! And I guessed where he was!" chuckled Carne. "I found the door to the secret passage unbolted."

"Oh gad! You think——"

"I jolly well know!" Carne laughed. "I've bolted the door on him!"

"Ha, ha!" came from Loder's study.

"It's a catch," grinned Carne. "The Head's fearfully shirty about anybody going down that secret passage, since Coker had his accident there. I don't know whether he'll flog a Fifth Form man like a junior, but you can bank on it that Compton's booked for a fearful row."

"Serve him jolly well right, if he's breaking bounds like some silly fag!" said Walker.

"Sure it was Compton?" asked Loder.

"Well, it's somebody—and Compton's not in the library. Whoever it is will get a show-up!"

"Must be a goat," said Loder. "What the dooce does he want to root about in a filthy old underground passage for?"

"Well, lots of fellows would want to, if it wasn't out of bounds. But it jolly well is," chuckled Carne. "I say, Prout takes roll in Hall this evening. He thinks no end of that new trick.

Watch his face when he learns that Compton's missing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come in and take a pew, old man," said Loder.

Billy Bunter's fat face brightened as he heard that. He could guess that Loder and Walker were smoking cigarettes in that study, and he hoped that Carne felt the need of a smoke.

"Thanks—no!" said Carne. "Bad for the wind." Evidently cigarettes were on in Loder's study.

Bunter's fat face fell again.

It was very sensible of Carne, no doubt, to avoid cigarettes, when he wanted to excel at footer. But Billy Bunter could not help wishing that Carne had been a little less sensible on this occasion.

There was a laugh from Gerald Loder in the study.

"Oh, don't be a goat, Carne! You won't want your wind on Wednesday at Lantham. Think Wingate's going to change his mind?"

Carne scowled.

"Trickle in, old bean," said Walker. "What's the good of pi? It doesn't seem to have brought you anything."

Carne hesitated; but he nodded, and stepped into the study. He had dropped bad habits, for the sake of the footer. But he was not wanted in the Lantham match; and his reform, probably, had not gone very deep.

He went into Loder's study, and the door shut.

That was a satisfaction to William George Bunter, at least. Bunter gasped with relief when Carne disappeared into Loder's study. The sound of the door closing was music to his fat ears.

The coast was clear at last.

The fat Owl blinked up and down the passage through his big spectacles, and rolled hurriedly out of Carne's study.

He lost no time in getting out of the dangerous quarters of the Sixth. There was no danger now of Carne discovering who had juggled with ink and gum in his study. There was a happy surprise in store for Carne when he sat in the ink, and dipped his pen into the gum.

Billy Bunter chuckled a fat chuckle as he rolled away to the Rag. He passed a group of Fifth Form men on his way, and grinned, as he caught some words from Blundell.

"Anybody seen Compton?"

"Oh, he's on his swotting stunt!" said Potter. "I saw him with his jolly old notebook. He'll be in the library."

"Fancy that chap swotting, the way he plays Soccer, too!" remarked Greene.

"Well, it's rather weird," admitted Blundell. "But every man to his taste, you know. I don't say I can see what he sees in it, but a man who plays football as Compton does, can do as he jolly well likes."

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

After what he had heard in the Sixth, the Owl of the Remove knew better than the Fifth Formers where Valentino Compton was.

The seniors glanced round at him. Blundell, with a frown, let out a foot. Why Bunter cackled, he did not know, and did not want to know; but it had to be made clear to a fag that he could not cackle at Fifth Form men.

Bunter ceased to cackle on the spot. He yelled instead.

"Ow! Wow!"

And the fat junior scuttled away to the Rag.

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

There were a dozen or more of the Remove in the Rag after tea.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood by the window, talking to Lord Mauleverer, whose lazy limbs were stretched at full length in the window-seat. Peter Todd, Ogilvy, and Tom Brown were arguing about the respective merits of the new man Compton and old Wingate on the footer field. Fisher T. Fish was going through all his pockets, one after another, with a worried look on his bony face, in search of a halfpenny he dreaded that he had lost. Hazeldene was telling two or three fellows that somebody seemed to have claimed that lost letter he had found in the quad, as it had been taken from the board. Vernon-Smith, sitting rather apart from other fellows, was conning over a paper he held in the palm of his hand, with a wrinkle of thought in his brow. Tom Redwing was playing chess with Squiff.

With all those fellows present, Billy Bunter, no doubt, expected a reply when he squeaked. But he received no reply.

Bunter, clearly, had something to say. He generally had. Equally clearly the fellows did not want to hear it. They generally didn't.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter again. "Compton's copped!"

Then Bunter received attention.

Every fellow in the Rag looked round, except Fisher T. Fish. Fishy was indifferent to Compton, and to the rest of the population of the universe, while that halfpenny was missing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's that?"

"Copped!" repeated Harry Wharton. "What do you mean, you ass?"

Vernon-Smith started. He thrust the paper in his hand into his pocket, and rose quickly to his feet.

With such strange suspicions in his mind concerning the new fellow in the Fifth, it was rather startling to Smithy to hear that he had been "copped." He wondered, for a moment, whether Valentine Compton had been found with contraband goods in his possession.

"Compton copped?" he repeated. "What's happened? Who—?"

Billy Bunter grinned. He had got the fellows interested. Every fellow, excepting Fishy, was intent to hear the news.

"Carne's copped him!" said Bunter.

"Carne?" repeated Wharton. "What utter rot! Compton's not the fellow to do anything a prefect could nail him for."

"Bosh!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The boshfulness is terrific, my idiotic Bunter!"

"Kick him!" said Squiff.

"Oh, really, you fellows! Perhaps you know better than I do. I heard Carne telling Loder and Walker, and chance it."

"What's he done, then?" asked Skinner. "I mean, beside pushing Carne out of the first eleven? We know Carne's down on him for that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's done nothing," said Harry Wharton, frowning. "Only Bunter talking out of the back of his silly neck, as usual."

"That's all you know!" jeered Bunter. "I can tell you I heard Carne talking to Loder, and he said—don't chuck that cushion at me, Bob Cherry, you beast!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He said—keep that cushion away, you rotter!"

"Let the fat ass speak!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith impatiently. "Look here, Bunter! Why has a prefect dropped on Compton?"

"Breaking bounds," said Bunter triumphantly.

"Rubbish!" said Harry. "Compton's in the House. I saw him, not half an hour ago, with a notebook under his arm."

"He, he, he!"

"You blithering bloater, if he's in the House, he can't be out of bounds!" hooted Bob Cherry.

"What about the secret panel?" grinned Bunter. "Ain't that out of bounds? The Head's fearfully particular about that."

Harry Wharton started a little as he met the Bounder's glance. Smithy's eyes gleamed with mockery.

"I say, you fellows, Compton's gone down that secret passage, and Carne's spotted him," said Bunter. "I say, I'm sorry for old Compton! He's not a bad chap really. I jolly well know now that he wasn't going to boot a chap for making a mistake, but that beast Carne—"

"Has Carne reported him?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, no! He knows he's gone, and he told Loder that he's bolted the door after him, to shut him out," explained Bunter. "He never saw him go, I fancy, and he wouldn't risk reporting him, unless he was sure, of course. But with the door bolted the chap can't get back. He will be missed at calling-over."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

The same thought was in all their minds. If this was true, and old Compton was in a scrape, a helping hand would not come amiss.

"Look here, Bunter, if you've got it right—" said the captain of the Remove.

"I tell you I heard Carne saying so. He said that Compton wasn't in the library, and he found the secret door unbolted—and bolted it to shut him out. He was grinning over it like anything."

"Silly ass to take the risk!" said Skinner. "If the door's bolted on him he's copped, for a cert."

Harry Wharton strolled towards the door. Most of the fellows guessed his intention easily enough, and grinned. It was risky for a junior to approach the forbidden spot; but Wharton was more than ready to take that risk to lend Compton a hand if he was shut out of the House. It meant a tremendous row for him if he was discovered.

Vernon-Smith followed him from the Rag. He tapped Wharton on the arm in the passage outside.

"What do you think now?" he asked, in a low voice.

"I think it's up to somebody to let Compton out, as that fat chump has nosed out that he's in a scrape," answered Harry.

"You know what I mean," snapped the Bounder. "What do you think he's gone down to the sea-cave for?"

"Dozens of fellows would like to explore the place," said Harry. "Why shouldn't Compton, as much as anybody else?"

"You don't think he's got any special business in the sea-cave?" sneered Vernon-Smith.

"No more than Coker had, when he went down," said Harry. "No more than Hobby had, when he tried to go."

"All right!" The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "No good telling you that smuggled goods were run into the

cave from a steam yacht for him to pick up?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No good at all!" he answered.

"Well, you're a fool!"

"You're repeating yourself, Smithy. I've had that."

"I'll tell you this," said the Bounder.

"Compton will come back with something that's been landed in the cave for him to pick up. That's why he's gone. You're going to let in a smuggler, with the goods on him."

"Rot! Mean to say you'd leave him to it because that cad Carne has nailed him?" asked Harry scornfully. "We all know why Carne is watching for chances to score over him. You'd—"

"No, I wouldn't. I'd cut along and let him out, if you didn't!" said the Bounder. "But I know what I know, all the same. And I can tell you this, I like the chap, and I want to do him no harm, but I'm going to stop his game here."

"His game—his game's Soccer—"

"His game's smuggling!"

"Rubbish!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders and went back into the Rag and resumed pondering over the copy of the lost letter.

Harry Wharton walked away in the direction of the library corridor.

It was some time before he found an opportunity of slipping into that forbidden corridor unobserved. But he found a chance at last, and cut along to the secret panel.

To open the panel, unbolt the oaken door within the wall, and close the panel again occupied the captain of the Remove less than a minute.

If any fellow, Compton or not, was out of bounds in that direction, the way back was open to him now.

Wharton lost no time in getting clear of the spot. He was smiling when he rejoined his friends in the Rag.

"All serene?" asked Bob.

"Quite!"

"Compton's rather an ass to do it," said Johnny Bull slowly. "He's a senior, and he jolly well knows better."

"I'm not at all sure that he has done it," answered Harry. "Carne fancies he has, but he may be mistaken. Anyhow, if Carne thinks he's got him in a cleft stick his face will be worth watching when Compton answers to his name at roll."

And the juniors chuckled at the prospect of that pleasant surprise for Carne of the Sixth.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Catch!

"COMPTON!"

"Adsum!"

Carne of the Sixth fairly jumped.

Mr. Prout was taking roll in Hall.

Carne's eyes were fixed on Prout. He was waiting for Prout to call that particular name, to repeat it when there was no answer, and to stare in surprise when he found that that member of his Form was cutting roll.

Instead of which, Compton's "adsum" followed that of the other fellows as their names were called.

Carne stared round at the Fifth blankly.

He had been certain—he had known for an absolute fact—that Compton could not be there. He had no doubt that, in these very moments, Compton was on the wrong side of a bolted door, in a state of desperation at inevitable discovery. Compton was not present—he could not be present!

Carne's eyes glittered. It was far

from unheard-of for one fellow to answer "sum" for another, if that other had the misfortune to be late for roll. Carne jumped to that as an explanation. Blundell, or Potter, or Greene had answered for Compton, to keep him out of a row.

Hall was a little dusky. Prout was far from observant—especially of boys in his own Form. That was it!

Carne stared across at the Fifth, who were in their places in a crowd. One fellow was not easy to pick up in the crowd, and, as it happened, Blundell's bulky form interposed. Compton was not there. A pal had answered for him, as thoughtless pals did, at times. Carne was certain of that!

A prefect had his duty to do. Arthur Carne stepped up to Mr. Prout, who was taking the next name on the roll.

"Excuse me, sir," said Carne. "I think Compton is absent."

"What—what?" boomed Prout.

He gave that dutiful prefect a far from pleasant glance. Prout did not like this at all. Prout's Form—in Prout's opinion, at least—was like Caesar's wife, above suspicion!

"I think, sir—"

"What do you mean, Carne?" said Prout testily. "How can a boy be absent when he has just answered his name? You are talking nonsense, Carne!"

"I think some other fellow answered for him, sir!"

"Nonsense! Such tricks may be played in a junior Form, such as the Remove, but not in the Fifth Form—certainly not in the Fifth Form!"

Carne set his lips. If that old ass, Prout, thought he was getting by with this, that old ass, Prout, was making a mistake!

"I repeat, sir, that Compton is absent!" said Carne. "I am certain of it. Will you repeat the name, sir?"

Snort from Prout!

"I will certainly do so!" he snapped. "Compton is certainly present, as he answered to his name. However, I will call him again. Compton!"

"Adsum!"

"Are you satisfied now, Carne?" snapped Prout.

Carne breathed hard. The voice that answered from the Fifth undoubtedly sounded like Compton's. Had he made a mistake?

Prout's pause in calling the names attracted attention. Everybody could see that Carne was speaking to him, and wondered why he had interrupted roll. Certain members of the Remove knew, and grinned at one another.

"Dear old Carne's quite surprised!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The surprisefulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, Compton must have got back!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, did you fellows hear him answer?"

"Shut up, fathead!"

"Well, I'm jolly sure Carne thought that—"

"Shut up!"

"I heard him say to Loder—ow! Stop tramping on my foot, you beast! Wow!"

Mr. Prout was staring—or, rather, glaring—at Carne, as if bent on staring and glaring him back to his place. But Carne was not beaten yet. That answering voice did sound like Compton's, but it could not be Compton's, if Compton was not there!

"I do not believe that Compton is present, sir," persisted Carne. "I've reason to believe that he has gone out of bounds."

"You can have no reason to believe anything of the kind, Carne. Such a belief is merely absurd. You are talk-

ing nonsense, Carne!" Mr. Prout stared along the hall. "Compton," he boomed, "please stand out! A Sixth Form prefect fancies that you are out of bounds, Compton! Please let everyone see that you are present."

"Certainly, sir!"

Valentine Compton emerged from the ranks of the Fifth, with a surprised expression on his face. He stood in full view of everyone in Hall who was interested in the matter, as most of the fellows were, by this time.

Carne stared at him, his jaw dropping!

It was Compton, there was no mistake about that! He was present, though Carne had not seen him, he could see him now!

"Well?" boomed Prout, in indignant wrath. "Can you see Compton, Carne?"

"Oh!" gasped Carne. "Yes!"

"Then," said Prout, with overwhelming sarcasm, "no doubt you are satisfied that he is present to answer his name at roll-call, Carne!"

Carne made no answer to that.

He backed away from the general stare, his face burning. Prout snorted, and went on with the roll.

Loder and Walker exchanged a wink.

They had supposed that Carne had it right, as he had told them so. Now they had no doubt that Carne had had it wrong!

"No catch!" murmured Loder.

"How did he get back?" breathed Carne. "I tell you I bolted the door on him. I was absolutely certain! How did he get back?"

"That's an easy one," chuckled Walker. "He never went."

"I tell you—"

"It's no good telling me that he got through a bolted door, old bean! It was somebody else you bolted out, not Compton at all."

"Oh!" muttered Carne.

He realised that it was possible. He had not seen Compton go, he had only missed him from the library, where he was supposed to be swotting! The unbolted, oaken door had seemed to him a certain proof; but after all some other fellow might have gone out of bounds and left it unbolted.

Carne was driven to that conclusion, but he was driven away from it again when Prout finished calling the names. For every man at Greyfriars answered to his name, not a man was missing!

Nobody was shut out on the other side of the oaken door, neither Compton nor any other fellow!

Loder and Walker exchanged another wink. They found the expression on Carne's face rather amusing.

"It beats me," muttered Carne. "The door was unbolted, I bolted it, and—?" He gritted his teeth. "I can't make it out—"

"I can't!" said Loder, laughing. "Some young rascal has been out of bounds by that door, and left it unbolted when he came back. That's how you found it unbolted, old bean!"

"Oh!" gasped Carne.

Walker chuckled.

"What a sell!" he remarked.

"I—I suppose—" muttered Carne.

"No supposing about it!" grinned Loder. "That's how it was, as everybody's here! You bolted nobody out, old tulip!"

Prout, having finished calling the names, dismissed the school. He gave Carne of the Sixth a glare before he rolled away.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced rather curiously at Compton of the Fifth when they went out of hall. They wondered whether he had been out of bounds in

(Continued on next page.)

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the secret passage, or whether it was some other fellow that Carne had so nearly copped.

Compton, chatting pleasantly with Blundell and Fitzgerald, certainly did not look like a fellow who had recently been breaking bounds and running the risk of a tremendous row. It seemed to the Co. likely enough that Carne had made a mistake, the wish being father to the thought, and that the breaker of bounds had been some junior, perhaps Hobby of the Shell trying it on again.

But there was one fellow, at least, who had no doubt. The Bounder of Greyfriars was glad that Compton had not been copped, but he had not the slightest doubt that Compton was the man, any more than he doubted why he had gone by the secret passage to the smuggler's cave.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Clue!

"COMING down, Smithy?"

"No!"

"Like me to stay up?"

"No!"

Redwing left Study No. 4 and shut the door.

The Bounder was left alone.

Prep was over in the Remove, and the juniors were going down. Most of them were thinking chiefly of the first eleven match with the Lantham Ramblers, which was due on the morrow. No match being on in the Remove, quite a number of that Form had decided to go over to Lantham and encourage the first eleven with their presence. In fact, it was certain that there would be an army of Greyfriars men on the Lantham ground on Wednesday afternoon. Every footballing fellow was keen to see the new recruit, Compton, in his first school match.

Smithy was thinking of Compton, though not as a footballer. He was thinking of him as the suspected smuggler!

For days now, that copy of the lost letter had been in Smithy's hands; and the more he conned over it, and pondered over it, the more he was convinced that it was some sort of a cipher or cryptogram.

Every other fellow who had seen it had forgotten it by that time. Nobody was interested in the goods that were to be sent by goods train, or the oak chest that was to be delivered at Lantham not later than Wednesday.

But the Bounder was assured that that letter, if only he could discover its real meaning, had no connection whatever with goods by goods train, or oak chests.

It was, on the face of it, a very unusual letter, addressed to no one, signed by no one. It could hardly belong to a boy in the school if it meant what it seemed to mean. If it belonged to a master, who had lost it, surely that master would have made some inquiry after a lost letter. No such inquiry had been made.

There had existed a remote possibility that the letter did not belong to Greyfriars at all. It had clearly been out in the wind and the rain, blowing about; and might imaginably have blown in over a wall. But the fact that the unknown owner had taken it from the notice-board settled that!

That made it clear that the owner was in the school. And that owner had made no mention of the matter, had not inquired how the letter came to be there,

or who had found it: clearly, to Smithy's mind at least, desired that nothing should be said on the subject.

More and more the Bounder was convinced that that letter had been in Compton's hand when the fat and fatuous Owl dropped the basket of mixture on his head. It had blown away, and Compton had not ventured to inquire after it, and if he had looked for it, naturally he had not found a letter blown about in the winter winds. It was by the merest chance that Hazel had picked it up.

And more and more Smithy was convinced that the ostensible message in that letter covered a hidden meaning.

If Compton was indeed engaged in a law-breaking enterprise, in confederacy with Captain Compton, or more likely under his orders, communication would have to be made with great care on such a matter. There was always the danger of a letter being seen, or being dropped, or lost by accident, as, indeed, had actually happened in the present case.

If that letter dealt with what the Bounder suspected, it would have betrayed the schoolboy smuggler on the spot, had it been written in plain English. Thirty or forty fellows, at least, had seen it before it was taken from the board.

Left alone in his study, the Bounder bent his brows over his copy of that—to him—mysterious missive.

Wednesday was mentioned in the letter. That word, of course, might be part of the cipher, if cipher there was. On the other hand it might refer to the Wednesday that was now coming, to-morrow, the day of the Lantham match.

If that was the case, and if it contained hidden instructions to Captain Compton's nephew, Smithy had no more time to lose, if he was to take a hand in the game.

On that he was inflexibly determined. His personal liking for Compton, his real admiration for a fellow who was, in most ways at least, a splendid fellow, made no difference to his resolve.

If smuggling was going on through the medium of Greyfriars School the Bounder was going to put paid to it. He could reasonably take the view that that was any fellow's duty, though this peculiar kind of a conflict, this battle of keen wits, probably appealed to him more than that consideration.

But what was the secret?

Had Compton known from that letter that some consignment of smuggled goods was ready in the cave? Was that why he had slipped away by the secret passage and so narrowly escaped being caught out by Carne of the Sixth? Vernon-Smith was assured of it. But what was the secret?

He had read that strange missive over and over again till he knew it by heart. He had tried reading it backwards, but "Wednesday than later not Lantham," etc. did not look promising.

He had tried reading the initials of the words, in acrostic form: but only produced such a meaningless string of letters as I, Y, C, P, T, and so on, and gave that up.

He had examined it from every angle, and still it told him nothing. He did not begin to doubt whether it was a cipher: he was absolutely certain of it. But he began to doubt whether he would ever elucidate it.

Some rearrangement of the words, he felt, was the clue to the secret. But what rearrangement?

There was an infinite number to choose from, running into millions, if not billions.

He rose from the table at last, and moved restlessly about the study, angry, irritated, but as determined as ever.

Every now and then he glanced at the paper lying on the table. It seemed to mock him, with its outward meaning clear to the eye, at a glance; its inward meaning—if any—deeply hidden.

Suddenly he stopped, his breath coming quickly, his eyes almost blazing. Glancing at the letter, he caught several words that, separated by other words, seemed to make sense if read one after another.

"By gum!" breathed the Bounder.

Was it the clue?

He leaned over the letter, scanning it eagerly. "Put the goods" were the three words that had caught his eye, running together.

Was that it? Were a certain number of words to be picked out from the message, strung together, and formed into another and shorter message?

If so, they must run in some regular order, to conform to a code known by the recipient.

Swiftly the Bounder counted the words he had spotted. "Put" was the fourth word. "The" was the next fourth word. "Goods" was the fourth again, counting onward.

His eyes flashed. He had it now!

He knew that he had it!

Taking out a pencil, he underlined every fourth word in the letter. Then he read them, one after another:

"Put the goods in the oak at Lantham Wednesday."

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smithy on the Scent!

VERNON-SMITH laughed.

He laughed aloud, in sheer exultation.

He had succeeded!

There was no doubt of that!

Not by chance did every fourth word in that peculiar letter form a different sentence, with a totally different meaning.

He had discovered the secret cipher!

Who, at Greyfriars School, was receiving a letter written in a secret cipher? Who at Greyfriars had any goods to be hidden in an oak on secret instructions? Who but Captain Compton's nephew?

Grinning, the Bounder wrote out the message afresh, putting every fourth word into capital letters. This was the result:

"If you can PUT the boxes on THE ten-twenty-five GOODS train they'll be IN good time for THE second delivery. The OAK chest should be AT the address in LANTHAM not later than WEDNESDAY."

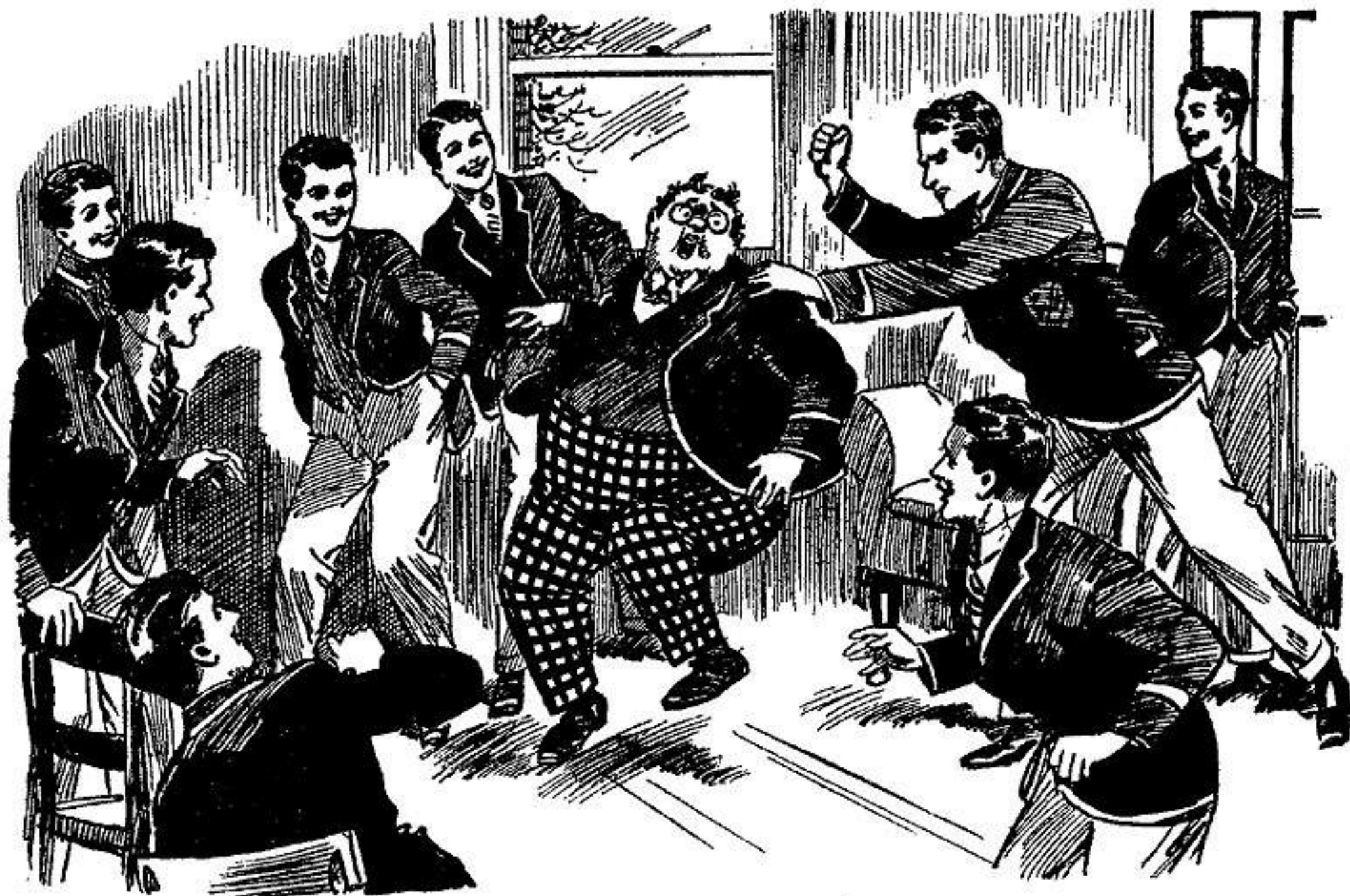
Reading the words he had put in capitals gave him the new sentence: "Put the goods in the oak at Lantham, Wednesday."

It was simple enough—when a fellow had spotted the secret. The sender of the letter would, no doubt, write his real message first, leaving space for three additional words before each word.

The addition of those words, with a little care, gave an outward meaning very different from the inward one.

That letter did not refer in the very least to sending goods by railway, or to the delivery of oak chests. The Bounder laughed at the idea. It referred to placing something secretly in an oak-tree at Lantham—obviously a pre-arranged spot.

The "goods"—he knew what the goods were. Smuggled goods, brought up from the sea-cave by the secret passage into the school. Wednesday was



"That Sixth Form cad, Carne——" "Oh, my hat!" "That rotten bully, you know——" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fifth Formers. Happily unaware of Carne's presence and his basilisk glare, Billy Bunter rattled on. "I saw him walking under the Remove windows, and got that stuff ready for him, and then——" The fat junior broke off suddenly as Carne woke to action and bounded at him. "Oh erikay!" he gasped.

to-morrow. Obviously it was the Wednesday following the receipt of the letter that must be meant, or a date would have been needed.

Of course, they would choose a half-holiday. Wednesday was one. Only on a half-holiday could a Greyfriars fellow get as far as Lantham.

Easy enough for Compton, who had a motor-bike. But on this particular Wednesday he could not cut across to Lantham on his motor-bike, for he was going there with the first eleven to play football.

That engagement was unknown to the sender of the letter, of course; but it made no difference. Whatever it was that the smugglers dealt in, it was something of small bulk. Compton would be able to take it with him easily enough.

The smugglers who had used the sea-cave in olden days had run in cargoes of French wines and brandy, bales of Lyons silks, and such things. Bulky goods of that kind were out of the question in this case.

Watches, perhaps. There was a tariff on watches. Binoculars from Germany, watches from Switzerland, or cigars. It might be anything. There were hundreds of articles of small bulk, but great value, that could be carried in a fellow's overcoat pockets. Smugglers had been spotted on the Channel boats with hundreds of pounds' worth of goods hidden in false linings to trunks, or even sewn under the lining of greatcoats; even hidden between double soles of a shoe.

Smithy remembered the packet that Harry Wharton had found on the beach, and taken to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield. It was not a large packet, but he had no doubt that it had been a very valuable one. That ass Wharton did not believe that it had been

Compton's at all, as the fellow disclaimed it. The Bounder knew. And he remembered the words overheard in the sea-cave—the reference to a packet worth five hundred pounds!

This was something of the same sort. Something that a fellow could carry unnoticed, but worth hundreds of pounds—perhaps thousands—with a large profit to the smugglers if they got it through the Customs undetected.

Smithy chuckled. They had got it through. A yacht had lain off the coast one dark night—a boat had run into the sea-cave. The "goods" had been left there to be picked up later.

At this very moment, Smithy had not the slightest doubt, the "goods" were in Compton's study in the Fifth—to be put in the oak at Lantham on the morrow.

That was all that the schoolboy smuggler had to do. Later, the captain or some associate would collect the goods from the oak at Lantham.

It was easy as pie!

Getting the stuff inland was the difficulty of a smuggler. It was easy enough to drop it in a cave after dark. Fetching it away was running the risk of the Revenue officers and the police—practically an impossible task more than once or twice.

The secret passage from the sea-cave to the school solved the difficulty.

That was why Captain Compton and his nephew had been so keenly interested in that underground passage. That was why the captain had placed his nephew at his old school soon afterwards.

Undoubtedly they had played this game all round the coast in the Firefly; but the discovery of that secret passage had caused them to concentrate on Grey-

friars, where it was absolutely safe and beyond suspicion.

Who would, or could, suspect a schoolboy at Greyfriars of smuggling? Who would think of looking for smuggled goods at Lantham, ten miles inland? It was safe as houses!

Only the Bounder knew!

And what he knew he could not reveal if he had wished to do so, for there was no possibility that he would be believed. Wharton had seen and heard all that the Bounder had seen and heard, and laughed at the idea. It was not, perhaps, much to Smithy's credit that he was so much keener and more wary and suspicious than other fellows of his age. But there was no doubt that he was.

He knew, but if he spoke out all Greyfriars would laugh at the idea, as Wharton had laughed at it; worse than that, he would be regarded as a reckless and malicious slanderer.

But the Bounder had no idea and no intention of speaking out. He did not want to harm Compton. He liked the fellow and admired him. He was convinced, too, that it was the hard-faced man he had seen in the cave who was to be blamed for this chiefly. The boy was under his influence—under his authority. Smithy would not have been very sorry to see Captain Compton in the official custody of Inspector Grimes. But he shuddered at the thought of a constable's hand falling on Valentine Compton's shoulder.

He was not going to hurt Compton. Compton was never going to know, even, that he knew. Wharton had counselled him to hold his tongue, and he was going to act on that counsel. But at the same time he was going to defeat Captain Compton's nefarious enterprises. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,502.

all he could. The gallant captain had had one loss already in the packet that Wharton had found and handed over to the police. He was going to have another now. The Bounder chuckled at the prospect.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The door of Study No. 4 was thrown open, and Bob Cherry roared in. "Know it's dorm, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith threw the paper from the table into the study fire.

"Swotting?" asked Bob, in surprise. Smithy was not the fellow for swotting as a rule.

"Sort of!" drawled the Bounder.

"I say, the list's up," said Bob, as Smithy came out of the study. "Compton's up to play at Lantham to-morrow—official!"

Smithy chuckled.

"I'm going over to see him bag goals, then!" he said.

"Lots of fellows are going!" said Bob. "We've been sorting out our cash for fares. Even Bunter's going, I hear, if his postal order comes in time! You're looking jolly bucked, Smithy!" Bob could not help noticing that the Bounder seemed in great spirits.

"Looking forward to to-morrow!" explained Vernon-Smith. "I'm going to enjoy that trip to Lantham."

"Watching Compton, you mean?"

The Bounder grinned.

"Exactly; watching Compton," he agreed. "I shan't take an eye off him to-morrow you can bank on that."

"His game's jolly well worth watching," said Bob.

"What-ho! I'm going to watch his game, you bet," said the Bounder. "I'm going to keep a jolly keen eye on his game at Lantham to-morrow, old bean."

"I fancy a lot of eyes will be on him," said Bob unsuspiciously. "I think half Greyfriars will be there."

The Bounder laughed as he went up to the Remove dormitory. There was no doubt that he was going to watch Compton at Lantham on the morrow—no doubt at all. He was going to watch him on the football ground, like the rest—and he was going to watch him off the football ground—more particularly

off it. Undoubtedly he was going to watch Compton's "game"—and not only the game of Soccer.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Fine!" said Bob Cherry.

"Eh?" asked Bunter. "What's fine?"

"The weather!"

"Oh, blow the weather!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you're all going over to Lantham this afternoon, what?"

"We are—we is!" agreed Bob.

After morning class on Wednesday, many eyes turned rather anxiously on the weather. It had been a fine morning, and to the general relief, the day was keeping fine. It was a cold, clear, keen day—just the day for football; which was satisfactory all round.

Billy Bunter, however, was thinking of more important matters.

"What about a car?" asked Bunter.

"Nix about a car!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We're not giddy millionaires like Smithy."

"I mean, I'll stand the car!" explained Bunter. "The post will be in before we have to start. I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I fancy it will run to a car, if it comes in time," said Bunter, blinking seriously at the Famous Five through his big spectacles, "and there's not much doubt about it, as it's from one of my titled relations. You fellows like a lift, if I stand a car?"

"Good egg!" said Bob. "You stand the car, and we'll stand you!"

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! If that's the way you thank a chap for offering to stand you a car on a half-holiday—"

said Billy Bunter warmly.

"I'll put it a bit more gracefully, when I see the car!" said Bob.

"The whenfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bunter

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you'll be having tea at the Pagoda, after the game?"

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

Compton's Soccer was a great attraction that was going to draw a crowd of Greyfriars fellows to Lantham that afternoon. But Bunter, it seemed, had found a still greater attraction.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said the fat Owl peevishly. "You'll be jolly hungry, after watching a football match through, in this cold weather. They do you a jolly good tea at the Pagoda. Look here, if I stand the car, you fellows stand the tea, what? That's fair!"

"The fairfulness is preposterous!" agreed Hurrec Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Done, then!" said Bunter. "If—if there's any delay, and my postal order doesn't come in time, you fellows can stand my railway fare, see? We tea at the Pagoda just the same, of course."

"Sounds good!" said Bob Cherry. "Worth a railway fare to see Bunter stuff at the Lantham Pagoda, what?"

"And I'll tell you what," said Bunter, "it's jolly cold, standing about watching football in this weather! What about cutting the second half?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. They were going over to Lantham that afternoon, to see the Greyfriars first eleven play the Ramblers, and especially to see Compton of the Fifth put up a great game of Soccer. Cutting the second half, in order to get along to the teashop to feed, was not a scheme that recommended itself to the chums of the Remove.

They were not, really, looking at the matter from Billy Bunter's angle. They were thinking of Soccer on the Ramblers' ground. Bunter was thinking of tea at the Pagoda. To Bunter, watching the Soccer match meant simply hanging about with cold feet, waiting for tea. He did not see much sense in that.

"Cut the second half!" repeated Johnny Bull.

"That's the idea!" said Bunter. "With such a crowd over there to-day, there'll be a rush at the Pagoda for tea. My idea is, get in early and avoid the crush. See? Half a football match is enough for anybody, isn't it?"

"Think so?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yes, old chap. I suggest cutting the second half. What about it?"

Bob Cherry winked at his friends.

"If you mean that, Bunter—"

"Yes, rather, every word."

"Then cut it, by all means!" said Bob.

"Do!" assented Frank Nugent, grinning.

"Oh, do!" said Harry Wharton.

"Good!" said Bunter. "That's sense! I never expected so much sense from you chaps, really. You're improving."

"We're in improving company!" said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"Well, look here," said Bunter. "Come to think of it, I don't see mooching about all through the first half. What?"

"What's the big idea, then?" asked Bob, with another wink at his grinning chums.

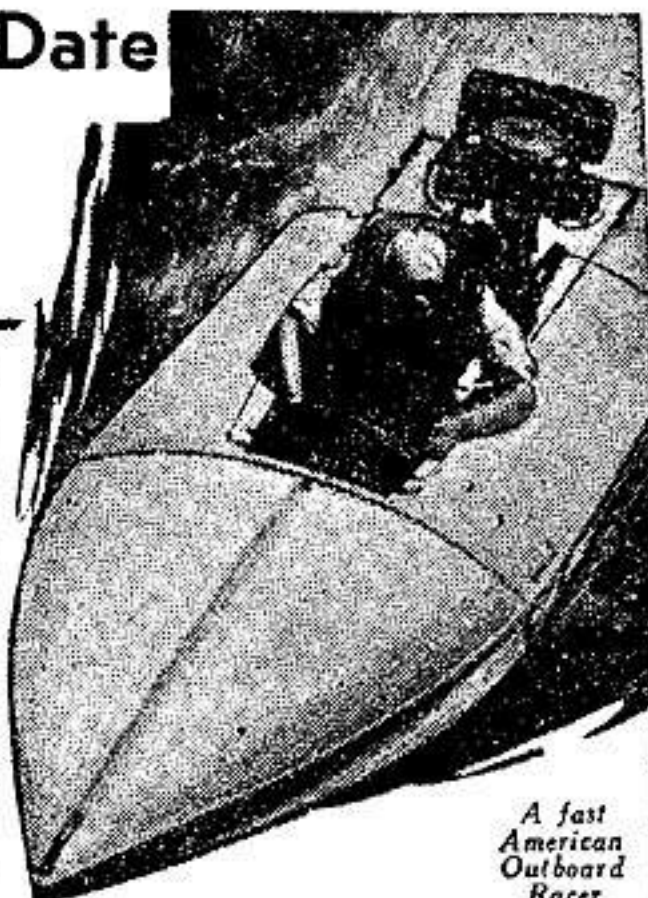
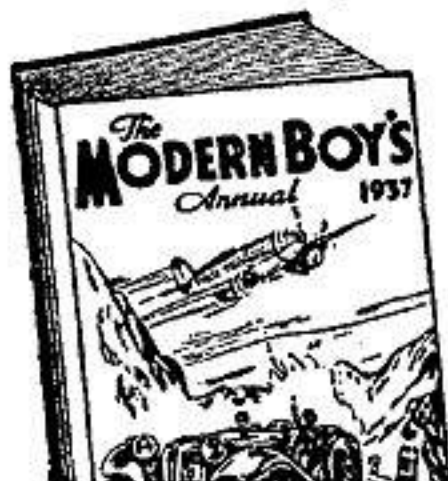
Bunter having—as he supposed at least—gained his point, and cut the Lantham match down by half, was going on.

Like Alexander, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer. Football being

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merely a disagreeable preliminary to tea, the more of it that was got rid of, the better evidently. These fellows being, apparently, in an unusually sensible mood, Bunter was encouraged to proceed.

"Well, suppose we see the kick-off?" said Bunter. "Having seen the kick-off, we can miss the rest. Too jolly cold to hang about, you know. Just see the kick-off, and clear! That's my idea."

"Bunter's the fellow to think of things, isn't he?" asked Bob. "We shouldn't have thought of that ourselves."

"Never even occurred to me!" said Johnny Bull, with a nod.

"The occurfulness to my esteemed self was not terrific," confessed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The brainfulness of the ridiculous Bunter is truly preposterous."

Billy Bunter grinned complacently. He felt that he was getting on.

"That's settled, then," he said.

"Fix it just as you like, old fat bean!" said Harry Wharton.

Bunter blinked at them. Having reduced the football match, for which the fellows were going ten miles, to a simple kick-off, even Bunter might have been satisfied. Still, as these fellows seemed so unusually and surprisingly reasonable and sensible, Bunter felt that he might as well go the whole hog, so to speak.

"Well, look here," he said, "why bother about seeing them kick-off?"

"Why, indeed?" agreed Bob. "You're not keen on it?"

"Well, no!" said Bunter.

"You'd like to cut out the kick-off, as well as the game?"

"I fancy so," said Bunter. "Let's head direct for the Pagoda, what? Cut the football match out entirely. That's my idea."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob.

"Good egg!" said Nugent.

"You fellows all agree?" asked Bunter. He was pleased, but he could not help being surprised. Seldom or never did he find Remove fellows so sensible and reasonable as this. Really, it seemed too good to be true. As a matter of fact, it was.

"Agree?" repeated Bob. "Why shouldn't we agree? I think it's a jolly good idea! Don't you, Franky?"

"Ripping!" said Frank Nugent heartily.

"The ripfulness is terrific."

"Then it's settled?" asked Bunter.

"Absolutely and definitely!" said Bob. "Sorry we shan't see you at Lantham, old fat man, but we'll try to bear your absence—"

"Eh?"

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder, so they say!" said Bob thoughtfully. "In your case, Bunter, I'm sure it's true. The more you're absent, you know, the nicer fellow you are! I should like you no end if I never saw you at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you silly ass," yelled Bunter, "wharrer you mean? I shall be with you fellows at Lantham, shan't I?"

"I don't see how, if you're cutting out the match, when we're going to watch it from kick-off to the final whistle," answered Bob, in surprise.

"You—you—you're going to watch it," stuttered Bunter.

"Yes; that's what we're going over to Lantham for."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co., quite entertained by the extraordinary ex-

pression on Billy Bunter's podgy countenance.

"Why you—you—you beast!" howled Bunter. "Didn't you agree when I suggested cutting the match, and—"

"Why not?" said Bob. "We're agreeable chaps, ain't we?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why shouldn't you cut the second half, and the first half, and the kick-off, and the whole jolly old bag of tricks, if you want to?" said Bob. "It's a free country. You didn't suppose we were going to do the same, did you?"

"Of course I did!" shrieked Bunter.

"Something wrong with your supposer, then," said Bob gravely. "It must want oiling, or something, if it makes you suppose things like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you—you—" gurgled Bunter, glaring at the hilarious Co. with the glare of a gorgon and a basilisk rolled together. "You—you—you—you were pulling my leg, you beasts—"

"Only letting you pull it yourself, old fat bean. Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob, "can you see yourselves hiking over to Lantham, ten miles off, to watch a footer match, and then cutting out the footer to sit round and watch Bunter wrap himself round tuck at a teashop? I'm just asking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not quite."

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "I jolly well won't stand the car now, when my postal order comes! So yah!"

"There won't be any cars left by the time your postal order comes, old chap," said Bob. "It will be all planes and air-taxies by that time. About forty years on—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I mean—I say, look here! I'll tell you what! If you want to watch that silly Soccer, I—I don't mind. I'll wait for you at the Pagoda—see? That will be all right."

"Right as rain!" agreed Bob. "How long will you wait?"

"I'll wait till you come, of course."

"They don't let lodgings for the night at the Pagoda," said Bob, shaking his head. "It's only a teashop. Besides, you'll have to turn up for calling-over here, and then there's class to-morrow—"

"You—you—you beast! You mean that you're not going to tea at the Pagoda after that match at all?"

"Just that, old fat fruit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, the railway fares will stick us for all our loose cash," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It won't run to tea afterwards at the Pagoda, or anywhere else."

"Then I jolly well shan't come!" hooted Bunter.

"You won't!" ejaculated Bob.

"No," roared Bunter; "I won't! Make the best of that, blow you! I won't come at all—see?"

"Lend me a handkerchief," sobbed Bob Cherry. "I've only got one, and I shall want two, one in each hand, to cry into if Bunter won't come."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter snorted, and rolled away, leaving the Famous Five yelling.

The fat Owl kept his word. If there was going to be no tea at the Pagoda, there was going to be no Bunter—and there wasn't. But to judge by the looks of the Famous Five when they trotted off to the station after dinner, amid a swarm of other Greyfriars fel-

lows, they were bearing the loss of Bunter's fascinating society with considerable fortitude.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Soccer at Lantham!

"GOAL!"

"Well kicked!"

"That's the stuff!"

"Compton—Compton!"

"Yaroo!" howled Johnny Bull, as Bob Cherry waved his cap in the air, with unbounded enthusiasm. Rather unfortunately it caught Johnny on the nose.

"Goal! Goal!" chanted Bob. "You men, did I tell you that man Compton was a cough-drop? Did I mention that he was hot stuff? Did I whisper that he was the goal-getter from Goalsville—what?"

"Ow! My nose!" gasped Johnny, rubbing the same. "You mad ass! Ow!"

"Blow your nose! Look at Compton!"

"Fathead!"

"Good old Greyfriars, second to none!" roared Bob. "On the ball!"

Every eye was on Compton of the Fifth. Even "old Wingate" did not draw so much attention as the new man in the eleven.

The Lantham Ramblers were a good team. They rather fancied themselves a little over the weight of a school team—even the first eleven of a school like Greyfriars. But it did not look like it now.

Almost half Greyfriars had come over to see that game. There was a big crowd of the Ramblers' supporters. Hundreds of pairs of eyes watched it from the moment the ball rolled. And very soon most eyes followed chiefly the movements of a handsome and graceful figure in the Greyfriars front line. Compton of the Fifth had the spotlight.

There was no doubt that he was a wonderful man at Soccer. It could be seen that he enjoyed the game thoroughly. His handsome face, a little flushed, was bright and cheery; his keen grey eyes had a sparkle in them. As a footballer he stood out, even in a team where every man was good, and some first class.

In the first ten minutes the ball went in from Valentine Compton's foot. It was first blood to Greyfriars, and a promise of great things to come.

"By gad, that man can play!" said Temple of the Fourth.

"The playfulness is terrific!" concurred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Good man, Compton! Good man!" roared Coker of the Fifth. "Oh, good man! Stick to it, old man! By gum, you fellows, that man can play! I couldn't have done better than that!"

"You couldn't, old man!" gasped Bob Cherry. "No; I fancy not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So long as he keeps that ball away from those Sixth Form duds, all right," said Horace Coker, with the air of an oracle.

But Compton did not play up to Coker's expectations in that respect. Good man as he was, easily the best in the team, bar none, there was no trace of selfishness about his play. The next goal came to Wingate, from a pass of Compton's.

Quite early in the first half Greyfriars were two up.

"Oh, good man—good man!" said Vernon-Smith.

He was standing near the Famous

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Five, keen on the game, quite forgetting, for the time, the other business he had on hand at Lantham that afternoon.

"I should have shot," said Coker, shaking his head. "All very well to give Wingate a chance; but I should have shot, in Compton's place, that time."

"Bet you would!" grinned Bob Cherry. "And then you ought to have been shot yourself, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker snorted, and moved away from the fags. Other ears had the benefit of Coker's further masterly criticisms of the game.

"Glad you came, Smithy—what?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Better than going to see a man about a horse—what?"

The Bounder laughed.

"Yes, rather!" he agreed. "By gum, that man Compton is the goods! I fancy Wingate's glad he's got him here instead of Carne."

"Ha, ha! I fancy so!"

It was close on half-time before the Ramblers put the pill in. At the interval Greyfriars were leading by two goals to one.

"We're winning this," remarked Bob Cherry.

"The winfulness will be preposterous!" assented Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"What a splendid chap he is!" remarked Harry Wharton. He did not need to mention a name. "Best man in the bunch, and not the shadow of a sign of swank or roll. A first-class sportsman all over."

"Abso-jolly-lootly the goods!" said Bob.

Wharton glanced at the Bounder, whose eyes were intent on Compton. He smiled, remembering Smithy's suspicions of the new man in the Fifth—suspicions that seemed more fantastic than ever now. There was no fault in a fellow like that; no chink in his armour. He was "pukka" all through. The captain of the Remove was convinced of that.

Smithy caught his eye, read his thoughts, and coloured a little.

He was, at that moment, as fervid and fervent an admirer of that splendid fellow as any Greyfriars man on the Ramblers' ground. And yet, he knew what he knew. He could have wished at that moment that he knew nothing.

The whistle went. With the change of ends the Greyfriars men had the wind in their faces, and Lantham came down with the wind like wolves on the fold. There was a prolonged tussle before the visitors' goal, and North, in the citadel, had to save, again and again. Lantham were going strong, and the crowd watched breathlessly. Then a figure in blue and white shot out of the press, the ball at its feet.

"Compton!" roared the Greyfriars crowd. "Compton!"

There was no chance of a pass, and the Lantham backs had Compton marked, and the man in goal was all eyes. How he beat them they never knew. But like a roll of thunder came the roar.

"Goal, goal, goal!"

Bob Cherry's chums successfully dodged his brandished cap.

"Compton! Compton!"

"Goal, goal!"

"Is that man a prize-packet, or isn't he?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

"Three to one, and half an hour to go!" chortled Bob. "Look at old Wingate thumping him on the back. He's

worth two of Wingate, and the old bean knows it, and is jolly glad! Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton & Co., as a rule, were keener on playing football than watching it. But they were glad that they were watching that game. They glued their eyes to it. They shouted themselves almost hoarse. They cheered and roared. It was good play from start to finish. Lantham Ramblers were good men, and they put all they knew into it. With one exception, the teams were fairly matched; but the star man of the Greyfriars side was worth any three on the field. Which made all the difference.

Never had a game seemed so short to the Famous Five. They were almost taken by surprise when the final whistle went. They had not lost a minute of it. It was hard and fast right up to the finish; but Lantham never got through a second time; but twice the ball went in from Greyfriars' new forward! Five goals to one against Lantham Ramblers was a score to make the Greyfriars fellows rub their eyes. But there it was!

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" chanted Bob Cherry. "Was this worth coming over for, you men? Was it? What? Smithy, old man—Hullo, hallo, hallo! He's gone!"

"Seen Smithy, you fellows?" called out Tom Redwing.

"He was here a few minutes ago," said Harry Wharton. "Seems to have cleared! Come along with us, Reddy!"

They left the Ramblers' ground, seeing nothing more of Herbert Vernon-Smith. They were not likely to guess where the Bounder had gone, or how he was occupied.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Contraband!

THE Bounder of Greyfriars backed against the hedge, as the figure ahead of him glanced back. He stood for a minute, in the dusk; and then, as that figure resumed its way, Smithy resumed his.

The early dusk of November was falling. That made the Bounder's task of shadowing more difficult. At the same time it made it much less likely that his quarry would spot him.

Easy or difficult, the Bounder was going through with it. On that point, his mind was irrevocably made up.

They were outside Lantham now, following the lane that led towards Lantham Chase, a solitary woodland, more solitary than ever at winter dusk. Smithy did not need telling now that the "oak" mentioned in the mysterious letter was somewhere in Lantham Chase.

Cool, keen, and sagacious himself, as he had shown in his many contests with masters and prefects at Greyfriars, the Bounder admired the coolness, keenness, and sagacity of the schoolboy smuggler. Compton of the Fifth had gone back to Lantham Station with the Greyfriars team and a Greyfriars crowd.

No doubt every Greyfriars man in the train believed that Compton of the Fifth was in another carriage. Every fellow would have been glad of his company—but every fellow could not have it, of course; and fellows who hadn't it, supposed that other fellows had. Probably in all that swarm of Greyfriars fellows, only Vernon-Smith knew that Valentine Compton had not taken the train at all, but had slipped away in the crowd, and slipped quietly out of the station.

The Bounder knew, because he had

been watching him, in full expectation of such a move.

After that great game on the Ramblers' ground, Smithy would have been glad, deeply and sincerely glad, to find that his suspicions of Compton were unfounded. How could so splendid a fellow do mean and shady things? The Bounder wondered whether, after all, there could be a possible doubt—and while he watched Compton, he knew that he would not take the train, and yet hoped that he would!

But he did not; and when Smithy followed the figure with muffled-up coat collar and pulled-down cap, along Lantham High Street, he grinned sardonically at that faint and delusive hope.

He liked the fellow, admired the fellow more than ever. But he was going to beat him at this game; or, rather, he was going to beat the hard-faced man who was pulling the strings.

Outside the town, in the lane lined by leafless trees and hedges, Compton looked back, but he did not see the Bounder, blotted in the hedge.

He walked on again swiftly, and the shadower followed.

What Compton would have done if he had found himself shadowed, Smithy could not guess. But Compton was not going to learn. He was not going to be shamed and humiliated by learning that a Greyfriars junior knew his wretched secret.

There was, after all, little danger. He had not the remotest idea that he was followed—not the remotest idea that he was suspected by any fellow at Greyfriars, or anywhere else. It was a habit of caution that caused him to give that one backward glance—and he did not give another.

Even had he spotted a boy's figure in the lane, he would hardly have guessed that it was a Greyfriars boy at all—he could hardly have guessed that he was followed. But he was not going to spot the Bounder—Smithy was too wary for that.

From the Lane, Compton turned into a footpath through Lantham Chase. The dusk, already falling, was thicker under the overhanging trees.

The athletic figure muffled in the overcoat, was merely a dark shadow ahead of the watchful Bounder.

A quarter of a mile in the wood that dark shadow disappeared from the footpath, and there was a rustle of twigs and boughs.

But there was no rustle as the Bounder followed, soft as a cat. He made no sound, as the rustling ahead guided him on the trail of the fellow he could no longer see.

Smithy's heart was beating faster, he could guess that he was near his destination now. But he was as cool as ice.

The rustle ceased.

Hardly a dozen feet from the Bounder the dark figure stopped under the branches of a tall oak.

It approached the trunk very closely. Had not Smithy known what to expect, what to watch for, he would not have known what was being done, for the shadow was deep and dark under the tree.

But he knew, as clearly as if he could see, that that dark figure was thrusting some packet or parcel into a hollow of the oak.

It was a large, massive, ancient tree, one of the oldest in the Chase, visible at a distance over the smaller growths. And it was hollow, the Bounder knew now. Likely enough, Captain Compton had known of it, in his old days as a



"Goal!" "Well kicked!" "Compton! Compton!" "Yaroooh!" howled Johnny Bull, as Bob Cherry, waving his cap in the air, caught him on the nose. "Ow! My nose! You mad ass—ow!" "Blow your nose!" roared Bob excitedly. "Look at Compton!"

Greyfriars boy, thirty years ago. Anyhow, that was the secret spot picked out by the smugglers for the "goods" to be left till collected! There was no doubt on that point in the Bounder's mind.

But for the football match that day, no doubt Compton would have cut across on his motor-bike—easy enough on a half-holiday. But as he had had to come to Lantham with the football team, he had brought the goods with him, dodged the other fellows after the match—and here he was, carrying out the instructions received!

The goods must have been in his overcoat-pockets—he was carrying no bundle. Something of small bulk—and great value!

There was a faint brushing sound in the silence of the wood. Something was being thrust into a hollow of the old oak trunk.

The dark figure turned.

Herbert Vernon-Smith crouched low in the dark brambles. But, for some moments the figure stood quite still, under the oak, and the Bounder, listening, wondered why. Then, from the silence, came a sound—a faint sound—a deep sigh!

Vernon-Smith started a little as he heard it. It gave him a strange pang to hear it.

What were the thoughts of that strange lad—a breaker of the law—as he stood there, in the gloom, believing himself to be alone? That deep sigh seemed to give some indication.

Then, suddenly, came a rapid tread. Valentino Compton was going back to the footpath—and the Bounder crouched low, silent, as he passed within a few yards.

Trampling footsteps, rustling twigs, died into silence. The Bounder listened intently. Compton was gone!

Gone—back to Lantham, no doubt, to catch the next train. Easy enough to

leave it to be supposed that he had lost the train, in the surging crowd, and caught the next. It was an easy game that the schoolboy smuggler was playing at Greyfriars—though that deep sigh, that still echoed in the Bounder's ears, hinted that it was not a wholly satisfactory game.

For long minutes the Bounder lay still, silent, while the November dusk thickened and darkened. Not till he was sure that Compton was half-way back to Lantham did he stir.

Then, softly, he approached the old oak, and stopped under it where Valentino Compton had stopped. He groped over the gnarled old trunk.

Some time—perhaps that very night—the goods would be removed from the oak at Lantham. The Bounder could picture a fast car stopping in the lane—a hard-faced man stepping out and slipping into the wood—five or ten minutes, and then the car would be shooting on—with contraband goods packed out of sight.

That very night, most likely—perhaps early in the evening! Under cover of the darkness, no doubt; but it was dark early in November. But whether they came early, or came late, they would find the goods that a Greyfriars Fifth Former had brought up from the sea-cave. Herbert Vernon-Smith was there to make sure that they did not!

He groped, and found a hollow low down the massive old trunk. He thrust his hand in; but not till he had thrust in the whole length of his arm did he feel a packet. He groped—there was more than one! He drew them out, one after another—sealed packets, of a size convenient to pack in overcoat pockets. The Bounder did not think of opening them. That was no business of his—and he had no time to waste.

He jammed them into his own over-

coat, groped again to make sure that he had taken all, and then walked back to the footpath.

He grinned as he tramped back to Lantham Lane, and turned towards the town. He was going to be late for calling-over at Greyfriars—it was worth it! He stopped at a stationer's in Lantham High Street, where he bought a sheet of strong brown-paper, wrapped the two packets into a bundle, and tied it carefully with string.

With that bundle under his arm, he sauntered into Lantham Post Office. There, he addressed it, in a hand quite unlike his own, to "Inspector Grimes, Police Station, Courtfield," and posted it at the parcels post counter.

As he walked to the railway station, Smithy wondered what the Courtfield inspector would think when he received that parcel on the morrow—and chuckled at the thought. No doubt it would be the first time in Mr. Grimes' official career that he had received a consignment of contraband goods by parcels post!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

A Tip in Time!

"I SAY, you fellows!" "Now how," said Bob Cherry plaintively, "did Bunter know that we had a bag of apples?" "Trust Bunter!" said Johnny Bull. Harry Wharton laughed. "Lots!" he said. "Pile in, old fat bean!"

It was the following day, after morning school. The Famous Five were gathered in Study No. 1, with two or three other Remove fellows. On the table lay a bag, packed with big, ripe, rich, red apples.

All the fellows in the study were The Magnet Library.—No. 1,502.

helping themselves, and nobody was surprised to see Billy Bunter's fat face and gleaming spectacles at the door.

"I say, I never knew you had apples!" said Bunter. "I came here for Wharton! Still, I'll have one! I say, Wharton, what have you done?"

"Eh?"

"I mean, what's up?"

"Up!" repeated Harry.

He gazed at the fat Owl. So far as he was aware, he had "done" nothing, and nothing was "up." But the fat face of the podgy Owl was portentously serious in its expression, and he evidently was under the impression that the captain of the Remove had "done" something, and that something was very much "up."

"What about hiding under the table?" asked Bunter.

"Wha-at?"

"Or in the cupboard!" suggested Bunter. "I got in that cupboard once, when Smithy was after me, making out that I had had his cake, so you could!"

"Potty?" asked Wharton, amazed.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What do you mean, you fat Owl?" demanded Harry, while all the fellows in the study stared blankly at Bunter.

Bunter did not reply for a moment. He was taking an immense bite out of a big ripe apple. He had to chew that large mouthful before he could speak.

Having chewed and reduced it to manageable proportions, the fat Owl got going again.

"I say, I came up to give you the tip, old chap! I'm not the fellow to see a pal run in, if I can help him!"

"Run in!" gasped Wharton.

"Well, as a bobby's after you—"

"A—a—a bobby after me!" repeated the captain of the Remove, like a fellow in a dream, gazing at the fat Owl.

"Yes—old Grimes—"

"Old Grimes?"

"Yes—he's after you, old fellow! What have you done?" asked Bunter. "Nothing serious, I hope? Oh crikey! I say, did you pinch these apples?"

"What?" yelled Wharton.

Bunter, about to take a second bite, paused. He blinked through his big spectacles at the captain of the Remove in alarm.

"I—I say, whose are these apples?" he exclaimed.

"Wharton's, you fat ass!" said Nugent. "They came in a box this morning from his uncle at Wharton Lodge."

"Oh crikey! I—I say, did you see the box? I—I say, sure? I mean to say, if Wharton pinched these apples, that may be why the bobby's after him! I say, you fellows, I like apples, but I'm not going to get into a row—"

"Mad, I suppose!" said Bob Cherry.

"You potty porpoise!" roared Wharton.

"You needn't yell at a chap, Wharton, when he's come up here to put you on your guard!" said Bunter warmly. "Lots of fellows would let you be run in, without taking the trouble to give you the tip, I can tell you! If you haven't pinched these apples, what have you done?"

Peter Todd tapped his forehead significantly.

"Quite off!" he remarked. "When did you feel this coming on, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"But I say, old Grimes is here!" said Hazeldene. "I saw him from the window—he came up from the gates ten minutes ago."

"Yes, he's after Wharton!" said Bunter. "I think Wharton ought to tell us what he's done! Mind, I'm standing by you, old chap! Look here, you can cut into my study if you like, and get under the table there! Then we'll all tell Grimes that you've run away from school—"

"Wh-a-at?"

"Keep clear till he's gone!" said Bunter. "Then the Head may be able to fix it somehow—see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled all the juniors in the study—except Wharton.

Wharton stared at the fat Owl, as if his podgy countenance fascinated him.

"You—you—you potty, pernicious porker!" gasped the captain of the Remove. "If Inspector Grimes has called here, do you think it's got anything to do with me?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Bunter. "I jolly well heard Quelch tell Trotter to find you at once, and send you to his study. He was looking like a gorgon! So was old Grimey! He's after you, old chap!"

"Inspector Grimes wants to see me!"

"He, he, he! You bet! That's why I dashed up here to give you the tip! Trotter's looking for you in the quad. I heard him ask Smithy if he'd seen you. I say, old fellow, for goodness' sake get out of sight before they get you!" said Bunter anxiously. "If it's a matter of pinching—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Removites, as much entertained by the expression on Harry Wharton's face as by Bunter's remarkable idea that a "bobby" was after the captain of the Remove for some offence against the law.

"If you pinched these apples, it can be fixed up all right—pay for them, or something!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You potty porker, those apples came from my uncle at home!" shrieked Wharton.

"Well, that's all very well," said Bunter. "But what is a policeman after you for, then? I heard him say to Quelch—I happened to be just under the window, and it was open; mind, I never got under that window because I noticed it was open, and I wondered what old Grimes wanted; I stopped there by sheer chance, to tie my shoelace—and I heard old Grimes say: 'I think it must have been Wharton! Please send for the boy!' His very words!"

Harry Wharton was rising to his feet, with the intention of kicking Bunter, by way of expressing thanks for his valuable "tip." But at that, he sat down again, staring.

"Grimes said that!" he ejaculated.

"I jolly well heard him, when I was picking up the penknife I'd dropped under Quelch's study window!" answered Bunter. "And Quelch said—This is a jolly good apple! I think I'll finish it, and chance it!"

"Quelch said that?" gasped Bob.

"Eh? No! I said that! Quelch said he would send for Wharton at once, and rang the bell for Trotter! Then old Grimes said it was a serious matter—a fraction of the law—"

"A fraction of the law!" stuttered Wharton.

"His very words—a very serious fraction of the law—"

"Oh! An infraction of the law!" gasped Harry.

"Yes, he might have said infraction—I thought he said fraction—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Wharton will be sacked, after being run in for pinching apples, or whatever it is he's done. It's a serious fraction of the law, anyhow. I say, Harry, old chap, they may be after you any minute. Get under the table, and we'll all stand round and keep you out of sight—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can eat an apple while you're under the table!" said Bunter. "Look here, take the bag and help yourself, see? If they're pinched, you'd better keep them out of sight till old Grimey's gone. I'll have another first. I may as well have a couple. But, I say, old chap, you've no time to lose. I say, I can hear somebody coming!"

Bunter blinked round at the doorway in alarm. Trotter, the House page, appeared there.

"Master Wharton here?" asked Trotter.

"No, he's not here, Trotter!" exclaimed Bunter in a hurry. "He's gone to Courtfield. You needn't look into the study, he's not here. He went down to Friardale just after class!"

Billy Bunter placed his fat form, as he spoke, in front of the captain of the Remove, to screen him from Trotter's eyes.

As Bunter was double-width he made quite a good screen; any fellow of average circumference was safe out of sight behind him, so long as he was sitting down! Standing up, he would have been in view over Bunter's head. Billy Bunter was tall sideways.

The juniors in the study shrieked. Mr. Grimes' words to the Remove master, overheard by Bunter, were certainly very mysterious, but nobody, except the fat and fatuous Owl, was likely to suppose that a policeman was "after" Harry Wharton, to run him in!

Bunter was, in his own belief, doing the captain of the Remove a friendly turn. But he received the blackest ingratitude for it.

As he stood in front of Wharton the latter lifted his foot and planted it, with considerable force, on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars School.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, quite taken by surprise by that unexpected attack in the rear.

He pitched forward. An apple flew from either hand, and he bumped down on his fat knees, roaring.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yoo-hooooop!" roared Bunter. "Beast! Yoo-hoop!"

Trotter grinned.

"Mr. Quelch wants you in his study, sir!" he said, and departed, still grinning.

Harry Wharton crossed to the door. He was puzzled, but not, as Bunter expected, alarmed.

But the fat Owl was no longer concerned about his safety. Such ingratitude, from the fellow he had come to warn that a "bobby" was after him, quite banished Bunter's friendly concern.

"Beast!" he roared. "Yah! I hope you'll get three months for pinching these apples! I hope you'll get six months! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton went down the stairs, leaving Study No. 1 in a roar. Why the Courtfield inspector wanted him nobody could imagine, but only Billy Bunter supposed that Mr. Grimes had come there to "run him in."

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Not Wharton!

HARRY WHARTON tapped at his Form-master's door and entered.

He was puzzled—and still more puzzled when he saw the grave expression on Mr. Quelch's face, and caught the keen, penetrating eyes of the Courtfield inspector. He could see, at a glance that Bunter was at least right in supposing that something was "up," and that it was a serious matter. Mr. Grimes had come there specially to see Wharton—and he was not a man to waste his time.

"Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, "were you at Lantham yesterday?"

"Yes, sir," answered Harry, astonished at the unexpected question.

"I thought so!" remarked Mr. Grimes.

"What were you doing at Lantham, Wharton?"

"I went over to see the first eleven match with the Ramblers, sir. Half the school went, because Compton—"

"Quite so! Quite!" said Mr. Quelch. "Did you do anything at Lantham, Wharton, apart from watching the football match?"

"Not that I remember, sir," said Harry, more and more astonished. "I came back with the other fellows, after the game."

"Did you go to Lantham Post Office?"

"No, sir."

"Then it could not have been Wharton, Mr. Grimes," said the Remove master. "If you are sure it was a Greyfriars boy, and a junior, it appears that there were a very large number in Lantham yesterday."

Mr. Grimes' cool, penetrating eyes were fixed on Wharton.

The junior looked at him, meeting that piercing glance quite equably. He could not begin to understand what the matter was, but he realised more and more that it was serious.

"Now, Master Wharton," said the inspector, "please answer me quite frankly. The law has been broken, and I think it is in your power to help the authorities. You must realise that it is your duty to do so."

"Certainly, Mr. Grimes! Anything I can do—"

"A few weeks ago you found a certain packet on the beach and handed it to me at the police station!" said Mr. Grimes.

"I remember, sir!"

"That packet contained certain things," said Mr. Grimes. "In view of what has now occurred I will tell you what I have told your Form-master, so that you may realise the extreme seriousness of the matter. That packet, Wharton, contained contraband goods—goods smuggled into the kingdom in defiance of the law and the Customs!"

Harry Wharton started violently.

The Bounder had been right, then! Not about Compton—utterly wrong about Compton, of course!—but right about the contents of that mysterious packet!

"That surprises you?" asked Mr. Grimes.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"You did not suspect it?"

"I did not, sir," said Harry. "I'd better say, perhaps, that a Remove fellow told me he thought so, but I thought it rot."

Mr. Grimes smiled.

"That boy seems to have made an accurate guess, then," he said. "It was not rot, as you term it, Master Wharton, it was a fact! You performed a public service in handing that packet over to the police."

"I'm glad to hear that, sir!" said Harry.

"Now, if any such goods have come into your hands, by any chance, since that date—" said Mr. Grimes.

"That's not likely to happen, sir!" said Harry, smiling.

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

ONE of my chums who has written to me this week has set me

A PROBLEM!

He asks me what time a boy should arrive home in the evening. Frankly, I think this query is one that should be settled by a boy's parents.

With very few exceptions, I am sure, parents will give a reasonable time for returning home. It may be that some boys think their parents want them to be home too early. But let me assure any boy who feels inclined to grumble that late hours are not good for one's health. There are many ways of passing away the long winter evenings which do not involve being out late. The ideal way, of course, is to get a copy of the "Holiday Annual." This world-famous book, on sale everywhere, is packed from cover to cover with rollicking fine school stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood, humorous articles, sparkling verses, and many other bright features. It costs only five shillings, and is a real bargain at the price. Get the "Holiday Annual" to-day and I'll guarantee you won't want to stay out late. You'll want to get home early to read it!

Have you ever heard about the woman who gets

SEASICK BY WIRELESS?

You would imagine that anyone sitting safely at home in an easy-chair would be the last person on earth to suffer from seasickness. Not long ago, however, a South African woman was listening to a broadcast from the liner Stirling Castle when she was suddenly taken seriously ill. A doctor was sent for immediately, and diagnosed the trouble as seasickness! He said that it was the sound of the waves and the thud of the engines that had brought on an attack of seasickness by wireless!

LEARN TO BE A DETECTIVE!

There's a thrilling surprise waiting for all MAGNET readers. Ex-Detective-Inspector Grosse, formerly head of the famous "Flying-Squad," has written a book that is literally packed with excitement. Fingerprints, clues, secrets of the Flying-Squad, lots of mysteries and problems and tests for you to solve yourselves, all find a place in the "Master Book of Detection and Disguise." All you have to do to get your copy is to cut the Quaker figures from the front of two packets of Quaker Oats (or Quick Quaker) and send them to Dept. M.3, Quaker Oats, Ltd., Southall, Middlesex, giving your name and address in capital letters. Send for yours to-day and learn more about the fascinating art of Detection.

"Then it has not happened?"

"Oh, no!" Wharton, in amazement, realised that Inspector Grimes suspected that it had.

"Please be absolutely frank, Wharton!" said Mr. Grimes quietly. "I will

(Continued on next page.)

ALL GOOD THINGS COME TO AN END!

Whenever one of our popular features comes to an end I generally get letters from chums who want to know why I have discontinued it. This, of course, is a great compliment to the features in question. But there is another side. Popular as they may prove to be, I am sure that few of you would like them to go on for ever. And, after all, variety is the spice of life! I believe in giving every feature a run and then replacing it with something just as good, if not better. In this way the MAGNET is always fresh and bright. You will have already noticed that our "Greyfriars Interviews" have come to an end. Well, to make up for this, our long-haired poet is writing a series of verses dealing with "The Stately Homes of Greyfriars," which will be as interesting as they are amusing. Look out for No. 1 of this new series very shortly, chums!

Here is a selection of

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to queries sent in by various readers:

When was Nelson's Column Built? (O. H., of Wandsworth): It was erected in the year 1843, and cost £28,000. The bronze lions at the base were not added until the year 1867.

Do Crocodiles Ever Shed Tears? ("Curious," of Brighton): No. They can't, because they have no tear ducts. The expression "crocodile tears" simply means that a person is only pretending to cry.

Which is the Loneliest Gold Mine in the World? ("Aussie Reader," of Melbourne): The gold mine at Portland Roads, Queens-town. The mail is carried to it by pack-horse from the nearest post office, three hundred miles away. The gold ore is carried by packhorse to the coast, sixty miles away, and has to be rowed out to steamers, as there is no anchorage. Sixty people live at the mine.

Where did "Houdini" Get His Name? ("Conjuror," of Kingston): Houdini, the famous escapologist, took his name from Robert Houdin, a Frenchman who was, perhaps, the greatest magician of his time. The original Houdin died in 1871, and his American follower adopted a slight variation of the name.

Geo! I almost forgot to say a word or two about next week's star school story. Valentine Compton has certainly established himself in the Greyfriars Fifth. And what an asset he is to Wingate and his merry men in the First Eleven! But his inclusion in the footer team has meant the displacement of Carne, who is only too anxious to seize any stick with which to beat his rival. In consequence of this the fat's in the fire with a vengeance for the Greyfriars recruit!

"THE BOY WITH AN ENEMY!"

By Frank Richards,

the next yarn in our present popular series, is one of the finest it has ever been my fortune to read. Take a tip from me, chums, and order a copy of next Saturday's MAGNET to-day!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,502.

tell you what has occurred, as I have told your Form-master. I cannot help thinking that you were already aware of it. This morning I received a bundle by parcels post."

"Did you?"

"It was post-marked Lantham. It contained two sealed packets, which, on examination, proved to contain contraband goods of the same kind as the packet you found on the beach and handed over to me."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"I have made inquiries at Lantham Post Office," continued Mr. Grimes. "Very exhaustive inquiries. I have learned that the bundle was posted by a boy—a schoolboy. That boy was wearing a Greyfriars cap. He was not particularly noticed, so far as features went—but I have learned, beyond doubt, that the cap he was wearing belonged to this school, and that he was of your size and age. The address on the bundle was written in a schoolboy round-hand. Did you post that bundle at Lantham yesterday, Master Wharton?"

"No, sir!"

"I admit," said Mr. Grimes, "that I see no reason why you should send it to me in such a manner, after having, on the previous occasion, come to me openly. But the fact remains that some person found these packets of contraband goods, and did actually send them to me by parcels post. It was a Greyfriars boy—a junior boy."

"It was not I, sir!" said Harry. "If I'd found anything of the kind, and known what it was, I should have come straight to you at the police station."

"Naturally so!" said Mr. Quelch, with a nod.

"So I should have expected," said Mr. Grimes. "But, as I have said, the fact remains that the bundle was sent to me by post, by some person obviously desirous of aiding the law, yet desiring to keep unknown. A schoolboy, might, perhaps, be unwilling to get mixed up in police matters—Mr. Grimes' penetrating gaze almost bored into the captain of the Remove. "If it is anything of that kind, Master Wharton, please be quite frank. Whoever sent that bundle by post must know in whose hands it had previously been, and could give very material help to the authorities."

"I understand that, of course, sir."

"Then please be perfectly frank with me, Master Wharton! If you know anything of this matter—"

"Nothing at all, sir! If I'd sent the bundle, I should have let you know who was sending it, of course."

Mr. Grimes shut his lips hard. He was disappointed, and perhaps he had a lingering doubt. Certainly he was deeply puzzled by the whole occurrence. But there was evidently nothing more to be said, and at a sign from his Form-master, Harry Wharton left the study.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

A Mystery!

"WHO?" said Bob Cherry.

"Goodness knows!"

"Some Greyfriars man?"

"So Grimey thinks!"

"It's a jolly old mystery!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, with his

A Treat No "Magnetite" Should Miss!

"THE STAGE-STRUCK SCHOOLBOYS!"

By Frank Richards,

this week's tip-top story dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., in

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hands in his pockets, and a sardonic grin on his face, lounged at the doorway of Study No. 1. Harry Wharton & Co. were there, discussing what the captain of the Remove had told of the interview in Mr. Quelch's study.

Clearly Smithy was interested in the talk.

Harry Wharton glanced at him two or three times. He had no objection to the Bouncer hearing that discussion, but he was surprised by Smithy's interest in it, and vaguely uneasy and irritated by the sardonic expression on Smithy's face.

"Who was it, Bunter?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Eh?" Bunter gulped a large mouthful of ripe apple. "Who was what?"

"Who sent that bundle to old Grimey?"

"How should I know, you ass?"

"Don't you know everything that doesn't concern you?" demanded Bob.

"Beast!"

"We ought to have taken Bunter to Lantham yesterday, after all!" declared Bob. "Then he would know! There's a keyhole at the post office in Lantham!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" said Bunter.

"Now we don't know a thing," said Bob. "Except that Grimey thinks it was a Greyfriars man! What are you grinning like a Cheshire cat for, Smithy? Do you know anything about it?"

"I believe I can guess!" said Smithy.

"Go it!"

"Well, that Greyfriars man, whoever he was, wanted to put paid to the jolly old smuggler, and, at the same time, didn't want the jolly old smuggler to be copped!" said Vernon-Smith. "How about that?"

Harry Wharton started. He stared hard at the Bouncer—who gave him a wink in return for that inquiring stare.

"What utter rot!" said Johnny Bull. "A smuggler ought to be copped!"

"He might be quite a nice fellow in other ways!" drawled Smithy. "The chap who spotted him might like him too much to give him away. Might have been advised, by a fellow who knows everything, to hold his tongue!"

"Bosh!" said Bob.

The Bouncer laughed, and walked down the Remove passage.

A moment later, he stopped, at a touch on his arm.

Harry Wharton had followed him from the study.

"Do you know anything about this, Vernon-Smith?" asked the captain of the Remove in a low voice.

"Lots!"

"Well, what, then?"

"The other day, you advised me to hold my tongue—"

"What about that?"

"I'm holding it!" said the Bouncer. And with that, he laughed again, and went down the Remove staircase, leaving Harry Wharton, with compressed lips, staring after him.

THE END.

(Make sure you read the next cover-to-cover yarn in this fine series, entitled: "THE BOY WITH AN ENEMY!" You'll enjoy every word of it, chums—and so will your pals, if you give them the tip!)

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THE MASKED KIDNAPPER!

Another hilarious instalment of
Dicky Nugent's latest serial:
"THE RINGMASTER OF ST. SAM'S!"

"Ally-up!"
"Hoop-la!"
"Whoa, mare!"

Loud and raucous were the shouts that rang out across the grate tent pitched on the St. Sam's looter field on the night before the opening of Doctor Birchermall's sercuss. Masters and boys carefully selected by the Head as lion-tamers, acrobats, snake-charmers, clowns, et settera, were having a dress rehearsal in the presence of the remainder of the skool. And the noise was simply deafening. As Jack Jolly yawned and remarked, it reminded you of Saturday night in the Fags' Games-room.

To save time, several turns were being performed together, and this made things somewhat difficult in the ring. For instance, Miss Molly Birchermall, who was doing bare-back riding on a team of dashing horses, once did a jump through a hoop, to find that her steeds had gone another way, and she had landed on the back of an elephant. But taking it all round, the performers were doing very well. There was not one amongst them you could have called a rabbit; in fact, most of their trix were simply hare-raising.

Doctor Birchermall, who had appointed himself ringmaster during the stay of the sercuss at the skool, stood in the centre, directing the show with the aid of a wacking grate whip. There was a cheery grin on his dial—in addishun to a smear of jam from the doennutt he was skolling.

"Say what you like, Spangler," he remarked, between two hefty bites at the doennutt, "this show I've got together for you is simply spilling!" "It certainly does begin to look as if you are going to save the sercuss from falling into the hands of the scoundrel Hair von Schyster!" boomed Mr. Spangler. "The spondulicks are going to roll in like the very dickens when the public hear about this. I shall owe you a rare dett of gratitude, Doctor Birchermall."

"And, of course, a dett of one half of the prophets!" the Head reminded him gently. "You have not forgotten our little arrangement?" "Sir, I am a man of honour!" said Mr.

Spangler with dignity, and the Head nodded, quite satisfied.

The next moment there rang out a cry that drove all thoughts of meer munny out of Doctor Birchermall's head for the time being.

"Mr. Justiss! The lions have got him!"

Instinctively all eyes were turned to the lions' cage, where Mr. Justiss, the master of the Fifth, had been somewhat gingerly putting the jungle monarchs through their paces. The Head uttered a shout of alarm as he saw that Mr. Justiss had collapsed on the floor of the cage and that the lions were just in the act of springing on him—with the intension, it seemed, of rending him limb from limb and making their supper of him.

"Justiss! You—you idjut!" he roared. "What's the good of getting yourself eaten up before you've given even one performance? I never knew a lion-tamer who made me so wild as you do!"

"Help!" came a deafening shriek from the master of the Fifth.

Doctor Birchermall, with a shrug, pushed his way through the crowd. Amid a breathless, horrified hush he dashed right up to the cage. Mr. Lickham, in the full war-paint of a sercuss clown, stepped forward and tried to lay a restraining hand on him.

"Sir! You can't do this here!" he cried huskily. "Don't go down in the mine, dad—I mean, don't go into that cage, sir! Better that one should perish than two!"

"Don't be an ass, Lickham!" snorted Doctor Birchermall. "I'm not going into the cage. I know a trick worth two of that! Watch me!"

So saying, the Head dived his hands into his trowls pockets and brought to light half a dozen doennutts, wrapped in tissue paper.

"If these don't tempt them away from a tuff old joint like Justiss, then there must be something wrong with their taste!"



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 216.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

November 28th, 1936.



"I AM A REALLY GREAT GOALIE!"

COKER tells "GREYFRIARS HERALD" Interviewer

Our Interviewer met Coker outside the Fifth Form games study. Coker came flying out of the door on the tips of a dozen shoes, and hit our Interviewer broadside on, and our Interviewer hit the passage floor with a bump that made the windows rattle!

Coker got up first. He pushed back his hair, gritted his teeth, clenched his fists, and made ready to charge back into the games study. But our Interviewer got his breath back just in time to stop him.

"Half a mo' Coker!" he gasped. "I've got to interview you for the 'Herald' before we go to press. About football. Following on your appearance for the Fifth as goalie to-day, the Editor wants your opinion about goalkeeping and—"

"H'm! Well, perhaps I can spare a minute for that!" growled Coker. "Matter of fact, it's just what I'm arguing about with those idiots in the games study. I'll tell you what I told them. I am a really great goalie!"

"Really great goalies appear at only rare intervals in history. One of those rare intervals has happened to-day."

"It's funny, when I come to look back on it, that I never realised before how gifted I was in this direction. I knew, of course, that I was a marvellous forward,

a matchless half, and a supreme full-back. But somehow it didn't occur to me that I might be a great goalie!"

"All that is different now. I'm no longer in the dark about my own capabilities, and now I know what I can do, I shall go from strength to strength. Already I foresee the day when teams like Arsenal will be on their knees before me, begging me to come and play for them!"

"Yes, but half a minute, old sport!" gasped our Interviewer. "Isn't it a fact that your opponents this afternoon scored fourteen times without reply while you were in goal?"

"That's just what those fatheads in the games study are saying!" snorted Coker. "They don't seem to realise that it was their fault—not mine! Even the world's greatest goalkeeper can't save the game when the rest of his side are nitwits and numskulls!"

"My hat! Have you told them that?" "I have—and they slung me out!" roared Coker. "Now I'm going to tell 'em again—only in plainer language this time! Stand aside!"

And Coker lowered his head like a buffalo on the warpath and charged back to the games study. And our Interviewer decided to beat a hurried retreat!



BUMPING THE HEAD IS GOOD CLEAN FUN!

Says BOLSOVER MAJOR

I've tried a good many pastimes at Greyfriars, but I must say I've never come across one more diverting than bumping the Head!

Up to this week it had never occurred to me that bumping the Head was even possible. If anyone had suggested it to me, I should have told them I didn't want the skies to fall in, so I'd rather not have a hand in it, thanks all the same!

But the way it happened, I couldn't possibly turn it down. You see, it was the Head himself who ordered me to bump him!

Keep your seats, chaps, though. No need to get seriously alarmed. The beak hasn't gone completely off his rocker, or anything like that. As a matter of fact, the explanation is quite simple.

It was just one of those ancient ceremonies of beating the bounds, carried out at Greyfriars every

ten years from time immemorial, to show all and sundry the boundaries of the school lands. For reasons which I don't mind telling you are quite beyond me, four boys belonging to the school have the privilege of bumping the Head on this rare occasion—and I was one of the four!

The other three looked quite funky about it when the Head chose them. The three were Hobson of the Shell, Smith Senior of the Fifth, and Walker of the Sixth. They handled the Head as though he was an Old Master—instead of an ancient schoolmaster! But I soon put a stop to this nonsense. I grabbed my corner of the beak and squashed his topper firmly over his ears.

"Ready, you chaps?" I asked them. They all

waited in the lane outside. But von Schyster seemed tireless.

If only he could prevent Spangler's sercuss from opening on the following evening, it would be impossible for Mr. Spangler to pay him back that old outstanding dett, and von Schyster would then get the sercuss, look, stock, and barrel!

With this thought to inspire him, Hair von Schyster seemed to have the strength of an ox. For did he hezitate to treat the members of Doctor Birchermall's sercuss as so many carcasses? mutton. Knowing what was at stake, a man of von Schyster's kidney natcherally found such a task as easy as pie!

"Hoek, hoek, hoek! Dot vos der lot!" he gloated, at last. "Now for to drive mine viktim to a place where nobody will find them, hine? Und after dot, I sit back und wait for poor old Spangler's sercuss to drop

into mine hands! Ho, ho, ho!"

Still larking leeringly under his broth, the raskal locked up the back of his van then went round to the driver's seat, switched on the lights, and pressed the self-starter. A few seconds later the grate van was lumbering off down the lane, bearing a score of unconscious sercuss stars to an unknown destination.

Meanwhile, back in his study at St. Sam's, Doctor Birchermall was enjoying his froogal bedtime snack of bread and cheese and koko, and dreaming of the triumph that he hooped awaited his sercuss next day—in blissful ignorance of the fact that his performers had vanished just as surely as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up!

(Be sure you read the concluding instalment of Dicky Nugent's serial next week! "Eggscitement" and "joaks" in every line!)



he growled. A moment later he was herling the doennutts across the cage and wissling the lions to draw their attenshun to them.

The effect was instantaneous. The feroshus beasts, snarling hideously, wheeled round, spotted the doennutts, and made a rush to get them! And Mr. Justiss promptly seized the opportunity of getting out of the cage.

"Few! A narrow squeak, and no mistake!" he gasped, as he mopped his perspiring brow. "You saved my life, sir—for which I can never repay you in cash!"

"And you lost my doennutts—for which you can repay me in cash to the tune of one shilling, as soon as possible! Ta! And now, Justiss," went on the Head, as he pocketed Mr. Justiss' silver coin, "you'd better return to the House and have a rest to get over the shock. Have a good nite's sleep, my dear chap, and you will be prepared for the responsibul work which will be required from you to-morrow!"

The master of the Fifth was given no chance to complete his sentence. He caught a momentary glimpse of a masked face and heard the cudgel wissle through the air. The next moment the cudgel had caught him a fearful wack on the napper—and Mr. Justiss ceased to interest himself in things for an hour or two!

"Ho, ho!" cried the man in the mask, in a gloating voice, as his viktim thudded to the ground. "Dot vos goot, don't it? Now for to put him away mit safety before I get bizzzy mit der rest!"

He grasped the unconscious skoolmaster by the scruff of the neck and dragged him across the turf to a little side gate in the wall. The gate was ajar, and beyond it, in the lane, was a big furniture van with its lights switched off.

"This way, mine friend, don't it?" chuckled the masked scoundrell, and he coolly lifted his viktim into the back of the van and dumped him on some sucking. Then he returned to the football field.

Hair von Schyster—for nobody hearing the accent of the man in the mask could have doubted that it was the raskally German—was in luck's way. He had hardly reached the tent again before two more performers came out in the shape of Burleigh and Tallboy of the Sixth

going on more bizzily than ever. Mr. Justiss stepped out of the tent into the darkness of the nite.

Then a surprising thing happened. From out of the shadows stopped a mysterious, sinister figger, following close on the heels of the unsuspecting master of the Fifth! Nearer and nearer he crept, and as the distance between him and his quarry lessened, he brought to light an enormous cudgel.

For a time he man-nidged to dog Mr. Justiss' footsteps without making a sound. But all of a sudden a twig snapped beneath his feet, and his presence was betrayed.

Mr. Justiss turned round, a startled egg-clamation on his lips.

"What the merry dickens—"

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"Ho, ho!" cried the man in the mask, in a gloating voice, as his viktim thudded to the ground. "Dot vos goot, don't it? Now for to put him away mit safety before I get bizzzy mit der rest!"

He grasped the unconscious skoolmaster by the scruff of the neck and dragged him across the turf to a little side gate in the wall. The gate was ajar, and beyond it, in the lane, was a big furniture van with its lights switched off.

"This way, mine friend, don't it?" chuckled the masked scoundrell, and he coolly lifted his viktim into the back of the van and dumped him on some sucking. Then he returned to the football field.

Hair von Schyster—for nobody hearing the accent of the man in the mask could have doubted that it was the raskally German—was in luck's way. He had hardly reached the tent again before two more performers came out in the shape of Burleigh and Tallboy of the Sixth

going on more bizzily than ever. Mr. Justiss stepped out of the tent into the darkness of the nite.

Then a surprising thing happened. From out of the shadows stopped a mysterious, sinister figger, following close on the heels of the unsuspecting master of the Fifth! Nearer and nearer he crept, and as the distance between him and his quarry lessened, he brought to light an enormous cudgel.

For a time he man-nidged to dog Mr. Justiss' footsteps without making a sound. But all of a sudden a twig snapped beneath his feet, and his presence was betrayed.

Mr. Justiss turned round, a startled egg-clamation on his lips.

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