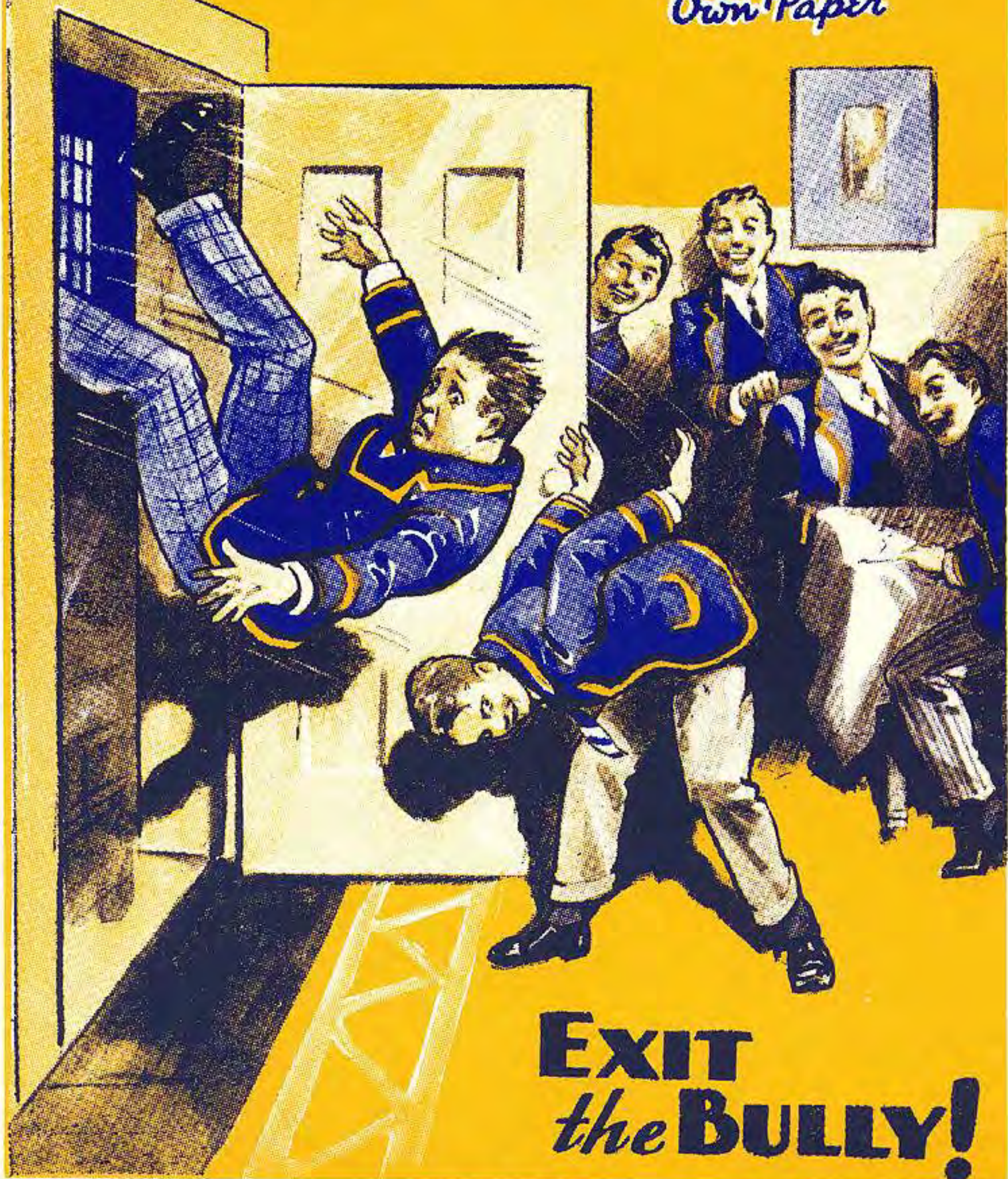


ONCE A PICKPOCKET—NOW A NEW BOY AT GREYFRIARS

SENSATIONAL
SCHOOL YARN
INSIDE.

The Magnet ^{2^D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*

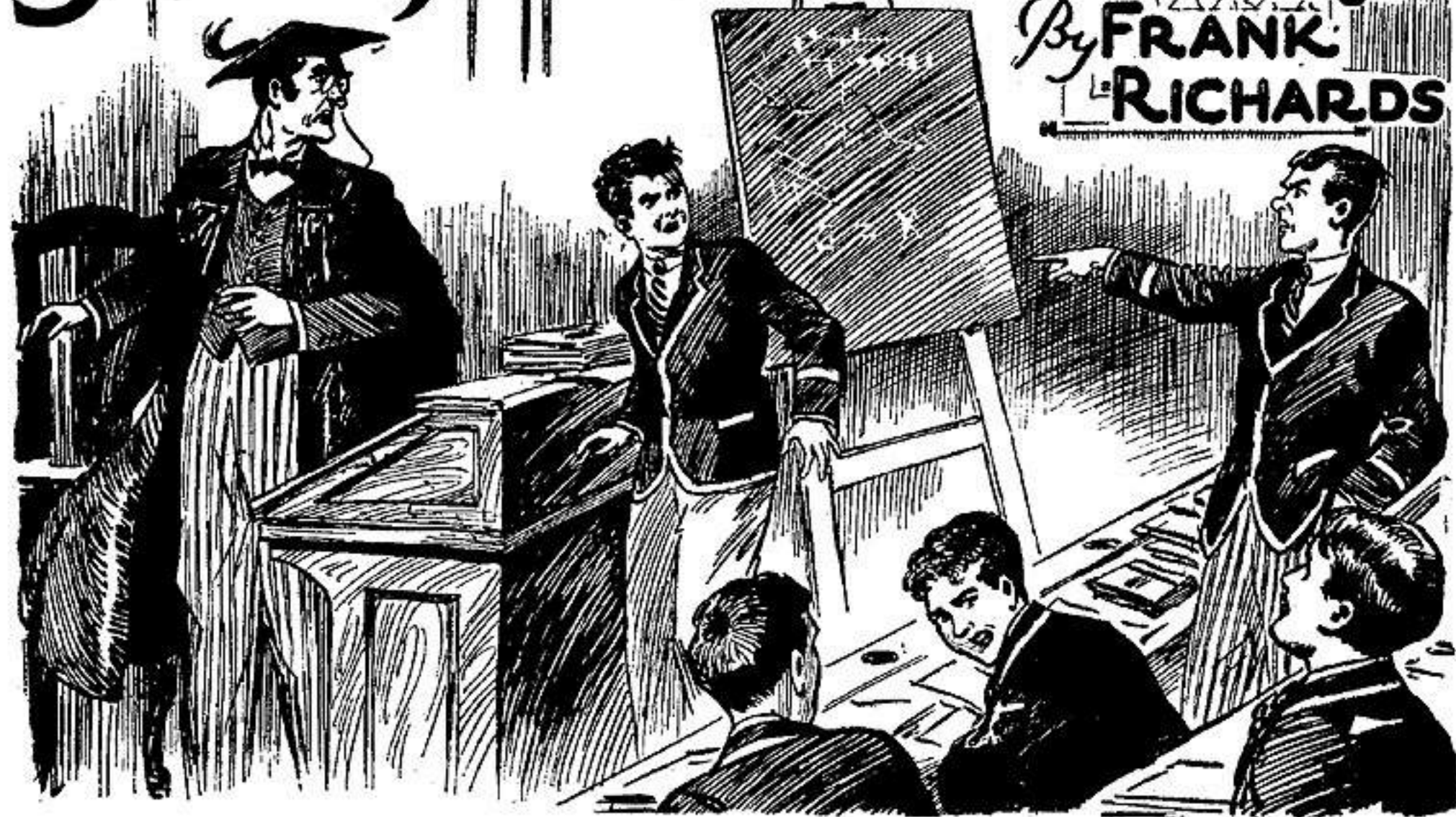


**EXIT
the BULLY!**

"GIVE ME A CHANCE, AND I'LL RUN STRAIGHT!" vows Skip. But Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, are not so ready to forget the new boy's past.

SKIP of the REMOVE!

By FRANK RICHARDS



As Skip entered the Form-room, Vernon-Smith rose to his feet and faced Mr. Quelch. "Are we to sit here with a thief, sir?" he asked.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Caught!

BILLY BUNTER lifted a fat hand half-way to a capacious mouth—and lowered it again hastily.

Mr. Quelch looked round at that moment.

The Remove-master of Greyfriars had an extremely disconcerting way of looking round just when a fellow didn't want him to.

Bunter had often found it annoying, but never so annoying as now.

Second lesson was in progress in the Remove Form Room. Every fellow had a Latin paper before him; and if some few of the Removites were interested in those Latin papers, Billy Bunter was not numbered among the few.

Mr. Quelch, sitting at his high desk, was busy with a pile of exercises he was correcting. Every now and then, however, he looked up; and Billy Bunter wished, from the bottom of his fat heart, that he wouldn't!

Bunter had been in luck that morning.

Just before class he had found a bag of toffees in Vernon-Smith's study.

Smithy probably supposed that those toffees were still in his study. Billy Bunter could have put him wise on that point. That bag of toffees was in Bunter's pocket, and the fat Owl's thoughts were concentrated, not on Latin, but on conveying those toffees surreptitiously from his pocket to his mouth.

But it was not easy under Quelch's gimlet eye.

Bunter had a pen in his right hand. In his left he had a chunk of toffee—

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all ready for conveyance mouthwards—if only a fellow got a chance!

But every time he blinked anxiously through his big spectacles at Quelch's bent head, to make sure that he wasn't looking, Quelch glanced up—just as if he had eyes in the top of his head, and spotted Bunter with them.

This time Bunter was nearly caught! He lowered his fat hand just in time, with the sticky toffee concealed in the palm, and scribbled industriously.

The gimlet eyes lingered on him for a moment.

Then Mr. Quelch bent his head again over that pile of exercises, and was busy once more.

Bunter scribbled Latin translation. Never had Latin appeared so weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable to Bunter! Toffee-less, he might have been able to give it some attention. But with a bag of toffees in his pocket, and a sticky chunk in his fat hand, how could a fellow possibly give his attention to such tosh? Bunter, at any rate, couldn't!

He was getting on with his paper somehow. By looking over Bob Cherry's shoulder, he was able to copy down what Bob wrote, and reproduce all his mistakes faithfully. Every now and then he blinked at Lord Mauleverer's paper, and reproduced Mauleverer's mistakes instead! But his thoughts were concentrated on the toffee.

Having allowed a few minutes to elapse, he fixed his eyes and his spectacles on Quelch once more.

Quelch seemed deep in those exercises. He was not looking up. Once more Billy Bunter's left hand rose cautiously towards his extensive mouth.

This time he got by with it.

The chunk of toffee was jammed in, and the fat hand dropped and left it there. And at that precise moment Mr. Quelch looked up again. His gimlet eyes fixed on Bunter.

Bunter bent his head over his Latin paper. He was aware that one fat cheek was bulging with that chunk of toffee. He did not want Quelch to notice it.

"Bunter!" came a deep voice from the master's desk.

Bunter trembled.

That chunk of toffee was sweet, and sticky, and delicious. But at that moment the fat junior wished it was anywhere but in his mouth!

"Oh yes, sir!" he gasped.

"Stand up, Bunter!"

"Oh lor!"

Bunter stood up.

All the Remove looked at him as well as Quelch.

Standing up, Bunter had to reveal the fact that his fat face was bulging with toffee. There was a general grin along the Remove.

"You are eating sweetstuffs in class, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh no, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You have something in your mouth, Bunter!"

"Oh no, sir! I—I— Urrrrggh!" The toffee slipped, in the way of utterance, and Bunter gurgled. "I—oogh—I—woooogh—oooooch!"

"Bunter—"

"Groooogh—"

"Stand out before the Form, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" Bunter packed the toffee into his fat cheek again, and was able to speak. "I—I haven't been eating sweets, sir—I haven't any toffee

—I shouldn't think of scoffing toffee in class, sir—"

"Stand out at once!"

"Oh lor!"

Bunter rolled out before the class.

With great artfulness, he stumbled against a desk as he went and dropped the chunk of toffee from his mouth under the desk. Wharton promptly put a foot on it, to conceal it from sight. That was not, perhaps, exactly in accordance with Wharton's duty as head boy of the Remove, but he did it.

Bunter rolled on and stood before his Form-master.

"Now, Bunter—" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Yes, sir!" said Bunter, quite cheerfully. "I've nothing in my mouth, sir. I—I hope you don't think I'd eat toffee in class, sir!"

"Have you any other sweetmeats about you, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Turn out your pockets on my desk."

"Eh?"

"Immediately!" said Mr. Quelch, picking up his cane.

"Oh jiminy!"

Slowly and reluctantly, Billy Bunter turned out his pockets. An interesting variety of articles came into view.

There was a handkerchief, fearfully in need of a wash. There was a stump of pencil, with an ancient bullseye adhering to it. There was a penknife with two broken blades and a flavour of aniseed balls. There was a French penny—the sum total of Bunter's wealth. But there was no toffee.

"Is that all, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Turn out the lining of your pockets."

Bunter blinked at him. This was Quelch all over, in dealing with Bunter. He would have taken almost any fellow's word in the Remove unquestioningly. For some reason with which Bunter was unacquainted, he seldom or never took Bunter's. Practically making a fellow out a liar before all the Form, as Billy Bunter bitterly reflected.

However, there was nothing for it but to obey; and the bag of toffees came to light, and Bunter duly laid it on the desk.

"I—I forgot that was there, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch. He swished his cane. "You can replace all those articles, Bunter, except the toffee."

Bunter replaced all the articles except the toffee.

"You will throw the toffee into the wastepaper-basket, Bunter."

"Oh crumbs!"

The bag of toffees had cost the Bounder one-and-six. Bunter certainly, had got it cheaper. But he was very unwilling to part with it. Slowly, very slowly, his fat hand lifted the bag to the wastepaper-basket under Quelch's desk. He held it there for a long moment, as if he really could not let it drop.

But it had to be!

It dropped—plump!—among the papers in the basket.

Bunter could have groaned as it went. It was a painful parting.

"Now, Bunter, you will bend over and touch your toes!" said Mr. Quelch, with another swish of the cane.

In the lowest of spirits, Billy Bunter bent over.

Whack!

"Ow!"

Whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

"You may go back to your place, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, laying down the cane.

"Ow! Yow!" groaned Bunter. And he went.

Mr. Quelch glanced at his class.

"Wharton!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You will take a hundred lines!"

"Oh!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch did not tell him why. Neither did his head boy need to ask. Only too evidently Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye had spotted the foot that was placed over the chunk of toffee on the floor.

Latin papers were resumed in the Remove-room.

When at last the juniors were dismissed for break, Billy Bunter's eyes and spectacles lingered longingly on the wastepaper-basket under Quelch's desk, as he rolled out with the Form! The gentleman who sang so feelingly of the girl he left behind him had nothing on Bunter, as his fat thoughts dwelt sadly and sorrowfully on the toffee he had left behind him!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Skinner Asks for It!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"There he is!"

"That's Skip!"

"Give him a hiss!"

whispered Skinner of the Remove.

"Shut up, you ass!"

To Skip, ex-professional pick-pocket, Greyfriars School seems like a new world. But there are many difficulties ahead for the new boy of the Remove!

Harry Wharton & Co., and most of the other Remove fellows, turned their eyes on the boy crossing the quad towards the House, as they came out in break.

In his looks there was nothing to account for so much curiosity directed towards the new junior.

He was a short, but rather sturdy fellow, with a chubby, good-looking face, and keen dark eyes. Dressed like any other Greyfriars junior, he looked much the same as any other. A stranger within the gates might have been surprised by the interest and curiosity he excited.

But "Skip of the Remove" was as all the fellows knew, the most unusual and remarkable new fellow that had ever happened at Greyfriars School!

In the first place, he had no name but Skip—if he ever had any other nobody knew it, not even himself.

In the second place he had been a pickpocket.

That fact was only too well known to the Famous Five, as they had come on him in the summer holidays, and he had picked their pockets!

All the fellows knew that he had saved Coker of the Fifth from having his nut cracked by a footpad. They all knew that Coker's Aunt Judy had befriended him in consequence.

But that Coker's Aunt Judy would ever be able to talk the Head over into

admitting such a character into Greyfriars, no fellow had ever dreamed.

But it had happened.

He was going into the Remove—and he was entering that day; and was to make his first appearance in the Form-room in third school that very morning!

Nobody wanted him in the Remove. It was pretty certain that Mr. Quelch did not want him. But the Head, for reasons that no doubt seemed good to him, had decided to give the boy a chance at Greyfriars; and Mr. Quelch had made up his mind to make the best of it. The Remove had to do the same.

No doubt that very unusual new boy would be kept under strict supervision. No doubt the chopper was ready to come down if he showed the cloven hoof, so to speak! Still, there it was—he was now Skip of the Remove, a Greyfriars junior; and as he walked across the quad, whistling, with his hands in his pockets, he looked as if he liked the idea.

Passing the staring crowd of Remove-ites, he glanced at them, evidently not in the least disconcerted by the general curiosity. Skip had plenty of nerve—and he was likely to need all he had in his new career at Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows, it's too jolly thick!" said Billy Bunter. "We all know jolly well that that chap was a pincher! Fancy a pincher in the Remove!"

"Only fancy!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Whose were those toffees you had in the Form-room this morning, Bunt?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He doesn't look a bad kid!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "I don't see why a fellow shouldn't be civil to him."

"You can be as civil to him as you like, Mauly," said Vernon-Smith, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I've got no use for pickpockets."

"Same here!" said Skinner.

"Well, he's landed here now!" remarked Harry Wharton. "If the Head's going to give him a chance, I suppose we can do the same."

"The samefulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"You're welcome to him in your study!" sneered Skinner. "If Quelch planted him in mine, I'd jolly well boot him out!"

"So would I!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "And I jolly well think that we ought to let Quelch know that we're not going to stand it."

"Go and tell him so!" suggested Frank Nugent.

There was a laugh, and Bolsover snorted. He was not likely to go to Mr. Quelch and tell him what he thought about it.

"Mind your pockets, you fellows!" called out Skinner, loud enough for Skip to hear as he passed.

"Shut up, Skinner!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"Rats to you!" answered Skinner. "I suppose it's necessary for fellows to mind their pockets with pinchers about, isn't it?"

Skip came to a halt and looked at Skinner. He did not colour, or look confused, as a fellow might have been expected to do! He grinned quite cheerfully.

"Don't you worry!" he said. "I ain't arter your pockets! I've chucked that there game, now I'm 'ere."

"What a fine flow of English!" remarked the Bounder, sarcastically. "That chap will be a credit to Greyfriars!"

"I've promised the 'Ead not to pinch

no more," added Skip, "and I can tell you coveys, I'm a bloke of my word."

"You're not wanted here," said Skinner. "This is Greyfriars—and your proper address, I think, is Borstal."

"Chuck it, Skinner," said Harry Wharton, sharply.

"Do you like pickpockets in the Form?" sneered Skinner.

"Never mind that; leave the kid alone!" said the captain of the Remove.

"He ought to be jolly well booted out of the place, and you know it!" said Skinner.

Skip gave Harold Skinner a warlike look.

"P'raps you'd like to try it on!" he suggested. "I'd bung you on the nose fast enough, and you can lay to that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What you got agin a bloke?" demanded Skip resentfully. "I ain't pinched nothing of yourn, 'ave I? I pinched off them blokes, Wharton and his pals, but they ain't jumping on a covey the minute they see 'im! You shut up your mouth, or I'll shut it up for you, see?"

And Skip, coming towards Skinner, displayed a set of knuckles right under his nose, so near that nose that Skinner jumped back.

"Keep your distance, you low cad!" gasped Skinner.

"You 'old your row, then!" said Skip. "I'd 'it you in the eye as soon as look at you, and sooner, ugly mug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Skinner, knock the cheeky cad down!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"I'm not going to touch the low rotter!" said Skinner loftily. As a matter of fact Skinner did not like the look of Skip's knuckles at close quarters!

"Ain't you?" exclaimed Skip. "Well, I tell yer the low rotter is a-going to touch you then, and touch you 'ard! Calling a bloke names for nothing! You take that!"

Smack!

Skiner backed away again, but not fast enough. A rather grubby hand landed on his features with a loud smack!

"Oh my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skiner, red with rage, made a jump at Skip. He was no fighting man, as a rule; but he was not going to have his face smacked.

He went for Skip with right and left, hard and fast.

"Stop that, Skinner!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Go it!" roared Bolsover major. "Give him jip, Skinner, old chap!"

The captain of the Remove ran forward to pull Skinner back. Bolsover barged into his way at once. Vernon-Smith, grinning, gave him a shove, and he sat down in the quad.

"Leave Skinner alone," said the Bounder. "Why shouldn't the cad be licked for his cheek?"

"You cheeky cad, Smithy—"

"Rats to you!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Man down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Skinner who was down. He was down on his back, hardly knowing how he got there. He had a feeling in his chin as if a mule had kicked him.

Skip grinned down at him.

"'Ave another?" he inquired.

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"By gum, that kid can punch!" said Bob Cherry.

Skiner sat up, holding his chin. Then he scrambled to his feet, and clenching his fists, ran at Skip. The next moment they were fighting hammer and tongs. With his chin feeling as if it had been knocked off, Skinner forgot that he was no fighting-man, and put his beef into it.

"Cave!" called out Hazeldene.

"Ware beaks!"

"Here comes Quelch!"

"Look out!"

Mr. Quelch, with a thunderous brow, came striding from the House. He had been in his study, where Skip had instructions to present himself; and as Skip had not arrived, he had come to the door to look out for him—in time to see him engaged in desperate combat with Skinner.

"Boys!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "How dare you? Cease this at once! Skip—Skinner—do you hear me?"

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" gasped Skip. He dropped his hands instantly.

Skiner did the same, and stepped back, panting.

Mr. Quelch gave him a stern look.

"Skinner! How dare you—"

"He smacked my face!" muttered Skinner, sullenly.

"And why?"

Skiner did not answer that.

"You will take two hundred lines, Skinner!"

Skiner gritted his teeth.

Mr. Quelch glanced round over the Removites. "I expect the boys of my Form," he said, "to show some consideration to this lad, in view of his unfortunate past. It is your duty, Wharton, as head boy, to see that such consideration is shown him. Skip, come with me."

"Yessir."

Skip, rubbing his nose, followed the Remove master into the House.

Skiner breathed hard and deep.

"I'll pay the cad out for that!" he muttered.

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, angrily. "Why can't you let the kid alone! You've got me a jaw from Quelch! I'd have stopped you, fast enough, if that cheeky fool Smithy hadn't barged me over. I've a jolly good mind to punch your head, Vernon-Smith."

"Get on with it!" jeered the Bounder.

Harry Wharton looked, for a moment, like taking the Bounder at his word. But he restrained his anger, and walked away with his friends, with a ruffled brow.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Laying the Trap!

"WHERE'S Quelch?"

"That's all right—he's in his study with that new cad!"

"Right as rain!"

"Go it, Bolsover, old bean!"

A little group of juniors had gathered under the window of the Remove Form Room. That window was wide open, to admit the sunshine and the breeze of the bright, sunny October morning.

Any fellow, with a "bunk" from outside, could have climbed in at that window, and dropped into the Form-room. Bolsover major, lifting himself by the sill, looked in, to make sure that the Form-room was vacant.

Sometimes Mr. Quelch might be there, in break. But the room was vacant now; the Remove master was in

his study with Skip. He would not be coming to the Form-room till the bell rang for third school. Then, as usual, his Form would be waiting for him outside the door, to be let in by their Form-master when he arrived.

"Bunk a chap up!" said Bolsover.

"What-ho!" agreed Skinner.

"Perhaps you'd better come in, too, and lend me a hand!" suggested Bolsover.

"Well, safer for a fellow to stay here and keep watch, old chap."

"Snoop can do that, or Hazel."

"Well, you see—" murmured Skinner.

Bolsover major snorted.

"You mean that you funk it? Well, stick there, then!"

The three fellows outside, "bunked" the burly Removite up.

Bolsover major clambered clumsily in at the window.

Skiner, Snoop and Hazeldene grinned at one another. All three of them were keen on this rag—especially Skinner. But it was left to the reckless and bull-headed Bolsover major to take the risk.

Had Mr. Quelch happened, by chance, to enter the Form-room and discover that a fellow had climbed in at the window, there would certainly have been "six" of the best for the intruder.

True, there was little risk of that, as Quelch was occupied with the new boy. But such risk as there was, Bolsover's friends preferred to leave to Bolsover.

He was the fellow for it.

Deeply indignant and annoyed at the idea of a fellow like Skip being shoved into his Form, Bolsover major was more than ready to make himself unpleasant; and he was rather too dense to realise that he was acting the part of the cat in the story, who pulled the monkey's chestnuts out of the fire. Happily unaware that he was Skinner's catspaw, the burly Bolsover dropped heavily into the Remove Form Room.

"Keep cave, you fellows!" whispered Skinner. He pulled himself up by the sill, to watch Bolsover's proceedings within—ready to drop back, and scud, at a warning of danger.

Bolsover crossed to the door of the Form-room.

It was not locked; and he unlatched it, and drew it a few inches ajar. Then he placed a chair within to step on.

Taking the wastepaper-basket from under Mr. Quelch's desk, he emptied it where he stood—Bunter's bag of toffees rolling out with the wastepaper unheeded.

He carried the basket across to the fireplace.

Skiner grinned, as he watched him raking down soot with the shovel, to pack into the basket.

As soon as it was half-full, Bolsover lifted it, to carry to the door.

"Shove in some ink, old chap!" called out Skinner, in cautious tones, "There's a big bottle on the shelf in the cupboard."

"Oh, all right."

Bolsover major extracted the big bottle of ink from the shelf in the Form-room cupboard, and poured its contents on the soot in the wastepaper-basket.

Then, stepping on the chair inside the door, he landed the basket on the top of the stout oak door, leaning it against the lintel of the doorway.

So long as the door remained unmoved, that basket was safe. As soon as the door was pushed open it would descend, with a swoop, on the head of the person who pushed. That person, it was fairly certain, would be Henry

Samuel Quelch, the master of the Remove.

It was Mr. Quelch's invariable custom to let his Form into the Form-room for lessons, and they had to gather outside and wait for him.

Skip, the obnoxious new boy, might or might not get his share of the booby-trap—but there could be little doubt that Mr. Quelch would get a full and generous share. Which, Skinner hoped, would make him understand that the Remove did not want pickpockets in the Form; and also make him sorry for

mortar-board hardly reached the level of the high sill. He was, therefore, quite invisible to a fellow within.

That was rather unfortunate, in the circumstances, as Bolsover major was just going to swing out, in the happy belief that his friends were below.

Bolsover came out of the window backwards, to hang on to the sill and drop. His long legs, naturally, came first; and Mr. Prout, as he stared after Skinner & Co., was astonished to receive a sudden clump on the back of the head. Bolsover major had a large foot

Prout gave a yell of agony, and hopped.

Bolsover rushed to escape.

But he had nothing to fear from Prout. That gentleman had lost interest in his assailants—lost interest in everything but his corn.

Prout, standing on one leg like a stork, clasped the other foot with both hands, hopped, and moaned.

Bolsover major vanished round the nearest corner—leaving the master of the Fifth hopping and moaning.



Billy Bunter's hand rose cautiously towards his extensive mouth, and the chunk of toffee was jammed in. At that precise moment, Mr. Quelch looked up. "Bunter!" came a deep voice. The fat junior wished the toffee was anywhere but in his mouth.

having given a fellow two hundred lines for punching a pickpocket's head.

Bolsover major grinned round.

"All right, what?" he asked.

"Right as rain, old bean!" chuckled Skinner. "Better cut now!"

Bolsover nodded, and took away the chair he had placed inside the door.

From behind Skinner came a whisper, from Hazel.

"Cave!"

Hazeldene and Snoop cut off at once. Skinner dropped, and cut after them. They did not think of stopping for Bolsover. He had taken the risk of getting into the Form-room, and he had to take the risk of getting out again.

Three juniors vanished like spectres at cock-crow, as Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, came rolling along the path under the Form-room windows.

Mr. Prout stared after them, rather suspiciously.

They scudded too fast for him to recognise them; but that sudden departure made the Fifth Form master suspicious.

He came to a halt, under the open window of the Remove-room, and stared after the vanishing three.

Prout was a big man sideways; but vertically he was not extensive, and his

—with a large boot on it! It gave the Fifth Form master quite an unpleasant clump on the back of his majestic head.

"Ooooh!" gasped Prout. "What—"

He spun round, just in time to receive Bolsover major's other foot—this time in the eye!

"Oooooop!" spluttered Prout.

He staggered.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bolsover major. Hanging on the sill, with dangling legs, he stared round—at Prout!

"Boy!" gasped Prout.

He made a grasp at Bolsover.

Bolsover promptly dropped, to run. He had no intention whatever of landing on Prout's foot. It was really Prout's fault, for putting it in the way.

But he did land on it; and his heel ground into Mr. Prout's favourite corn!

The yell that came from Mr. Prout woke most of the echoes of Greyfriars School.

That corn of Prout's was no common corn. It had been Prout's companion for years on end. It had, so to speak, grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength. The slightest tap on that corn gave Prout a severe twinge. Now the biggest and heaviest fellow in Greyfriars Remove landed on it, full weight!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bad Luck For Bunter!

"SEEN Bunter?"

"Yes!"

"Where?"

"In the Form-room this morning!"

"You silly idiot!" snapped the Bounder, and he stalked on, leaving William Wibley grinning.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had been up to his study—for a bag of toffees he had left there. He had not found them. But as soon as he missed them, he remembered Bunter's exploits with toffee in second school. So he had no doubt whose toffees had been consigned to Mr. Quelch's wastepaper-basket.

Now he was looking for Bunter, and asking every fellow he met if he had seen the fat Owl.

Tuck that fell into Billy Bunter's fat hands was generally beyond recall. It went rapidly by a route that its owner could not possibly follow. But on this occasion Smithy's toffees had not followed the downward path in Bunter's extensive gullet, owing to the keenness of Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes in the Form-room. Those toffees were recovered.

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able—and Billy Bunter was going to recover them for their owner, or take the consequences—which, judging by Smithy's look, were going to be extremely unpleasant.

"Seen Bunter?" he called out, as he came on the Famous Five in the quad.

"Lots of times!" answered Bob Cherry.

"You fool——"

"Same to you, old bean, with knobs on!" answered Bob affably.

"That fat scoundrel bagged those toffees from my study, before class!" snapped the Bounder. "He's going to get them back for me. Where——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Talk of angels!" grinned Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter rolled up. He did not notice the angry Bounder for the moment. He fixed his eyes, and his spectacles, on Harry Wharton & Co.

"I say, you fellows, my postal order hasn't come!" he said. "I've looked in the rack, but—it hasn't! It's jolly queer, you know, as I was expecting a postal order from one of my titled relations. I say—— Yaroooooh! Leggo my neck, Smithy, you cad! Wharrer you grabbing a fellow for?"

"I want my toffees!" said Smithy, gripping the fat Owl by the back of a fat neck. "And I want them now!"

"Owl! Leggo! How should I know anything about your rotten toffees?" gasped Bunter. "Think I went into your study and bagged them, you beast!"

"I know you did!"

"I say, you fellows, make him leggo!" howled Bunter, wriggling. "I never had his toffees! I never went into his study before class, and the toffees weren't on the table, or I should have seen them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make him leggo, you fellows! If anybody had his toffees, I expect it was that fellow Skip—you know he's a pick-pocket. I don't know anything about them, Smithy! They weren't on your study table when I looked—besides, I left them untouched when I went out of the study. Not that I went into your study before class, you know—I wasn't up in the Remove passage at all. I was in the quad—talking to Temple of the Fourth. I remember I was saying—— Yaroooooh! Leggo! Stop kicking me, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to get back my toffees from Quelch's wastepaper-basket?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"They ain't your toffees! Owl! Leggo, I tell you! Suppose Quelch spotted me going into the Form-room for them, you beast! It would mean six!"

"I'm going to kick you till you do!"

"I say, you fellows, make him leggo!" wailed Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned, and walked away, leaving the fat Owl in Smithy's grip.

If the grub-raider of the Remove bagged a fellow's toffees, he had to suffer for his sins. Even a good-tempered fellow might have been annoyed—and Smith was not exactly a good-tempered fellow.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter, in dismay. "I say, old chaps—I say, you rotten beasts! Leggo, Smithy, you cad!"

The Bounder's foot landed again on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars.

Bunter gave a yell of anguish.

"I'm waiting for those toffees, Bunter," said Smithy grimly. "I'm going to keep on kicking you till the

bell goes, if you don't hand them over!"

"How can I hand them over, you boast, when they're stuck in Quelch's wastepaper-basket in the Form-room?" wailed Bunter. "I'd have gone in for them already, only Quelch might spot a chap."

Thud!

"Owl! Wow! I—I say, Smithy, they ain't your toffees, old fellow—they really ain't. Most likely that pal of yours, Redwing, had them. I don't trust him. I say—yaroop!"

Thud!

Billy Bunter wriggled and roared. The Bounder's grip was like iron, on the back of his fat neck. And the Bounder's boot landed hard.

"Look here, you beast, they're not your toffees, but you can have them if you like to cut in and get them!" gasped Bunter.

Thud!

"Owl! Wow! I'll go and get them, you beast, if you like!" shrieked Bunter. "Leggo my neck, you cad, and I'll go!"

"I'll come with you, then!" said Smithy grimly.

"You needn't trouble——"

"No trouble at all!" said the Bounder, with grim sarcasm. "Pleasure! Come on! You don't get out of my sight till I've got that bag of toffees!"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter. "Look here, I'll stand you another bag of toffees, just the same, as soon as my postal order comes——"

Thud!

"Yaroorh! Leave off kicking me, you beast! I'm going, ain't I?" howled Bunter.

And he went!

Going into the Form-room after those toffees meant risking "six" from Quelch's cane. But six from Quelch's cane, though disagreeable, was not really so bad as an unlimited number of bootings from the Bounder. Besides, the "six" was only a risk, and the bootings were a certainty! The Owl of the Remove dismally made up his fat mind to it!

He rolled away to the House—conveyed by Herbert Vernon-Smith. Bunter had no chance of dodging.

He blinked anxiously at Mr. Quelch's study window as he passed—and was comforted by a glimpse of the Remove master there! Quelch was still in his study, talking to Skip, so the coast was clear so far as the Form-room was concerned. It was near the end of break now, but Bunter had a few minutes. He rolled into the Form-room passage—with Smithy close behind.

"I—I say, Smithy!" he gasped. "I say, there's that beast Hacker at the end of the passage——"

"Never mind Hacker!"

"He might tell Quelch——"

"Are you going to get those toffees?"

The Bounder drew back his foot.

"Owl! Beast! Yes!"

"I'll wait here! Buck up!"

"Rotter!" groaned Bunter. "All this fuss about a bob's worth of toffees, and you jolly well know I never had them! I—— Keep off, you beast!"

Leaving Vernon-Smith waiting at the corner of the passage, the fat Owl rolled up to the Remove door.

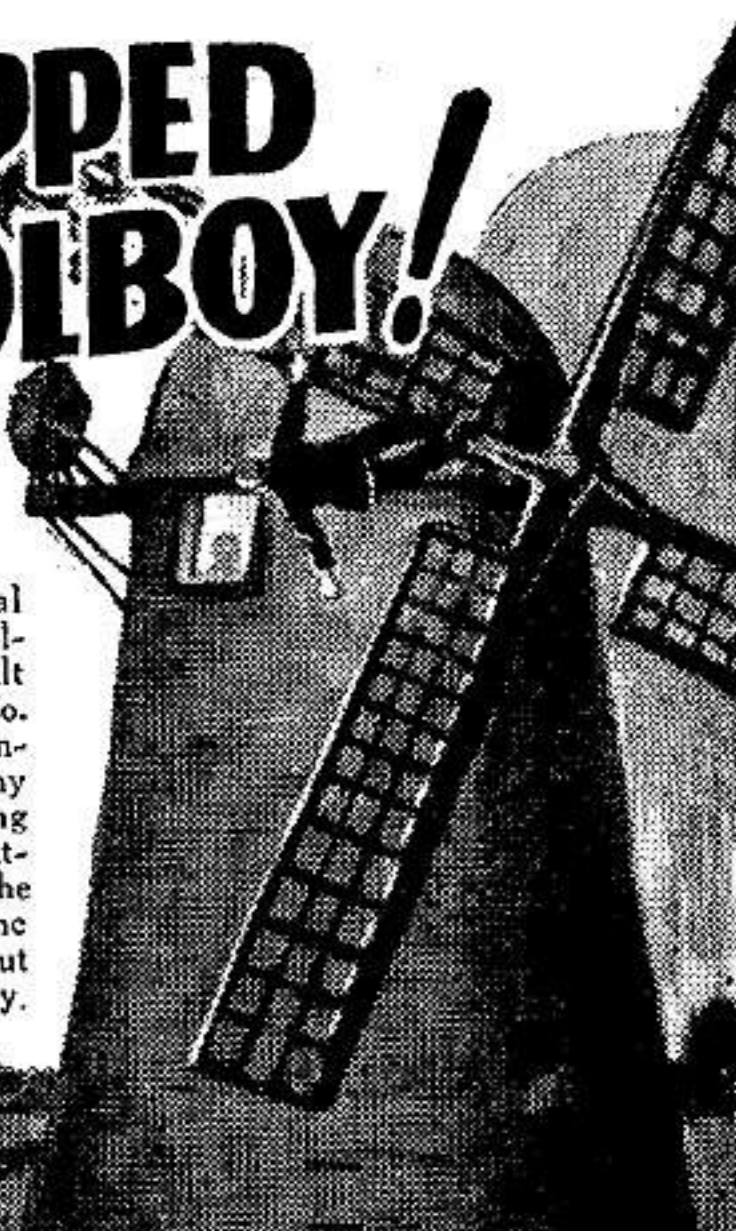
Farther up the passage, Mr. Hacker was standing, talking to Mr. Capper in the doorway of the Fourth Form Room. Luckily, the master of the Shell was not looking round. Bunter had to take the risk of that. The Bounder's boot was overwhelmingly persuasive.

The fat junior arrived at the door of the Remove-room. There he paused and

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hesitated, casting an uneasy blink up the corridor towards Mr. Hacker, and a fierce and inimical blink down the corridor at Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder gave him a black look. Bunter made up his mind to it. He pushed open the Remove door, which stood ajar, and rolled in.

What happened next, Billy Bunter hardly knew!

Crash! Swoosh! Smother!

"Yurrrrrggh!" spluttered Bunter. Something descended on his head from the top of the door. It lodged on his head like a very large hat coming down over his ears and resting on his shoulders!

Its contents streamed over him. Soot, clammy with ink, smothered the astounded fat Owl from head to foot. He gasped and gurgled and guggled, in wild horror and amazement.

"Urrrrggh! Wurrrggh! Gurrerggh!" He staggered out of the doorway, streaming with soot, and with the wastepaper-basket still jammed on his head.

"Woooooorrrrrggh!" came spluttering from the interior of the basket.

Vernon-Smith stared at him transfixed. He had no knowledge of Skinner & Co.'s booby-trap in the Form-room. Neither had Bunter. Now they both learned of it at once.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder. "Urrggh! Wurrggh! Grooogh!"

Mr. Hacker spun round, and stared. Mr. Capper put his head out of the Fourth Form Room, and stared. They stared blankly. Never had such a remarkable sight been seen in the Form-room passage.

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Hacker.

"What?" gasped Mr. Capper.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Smithy.

"Gurrerggh!" gurgled Bunter, staggering blindly, and spluttering frantically. "I say—gurrerggh! Oooooogh! I'm chook-chook-choking! Gurrerggh! Wurrrggh! Oooooch!"

The bell for third school began to ring. Billy Bunter did not hear it. His eyes and ears and nose and mouth were full of inky soot; and the hapless Owl could only totter and splutter and gurgle and gasp.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Man!

MR. QUELCH rose to his feet. "You may come with me—er—Skip!" he said.

"Yessir!"

"Please do not say 'yessir,'" said Mr. Quelch mildly. "Yes and sir are two words, Skip, and should be divided."

"Yessir!"

"Please say 'Yes, sir!'"

"Yessir!"

Mr. Quelch gave it up, and crossed to his study door.

He had had a last long talk with Skip before introducing that rather peculiar new boy into his Form.

On the whole, Mr. Quelch, a little to his surprise, rather liked the boy.

Skip was bright and cheerful and intelligent; and evidently, tremendously bucked at finding himself a Greyfriars fellow. He promised that anything in the nature of pinching should be definitely a thing of the past; and Mr. Quelch, though dubious, had an impression that he would keep his word.

If he failed to do so, he had to leave Greyfriars immediately at the first offence! And he was clearly anxious to stay and make the most of this wonderful chance that had so unexpectedly come his way.

Neither was he so backward in educa-

tion as Mr. Quelch had feared. He had had little of school of any kind; but he was intelligent and quick, and anxious to learn.

He could not take his place in Form with the rest of the Lower Fourth, which meant a great deal of separate tuition and extra work for a Form-master who already had plenty to do. But Mr. Quelch was a kind-hearted man—and prepared to take trouble for the benefit of the little waif. If Skip was keen to learn, he had ready help to expect from Mr. Quelch—and he seemed very keen indeed.

But, in the circumstances, it was fairly certain that Skip had a hard row to hoe in the Greyfriars Remove, and Mr. Quelch doubted very much the wisdom of placing him there. Still, that had been decided by his chief; and Quelch, as a loyal member of the staff, was prepared to give his chief every possible support.

Skip, grinning cheerfully, followed him from the study.

To the boy whose early years had been passed in such places as Slummock's Alley, and among such associates as Barney the Binger, and Jimmy the Rat, Greyfriars School seemed like a new and dazzling world. He could hardly believe that he really was a Greyfriars boy now, like those well-dressed "blokes" he had seen in the quadrangle.

He hoped that the blokes would be friendly, and give a covey a chance! He was far from realising the difficulties ahead.

To poor Skip, owing to his strange training, pinching came almost as naturally as breathing. He was quite ready to promise to give it up, and to keep that promise, as the Head and Mr. Quelch made such a point of it. But he was very far from understanding the horror with which a thief was regarded by ordinary fellows. In Slummock's Alley they pinched as a matter of course—and between Slummock's Alley and Greyfriars School was a great gulf fixed—which was not easy to bridge.

He followed Mr. Quelch with a bright face.

The bell had begun to ring for third school; and Mr. Quelch expected to find his Form gathering at the Form-room door. But he was very far from expecting what greeted him as he stepped into the Form-room passage.

Wild, weird sounds greeted him as he arrived.

"Urrggh! I say—gurrerggh! Ooooooch!"

"What?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

The Bounder was there, roaring with laughter. A dozen Removites had come in; they were roaring, too! The extraordinary figure staggering and tottering outside the Remove door seemed to strike them as funny!

Mr. Quelch stared at it with starting eyes! Skip stared at it, and chuckled. There was a roar in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that Bunter?"

"Poor old Owl!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

He strode forward. The Form-room door was open, and in the doorway lay soot in heaps. It smothered the floor, inside and out. Most of all, it smothered Billy Bunter.

The fat Owl had succeeded in getting the wastepaper-basket off his head. His head emerged as black as the ace of spades. His fat features had disappeared under soot. The blackest Hottentot in the African jungle was not so black as William George Bunter.

"Is—is—is that Bunter?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Oooooogh!"

"What has happened here?"

"Groooooogh!"

"Answer me, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Gurrerggh!"

Bunter clawed and dabbed wildly at soot. He blinked sootily at his Form-master through sooty spectacles.

Mr. Quelch glared at him. He glared at the wastepaper-basket on the floor, and the soot in the doorway. He understood. A booby-trap had been fixed up at the Remove door—and Bunter, butting into the Form-room without leave, had been the fellow to bag it!

The Remove-master compressed his lips with anger.

He could guess for whom that booby-trap had been intended. Bunter, evidently, had not known that it was there; neither had the ragger known that Bunter was going to barge in. But for Bunter, it was Mr. Quelch, his own stately self, who would have pushed open that door, and bagged the basket of soot.

Quelch's eyes gleamed like cold steel.

"Bunter!"

"Urrrrggh!"

"I think I can guess, Bunter, why you went to the Form-room without leave in break." Quelch remembered the toffees. "It is, perhaps, fortunate that you did so, and therefore I shall not punish you."

"Gurrerggh!" gurgled Bunter. He could see nothing fortunate in it.

"Go away at once, Bunter, and clean yourself and change your clothes! You are excused this lesson."

"Woooooogh!"

"Wharton!"

"Ha, ha! I mean, yes, sir!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"There is no occasion for laughter, Wharton! Take Bunter away at once!"

"Oh! Yes, sir! Come on, Bunter!"

"Urrrggh!"

Wharton led Billy Bunter away—leaving a trail of soot behind him as he went, and gurgling horribly.

Mr. Quelch scanned the juniors in the passage. Then, with compressed lips, he walked away to summon Trotter with mop and pail. That awful smother of soot had to be cleaned up before the Removites could get into their Form-room. The look on his face as he went rather checked the merriment of the juniors.

"Henry's ratty!" murmured Bob Cherry. "There's toco to come for somebody! Who on earth did this? You, Smithy?"

"Not guilty!" grinned the Bounder.

"It's rather in your line!" remarked Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, quite! But not guilty, all the same!" chuckled the Bounder. "Do you know anything about this, Skinner?" he added, as Harold Skinner came up, with Snoop, and Hazeldene, followed by Bolsover major.

"About what?" asked Skinner blandly.

"Booby-trap on the Form-room door!" said Johnny Bull. "Look!"

Skinner looked—and grinned.

"Poor old Quelch!" he said. "He must have been early—the bell hasn't stopped ringing yet! Well, the early bird catches the jolly old worm!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"So you meant it for Quelch?" he asked.

"I?" said Skinner, in surprise. "I know nothing about it, of course. Do you, Snoopey?"

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Chopper Comes Down!

"Not a thing!" giggled Snoop.
 "Same here!" said Hazeldene, grinning. All the same, I'm not sorry that Quelch has got a tip about what the Remove think of his shoving pick-pockets into the Form."

"Serve him jolly well right!" growled Bolsover major.

Skinner & Co. evidently were under the impression that Quelch had "got it," as per programme. Bunter had disappeared before their arrival.

"Well, the chap who did it had better look out for squalls!" said Frank Nugent, laughing. "Quelch knows jolly well that it was meant for him."

"Not hard to guess—as he got it!" said Skinner.

"But he never got it!" chortled Bob. "Bunter got it!"

"What?"

"Bunter!"

"What the thump?"

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

"Bunter!" gasped Skinner. "How on earth did Bunter get it? What did that fat idiot barge in for?"

"Ask Smithy!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bunder. "Why the thump didn't you put me wise, you ass, Skinner? I made that fat rotter go in for my toffees—"

"Oh, you silly idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You blithering dummy!" yelled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So Quelch never got it—or that young blackguard Skip, either!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"He doesn't look like it, does he?" grinned Bob, with a gesture towards Skip, who was standing in the passage where Mr. Quelch had left him.

Skinner & Co. had not noticed him there hitherto.

Skip grinned at them.

"So you meant that for me, as well as the old gent?" he exclaimed. "How'd you like me to tell him you done it?"

Skinner and Snoop and Hazel looked alarmed, but Bolsover major gave the new junior an aggressive glare.

"You can sneak to Quelch, you rotten cad, if you jolly well want to!" he snarled. "Think any fellows here care what you do, you rotten worm?"

"Shut up, Bolsover, you rhinoceros!" said Bob Cherry hastily. "Skip, old bean, you won't repeat anything you've heard to Quelch; that sort of thing is called sneaking here, and it's not done."

"I ain't going to tell the old bloke nothing!" said Skip. "I ain't a blooming telltale, if that's what you mean, young Cherry."

"That's exactly what I mean," said Bob. "Mum's the word!"

"I'm not asking any favours of him," snapped Bolsover major. "He can go straight to Quelch with it, for all I care."

"Shut up, you ass!" muttered Hazel.

"Ware beaks!" murmured Tom Brown, as Mr. Quelch came back with Trotter.

The Remove were rather late in for third school that morning—and one place remained vacant in the Form-room. All through third school Billy Bunter was in a bath-room, busy with hot water and soap cleaning off soot. He was still at it when the Form came out again; and when he turned up for dinner there were still many visible traces of soot about Billy Bunter.

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Skip came in with the Remove that afternoon, but his chubby face was not quite so bright as it had been in the morning.

He was with the Remove—but not, so to speak, of them.

Although he had had so far only one lesson in the Lower Fourth Form Room, that fact had been borne in on his mind.

In class he sat with a special lesson of his own; it was likely to be some time before he was able to join in the ordinary Form work. That alone marked him off from the Form.

But the looks of the Remove fellows marked him off still more.

Not only ill-natured fellows like Skinner, or overbearing fellows like Bolsover major, barred him; much better fellows took the same line.

The Famous Five were as good-natured as any fellows in the Form, and they felt rather sorry for Skip in a way and wished him well, but a fellow who had picked their pockets was not a fellow towards whom they could feel cordial.

They could make all sorts of excuses and allowances for him, and they did; but they did not want to have much to do with him.

Even Lord Mauleverer, who had the kindest heart ever, felt an irresistible repugnance towards contact with him.

In that brief morning Skip had realised that it was not going to be "roses, roses all the way" at his new school.

Having a spot of pugnacity in his nature, he was quite prepared to scrap with any fellow who made himself unduly offensive—as he had already shown in dealing with Skinner. Most of the fellows, however, did not make themselves offensive like Skinner and Bolsover; they simply wanted to keep clear of him—and that was not a kind of thing that could be improved by punching noses.

Mr. Quelch, of course, had foreseen this, and was not in the least surprised when he observed it. Skip had not anticipated it—being, as yet, ignorant of how unspeakably horrid it was to have pinched.

The Remove master was quite ready to deal with any open persecution of the new boy, as Skinner had learned; but that was all he could do. He could not make fellows associate with him if they did not choose to do so. Indeed, he was not sure that he desired it, considering Skip's extraordinary upbringing.

Skip, luckily, had plenty of high spirits and plenty of cool cheek. And in his strange young life he had come upon harder experiences than the disdain of schoolboys. A sneer from Skinner, a jeer from Snoop, or the turning up of Billy Bunter's little fat nose did not hurt like the buckled belt once wielded by Barney the Binger in Slummock's Alley. Bolsover major's brawny fists were not so disconcerting as a policeman's hand on a shoulder. All things considered, the little waif was in clover, and he was well aware of it.

So, though he was not looking so merry and bright, he came into the House quite cheerfully when the bell rang, and strolled up the passage with his hands in his pockets, whistling—a thing, of course, that no Greyfriars junior ever ventured to do.

"Here, young shaver!" called out Wingate of the Sixth.

Skip looked round.

"'Allo, you!" he replied. "What's biting you, old covey?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the Greyfriars captain. "Just a word, kid—juniors don't whistle in the House. Chuck it. See?"

Skip stood staring at the head prefect of Greyfriars.

"'Oo are you?" he demanded.

"Eh? I'm Wingate."

"You ain't a master 'ere?" said Skip.

"Eh? Oh, no!"

"Then you keep your blooming horders to yourself!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Bite on that, covey!" said Skip.

Wingate looked at him. Any other junior would have been told to bend over at once for answering a Sixth Form prefect in such style, but Wingate was a good-natured fellow.

"Look here, young shaver—" he began.

"You look ere, old shaver!" retorted Skip.

"I am a prefect," Wingate explained patiently. "Lower boys have to take orders from prefects. Understand that?"

"What's a prefect?" asked Skip. "Never 'eard of it!"

"Oh dear! A prefect is a Sixth Form man, with authority over juniors," the captain of Greyfriars explained. "If you argue with a prefect you get whopped."

"I'd jolly soon 'ack your shins!" said Skip.

"Oh gad!" gasped Wingate. He slipped his ashplant down into his hand.

On second thoughts, however, he tucked it under his arm again and walked away, laughing.

Skip stared after him rather belligerently and walked on to the Remove-room.

The Remove were gathering at the Form-room door. Some of them who had heard his talk with Wingate were grinning. Bob Cherry, always good-natured, spoke to the new junior as he came up.

"I shouldn't talk to a prefect like that if I were you, kid," he said.

"Well, you ain't me, are you?" said Skip. "I don't want any of his old buck, and so I can tell him!"

"Wingate's a soft ass!" said Vernon-Smith. "Loder or Walker would have whopped him for his cheek!"

Mr. Quelch came along to let in his Form.

The juniors grinned as they noted that he glanced rather suspiciously at the door before he opened it. He had not forgotten the booby-trap.

So far nobody had been called to account for that occurrence. Skinner & Co.—and especially Bolsover major—hoped that nothing more was going to be heard of it. That hope proved delusive.

When the Remove took their places Mr. Quelch did not begin the lesson at once; he stood regarding the Form with a baleful eye, then he rapped out four names in succession like bullets.

"Bolsover! Skinner! Snoop! Hazeldene! Stand out before the Form!"

"Copped!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The jolly old chopper's coming down now!"

"The copfulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The four juniors named stepped out of their places, looking extremely uneasy.

How Quelch knew they could not guess, but it was pretty clear that he did know. They remembered—rather too late to be of service—that Quelch



Mr. Quelch strode forward just as Bunter succeeded in getting the wastepaper basket off his head. "Is—is—is that Bunter?" he gasped. "Urrrgh!" gurgled the fat Removite, blinking sootily at his Form-master. "Woooooooooogh!"

was a dangerous man to jape. Such an amusement was rather like twisting a tiger's tail. It was clear that since third school Quelch had been making inquiries and was in possession of information.

"Bolsover!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!" muttered Bolsover major.

"What were you doing in the Form-room during break?"

Bolsover major breathed hard.

"You know what I was doing, sir," he answered sullenly, "and I know who's told you, too!"

And he gave Skip a black and venomous look.

Skip gave him a defiant stare in return.

"I ain't said nothing to nobody, face!" he said.

"Silence, Skip!"

"Yessir."

"I learned from Mr. Prout, Bolsover, that you jumped from the Form-room window, in break this morning, and stepped on his foot."

"Oh!" stammered Bolsover.

He realised that it was not Skip who had given him away. He had hoped that Prout had not recognised the fellow who had landed on his corn. Evidently, Prout had.

"Three other boys were seen by Mr. Prout," went on the Remove master. "Mr. Prout did not recognise them, but it is clear that they were concerned with you in this outrageous prank, Bolsover."

Bolsover was silent. He was an aggressive fellow, with an unpleasant temper, and a good deal of a bully. But he would have been whopped black and blue before he would have given his confederates away.

"From another source—a Sixth Form prefect—I have learned that you four boys were seen together, in break, on the path under the Form-room win-

dows!" said Mr. Quelch. "I have no doubt, therefore, that all four were concerned in this outrage."

Evidently Mr. Quelch had been making very careful inquiries, in all quarters. Skinner & Co. might really have expected that. A booby-trap in the Form-room was not a matter that a master like Mr. Quelch was likely to pass over.

"We never got into the Form-room, sir!" muttered Snoop.

"I certainly never did, sir!" said Skinner.

"Nor I, sir!" said Hazel.

"That is immaterial, if you were concerned in the matter," said Mr. Quelch. "If you deny that you were concerned in it, and that you were with Bolsover at the time, I shall require you to account for every moment during break this morning."

Skinner & Co. were silent. Obviously, they could not prove that they had been elsewhere, when they were with Bolsover major at the Form-room window.

"Have you anything to say?" asked Mr. Quelch grimly.

No answer.

"Very well! Take five hundred lines each, and remain in detention on Saturday afternoon to write them out!" said Mr. Quelch. "You may go back to your places. You, Bolsover, will be caned severely, as it was you who took the leading part." Mr. Quelch picked up his cane. "Bend over that chair, Bolsover!"

In sullen silence the bully of the Remove bent over the chair. He shut his teeth to keep back the yells as Mr. Quelch swiped.

The Remove looked on, with rather grim faces. Bolsover, really, had asked for it; but most of the fellows knew that

he had been Skinner's catspaw—and Skinner had got off with lines and a detention. And the infliction was severe enough to make any fellow sympathise with the victim.

Bolsover was silent under it till the fourth swipe fell. Then he could stand it in silence no longer, and he yelled. He was yelling, and roaring, and squirming by the time Mr. Quelch finished, and laid down the cane.

"I trust, Bolsover, that that will be a warning to you that the Form-room is not the place for unthinking practical jokes," said Mr. Quelch. "You may go."

Bolsover major wriggled back to his place, mumbling. He gave Skip a black and bitter look as he passed him.

Skip, in return, gave him a glance of cool contempt. That whopping, extremely severe from the point of view of the schoolboys, was a mere flicking, in Skip's eyes—nothing to what he had been through in his time. Skip's feeling was one of scorn for a fellow who could not take such a licking without yelling about it!

But whatever it might have been to the tough little rascal who was now a Removite of Greyfriars, it was severe enough for Bolsover major. He prided himself on being hard as nails; but that swiping had taken the stuffing out of him, and he wriggled and mumbled all through the class, his only consolation being the thought of what he was going to hand out to Skip later. As for handing out anything to Mr. Quelch, Bolsover major was not likely to think of that. It was likely to be a long, long time before Bolsover ventured again to play the dangerous game of twisting the tiger's tail!

As for Quelch, he led his Form patiently through the intricacies of specific gravity, disregarding the rebellious mumblings of Bolsover major.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Making the Best of It!

"Um!" said Harry Wharton.
"Um!" agreed Nugent, with a grin.

They were in their study, No. 1, in the Remove, after class. That study belonged now to Skip, the new boy, as much as to Wharton and Nugent.

Generally, the Famous Five tea'd together in that study, though sometimes they went along to Study No. 13, —Bob Cherry's study—or to Study No. 14, Johnny Bull's. But both Study No. 13 and Study No. 14 had other fellows in them, so when the five wanted to tea on their own they chose Study No. 1. Now, however, there was a difference. Not only was there a new fellow in the study, but that new fellow was one whose society was not yearned after by the Famous Five any more than by any other members of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Quelch asked me to do what I could for the kid, Franky!" said Harry, after an uncomfortable pause. "I'm bound to play up, as head boy."

"I'll help!" said Frank, with a grimace.

"But—"

"But—" agreed Nugent.

"The poor little beast must have been through awful things," said Harry. "I'm sorry for him, if you come to that. I'd do anything to lend the poor little rotter a hand. But—I can't stand him, Frank!"

"Same here!"

"He can't know any better, of course!" said Wharton. "We've got to remember that. If any of the fellows begin ragging, I'll stop them, fast enough."

"But—"

"Yes, but—" said Harry uncomfortably. "Of course, we can't pal with such a blighter, but—but—but I don't want to hurt him. It would be rather marked to bar the study because he's in it."

"We can't ask other fellows in to tea, with him here."

"I suppose they wouldn't like it."

"I know they wouldn't."

"The kid seems decent enough, from what I've seen of him," said Harry slowly. "Of course, I've not seen a lot, but—but, except that he was brought up to pinch, which is awful enough, I know, there doesn't seem to be a lot of harm in him. He's cleaner than Bunter, he's not malicious, like Skinner, and, from his looks, I don't believe he smokes, like Smithy. He's had everything against him, and, really, he must have a good bit of good in him not to have turned out worse."

"Oh, quite! But—"

"Well, I can't stand him, any more than you can; but—but look here, I hate the idea of making him feel an outsider. Let's have him in to tea, and treat him as an ordinary chap. After all, he doesn't bite!"

Frank Nugent laughed.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Put it to the other fellows, and if they don't like the idea—"

"Well, I don't see why they can't stand it, if we can. We'll put it to them, anyhow."

Harry Wharton looked out of the study into the Remove passage. Most of the fellows were coming up to tea. Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh had come up, with parcels under their arms from the school shop.

"Tea in my study!" called out Bob.

as he saw Wharton at the door of Study No. 1.

"Why not here, as usual?" asked Harry.

"Oh! All right!"

"The all rightfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"That new tick in the study?" asked Johnny Bull, with a grunt.

"Not yet, but I suppose he's coming up."

"Well, come along to my study, then! I'd rather not sit down to tea with a pickpocket, if you don't mind."

Harry Wharton coloured.

"Frank and I have made up our minds to stand him," he said. "I don't see why you fellows can't do the same. He won't pinch your watches."

"How do you know he won't?"

"Oh, rot!"

"I don't like pinchers!" said Johnny Bull. "We've jolly well scragged Coker for landing him on us, the cheeky ass. He oughtn't to be here. I'd rather keep my distance from him."

"So would I, but—"

"Oh, chance it!" said Bob. "Play up all round. Come on!"

Johnny Bull shook his head.

"Not for me!" he said.

"Lend a hand, Inky!" grinned Bob; and Hurree Janset Ram Singh lent a hand, and Johnny Bull was barged headlong into the study.

He gave a roar as he landed on the carpet, scattering his parcels.

"Look here—" he bawled, as he sat up.

"Shut up, man!" said Bob soothingly. "This Co. always sticks together. That swab's landed on Wharton, and we're bound to help him stand it."

"That's all very well—"

"Of course it is. Shut up, old man!"

Johnny Bull gathered himself to his feet. Johnny was looking obstinate. He did not like pinchers, and he did not trust pinchers, and he was not going, if he could help it, to have anything to do with pinchers. There was a very prominent spot of obstinacy in Johnny.

"I'm not going—" he began.

"No—you're staying!" agreed Bob.

"I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean—that's what I mean! Shut up, old man! You've got one fault in your otherwise perfect character—you talk too much!"

"You silly ass—"

"This 'ere my study?" asked a voice at the door. Skip looked in.

"This 'ere," said Bob Cherry gravely, "is your study! 'Op in!"

Skip came in.

"I've 'eard that the blokes 'ere 'ave tea in their rooms," he said, addressing the study generally. "But if you don't want to feed with me, I'll 'op it! I suppose I can get my tea with the blokes downstairs! If you don't want my company, I don't want your'n, and you can lay to that!"

"I don't!" said Johnny Bull curtly; and he walked out of the study.

Skip stared after him.

"That bloke belong 'ere?" he asked.

"Oh, no!"

"Then he don't matter, and he blowed to 'im. You two blokes, Wharton and Nugent belong 'ere, from what Mr. Quelch told me. Ain't that right?"

"That's right."

"Well, I never was a covey to butt in where I wasn't wanted," said Skip. "If you're going to put on hairs—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Hairs and graces," said Skip.

"Oh! Airst! Oh! Yes! No!"

"If you're going to put on hairs and graces, I'd punch your 'eads, as soon as look at you!" said Skip. "But Mr.

Quelch says, don't you get into quarrels, he says, like you did this morning, he says, and I'm going to do everything what Mr. Quelch says, like the 'ead-master told me to. So if you don't want me 'ere, spit it out, and I'll 'ook it!"

The four juniors exchanged glances. Certainly they did not want the former associate of Jimmy the Rat and Barney the Binger there. But something was due to good manners—and, after all, they felt a spot of sympathy for the boy who was rather like a fish out of water at Greyfriars.

"We always have tea in the study," said Harry. "No reason why you shouldn't, Skip."

"No reason at all!" said Nugent loyally.

"Your esteemed company will be a boonful blessing, my esteemed and ridiculous Skip!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Who's going to fill the kettle?" asked Bob Cherry, coming down to brass tacks, as it were.

And Skip of the Remove sat down to tea with four members of the Famous Five.

A few minutes later, the fifth member of the celebrated Co. put his head into the study.

They beckoned him in.

"What you want, face?" asked Skip.

"Shut up, you young ass!" said Bob.

"Roll in, Johnny!"

Johnny Bull rolled in. Johnny's bark was always worse than his bite; and if his comrades were going to make the best of it, Johnny Bull was going to make the best of it. And tea in Study No. 1 passed off quite amicably.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Surprise!

BOLSOVER major kicked open the door of Study No. 1, and stared aggressively in.

Behind Bolsover, in the Remove passage, were a dozen fellows or more; who had apparently come along for the entertainment.

The Bouncer was there, smiling sarcastically; his chum, Tom Redwing, frowning. Skinner was there, with a bitter face—Snoop and Hazel almost as bitter as Skinner. They were thinking of their Saturday afternoon, booked for lines; and rather unreasonably put it down to Skip's account—as Bolsover did his caning.

The three had been urging and egging Bolsover on—not that he needed much urging. He was still feeling severe twinges from the whopping in the Form-room; for which Skip was going to pay with interest.

"Oh! That cad's here, is he?" snorted Bolsover major. "You like thieves and pickpockets to tea in this study, do you?"

"That's enough!" interrupted Harry Wharton. "Get outside, Bolsover!"

"Take your face away and bury it!" suggested Skip. "What do you mean, walking about with a face like that? 'Naff to scare a dorg!"

There was a chuckle in the passage. Skip, at all events, was not overawed by the size and evident strength of the burly Bolsover. The Removites knew already that he had pluck, from what he had done for Coker of the Fifth. Clearly, Bolsover major did not alarm him, though his aggressive glare was quite alarming.

"You got me a licking to-day, you rotten pincher!" roared Bolsover.

Skip laughed jeeringly.

"Call that a licking!" he sneered. "You blokes must be made of putty 'ere. I'd be ashamed to 'oller like you did, for a few whops like that there! You made of butter?"

The Famous Five grinned. But Harry Wharton stood ready to intervene, when Bolsover major changed from words to actions. It was up to him, as head boy of the Form, and he was going to do his duty. And his chums were quite ready to lend a helping hand, if required.

"Come out of that study!" roared Bolsover.

"Shan't!" retorted Skip.

"I'm going to thrash you!"

"Think again!" suggested Skip. "If I 'it you, you'd 'oller and 'owl like you did this afternoon! You keep off while you're safe!"

Bolsover's rugged face was crimson with rage. Taunts from this young ragamuffin, whom he despised from the bottom of his heart, were rather too much to stand. He stepped into the study.

"Outside, please!" said Harry Wharton.

"I'm going to yank that scrubby little cur out, and thrash him!" roared Bolsover major. "I'm going to mop up the passage with him, see?"

"You're going to do nothing of the kind!" answered the captain of the Remove coolly. "You lay a finger on the kid, and you go out into the passage on your neck! Quelch has put it to me to see that he's not ragged or bullied—and I'm going to stop it, first shot."

"Mind your own business, Wharton!" called Skinner, from the passage.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You come in and whop him, Skinner, and I won't interfere," he said. "Bolsover's over his weight. You can handle him, if you like."

"Go it, Skinner!" grinned the Bounder.

Skinner did not go it. He scowled, and remained where he was. His experience with Skip in the quad that morning seemed enough for Skinner.

"All the same, there's no need for you to butt in, Wharton!" added the Bounder. "Leave Bolsover alone!"

"You can shut up, Smithy!"

"Well, you lay a hand on Bolsover, and I'm backing him up," said Vernon-Smith, "and other fellows here say the same."

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"Same here!" exclaimed Stott. And five or six other voices chimed in.

"You hear that?" jeered Bolsover. "If you want a scrap all round, you can barge in, Wharton. I'm going to thrash that cheeky young cad—"

"Stand back, or I'll knock you spinning!" was the answer of the captain of the Remove, as he stepped between Bolsover and Skip.

"Oo asked you to butt in?" inquired Skip, from behind him.

"Eh?" Wharton stared round at him in astonishment. "What?"

"I ain't asking you to protect me, that I knows on!" said Skip. "Think I can't 'andle that lout? Smoky 'addocks! If I couldn't, I'd 'ave 'ad a 'igh old time in the alley! Leave him alone, can't you?"

Harry Wharton gave him a look, compressed his lips, and stepped aside.

He was far from keen on entering into a fight with the burly Bolsover, and a row with the Remove generally, in defence of the unpopular new fellow; but he had been acting from a sense of duty. Skip's words, in the circum-

stances, were neither grateful nor comforting.

"Very well," he said, with closed lips. "If that's how you look at it, carry on. I'm done!"

Bolsover major, his way open now, towered over Skip, with clenched fists and jutting jaw.

"Come out of this study!" he snorted. "There's room for a scrap in the passage. Do you hear?"

"I ain't deaf, face!" answered Skip. "And if you want me out in the passidge, all you got to do is to 'ook me out!"

"I'll do that fast enough!" said Bolsover major. He glanced round at the crowded doorway. "Stand clear, you fellows, and give him room to drop!"

The juniors grinning, crowded back, to give Skip room to drop when Bolsover pitched him, neck and crop, out of the study.

The bully of the Remove jumped at Skip.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood back, without intervening, Skip had scornfully refused friendly protection, and he had to take his chance now.

He did not look like having much chance, against a fellow twice as heavy as himself, and inches taller. But appearances were deceptive.

Bolsover major grasped him in a bear-like hug, and swung him towards the door. But Skip twisted in his grasp like an eel; and suddenly, Bolsover never knew how, he was hooked over the new boy's back, his feet left the floor, and he flew.

Crash!

There was a roar from the juniors in the passage. They had given Skip room to fall when he was pitched out. But it was Bolsover major who fell, pitched out on his neck, and he fell with a terrific crash, and lay gasping and spluttering on the old oak planks.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

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"Great pip!" ejaculated Nugent.

Skip stood grinning.

The crowd in the passage stared at him, and stared at the sprawling Bolsover, as if they could hardly believe their eyes—and, indeed, they hardly could.

"Oh gad!" murmured the Bounder. "That kid's got beef in him, and mustard, too!"

"He doesn't seem to want protecting!" grinned Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha! No!"

Skinner gave Bolsover major a hand up. The bully of the Remove staggered to his feet, badly shaken.

He had hit the oaken floor hard, and he had more aches and pains distributed over him than he could have counted. But he was game. He stood panting for breath for a few moments; then, with set teeth, he rushed into the study again and hurled himself at Skip.

This time he did not think of pitching him out of the study. He had had enough wrestling. He attacked with both brawny fists hitting out like flails. Bolsover had little science; but his size and weight seemed overwhelming.

But they did not overwhelm Skip. He dodged like an eel, and a ham-like fist swept by his ear and another missed his cheek. Before Bolsover could punch again, a set of knuckles that seemed made of iron jammed under his jaw and almost lifted him from his feet.

He went backwards and crashed.

"Oh!" gasped a dozen fellows, as Bolsover major sprawled on his back in the doorway of Study No. 1.

"Phew!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Ow!" growled Skip.

He rubbed the knuckles of his right hand, barked on Bolsover's jaw.

For several long moments Bolsover major lay where he had fallen, all eyes on him. Then he sat up dizzily.

Both his hands went to his jaw. A dark bruise was already forming on his chin. He blinked at Skip dazedly.

Bolsover major was often in scraps, and he had scrapped with Fifth Form men, and had collected a good many hard knocks in his time. But even in combat with Bob Cherry, he had never collected such a left as that before. He felt as if every tooth in his head had been loosened, and his jaw ached horribly.

He had to hold on to the doorpost to get on his feet.

Skip gave him a mocking grin.

"Pack that up, kid!" said Bob Cherry quietly. "A Greyfriars man doesn't crow over a fellow."

Skip gave him a look. But he said no more.

Bolsover major stood leaning on the doorpost, panting, his hand to his jaw. He had come there to thrash the new junior, and it had been going to be a record thrashing. He was no longer thinking of that. He was tough and he was obstinate, but he shivered at the thought of standing up to another such jolt. Slowly he turned away.

"Chuckling it?" asked Skinner, deeply disappointed.

"Try him again!" urged Snoop.

Bolsover major did not answer. His jaw was too painful for speech. He turned in silence and tramped away to his own study.

Harry Wharton threw the door shut. He was far from pleased with Skip; but he almost smiled at the thought of having intervened to protect him. In the punching line, it was clear, Skip of

the Remove was not in need of protection. Neither was a fellow who packed such a punch likely to be much troubled in the fistical line again. There were few fellows in the Remove who could stand up to Bolsover major; and Bolsover, it was clear, could not stand up to Skip for a single round.

"You've got a pretty good punch for a kid of your size, Skip!" Bob Cherry remarked. "I'd like to have the gloves on with you in the gym some time."

"You'd better 'ave them on, that's a cert!" said Skip. "You'd get 'urt if you didn't, and you can lay to that!"

To which remark there was no reply in Study No. 1. Even Bob Cherry's good nature was chilled; and tea being over, the Famous Five went down, and Skip was left on his own.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Coker Chips In!

HORACE COKER frowned.

It was the following day, and Coker of the Fifth was in the quad with his friends, Potter and Greene, after morning school.

It was the sight of Skip that called the frown to Coker's brow.

Skip was walking in the quad by himself, with his hands in his pockets, and a slight cloud on his usually cheery, chubby face.

Harry Wharton & Co. were punting a footer about before dinner. A dozen fellows joined the Famous Five in punting the ball, Skip, certainly, could have joined in, had he liked—but he did not. Certainly, he wanted to. But under the rough, cheeky exterior of the peculiar new fellow in the Remove there was a spot of sensitiveness that few of the fellows thought of suspecting.

He was not wanted, and he knew that he was not wanted. So he kept clear. He "mooched" about by himself.

Skip had a sociable nature. He did not enjoy his own company. But he had found out, by this time, that his own company was all he had to expect in the Greyfriars Remove.

In his own study he was tolerated civilly. Wharton and Nugent, indeed, were more than civil; they were ready to help him in any way. The other members of the famous Co. were civil enough. But that was all. They did not want his company; and politeness in the Remove was not carried to the length of pretending to want a fellow's company if they did not want it.

Bolsover major was grimly unfriendly; but he let the new junior severely alone. Bolsover had a pain in his chin that was likely to last him quite a long time, and he did not want any more.

Nobody else had shown any desire to tackle Skip in the fistical line. Skinner's animosity was more bitter than ever; but the thought of standing up to the punch that had knocked out Bolsover major made him feel an inward sinking.

Only Fisher T. Fish had sought out the new junior—and it was only for the purpose of selling him a penknife for two shillings, which he had bought from a hard-up fag for threepence. But having made that sale, Fishy had no further use for the unpopular new fellow.

Strolling in the quad, on his own, Skip was not feeling very bright. He would have been glad to speak even to Billy Bunter; but Bunter, passing him,

turned up his fat little nose as far as it would go, and rolled on disdainfully.

Coker, observing all this, frowned.

It was through Coker that Skip was at Greyfriars at all. Coker regarded him as his protegee—under his protection. Coker was not pleased to see him thus isolated in his Form—though really, Coker might have foreseen it, had Coker ever foreseen anything.

"This won't do!" said Coker.

"Eh?" said Potter.

He had not noticed Skip, and was not in the slightest degree interested in that rather forlorn youth.

"Look at that!" said Coker, with a nod towards Skip. "Looks to me as if those scrubby young sweeps in the Remove are barring the kid."

Potter winked at Greene, who smiled.

"You didn't expect that, old man?" asked Potter.

"Eh? No! Certainly not!"

"You fancied they'd like a pick-pocket in their Form?" asked Greene.

"Don't be a silly ass, Greene! That is, if you can help it!" said Coker crossly. "The kid isn't a pick-pocket now. I've told him to chuck that entirely."

"And he does exactly what you tell him?"

"Of course!"

"You don't think he'll break out again, sooner or later?" asked Potter.

"I've told him not to."

"Oh! Does that settle it?"

"Certainly!"

"Oh!" said Potter again, with another wink at Greene.

The opinion of Coker's chums was, that of all the idiotic things old Horace had ever done, planting Skip at Greyfriars was the most absolutely idiotic. However, it was no use telling Coker so. Coker was satisfied with his own supreme wisdom, if nobody else was.

"I'm not letting this go on!" said Coker, knitting his brows. "Come this way, and let's see."

Coker walked across to Skip.

Potter and Greene promptly walked in the opposite direction. They had no desire whatever to be seen talking in the quad with Coker's pet pick-pocket!

"Here, kid!" said Coker, as he came up to Skip. "All on your own, what?"

Skip coloured uncomfortably.

He was grateful to Coker, and to Coker's Aunt Judy. But that had not altered his first impression of old Horace—that he was the biggest fat-head ever.

Coker's present proceedings were a choice sample of his tactless fathead-ness. Skip's one desire at the moment was that nobody should notice that he was lonely. Coker charged into the middle of his sensitiveness like a bull.

"I'm orlright!" muttered Skip.

"Don't they speak to you in your Form?" asked Coker. "Have they got the cheek to give you the cold shoulder?"

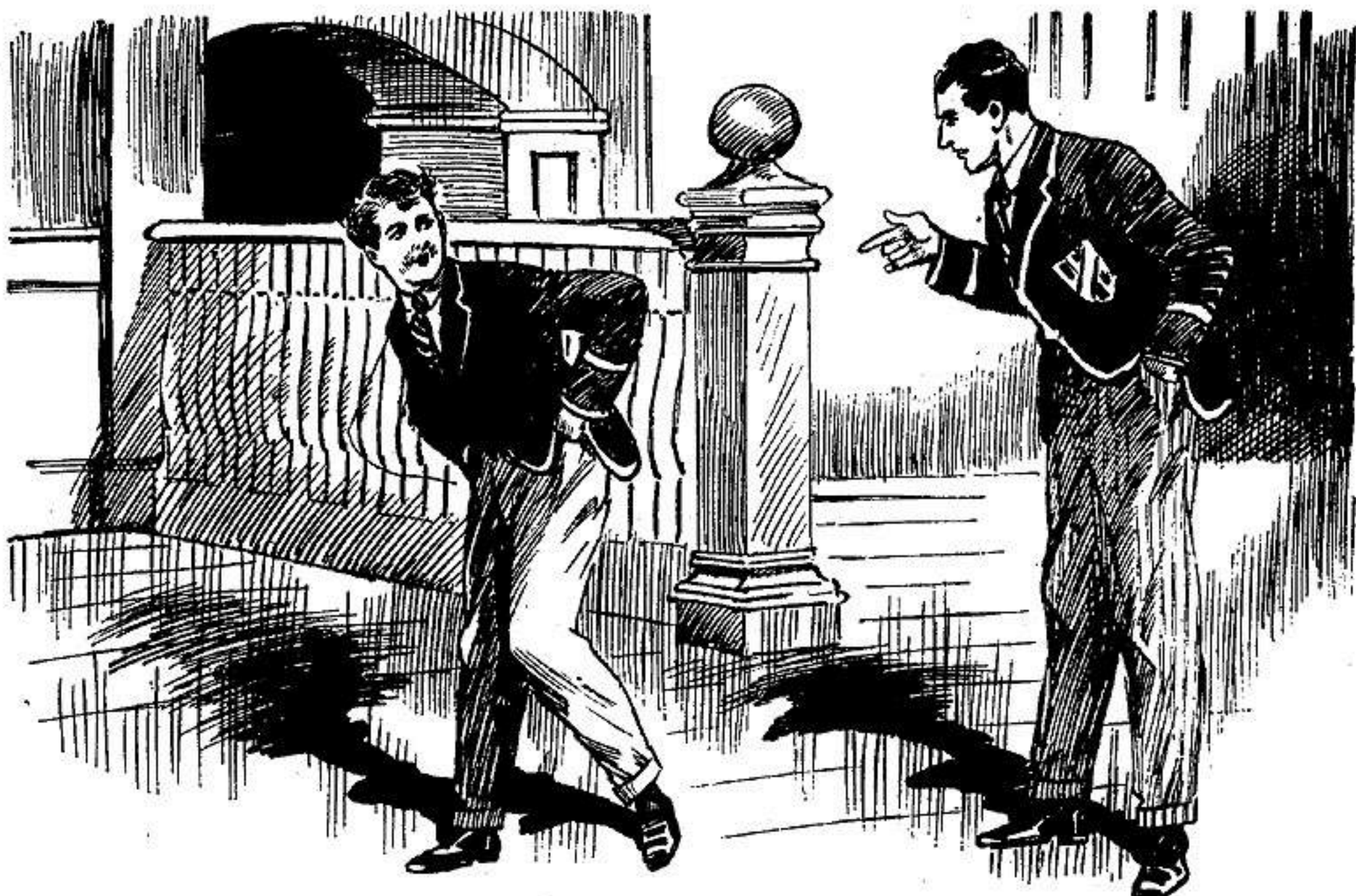
"I don't want to be always a-jawing to the blokes, do I?" grunted Skip.

"I tell you I'm orlright!"

"Rot!" said Coker. "This won't do, and I'll jolly soon put a stop to it, too. I can't see much of you myself, of course—I'm a Fifth Form man, and a senior, and I've not much time to waste on fags. But I'm going to keep an eye on you, and I'll see that this sort of thing doesn't go on, by Jove!"

He looked round at the Removites punting the ball.

Skip took advantage of his back being



Skip was strolling along with his hands in his pockets, whistling, when Wingate came along the passage. "Here, young shaver," called out the Greyfriars captain, "juniors don't whistle in the House! Chuck it, see?" "You ain't a master 'ere!" said Skip. "Keep your horders to yourself!"

turned, to scuttle away under the elms. Lonely as he was, he had had enough of Coker's tactless conversation.

Horace Coker did not heed him. He strode away towards the Remove punt-about. His brows were knitted in a wrathful frown.

"Here, Wharton!" he rapped.

"Don't bother, fathead!" called the captain of the Remove, over his shoulder, as he went after the ball.

"Hold on, I tell you!" roared Coker. "I've got something to say to you. Do you want me to boot you across the quad?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that old Horace asking for it again?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Hold on, you men—let Coker have what he's asking for!"

The juniors grinned, ceased to punt the ball, and gathered round Horace Coker. They were quite ready to punt Coker of the Fifth, instead of the footer, if that was what Coker wanted.

"Now, look here, you cheeky little scrubby scoundrels!" began Coker, as the Removites gave him their attention. "It looks to me as if you're barring that kid Skip in your fag Form. Is that so?"

"Sort of!" said the Bounder.

"More or less!" agreed Squiff.

"You can pal with him, if you like," suggested Johnny Bull. "We're not fearfully keen on pinchers, ourselves."

"So that's it, is it?" said Coker hotly. "Well, I'm telling you that it won't do, and that I'm not allowing it, see? That kid's going to be treated decently in the Remove; and if there's any more of this, look out for squalls. Precious set of scrubby little rotters you are, to be so jolly particular, I must say!"

"Is that all?" asked Harry Wharton. "Let's have it clear, Coker. You're giving us orders to chum up with your

pet pincher, and we're to do as you tell us. Is that it?"

"That's it!" assented Coker. "And look out for my boot if you put on any more airs to that kid, that's all! Think I've got him put in your Form for you cheeky young swabs to turn up your cheeky noses at him? I've a jolly good mind to whop the lot of you, all round! And I'll jolly well do it, too, if there's any more of your cheeky rot! Bear that in mind!"

"That all?" asked Harry.

"Yes, that's all!"

"Quite enough, too!" agreed the captain of the Remove. "Now, you fellows, collar that cheeky fathead, and give him what he's asking for!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bag him!"

Fifteen or sixteen Removites, grinning cheerily, rushed on Coker together.

Coker rolled over under innumerable feet.

He roared wildly as he rolled. Fifteen or sixteen fellows all trod on Coker—a few of the more exuberant spirits stamped. For two or three minutes Coker had a wild impression that he was mixed up in earthquakes and air-raids.

Then the merry Removites passed on—over Coker—and chased the footer again. They left Horace Coker in a winded and dilapidated state, hatless, collarless, and tieless, muddied from head to foot, and gurgling for breath.

Coker sat up spluttering—and he was still spluttering spasmodically when Potter and Greene, who had watched the scene with grinning faces from a distance, came along and kindly picked him up.

They led a gurgling Coker away—grinning at one another behind his rumpled head as they led him.

It was very doubtful whether Coker's intervention would produce much in the way of good results for Skip. But there was no doubt at all that it had produced very painful results for Coker!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Beware of Pickpockets!"

HAZELDENE barged into Skinner in the Form-room passage, as the Remove were coming out, a day or two later.

Skinner, stumbling, staggered against Skip, and bumped into his back. He grabbed Skip and held on for a moment, and Skip looked round at him, not pleasantly.

Of all the Remove fellows, Skip liked Skinner the least; and certainly of all the Remove Skinner had made himself the most disagreeable to the new junior.

However, that bump in the back was, apparently, an accident, and Skip walked on out of the House, and thought no more about it.

He was quite unaware that in that brief contact, Skinner had pinned a card to the back of his jacket. But the fellows behind him were aware of it—and there was a general chuckle as he went.

Skip, unconscious of Skinner's trickery, walked into the quad, with the card on his back, bearing the inscription in capital letters:

NOTICE!

BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS!

Skinner & Co. grinned after him from the doorway. There was a fat cackle from Billy Banter.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"He, he, he!" "That's a tip for all Greyfriars!" grinned Hazel. "The young ass hasn't the faintest idea he's got it on." "Good for you, Skinner!" chortled Bolsover major. He rubbed his chin, where there was still a bruise and an ache. "The Head's in the quad! If he sees that, he will know what we think about that cad!"

"Better keep it dark who did it!" said Vernon-Smith laughing. "You don't want a jolt on the jaw like Bolsover, Skinner!"

"I say, you fellows, come on!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "All the fellows are staring at him. He, he, he!"

Skip was walking across the quad—by himself, as usual. He was not unused to curious glances being cast at him; for his extraordinary history was known to all the school, and was discussed in all the Forms, from the Second to the Sixth. But he was conscious now of receiving rather more than usual attention—and he could not help observing that fellows were laughing.

His brow darkened. "Look, you fellows!" yelled Tubb of the Third, as Skip passed a group of fags of that Form; and they looked, and roared with laughter.

Skip swung round on them—with so savage an expression on his face, that Tubb & Co. promptly cut. They had heard of the new fellow's fistical exploits in his own Form, and did not want any samples in the Third.

Skip walked on with a red face.

He was by nature a cheery, good-tempered fellow, and though there was undoubtedly a spot of pugnacity in him, he was not quarrelsome. But he was in a mood now to quarrel with any fellow he met—and he glared round for the next fellow who laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from Temple of the Fourth, as Skip passed in his view, and he sighted the notice on his back. And Dabney and Fry, of the Fourth, echoed Temple's yell of merriment.

Skip, with gleaming eyes, walked up to the three. Behind him, there was a loud laugh from dozens of fellows who saw the notice on his back. But he fixed his attention on Temple & Co.

Cecil Reginald Temple and his friends, being Fourth men, were far too dignified to "cut" like Tubb & Co. But they did not quite like Skip's look as he marched belligerently up to them.

"Whatcher larking at?" demanded Skip.

"Eh, what?" gasped Temple.

"Larking at a bloke, what?" said Skip resentfully. "Don't like the way I does my 'air, p'raps! Well, I'll give you something to lark at!"

"Keep your distance, please!" said Cecil Reginald haughtily.

"Sheer off, young Sikes!" said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Skip did not keep his distance, or sheer off. Unaware of Skinner's jape, he could only suppose that Temple & Co.

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were making themselves offensive for nothing, and his temper was beginning to boil.

He made a rush at the three, grabbed Temple with one hand, and Fry with the other, and brought their heads together with a resounding crack.

"Ow!" roared Temple.

"Wow!" yelled Fry.

With a swing of his muscular arms, Skip sent the two of them sprawling in the quad.

Dabney, rushing to their aid, was met by a tap on the nose, which laid him beside Cecil Reginald, spluttering.

Skip gave them a glare and slouched on.

"Beware of pickpockets!" yelled Hobson of the Shell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter. "Beware of pickpockets, you know! He, he, he!"

Skip gave a glare round. He was very much inclined to run amuck among the crowd of laughing fellows. But he tramped sullenly on.

It was clear, to all the fellows, that he was unconscious of the card on his back, and to most of them it seemed no end of a joke. Loud laughter followed him, wherever he moved.

Hilton and Price, of the Fifth, were standing under one of the old elms, and they glanced at Skip as he passed—and, at the sight of the card, burst into a laugh.

"That's the young pickpocket!" remarked Price.

"They've labelled him!" said Hilton, laughing.

Skip turned on them.

"What's the blooming joke, ugly mug?" he demanded.

"Cut off!" said Price, staring at him.

"Don't be cheeky!"

"It's too bad!" said Hilton, who was a good-natured fellow. "Look here, kid, somebody's been pulling your leg, and——"

"Shut up, Cedric!" interrupted Price. "Leave him alone!"

"Oh, rot! Why not tell him? You've got a card pinned on your back, kid!" said Hilton. "I'd advise you to take it off!"

Skip gave a start.

"Suthing on my blooming back?" he ejaculated.

It dawned on him that this was the cause of the outbursts of merriment that had greeted him in the quad.

"Eh—what?" ejaculated Hilton. "Oh, yes! Something on your blooming back! Ha, ha!"

Skip twisted round, but he could not spot the card. He whipped off his jacket, and stood in his shirtsleeves to examine it.

Then he discovered the card.

He stared at it, with a crimson face. He understood now.

"Oh, smoky 'adlocks!" he ejaculated. "So that's the blooming joke, is it? Sticking of that on a bloke's back!"

"Might as well have left him alone!" grunted Price. "What the dickens did you want to butt in for, Cedric?"

"Oh, rot! It's rough on the kid! That fool Coker's landed him in this! He ought to have had more sense!"

Skip replaced his jacket, keeping the card in his hand. He looked at the two Fifth Formers.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" he said to Hilton.

Then he walked back to the House, keeping the card in his hand. And the expression on his face made Skinner, as he saw him coming, disappear discreetly up the stairs into the Remove studies.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Skip on the Warpath!

"YOU Smith?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith stared round in angry surprise.

The Bounder was on the Remove landing, with Harry Wharton & Co. and some other Remove fellows, when Skip came up the stairs.

They were talking football, the important topic being the match with Highcliffe; and Smithy, deep in that topic, had already forgotten the jape on the new junior. He gave Skip a dark look. Vernon-Smith did not like being addressed as "Smith"; having a double-barrelled name, he preferred, as it were, to use both barrels. Least of all did he like it in an angry, contemptuous, and aggressive tone.

"Are you speaking to me?" he asked icily.

"Yes, I ham!" said Skip, with emphasis.

"Then don't!"

"I'r'aps you don't think a bloke's good enough to speak to you?" yapped Skip.

"Exactly!" assented the Bounder coolly. "As you ask me, I don't!"

"Well, I'm going to speak, all the same," said Skip; "and you're going to answer, too, if you don't want a bunge on the beezer! I want to know whether it was you stuck this 'ere on a covey's back?"

He held up the card.

The Bounder grinned. Harry Wharton frowned: The Famous Five had been up in the studies, and had seen nothing of Skip in the quad.

"Look here, that's pretty rotten!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Was that stuck on your back, kid?"

"Yes, it blooming well was!" growled Skip. "And I'm looking for the bloke what stuck it there, and I'm going to find 'im, too!" He glared at the Bounder. "You was there, you, Smith—you and five or six other blokes! I know when it was stuck on—afore I went out of the 'Ouse! Was it you?"

"Find out!" said the Bounder coolly.

He had had nothing to do with Skinner's jape, except that he had witnessed it, like half a dozen other fellows. But he was not the fellow to be talked to in a dictatorial tone.

"You're going to say 'Yes' or 'No,' and I'm going to punch your 'ead till you do, and the same with the other blokes what was there!" said Skip.

And he advanced on the Bounder, with clenched fists and gleaming eyes.

Vernon-Smith put up his hands at once.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Why can't you tell the kid, Smithy! I don't believe you'd play a rotten trick like that. Tell him so."

"Do you think I'm going to be bullied by that low cad from a slum?" said the Bounder, between his teeth.

"That chap wasn't brought up by Lord Chesterfield, old bean," said Bob Cherry. "It's only his way. But don't you think, Skip, that you might manage somehow to ask a fellow a question civilly?"

Skip paused. He had been only a few days at Greyfriars, but he had already realised that the manners and customs of Slummock's Alley added to his unpopularity in the Remove.

"Oh, orlright!" he said. "A bloke wants to know, that's all. I'm jest asking the covey if he stuck that there on my back."

"Well, if you want to know, I wouldn't touch you with a bargepole!" said the Bounder contemptuously.

And he turned his back on Skip.
"The answer is in the absurd negative, my esteemed and infuriated Skip!" explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh urbanely.

"And that's that!" said Bob. "Pass on, friend, and all's well!"

And football "jaw" was resumed on the Remove landing, no fellow there taking any further notice of Skip.

He stood for some moments staring sullenly at the group. Then he turned and went across the landing into the Remove passage.

As it was not Smith who had pinned the card on his jacket, he had no further occasion for quarrel with the Bounder, but he was strongly inclined to quarrel with him, all the same.

However, he restrained that impulse, and went into the Remove passage and kicked open the door of Study No. 2.

Tom Brown and Hazeldene were there getting their tea. They stared round at the sullen face in the doorway.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Browney. "Is that the way you usually come into a study, young shaver?"

"I ain't come 'ere to talk to you!" retorted Skip. "I want a word with that there bloke!" He held up the card. "Was it you stuck this 'ere on my back—you, 'Azeldene?"

"No!" snapped Hazel.

"Orlright!" said Skip. "I'm going to find the bloke! If it wasn't you, I ain't got no row with you!"

He tramped up the passage.

"Precious sort of ruffian to have in our Form, isn't it?" sneered Hazel.

"Well, it was a rotten trick, sticking a thing like that on his back!" said Tom Brown. "I'd jolly well punch the chap's head!"

Skip's next visit was to Study No. 10, Bolsover major's study. He had made a note of the fellows who had been present when the card had been stuck on his back, and Bolsover was one of them.

The bully of the Remove gave him a savage stare as he looked in. Gladly enough he would have knocked him out of the doorway and landed him on his back in the passage. But a reminiscent twinge in his chin warned him off.

"What the thump do you want here?" he growled. "Do you fancy that you're wanted in this study?"

Skip held up the card.

"I'm looking for the bloke what stuck this on my back," he said. "I know when it 'appened, and I know you was there. Was it you?"

"Find out!" snapped Bolsover major.

"I'm going to!" said Skip grimly; and he came into the study. "If it was you, you're going to get it 'ot and strong! You can turn up your nose at a covey, if you like, but you ain't getting away with this 'ere!" He paused. "Mind, I'm asking you civil, jest like young Cherry said. You jest tell a bloke, please, whether it was you did it."

"No!" yapped Bolsover.

"Orlright!" said Skip.

And he left the study and walked on to the next, where Skinner, Snoop, and Stott were at tea.

There was a sound of chuckling from that study as Skip reached the door. It ceased as he pitched the door open with a crash.

Skinner & Co. jumped up and stared at him. Skip held up the card.

"You seen this?" he said. "You three blokes was there when it was stuck on me! I remember you bumped into me, Skinner. Was it you pinned it on my jacket?"

Skinner breathed hard. A moment ago he had been chuckling with his friends over the jape on the new junior.

But he was not feeling like chuckling now.

"Mind, I'm asking you civil!" said Skip. Bob Cherry's injunction had evidently made an impression on his mind. "I oughter thought of you first, as I remember you bumped into my back in the passage. But I'm asking you civil. Was it you pinned this blooming card on me?"

Snoop and Stott stood silent. Skinner did not speak. He had not expected to be brought to book, and he was quite at a loss. A lie direct was too humiliating, as both his friends knew what he had done. But the look on Skip's face, and the recollection of the jolt on Bolsover's jaw, made him extremely willing to own up.

"I'm a-waiting!" said Skip ominously.

"Get out of my study!" said Skinner.

"Will you answer a bloke?"

"I don't want to speak to you at all! Get out, and shut the door after you!"

"I might have knowed it was you!" said Skip. "Well, I know it now!"

You're the sort of rat to play a rotten trick be'ind a bloke's back, ain't you?"

He threw the card on the table. "That's yourn, and you can 'ave it back! Now put up your 'ands!"

Skinner did not put up his hands. His face was quite pale as he looked at Skip across the study table. It was not the first time that Skinner's malice had landed him in trouble with which he had not the courage to deal.

"You coming round that there table?" asked Skip.

"No!" said Skinner, between his teeth. "Get out of my study, you hooligan. I want to have nothing to do with you!"

"'Cept sticking suthing on a bloke's back when he ain't looking, what?" jeered Skip. "Well, if you ain't coming, I'll come for you!"

He cut round the study table on one side.

Skinner promptly cut round it on the other, and jumped for the doorway.

But Skip was after him like a shot, and grabbed his collar as he dodged into the passage.

"Gotcher!" jeered Skip.

"Let go, you rotten hooligan!" yelled Skinner. "I'll call up a prefect, if you lay hands on me, you ruffian!"

Skip laughed.

"Well, I won't 'itcher!" he said. "You'd fall down dead if I did, I fancy! You're a soft lot 'ere, and no mistake. I'll give you the boot instead."

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter, from the doorway of Study No. 7. "I say, that pickpocket's scraping with Skinner!"

"Let go!" yelled Skinner, struggling.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That sounds as if Skip's got his man!" chuckled Bob Cherry, and the juniors on the landing came into the passage.

A dozen other fellows looked out of the studies.

Skinner had a big audience, if he wanted one—which he certainly did not.

His face was crimson with rage and humiliation. But he dared not tackle the fellow who had knocked out Bolsover major, and that was that!

Skip swung him into the middle of the passage, and followed him up, landing out with his foot.

Skinner staggered as the boot landed on him.

"Now 'op it!" jeered Skip. "If you ain't got the pluck to put up your 'ands, I'm going to kick you along the passage. 'Op it!"

For a moment Skinner turned on him with blazing eyes and clenched fists. But as Skip came at him, his courage failed, and he turned and fairly bolted. Under the eyes of nearly all the Remove,

Skinner tore down the passage, with Skip in pursuit.

Some of the fellows laughed. Others looked very grim. But nobody intervened, and Skip followed the wretched Skinner the length of the passage, landing kick after kick as he fled.

Skinner dodged down the Remove staircase and escaped, leaving Skip grinning after him derisively over the banisters.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Serve Smithy Right!

"O II, crumbs!" murmured Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove had opened the door of Study No. 4, and stepped in, quickly closing the door after him.

That study belonged to Vernon-Smith and Redwing; but both of them, at the moment, were at football practice, so the coast was clear.

Billy Bunter had watched them go, with a crowd of other Remove fellows, after class, and had been glad to see the last of them. Football had no attraction for Bunter, but Smithy's study, on the other hand, had much.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was going to stand one of his lavish spreads, after the fellows came in from footer, and Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, had been on the Bounder when he did his shopping.

Bunter was not asked to the spread. Had he been on the list of invited guests, the fat Owl might have possessed his podgy soul in patience till the due time came round. But Smithy had no use for Billy Bunter's fascinating company; and had Bunter presented himself when the feast was on, he was likely to receive nothing more grateful or comforting than the end of Smithy's boot.

For which reason, Bunter had come early to avoid the crush, as it were.

He knew Smithy's spreads, though he seldom had the pleasure of sharing therein.

Smithy's study cupboard, at the moment, was like unto a land flowing with milk and honey. Smithy, it was true, was the fellow to cut up fearfully rusty if any grub-raider bagged tuck in his study—and Bunter had reason to remember, from the affair of the bag of toffees. But a grub-raider had to run risks—besides, Bunter was going to leave no clue. He was going to make an extensive selection from the supply in the study cupboard, and disappear before the fellows came in from the football ground.

But as Bunter blinked round the study, he forgot, for a moment, the tuck in the cupboard, as he stared at an article that lay on the table.

It was a note-case!

All the Remove fellows knew the Bounder's expensive russia leather note-case, worth several guineas in itself, apart from what it contained. And its valuable contents were often seen, for Smithy had a way of letting them catch the eye. He rather liked to pick a pound note from a wad of others and throw it carelessly on the counter in the tuck-shop under the eyes of fellows whose pocket-money was counted in half-crowns or shillings. It was not without reason that Smithy had been nicknamed the "Bounder."

Often and often had Bunter seen that well-filled note-case, but he had never before seen it lying about in this careless way.

He blinked at it in great surprise.

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Smithy had pots of money, but he was generally quite careful with it. Leaving his note-case lying on the study table, when he and nearly everybody else had gone out, was extremely careless, and quite unlike the Bounder.

But there it was—lying in full view of anyone who looked into the study. Not, of course, that anybody was supposed to come into Study No. 4 while the owners were out. Still, considering that there was a fellow in the Remove who had been a pickpocket, it was very careless of Smithy.

Billy Bunter picked up the note-case, opened it, and blinked into it, through his big spectacles. Curiosity was his besetting sin.

His eyes popped behind his spectacles at the sight of Smithy's wealth—half a dozen pound notes, and several ten-shilling notes. Bunter gazed at them with a longing eye!

Only that day Smithy had refused to cash, in advance, a postal order that Bunter was expecting from a titled relation. And the mean beast had all this money. More than ten pounds—and he was too jolly mean to cash a postal order for ten shillings, which Bunter was expecting hourly!

"Beast!" murmured Bunter. "Serve him jolly well right if that fellow Skip pinched it! Beast!"

Bunter laid down the note-case again, and turned to the study cupboard.

He was there for tuck—and to Bunter's fat and obtuse mind, the distinction between "meum" and "tuum" was quite lost, where tuck was concerned.

Wild horses could not have dragged Bunter into touching money that did not belong to him—he did not even dream of it for a single moment. But in the matter of foodstuffs, he was ruthless and utterly unscrupulous.

He grabbed the door-handle of the study cupboard and jerked at it.

The door did not open.

Bunter blinked at it.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "Beast! Suspicious rotter! Cad! Swab! Putrid tick! Well, of all the rotten cads—"

The cupboard door was locked.

Possibly Smithy had noted the eyes, and the spectacles, on him, when he made his extensive purchases in the school shop after class. Or perhaps he had taken a tip from the affair of the toffees. Anyhow, the study cupboard was locked, and that was that!

Bunter glared at it, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. Words could not have expressed his indignant scorn for a fellow who locked up his grub, just as if he fancied that some fellow might be after it. Such suspiciousness seemed simply caddish to Bunter!

"Beast! Rotter! Cad!" hissed Bunter.

Within that locked cupboard door was a feast of the gods. Without, was a hungry fat Owl! But the locked door was between; and that feast, so near, yet so far, was safe from the grub-raider of the Remove.

Almost was Bunter tempted to knock open the lock with the study poker. But even the fat Owl of the Remove stopped short of that.

"Rotten, low, suspicious beast!" hissed Bunter. "I'd jolly well like to boot the beast! I've a jolly good mind to rag his study, the cad!"

A fellow who locked up his tuck, when Bunter was hungry, deserved that, and more—indeed, something lingering, with boiling oil in it, was really what such a fellow deserved.

Bunter blinked round Study No. 4, more than half-inclined to stuff Smithy's books and papers up the chimney, or scatter ink over them.

Then his eyes fell on the note-case again, which he had momentarily forgotten.

They gleamed behind his spectacles.

Smithy, for once, had been careless—strangely careless—with his money. It gave Bunter the chance he wanted, of making the beast sit up. Hiding that note-case, and letting the beast think he had lost it, was a better idea than ragging the study—as well as being less risky, which was important!

Bunter picked up the note-case, and blinked round for a hiding-place for it.

That was easy enough to find. On the mantelpiece was a jar which Red-

wing kept filled with dried ferns, gathered from the cliffs along Pegg Bay.

Bunter lifted the ferns, dropped the note-case into the jar, and replaced the ferns.

He chuckled. When that beast missed his note-case, he could have a hunt for it—and it was likely to be a long time before he thought of looking in the jar on the mantelpiece.

Then the fat Owl rolled out of Study No. 4 and down the passage to Study No. 1.

He had a faint hope of better luck in that study, for Wharton and Nugent were both at the footer. He had forgotten Skip, the new junior in that study, for the moment.

But he was reminded of him as he opened the door and blinked in.

Skip was seated at the study table, with a Latin exercise before him.

It was a simple exercise, more suited to the Second Form than the Remove; but it was tough enough to Skip, and he was putting in some hard work at it.

He looked up, as Bunter blinked in.

"What do you want, face?" he inquired.

"Oh, I—I didn't know you were here!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean, I—I know you were here, and I—I came to speak to you—"

"Well, don't!" said Skip. "Take your ugly mug away and bury it!"

"You cheeky beast!"

Skip took up his Latin dictionary, and took aim. The study door slammed, and Bunter hastily retired.

Sadly and sorrowfully, he took his way down to Hall for tea at the common table—the last resource of the stony!

He had only one consolation—and that was the thought of the Bounder's annoyance and alarm when he found that his note-case was lost.

That happy anticipation brought a grin to Bunter's fat face as he sat and disposed of what the juniors called "doorsteps and dishwater" at the junior table in Hall.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Clear Case!

HERBERT VERNON SMITH smiled—a bitter, sardonic smile. "Gone!" he remarked.

His study-mate, Tom Redwing, looked at him as he stood in the doorway of Study No. 4.

Redwing was fresh and cheery, coming up from the changing-room, after football practice in a keen October wind. He had lingered, speaking to some fellows in the passage, while Smithy went on to the study. But he hurried on now and rejoined his chum.

"What?" he asked.

He did not like the look on Vernon-Smith's face. He could see that the Bounder was in the mood that he liked least—yet only a few minutes ago Smithy had been chatting cheerfully and carelessly with the junior footballers in the changing-room.

"Anything up, Smithy?"

"Yes!" The Bounder laughed with sardonic grimness. "My note-case is gone, that's all!"

"Your note-case?" repeated Tom. "Have you left it in the changing-room?"

"I left it in this study before we changed."

"That was jolly careless, Smithy."

"Not in the least! I left it lying in the middle of the table! Can you see anything of it now?"

"No!" said Redwing, very quietly.

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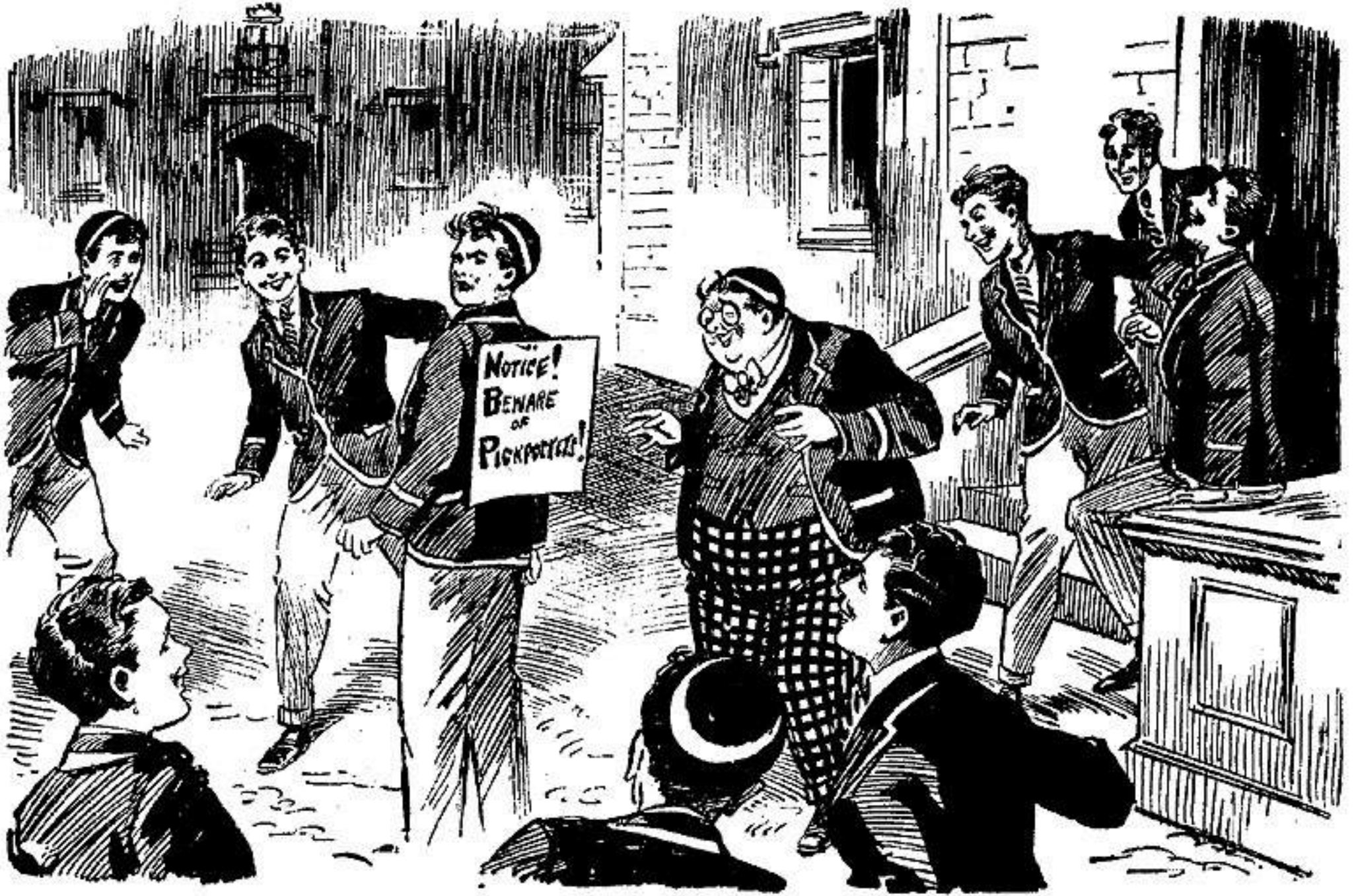
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Skip, unconscious of Skinner's trickery, walked into the quad, with the card on his back. Skinner & Co. grinned after him from the doorway, and there was a fat chuckle from Bunter. "Good for you, Skinner!" chortled Bolsover major. "If the Head sees that, he will know what we think about the cad!"

"Guess who's had it!" said the Bouncer, with bitter banter.

Redwing did not answer that. If a notecase had been stolen in the Remove, it was obvious enough who had had it; with a fellow in the Form who had been a professional pickpocket a few weeks ago.

His face became very grave.

Redwing had had little or nothing to do with Skip, but he did not share his chum's dislike for the waif of the Remove. The sailorman's son, who had been through hard experiences himself, could feel more than most Greyfriars fellows for the strange lad, whose lines had been cast in such unpleasant places.

"Look here, Smithy, you'd better make sure," he said uneasily. "You'd look a pretty fool if you made an accusation against that kid and it turned out to be all moonshine."

"Can you see the notecase there?" sneered the Bouncer.

"No; but—"

"Well, I left it there! It has been taken while we were at the footer—as I fancied it would be."

"You fancied so?" exclaimed Redwing. "Smithy, you're not such a rotter as to set a trap for a fellow—"

The Bouncer shrugged his shoulders.

"Has any fellow a right to butt into our study while we're not there?" he sneered. "And what would he butt in for? I've no use for a thief in the Form! You can look round the study if you like—but you know as well as I do that that young scoundrel has been prowling the studies while all the fellows were out, looking for something to pinch, and that he had it."

"I know it looks like it. But—but—" Redwing shook his head. "He couldn't be mad enough, Smithy! He's been given a chance here—but the very first thing of that kind means the

boot on the spot. Think the Head would let him stay another minute if he started that game here?"

"No! But once a thief, always a thief—and you know it, Reddy! What's the good of jaw, when you know as well as I do that that notecase is in the young scoundrel's pocket this very minute?"

"I'll look round, anyhow."

"Oh, do!" sneered Smithy.

Tom Redwing went into Study No. 4 and looked round. Perhaps he had a faint hope that the notecase might have slipped, somehow, from the table, or under some paper or book. He did not, of course, think of the possibility that it was hidden in the study. Such an idea was not likely to enter his head, or any other fellow's.

If the notecase were gone, Skip was the fellow to be suspected—and if Skip had taken it from the study table, it certainly and most decidedly was not to put it somewhere else in the same room!

Smithy watched him from the doorway, with the same sarcastic grin on his rather hard face.

Two or three fellows came up, seeing that something was on.

"Lost something?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, no! Something seems to be missing, that's all!" answered Smithy. "If it's not there, it's not lost—it's been taken."

Skinner's eyes fairly blazed.

"Pinched!" he gasped. "Money?"

"Yes!"

"Oh!" said Skinner, between his set lips.

It was a few days since Skinner had been booted down the Remove passage by the angry Skip. He had not forgotten it—neither had the other fellows. Many of the Removes were far from inclined to let Skinner forget it.

"Funk" was not popular in the

Remove. A fellow was not bound to scrap, if he did not choose—but to go out of his way to ask for trouble, and funk it when it came along, was altogether too thick, in the general opinion. A fellow who allowed himself to be booted down the passage was not likely to be allowed to forget it in a hurry.

Skinner had left Skip severely alone since then. But his bitterness had intensified, and there were few things at which he would have stopped to gratify his grudge. So this came as a sort of windfall to Skinner. If that young villain had broken out again, and started pinching in the Remove, there was Skinner's vengeance for him—ready-made, as it were!

He stared eagerly into the study.

Tom Redwing stood by the table, with a worried and distressed look on his face.

"Found it?" jeered the Bouncer.

"No!" said Tom. "It's not here."

"I knew it was not—and so did you! I've left it there three times the last few days! This time it's been seen—and taken!"

"I—I wouldn't be in a hurry—"

"Oh, I'm not going to accuse anybody!" said Smithy airily. "I'm going to inquire for my notecase. Fellows will draw their own conclusions, I dare say. If it doesn't turn up, it will come before Quelch, of course. That's not my fault! I never asked anyone to pinch my notecase, did I?"

"Your notecase?" said Skinner breathlessly. "Much in it?"

"About ten pounds."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

"Only currency notes," said the Bouncer. "But, as it happens, I've got the numbers; I'm careful sometimes."

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Skinner gave him a quick look.

"You mean—" he began.

"Exactly!" answered Vernon-Smith, without waiting for the question to be put into words.

"By gum! You've got him on toast!" breathed Skinner.

"What on earth's up along there?" called out Peter Todd, from the doorway of Study No. 7.

"Pinching!" called back Skinner.

"Oh, my hat!"

Peter came up the passage. More and more fellows were gathering now.

For once, however, Billy Bunter was absent when something was going on. That fat and fatuous youth was still scoffing "doorsteps and dishwater" in Hall.

The Famous Five were talking in a group outside Study No. 1, when they saw a commotion up the passage. They were on the list of Smithy's invited guests for the spread in Study No. 4, so that they were not going into Study No. 1 to tea, as usual.

As the study door was partly open, however, they noticed that Skip was in the study—bending over his Latin exercise with a worried, intent face, forgetful of tea-time.

"Anything up, Smithy?" called out Wharton.

"Yes!"

"Oh, my hat! Bunter been after the spread?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Smithy laughed.

"No, that's all right! Something a bit more serious than that! You'd better come along here, Wharton."

The Famous Five came up the passage. More than half the Remove were gathered outside Study No. 4 now.

"Well, what—" asked Harry.

"My note-case is gone from the study."

"Do you keep your note-case in your study?" asked the captain of the Remove, with a stare. "What do you mean, Smithy?"

"Exactly what I say—nothing more and nothing less!" answered the Bounder coolly. "I left my note-case lying on the middle of the study table before we went down to footer. It's gone. It had about ten pounds in it in currency notes. It may have walked off, of course, or flown out of the window!" added the Bounder sarcastically. "If not, it's been taken."

"Impossible!"

"Think so?" sneered the Bounder.

"I don't believe—"

"You don't believe that the fellow who picked your pockets in the holidays would pinch a note-case?"

Wharton did not answer that. He looked into the study, his face as clouded as Redwing's.

"You been looking for it?" he asked.

"Sure it's gone."

"It's gone!" said Tom.

The captain of the Remove turned back to Vernon-Smith.

"Better put this plain," he said curtly. "You've got pots of money, Vernon-Smith, but you're the last fellow at Greyfriars to leave it lying about to be pinched! Before there's a row about this you'd better explain why you left a lot of money on your study table—a thing you've never done before that I know of."

"I'll explain!" said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "We've got a thief in the Form, and the sooner he's booted out of Greyfriars the better. That's why! This is the third time I've left that note-case on the table when I've gone out. This time it has been pinched—as I knew it would be sooner or later. Got it now?"

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"You mean to say," said Harry, with a deep breath, "that you left money about, thinking that that poor little beast Skip would pinch it?"

"Knowing that he would!" corrected the Bounder coolly.

"Dash it all, Smithy, that's pretty thick!" exclaimed Bob Cherry hotly. "You needn't have put temptation in the kid's way."

"You can cut all that out!" said Vernon-Smith. "Temptation can't be put in a fellow's way unless he's a thief. If a fellow can't let another fellow's money alone the proper place for him is Borstal. If that young scoundrel had chucked up pinching, a thousand pounds could have been left lying about, and he wouldn't have touched it. I knew that he hadn't—every fellow here knows that as well as I do. My idea is that the sooner he's shown up and turfed out the better!"

"Quite right!" declared Bolsover major.

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

"You shouldn't have done it, Smithy!" said Frank Nugent, shaking his head.

"I did it intentionally, and I would do it again," said the Bounder. "I knew that that young villain would prowl the studies, sooner or later, to pinch—and I think it's better sooner than later. He ought never to have come here, and we shall get shut of him now. I never asked him to come prowling in my study, did I? What do you think he came for except to pinch?"

The juniors looked at one another.

If Skip had prowled the studies while the fellows were at footer practice his object was plain enough.

He could not even have seen Smithy's note-case there unless he had entered the study. Why had he entered it? Laying a trap for a thief was not an idea that appealed to many of the fellows—still, most of them agreed that the sooner the young rascal was shown up and booted out the better.

"What are you going to do?" asked Harry Wharton at last.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I'm not accusing anybody!" he said. "Quelch seems to believe that that young tick has chucked up pinching—and perhaps he's right! I'm not going to tell my dear, kind master that he's wrong! I'm simply going to report the loss—and Quelch can do what he likes about it."

"Better speak to the kid first," said Harry uneasily. "If he wants to stay here he must be mad to break out like this. Look here, come along to my study and let's see what he has to say before you start a fearful row in the school. It can't be stopped once it's started."

"Any old thing!" drawled the Bounder.

And the whole crowd of Removites followed the captain of the Form to Study No. 1—where Skip stared at them in surprise as they crowded in at the doorway.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Up to Quelch!

HARRY WHARTON was red and uncomfortable as he stepped into his study.

The whole thing was utterly repugnant to him. The fact that Skip had been a thief made him feel that he could not stand the fellow near him; but the idea that he was still a thief, watching for opportunities to steal, fairly made his flesh creep.

His friends shared his feelings to the full. They had made allowances for the

wretched waif; they had tried hard to treat him as a normal fellow. But if he had done this, if he were the same dishonest young scoundrel as in his days with Jimmy the Rat, they were only anxious to see the last of him.

Scornful and contemptuous faces looked in at the doorway at the surprised Skip. Nobody was surprised that the associate of Jimmy the Rat had broken out like this, but all were disgusted. Even Skinner had the satisfaction of feeling contempt for the fellow he feared and disliked.

"Look here, Skip—" began Harry, and paused.

"Looking!" answered Skip. "What's the blooming row?"

"Something's happened in Vernon-Smith's study!" said the captain of the Remove slowly.

"Nothin' to do with me, I s'pose! I ain't a visitor in that there study, am I?" jeered Skip. "I ain't good enough for Smithy."

"Never mind that! Did you go into Study No. 4 while we were down at the footer?"

"No, I didn't!" grunted Skip. "I been sitting in this 'ere study, worriting over this 'ere blooming Latin. What'd I want in the bloke's study?"

"You did not?"

"Ain't I said so?" snapped Skip.

"You calling a bloke a liar? Young Cherry he says to me the other day, says he, can't you be civil to a covey, he says. Well, is that what you call civil, young Wharton?"

Harry Wharton looked at him steadily.

Skip looked surprised and was growing angry; but there was nothing else to be read in his face.

"Look here," said Harry abruptly. "I'll put it plain! There's a note-case missing from Smithy's study, with money in it. Did you take it?"

"Oh, that's the tune, is it?" sneered Skip. "Well, if you asked any other feller 'ere that question he'd 'it you in the eye, and you know it!"

"And I should deserve it, too, if I asked any Greyfriars man whether he was a thief!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "But it's no good beating about the bush, Skip! You can't expect me to forget that only two or three weeks ago you picked my pocket."

"That was afore I come 'ere."

"I know that. If coming here has made a difference I'm jolly glad. But—there's money missing from Smithy's study. It can't have walked away. Somebody has taken it."

"Who says so?" sneered Skip.

"I do!" said the Bounder.

"And you can't take a bloke's word that I ain't been in your blooming study?"

"Hardly!"

"Then you can do the other thing!" said Skip. "I ain't been 'ere long, but I've 'eard you telling lies to Mr. Quelch. P'raps you're telling another now. P'raps you'd like to make out that I been pinching to get shut of me."

The Bounder crimsoned.

"Shut up, you young ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry hastily.

"Shan't!" retorted Skip.

"That does it!" said the Bounder between his teeth. "This goes before Quelch now! If that rotten rascal stays at Greyfriars I'm going to write to my father to take me away. I won't breathe the same air as that young crook."

Herbert Vernon-Smith strode away down the passage to the stairs.

His face was set with bitter anger. He had laid a trap for the pincher, and

(Continued on page 22.)

All Present and Correct? Good! Then Off We Go Again with—

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE

A TOUR OF THE SCHOOL. (The Old School Clock.)

(1)
It's seen in the tower, the old school clock,
With its deep and mellow chime,
For years, with a solemn and slow tick-tock,
It has carefully told the time.
At night we hear it when lying in bed,
Coming, it seems, from the clouds overhead,
Echoing faintly through the dorm,
Sounding its note above the storm—
Time is flying,
Hours are dying,
Hours are growing,
Time is going—
On—on—on—on—on!

(2)
It races like mad, the old school clock,
Whenever we're out for "break."
We look at the time and receive a shock,
And think there must be a mistake.
For fifteen minutes to pass along
In the wink of an eyelid is surely wrong!
"Time is flying!" the clock replies,
And there's no denying the brute is wise!

(3)
But doesn't it drag, the old school clock,
Whenever we've been detained?
We scribble our dreary "Hic, haec, hoc!"
And no one has ever explained
Why every second's a minute or more,
And every minute's as long as a score,
"Hours are dying!" the clock may cry,
But, gosh, what a jolly long death to die!

AFTER SCHOOL HOURS Doorsteps and Dishwater



(1)
You can tell the folk who are stony-broke,
For they go to tea in Hall.
With mournful face they enter the place,
Those penniless paupers all!
And their sad eyes gleam as they sit and dream
Of the tuckshop's joyful din,
And the study den where wealthier men
Are steadily tucking in.

(2)
No doughnuts are here, no ginger beer,
No kippers or ham are seen,
But lumps of bread on which is spread
A vestige of margarine.
The tea's so weak it's quite unique!
Just water discoloured and hot,
And no one can think what gives this drink
The strength to get out of the pot!

(5)
You're bound to feel that this work-house meal
Is hardly a place of glee,
For life at its worst is seen when first
You go into Hall for tea!
You're eager to get outside—and yet
It's useful at times—and how!
For I'm broke, you see, and it's time for tea,
And—and—and I'm going along there now!

THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET MICKY DESMOND

The Irish Junior of the Remove

D is for DESMOND—Ireland's where he
Comes from—good old Tipperary!
Always cheerful, always joking,
Always full of beans and poking
Fun at grave and solemn fellows;
When he meets them, Micky bellows,
"Sure now, can't yez smile, begorrah?
Life's too short for care and sorrier!"
In the class-room Micky sometimes
Has some very grim and glum times,



Quelchy has no taste for trickses
But delights to hand out "sixes,"
Then poor Micky, more's the pity,
Sings a different sort of ditty!
Still, good luck to our young smiler,
He's a proper Emerald Isler!

ANSWER TO PUZZLE

The bear could climb a tree better than Prout.



A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By
THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER

GREYFRIARS GRINS Sensational News

Quelchy has just spotted Lord Mauleverer ambling out of the Friar-dale tobacconist's shop. In reply to Quelchy's question, what he was buying there, Mauly turned red and stammered; "Nothin', sir!" Aristocratic howls are now coming from Quelch's study. We sympathise with Mauly, because, mind you, she's quite a nice girl, even though she serves in a shop!

Skinner's latest hobby is to saunter into any telephone-box he's passing, put twopence in the slot, ring Quelchy's number, then press button B and get his twopence back. Judging by the look on Quelchy's face, Skinner is getting ample vengeance for the lickings he gets in class.

PUZZLE PAR

A short while ago we heard Mr. Prout say he was once "treed" by a bear, and sat in the tree 13 hours, from 8 in the morning till 9 at night, while the bear squatted underneath waiting for him. What's wrong with this story?

Answer at foot of column 2.

After Temple had spent two fearful days writing 500 lines, he took them to Capper, who said absent-mindedly: "Let me see, did I give you any lines? I've quite forgotten!" Temple has nearly dislocated his right leg trying to kick himself.

Why is shedding tears at the pictures like Bunter's tummy?—Because it's a "waste" of "good sighs."

Why does Fisher T. Fish like lending money?—Because he finds it full of interest.

DON'T BE LATE ON PARADE NEXT SATURDAY, BOYS!

he firmly believed that he had caught him in it. The suggestion that he had made a false accusation was too much.

Skip looked round at the fellows who remained. He hardly understood the scornful disgust in every face.

"Well, that tears it," said Bob. "It's up to Quelch now."

"I'm blessed if I half believe that he did it!" muttered Harry Wharton.

"Then where's the money?" asked Hazeldene from the passage.

"What's the good of asking me, fathead?"

"Are you going to back up what that young rötter has suggested about Smithy?" asked Skinner, with a sneer.

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Wharton.

"You're a lot of fools, that's what you are!" said Skip. "Think I'd go for to get turned out of this 'ere school and 'ike back to Slummock's Alley if I could 'elp it? You ain't a nice lot 'ere, and I can't say I think much of you—but you're better nor Barney the Binger and his crew. Think I'm a blooming idjit?"

"You don't want to leave Greyfriars?" asked Harry.

Skip laughed.

"If you knowed what I been through afore I come 'ere you wouldn't be fool enough to ask that there!" he answered.

"I don't see all the 'arm in pinching that you coveys seem to; but I ain't a blinking idjit, I 'ope. The 'Ead says to me, says he, you've got a chance 'ere, he says, owing to the kindness of Miss Coker—do your best, he says; and understand, he says, if you waa to steal you would 'ave to go the same day. Never steal, he says, and never tell untruths, he says—which he meant lies—and I promises as I wouldn't; and I ain't, neither, not since I been a Greyfriars bloke! And you can believe it or not, jest as you like, and be blowed to the lot of you!"

With which Skip turned to his Latin exercise again, and bent his brows over it, as if dismissing the matter from further discussion.

The juniors looked at him, and at one another. There was a sort of rough sincerity in Skip's words that made an appeal to some of them. But the unanswered question remained—what had become of Smithy's notecase? If Skip had not taken it, who had?

The Remove fellows stood in silence, while Skip, with his head bent over the Latin exercise, puzzled with such sentences as "Britannia est insula"—which presented difficulties to poor Skip.

But it was not many minutes before the step of Mr. Quelch was heard in the passage.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY!

MR. QUELCH rustled up the passage to the door of Study No. 1—the crowd of juniors making way for him as he came.

Herbert Vernon-Smith followed him. Every face was grimly serious. The matter was in the hands of authority now, and there was no doubt that it would be sifted with the greatest thoroughness; and the truth, whatever it was, established. And few of the juniors doubted what the truth was.

Skinner's eyes were gleaming with happy satisfaction. He had not the slightest doubt of Skip's guilt. He did not want to have any doubt. He wanted the fellow who had booted him down the passage turned out of the

school in disgrace. Nothing could have happened more satisfactorily for Skinner. And he winked at Snoop as Mr. Quelch arrived on the scene with a thunderous brow.

The Remove-master stopped in the doorway of Study No. 1. His eyes turned first on Skip, who rose to his feet at the sight of his Form-master. Then he fixed them on his head boy.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!" said Harry.

"Vernon-Smith informs me that a notecase, containing a sum of money, has been abstracted from his study. Such an occurrence must be investigated without the slightest delay. You should have reported this to me, as head boy, immediately."

Harry Wharton bit his lip and gave the Bounder a far from pleasant glance. But he said nothing.

"I am here to investigate the matter," continued Mr. Quelch. "So far, I have heard nothing but Vernon-Smith's statement that the notecase is missing. Does any boy here know anything of the occurrence?"

"Only what Vernon-Smith has told us, sir!" said Harry.

"We know there's a thief in the Form!" blurted out Bolsover major.

Mr. Quelch looked at him.

"Are you speaking of the new boy, Skip, Bolsover?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I am!" answered Bolsover sullenly.

"Have you any reason for connecting him with what has occurred?"

"Only that we know he's a thief, sir."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"It is unjust and ungenerous, Bolsover, to regard this boy's unfortunate past as evidence against him," he said.

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

"I ain't done it, sir!" muttered Skip. "I wouldn't, sir, arter what I promised the 'Ead, sir."

"I trust not, Skip!" said Mr. Quelch kindly. "You may, at all events, depend on receiving strict justice at the hands of your Form-master."

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

The juniors looked at one another. Mr. Quelch, apparently, had not jumped to the same conclusion as his Form.

At any rate, the peculiar new boy in the Remove was going to have fair play, whatever might be the private opinion at the back of Quelch's mind.

"Vernon-Smith!" rapped the Remove-master.

"Yes, sir!"

"At what time did you leave your notecase in your study?"

"Just before I went down to change for footer, sir—about five o'clock."

"Where did you leave it?"

"On the study table."

"You left a notecase containing notes lying on the table in your study, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir!" said the Bounder coolly.

He did not add that he had done so intentionally, as a trap for the Remove pincher.

"You should not have been so careless, Vernon-Smith. You will take five hundred lines for having been so careless."

"Very well, sir!" said the Bounder quietly. Even that heavy "impot" did not seem to Smithy too high a price to pay for showing up the pincher and getting rid of him from Greyfriars.

"When did you discover the loss?"

"About ten minutes ago, sir."

"You have no doubt that the notecase is gone?"

"It was left in the middle of the study table. It's not there now. Redwing has looked round the study for it. It has been taken."

"It appears, then, that someone must have entered the study between five and six o'clock, and taken away the notecase," said Mr. Quelch.

"Where were you at the time?"

"On Little Side, sir."

"It was football practice, sir!" explained Harry Wharton. "Most of the fellows were there. Hardly anybody would be up here at the time."

"Quite so! Was Skip at football practice with the others?"

"No, sir."

"Where have you been since five o'clock, Skip?"

"In this 'ere study, sir!" answered Skip.

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch's expression changed a little. "Have you been alone in the study all that time, Skip?"

"Yessir! That fat bloke Bunter looked in for a minute, that's all."

"Why did you not join the other boys at games practice?"

"'Cause I wasn't asked."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch again. "How have you been occupied in this study, Skip?"

"I been doing this 'ere Latin, sir," mumbled Skip. "You told me to let you 'ave this 'ere exercise to-morrow, sir, and I been trying to get through with it."

Mr. Quelch stood silent.

Whether Skip had, or had not, been devoting himself to that Latin exercise, his own statement made it clear that he had been on the spot when Smithy's notecase had disappeared from Study No. 4.

"Did you leave the study before the other boys came up?" asked Mr. Quelch at last.

"No, sir."

"You did not enter Vernon-Smith's study for any reason whatsoever?"

"No, sir. Never been in that study at all since I been 'ere."

"You know nothing of what has happened, Skip?"

"I don't know nothing at all, sir, 'cept that I ain't such a fool as to go pinching 'ere, and getting turned out, which I don't want to 'appen!"

There was a pause.

Mr. Quelch turned to the Bounder again.

"You have no knowledge, Vernon-Smith, of what has become of your notecase?"

"No knowledge, certainly, sir, as I was out of the House when it was taken. But I've no doubt," said the Bounder coolly. "There was no thief at Greyfriars before that fellow came."

A murmur from the crowd of juniors in the passage gave assent to the Bounder's words. What all the Removites thought was very clearly indicated in their faces.

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed round, and the murmur died away.

"You have heard me say, Vernon-Smith, that it is unjust and ungenerous to take this boy's unhappy past as evidence against him!" he said sternly. "I will allow nothing of the kind."

The Bounder looked obstinate, but he was silent.

"Someone has taken it, sir," ventured Skinner. "There isn't a fellow in the Remove who would touch it."

"It appears," said Mr. Quelch, "that some dishonest person has taken the notecase; but at the present



"Get aside, you fellows!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth, as the Famous Five lined up together. "We don't want a row with you—but we're having that pincher out!" "I—I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Skip never had that notecase, it's in the jar on your study mantelpiece this very minute!"

moment there appears to be no evidence whatever against any particular person. I advise you all, my boys, not to draw hasty conclusions. The matter will now go before the headmaster, and the facts will undoubtedly be brought to light. Until then, I advise my Form very strongly to keep open minds on the subject. Skip, please come with me."

"Yessir."

Skip followed his Form-master from the study and down the Remove staircase.

The Bounder sneered bitterly as they went.

"Quelch knows who it was as well as we do!" he said. "The Head will get it out of the young rascal, too!"

"Safe as houses!" agreed Skinner.

"There's no proof, so far," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We'd better take Quelch's tip, and keep open minds on the subject."

"You know that that young rotter's got my notecase in his pocket at this very moment!" jeered the Bounder. "If they search him, they'll find it!"

"I know nothing of the kind, and you don't, either, Smithy!" answered the captain of the Remove.

"Are you backing up that pincher, Wharton?" roared Bolsover major.

"I'm going to give him fair play!" answered Harry. "Whatever he is, he's no fool, and if he wants to stay here, and you can see that he does, he's acted like an utter fool in breaking out into pinching again."

"He can't help it!" sneered Skinner. "Once a pincher, always a pincher! He went prowling along the studies when nobody was about, and spotted Smithy's notecase, and just grabbed it."

"Of course he did!" said Snoop.

"And Wharton jolly well knows it, too!" sneered the Bounder.

"If they let that young swab stay here, after this, we'll jolly well boot him out of the school ourselves!" declared Bolsover major.

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, they've got him all right!" grinned Skinner. "They'll find the notecase on him when they go through his pockets!"

And that was the general opinion. Harry Wharton could not help having a lingering doubt, but he was almost the only fellow who had.

The thing seemed absolutely clear to most of the fellows—Skip was the thief, and Skip had to go; and a good ridance to him!

And that was that!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Surprise for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER grinned serenely as he rolled out after tea in Hall.

Tea in Hall was more solid than satisfactory; Bunter preferred tea in a study—any fellow's study, so long as there was a good spread therein.

Still, if he was left out of the spread in Study No. 4, he had other causes for satisfaction. By that time, he had no doubt, the Bounder was in a fearful state of angry annoyance over the loss of his notecase!

Bunter had no doubt that he would miss it as soon as he went to his study. He would be frightfully annoyed and waxy! Though he had plenty of money, the Bounder was not the fellow to like losing any of it; and there was more than ten pounds in that notecase, which was a heavy loss, even to a wealthy fellow like Vernon-Smith.

It was not, of course, lost. It would

turn up in time. But, in the meantime, Smithy would suppose that it was lost, and he would be raging.

He was the fellow to indulge bad temper and annoyance, and it was very probable that the harmony of the tea-party in Study No. 4 would be very considerably impaired thereby. Which, in Bunter's opinion, would serve the beasts right for leaving him out.

There was nothing to connect Bunter with the matter. Had the study cupboard been unlocked, certainly, he would have left plenty of clues behind him. But as the matter stood, there was no clue. Smithy would be absolutely puzzled and unable to imagine what had become of his notecase! And all the time it was stuck in the jar on his mantelpiece! Billy Bunter chuckled as he thought of it. To his fat and fatuous brain this was no end of a joke—a real shriek!

Somewhat to his surprise, he spotted the Famous Five in the quad. He had supposed that they were at Smithy's spread.

"I say, you fellows, ain't you teeing with Smithy?" inquired Bunter.

"No," said Wharton curtly.

"Smithy in one of his ratty tempers?" grinned Bunter. "He's the chap to cut up rusty, isn't he? I wouldn't accept an invitation to tea in his study. His manners aren't quite good enough for me."

"Fathead!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Don't you know what's happened, ass? That fool, Smithy, left his notecase in his study, and it's gone!"

"He, he, he!"

"Think that's a laughing matter, you blithering bloater?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Ho, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

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Evidently, he did! "I say, you fellows, is Smithy in a bait about it?"

"Of course he is, ass!" said Frank Nugent. "Blow Smithy—and blow his beastly money!"

"He, he, he! Smithy will be shouting it out all over the Remove!" chortled Bunter. "He will be glad to let everybody know that he had as much as ten pounds in his notecase. He likes splashing it about! He, he, he!"

"If you don't leave off gurgling I'll jolly well give you something to gurgle for, you gurgling gargoyle!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, still gurgling. He gathered that Smithy's outburst of angry annoyance at finding his notecase missing had quite spoiled the tea-party in Study No. 4, as the Famous Five, after all, had not stayed for the spread. This was very amusing to Billy Bunter.

He spotted Vernon-Smith a few minutes later, and rolled up to him, with a fat grin on his face.

"I say, Smithy, I hear you've lost your notecase!" he remarked.

"Then you've heard wrong, fathead!" snapped the Bounder. "I've not lost it; it's been pinched from my study!"

The grin faded off Billy Bunter's fat face as if wiped off with a duster.

"Pip-pip-pinched!" he stuttered.

"Yes, idiot—pinched!" yapped Smithy, as he walked away, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after him, his eyes almost popping through his spectacles.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey!"

The fat Owl stood for some minutes where. Smithy had left him. The Bounder's words had given him rather a startling shock.

Then, as some Remove fellows came by, Bunter blinked round at them. They were Russell, Ogilvy, Hazeldene, and Peter Todd—and they were all discussing the recent happening in the Remove studies.

Billy Bunter caught the words "That pincher," and "They'll find it, all right!"

"I say, Toddy!" he called out. "I say, old chap—"

Peter glanced round.

"I say, Toddy, that cad Smithy makes out that his notecase has been pinched out of his study!" gasped Bunter.

"No making out about it, fathead!" answered Toddy, staring. "It's been pinched. Smithy left it there to be pinched—and it's been pinched!"

"He—he—he left it there to be pinched!" stuttered Bunter.

"Yes—a trap to catch a rat!" said Peter. "He's caught him all right. The young scoundrel will have to cough it up before he goes."

"Eh—who?" gasped Bunter.

"Haven't you heard, fathead?" asked Russell. "That kid, Skip, of course! He pinched Smithy's tin while we were all at footer."

"Skip did?" gurgled Bunter.

"And he'll be jolly well booted out for it!" said Ogilvy. "He ought never

to have come here, and the sooner he goes the better.

"But—" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, I—I don't believe Smithy's notecase has been pinched, you fellows. I say—"

"Fathead!" said Hazeldene. "Think it walked away?"

And the juniors walked on, leaving Billy Bunter blinking in amazement and dismay.

"Oh crikey!" gasped the fat Owl.

Bunter did not like Skip. He disliked him, in fact, and despised him from the bottom of his podgy heart. Skip, in Bunter's opinion, was not worthy to breathe the same atmosphere as William George Bunter. He was not fit to subsist in the same universe. But the idea of letting Skip be suspected of having pinched the article that he had hidden in Smithy's study never occurred to Bunter. Rather than that, he would have owned up to Smithy and taken the inevitable booting that would have been his reward.

There was an easier way. Now that the affair had taken this turn—utterly unexpected by the fatuous Owl—Bunter realised that his jape on Smithy had to come to a sudden end—and the sooner the better. If that beast was going to make out that his putrid money had been pinched, the hidden notecase could not turn up too soon!

Having come to that conclusion, the fat Owl rolled into the House and went up to the Remove passage. Smithy was in the quad, and he hoped that Redwing was also out of the study.

If the coast was clear it would be easy to whip into Study No. 4, turn the notecase out of the jar on to the table, and whip out again. Nobody would know that Bunter had hidden it, or that he had turned it up again! Which was rather urgent, considering the way the Bounder was likely to cut up rusty if he discovered how his leg had been pulled—all the rustier, it was certain, since he had made a fool of himself by talking about pinching!

Nobody, happily, was in the passage at the moment. Bunter rolled along to Study No. 4, and, like Iser in the poem, he rolled rapidly.

He opened the study door and stepped in quickly. A junior who was standing at the window looked round at him.

"Well?" rapped Tom Redwing. "What do you want, Bunter?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "N-n-nothing, old chap!"

"Buzz off, fathead!"

"I—I say, Redwing, Smithy wants you. He—he asked me to tell you, as—as I came up!" stammered Bunter.

Tom Redwing laughed. The spread in Study No. 4 having been a frost, there was a lavish supply in the study cupboard; and Redwing had no doubt what Bunter was after.

"Did he?" he asked. "Where's Smithy now?"

"He—he's in the school shop."

"Sure?" grinned Redwing.

"Oh! Quite! I—I left him there."

"That's odd, isn't it?" said Redwing, laughing. "Because I can see him from this window talking to Wibley in the quad."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean, I—"

"Never mind what you mean—what I mean is, buzz off!" said Tom, and he slammed the door of Study No. 4—and Bunter jumped back just in time to save his fat little nose.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter, through the keyhole.

And he rolled away, disconsolate—to wait up the passage till Redwing left the study.

Having waited ten minutes or so, he

saw, not Redwing leaving the study, but Herbert Vernon-Smith going into it.

The fat Owl shook a podgy fist at the door, as it closed behind the Bounder.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Evil Counsellor!

"SKINNER, old chap!"

Skinner grinned, and shook his head.

"Stony!" he answered regretfully.

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter, glaring in at the doorway of Study No. 11. "Do you think I want to borrow anything?"

"Don't you?" grinned Skinner.

"No, you beast!"

"Then why did you call me old chap?"

"Beast!"

Skinner chuckled.

He was feeling in a happy and satisfied mood, as he sprawled in the arm-chair in his study and smoked a cigarette. The happening in Smithy's study, which disgusted and horrified most of the Remove, did not produce that effect on Skinner.

Certainly, he felt as much scorn and aversion for a pincher as the other fellows. But the occurrence suited him too well for him to be sorry that it had occurred.

Ever since that booting down the Remove passage, Skinner had been turning over in his malicious mind, ways and means of "getting even" with Skip. Neither ways nor means had turned up—and now Skip had done for himself; and the worst that Skinner could have wished for him, had come to pass.

That Skip was guilty he had not the slightest doubt. Even if it could not be actually proved, it was as good as proved; and it was impossible for the young rascal to be given another chance at Greyfriars.

So Skinner was in a very cheery mood when Billy Bunter's anxious fat face looked into Study No. 11. As it happened, his cheery satisfaction was going to be very severely dashed.

"I say, old chap, I want you to do something for me!" said Bunter, coming into the study.

"Call after Christmas!" suggested Skinner.

"Tain't much!" urged Bunter.

"Look here! I want you to go along to Study No. 4, and tell Smithy and Redwing that—that Wingate wants them in his study. Sec?"

"Can't you tell your own whoppers?" grinned Skinner. "Are you really asking a nice, truthful chap like me to tell fibs? Go and ask Wharton!"

"Well, I can't ask Wharton," said Bunter. "He's down in the quad, for one thing, and he wouldn't tell lies, for another. You don't mind, do you?"

"Eh?" ejaculated Skinner. "What?"

"I mean, you're always telling lies to one fellow or another, so one more won't hurt you, old chap!" explained Bunter, blinking at him.

Skinner gazed at him. He was not an obliging fellow, and not at all inclined to oblige Bunter, or anybody else. But had he been, Bunter's tactful way of putting it would hardly have put him into an obliging mood.

"You fat clump!" he said. "Get out before I buzz a cushion at you!"

"But, I say, it's important!" urged Bunter. "I say, I've simply got to get

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into Smithy's study, before it goes any farther!"

"Before what goes farther, fathead?"

"Oh, nothing! I don't know anything about it, of course!" said Bunter hastily. "But it can't go on, of course. I don't like the chap, any more than anybody else does; but this can't go on! I heard a fellow say he was with the Head now."

"Are you talking about Skip?" asked Skinner, staring.

"Eh? No! Yes! I say, cut along and get those cads out of that study for a few minutes, old chap! Tell them anything you like—after all, you can tell whoppers better than I can!" said Bunter. "You've had more practice. Suppose you tell Smithy that the Head wants him, and that Redwing's to go with him? What about that?"

"While you bag the tuck from Smithy's study?" grinned Skinner. "I can see myself doing it—I don't think!"

"Tain't that!" gasped Bunter. "Think I'm thinking about tuck, you ass?"

"Do you ever think of anything else?" "Beast!"

Billy Bunter blinked along the passage. There was no sign of Smithy or Redwing leaving Study No. 4. He turned back to Skinner.

"Look here! You keep it dark, and I'll jolly well tell you!" he breathed. "Mind, you're not to tell Smithy. You know what an ill-tempered beast he is. I say, old chap, that notecase, you know. Skip never had it."

"Rats!" "He didn't!" said Bunter. "I jolly well know, because I hid it."

"Wha-a-at?" Skinner bounded out of the armchair, in his astonishment.

"Honest Injun!" said Bunter. "Mind, you're not to tell Smithy. The beast would cut up rusty, same as he did over those toffees the other day. I'm not going to have a row with Smithy. I say, that notecase is in his study all the time."

"In his study?" gasped Skinner. "Yes, and I know where."

Skinner looked at him. His expression of blank astonishment changed to one of savage anger. His eyes fairly glittered at Bunter.

"You fat fool!" he said, between his teeth. "What do you mean? Tell me at once what you mean, you idiot! That young thief Skip had Smithy's notecase, and all the fellows know it."

"He hadn't! I tell you I went into Smithy's study while the fellows were at the footer, and saw it there, and hid it."

"What for, you fat lunatic?"

"Well, it served him right!" said Bunter warmly. "Locking up his tuck, as if he suspected that a fellow was after it, the suspicious cad! Look how he shoved me into that booby-trap the other day, too. Of course, I never thought he would fancy it had been pinched."

"You—you—" gasped Skinner.

"I might have, though!" said Bunter. "It's just the sort of thing that Smithy would think—he's an awful bounder. And I've heard the fellows saying that he left it on the table, just to see whether Skip would pinch it. Dirty trick, I call it!"

"You mean to say that it's not pinched at all?" hissed Skinner. He could hardly control his rage and disappointment.

It was an utterly unexpected blow to Skinner.

No other fellow in the Remove would have regarded such a discovery as a blow. But it was a heavy blow to

Skinner, as he saw his vengeance on Skip slipping away.

"Of course, it wasn't!" said Bunter irritably. "Think I'd pinch it, you fathead? I just shoved it where Smithy would take a long time to find it, that's all. But, of course, he won't hunt for it if he thinks that it's pinched, and that Skip's got it. So—so he won't find it unless I put it where he can see it. See?"

Skinner stood in silence for a long moment. Then he crossed the study to the door and shut it. His face was set and savage.

The fat Owl of the Remove blinked at him in surprise. He could see that Skinner was savagely angry, but he did not guess why.

"Now, look here, Bunter!" said Skinner, in a low voice. "If you want my advice, you'll hold your tongue about this. You don't want that pick-pocket at Greyfriars, I suppose?"

"I jolly well don't!" said Bunter. "If he hasn't pinched Smithy's notecase, ten to one he's pinched other things—or he would, if he had a chance!" argued Skinner.

"I suppose he would!" agreed Bunter, with a nod. "He's that sort! But, look here! You go along to Smithy's study, and—"

"Listen to me, you ass! The fellow's a pincher, and we all want to get shut of him! Leave it where it is, see?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him and jumped. "Oh crikey! But—but I can't!" he gasped. "Why, the fellow's with the Head now, and he'll be kicked out!"

"That's what we all want, isn't it?" "Oh! Yes! But—" gasped the fat Owl.

"Just say nothing!" said Skinner. "Mind, I'm advising you for your own good. Smithy's fairly put his foot in it now, owing to your potty trick. He's reported to Quelch that his notecase is stolen, and Quelch has gone to the Head about it. You can bet that Smithy will take it out of you if you make him look such a fool to all the school."

"But—" gasped Bunter.

"You needn't worry about Skip!" sneered Skinner. "He's a pincher, and what does it matter whether he's

turned out for this, or for pinching something else? It comes to the same thing."

"D-d-does it?" stammered Bunter.

"Of course it does! It's bound to come, sooner or later, and the sooner he goes, the better for everybody!"

"But he never—"

"Think he wouldn't have pinched that notecase, if he'd seen it there?" sneered Skinner.

"I suppose he would. But—"

"Well, leave it at that then. We don't want the cad here."

"No; but—"

"Do as you like, of course," said Skinner, throwing himself into his armchair again. "It's your bizney. You'll get a Head's flogging for causing all this rumpus. I suppose you know that?"

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "Think so?"

"I don't think so—I know! Think you can start a row like this and nothing said? You'll get a Head's flogging for a cert—even if you're not sacked."

"Oh crikey!"

"And I shouldn't like to be in your shoes when Smithy finds out that you've pulled his leg and made him look a suspicious fool to all Greyfriars. The less you say, the better! Better suit yourself!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him in terrified silence. Then, without another word, he turned and left Skinner's study.

The look on his face was enough for Skinner—he knew that Bunter was going to say nothing. And he grinned sourly as Bunter went.

Skinner, to do him justice, was very far from realising his own rascality. He was quite convinced that Skip was still exactly what he had always been, and that sooner or later he would be caught pinching and kicked out. If he was not guilty this time, he would be guilty the next time!

He did not quite realise how much that booting down the passage had to do with confirming him in this belief. The sooner the rotter went, the better; and any stick was good enough to beat him with. That was how Skinner looked at it—and if he felt a twinge of conscience, he stifled it. Skinner's conscience was rather tough, anyhow.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business!

HISS! That unusual sound was heard in the Remove Form-room the following morning.

It caused Mr. Quelch to glance round with a glint in his gimlet-eyes, that would have had a terrifying effect on his Form at any other time.

Now it seemed to produce none.

It was the sight of Skip that caused the demonstration, from almost every fellow in the Form.

Skip was a minute or two late for class. Perhaps the Removites had concluded that he was not coming in at all. The fact was that Skip, with all his nerve and indeed impudence, hesitated to face the Form in the present state of feeling in the Remove. But he had to come—and he came. And a loud and prolonged outburst of hissing greeted him as he entered.

Many of the fellows had expected that he would be sent away the previous day, after his interview with the headmaster. But he had turned up for dorm—going quietly to bed, without a word to the other fellows, and without receiving a word from any of them. They concluded that he was leaving in the morning.

So when he presented himself in the Form-room to take his place in class, the Remove expressed their feelings emphatically.

He had not gone—and it seemed that he was not going.

It was altogether too much for the Remove. They hissed—and continued to hiss, in spite of Mr. Quelch's almost ferocious glare.

"Silence!" thundered the Remove master.

Hissss-s-s-s!

"The next boy who utters a sound will be caned!"

The hissing died away at that, as the Remove master grabbed his cane from his desk.

But faces in the Form were flushed and angry.

Herbert Vernon-Smith rose to his feet.

"If you please, sir, is that fellow coming into the class?" he asked.

"Skip is coming into the class as usual, Vernon-Smith! Sit down!"

"Are we to sit here with a thief, sir?"

"Silence! Skip, go to your place!"

"Yessir!" mumbled Skip.

He went to his place; and Mr. Quelch stood facing the Form, his eyes gleaming with anger.

"Now listen to me, my boys!" he said quietly. "What occurred yesterday in the Remove study is still under investigation. Nothing has been discovered, so far. Skip denies any knowledge of the occurrence; and to find any boy guilty without clear evidence would be the height of injustice. Dr. Locke has considered the matter very carefully, and he has decided that, for the present, at least, no one can justly be adjudged guilty. The boys of my Form are expected to place absolute reliance on the judgment of their headmaster."

That statement was received in grim silence by the Remove.

"That the facts will be fully elucidated before long, I am quite assured," went on Mr. Quelch. "Until then, the matter remains in abeyance. There must be no further demonstration of hostility towards any boy in this Form till the facts are known."

"Aren't they known already, sir?" asked the Bounder.

"I have said that they are not, Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"We will now commence!" added Mr. Quelch; and he turned to his desk for a book.

As if the removal of his gimlet-eye had broken a spell, the hissing burst forth in the Remove again as he turned.

Hissssssssssss!

Mr. Quelch revolved on his axis, as it were, with great rapidity, and glared at his insubordinate Form.

The hissing died away again—except for the Bounder, who steadily kept it up under his Form-master's angry eye. Smithy was the man to show off his nerve before all the fellows.

"Vernon-Smith!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I have ordered you to be silent! I will not have my authority disregarded in this Form-room! Stand out before the class!"

The Bounder lounged out before the class. Conscious of the support of all the Form, and always keen on the limelight, it was like Smithy to ask for trouble in this reckless way. But Henry Samuel Quelch was the man to deal with him.

"Bend over that desk, Vernon-Smith!" he rapped.

The Bounder paused a moment or two, as if considering whether to disobey that order.

The Removites watched him breathlessly. But even the Bounder's insolence had its limit; and he bent over the desk.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

It sounded like beating carpet.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

The Bounder shut his teeth hard, to keep himself silent. But his face was quite pale, and perspiration came out on his forehead. Seldom had Mr. Quelch administered so severe a "six" in the Remove room.

"Shame!" came a voice from the back of the class.

Clearly the Remove were in a mutinous mood that morning.

Mr. Quelch's face flushed crimson.

"Go to your place, Vernon-Smith! Bolsover, it was you who spoke, I think! Stand out before the class!"

Bolsover major, perhaps, had hoped that his voice would not be recognised. Certainly he wished from the bottom of his heart, that he had not spoken, as he came out to take "six" in his turn. He did not take them silently like the Bounder. He yelled.

Mr. Quelch looked over the Remove as Bolsover limped back to his place. Sullen faces met his eye; but there was silence.

"If there is any further insubordination in this class," said the Remove master, very distinctly, "all holidays for the remainder of the term will be cancelled, and extra lessons will be given on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Now we will proceed!"

And they proceeded—without a trace of any further insubordination in the class.

Every fellow there knew that Quelch would be as good as his word; and the prospect of the washing-out of all the half-holidays of the term, was more than enough to call the Remove to order.

Demonstrations in the Form-room were already a thing of the past. But outside the Form-room, it was likely to be a different matter.

Dark looks were cast at Skip as he sat with downcast face. Vernon-Smith, wriggling painfully on his form, was already planning action to follow the dismissal of the Remove.

Probably Mr. Quelch was quite aware of what was in the minds of

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the Removites. When the Form was dismissed, at last, in break, he called to his head boy.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You have heard me state the headmaster's decision with regard to the new junior. I expect you, as my head boy, to afford him any protection he may need, when he is out of class."

"Oh!" Harry Wharton breathed rather hard. "Very well, sir!"

The Remove marched silently out of the Form-room.

In the corridor Harry Wharton exchanged a glance with his friends, and they gathered round Skip as he went out into the quadrangle.

From the looks of the other fellows, it was clear that Mr. Quelch was right in supposing that he might be in need of some protection. Whether the task was palatable or not, the captain of the Remove had his duty to do, and his comrades were ready to back him up loyally.

Skip was in an unusually subdued mood that morning. The utter scorn with which he was regarded on all sides could not fail to affect him. Probably it was borne in on his hapless mind, that pinching was a much more serious matter than he had ever believed it to be.

He glanced from face to face of the Famous Five as they walked into the quad with him.

"You blokes believe I done it?" he asked in a low voice.

The Co. were uncomfortably silent.

"I never did!" said Skip in the same low voice. "I own up I don't look at pinching like you coves 'ere seem to do, but that there ain't the point; it ain't 'ow I look at it, but what I done."

"That's so, of course," said Bob.

"Well, then, I ain't done it!" said Skip. "The 'Ead don't believe I done it; I see in his face that he don't know what to believe, and it's jest the same with Mr. Quelch. But they're giving a bloke a chance. I ain't such a fool as to go for to do it—and I never did. That bloke Smith laid that there trap for me, but he caught somebody else in it—and you can lay to that."

"I—I suppose it's possible," said Harry slowly, "but—"

He was interrupted.

Herbert Vernon-Smith came up with a dozen Remove fellows at his heels.

The Famous Five closed round Skip at once.

"No rags, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "You heard what Quelch said in the Form-room."

"Quelch can go and eat coke!" snapped the Bounder.

"Go and tell him so; no good telling me!"

"Look here——" roared Bolsover major.

"I've got this to say!" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "That pincher is going to be kicked out! If the Head won't sack him after what he's done we're taking it into our own hands. Do you hear, you rotter?" His eyes gleamed at Skip. "You've got till after class to-day to get out of this school—that you ought never to have entered. If you're still here at tea-time we'll collar you and run you out of gates and kick you a good mile on the road."

"Don't be a mad ass, Smithy!" said Bob.

"I mean every word of it, and so do the other fellows!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You'll see if that rotter is still here!"

"I'll be still 'ere!" said Skip defiantly. "I ain't going, not unless the 'Ead says so!"

"Then you know what to expect!" With that the Bounder and the other Removites walked off.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

At the Last Moment!

"I SAY, you fellows——" "What's up, fatty?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, nothing!"

"You've got a face as long as a fiddle—for nothing?"

"Eh? Oh, no! Yes! I mean—er—nothing, you know."

Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving the chums of the Remove staring. It was just before afternoon school when Bunter surprised the Famous Five in that remarkable manner.

"What's up with that fat ass?" said Bob wonderingly. "He's been looking all day as if he's going to his own funeral."

"Perhaps his postal order hasn't come," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Several fellows had noticed that Billy Bunter was unusually silent that day. When Bunter was silent it was a circumstance that leaped to the eye, as it were. Generally he had enough to say—if not too much.

The bell rang for class, and the Remove went in.

Skip went in with the rest of the Remove, but this time there was no demonstration. Hardly a fellow looked at him; there was no hissing, or other sign of hostility.

Almost every fellow in the Remove was backing up the Bounder—and if Skip was still in the school at tea-time he was going to be kicked out by the Remove, on their own responsibility. They left it at that, and for the time being he was ignored in the Form.

When the Remove were dismissed Billy Bunter hooked on to Skinner in the corridor, while the other fellows went out.

"I say, Skinner, old chap——" he mumbled. "I—I say, it's rather thick, you know. I—I say, do you think I should get a flogging if—if——"

"I don't think; I know," said Skinner coolly. "Don't be an ass, Bunter! If it came out that all this pother was caused by you playing a potty trick you'd be up for a flogging; very likely the sack."

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

"All you've got to do is to say nothing."

"I—I'm not going to say anything, of—of course. But——"

"Stick to that, and you're all right," said Skinner, and he walked out of the House, leaving Bunter blinking lugubriously.

Harry Wharton was feeling as worried as Bunter, though from a different cause. In spite of a lingering doubt in his mind, his belief was much the same as that of the rest of the Remove, and he was more concerned for the crowd of fellows who were following the Bounder's lead than for Skip.

His friends gathered with him in Study No. 1—with Skip. The Co. were standing by their leader, little as they liked the prospect of a row with the whole Form in such a cause.

Most of the Remove collected in the passage, outside the Bounder's study. Loud voices reached the Famous Five in Study No. 1.

"There's going to be a row, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry. "That hot-headed ass Smithy is going to land all the Remove in it."

"And we're on the wrong side!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh rot!" said Harry. "We can't let Smithy carry on—I can't, at any rate. Besides, the fathead can't get away with it. Do you think Quelch will let Smithy dictate to him?"

"Hardly!" grinned Nugent. "But—but——"

"Look 'ere, you blokes," said Skip, "this 'ere is my study, and I'm sticking 'ere! If they try to get me out, somebody is going to get 'urt—and you can lay to that! But I ain't asking you blokes to take a 'and! You 'ook it and leave me to it. See?"

"You think you can handle twenty fellows?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"I ain't asking for your 'elp, any-'ow!" retorted Skip. "If they start on me, I'm going to 'it out and 'it 'ard, and you can lay to that. You blokes ain't got no call to get mixed up in it. 'ook it!"

The Famous Five made no reply to that.

"I say, you fellows——" A fat face looked in. "I say, they—they—they're coming!"

"Hop in, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "Just the man we want!"

"Eh? Are you going to have tea now?"

"Oh, no! We're going to have a scrap—tremendous! Haven't you come here to back us up? You take Bolsover off our hands—that will be a help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Bunter, clearly, had not come there as a fighting-man? Tea was not on the programme, in the exciting circumstances. So it was rather a puzzle why Bunter had come there at all. Still, there he was!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here they come!"

There was a tramp of footsteps in the Remove passage. The Bounder appeared in the doorway of Study No. 1, with a crowd behind him. His face was grim and determined.

"Here he is!" he said. "Have him out!"

"Stand back, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Are you sticking up for that pincher?"

"You're not going to touch him!"

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

"You hear that, you fellows?" he said. "Who's following me, to have that pincher out and boot him out of the school?"

"Every man here!" roared Bolsover major. "And if those cads stand in the way, we'll rag them baldheaded!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Get on with it!"

"We're in with you, Smithy!"

The Bounder made a step into the study. Behind him the crowd surged on.

"Get aside, you fellows!" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "We don't want a row with you—but we're having that pincher out. Last time of asking."

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Bob Cherry.

"I—I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I—I say, hold on! I say it's—it's all a mistake! I say Skip never had that notecase, and—and I jolly well know he never."

"Shut up, you fat fool!" snapped the Bounder. "Now, you men——"

"I tell you he never!" yelled Bunter. "I—I don't care if I do get a flogging, so there! I know where that notecase is. It wasn't pinched at all, you beast, and it's in the jar on your study mantelpiece this very minute!"

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Bumps for the Bounder!

THERE was a sudden silence in Study No. 1.

Every fellow in the study, every fellow crowded at the doorway, stared at William George Bunter.

Bunter had the house, so to speak!

Skinner, who was with the mob in the passage, gritted his teeth as he heard the fat Owl's words, and stepped quietly away. Skinner, like many unscrupulous fellows, counted on others being as unscrupulous as himself. It was not the first time that the cad of the Remove had made a mistake in measuring other fellows by his own standard.

Harry Wharton broke the silence in the study.

"What do you mean, Bunter? What do you know about it?"

"Oh, nothing! I—I mean, I'd have told you yesterday, only Skinner said I should be flogged."

"Skinner?"

"I don't care!" gasped Bunter. "It was only a jape—and how was I to know that that suspicious beast would think that his mouldy notecase had been pinched? I never knew he had left it there to be pinched, did I?"

The Removites stared blankly at Bunter.

"You say that that notecase hasn't been pinched at all?" said the captain of the Remove at last. "You say you know where it is?"

"Oh, smoky 'addocks!" murmured Skip.

The Bounder's face was a picture. He glared at Billy Bunter as if he could have eaten him.

"You!" he stuttered. "You——"

"Where's that notecase, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I've told you—it's in the jar on Smithy's mantelpiece—under the ferns in the jar!" gasped Bunter.

"You put it there?"

"I—I—I——"

"Redwing, old man!" Harry called to Tom Redwing in the passage. "Go to your study and see if Smithy's notecase is there, will you?"

"You bet!"

Redwing ran up the passage, and darted into Study No. 4.

He came back in less than a minute, with the well-known russet leather notecase in his hand. He pushed through the silent crowd and handed it to Vernon-Smith.

"Yours!" he said, with a touch of sarcasm.

The Bounder took it mechanically. He stood with it in his hand, staring at it, utterly at a loss.

Skip gave him a sarcastic grin.

"Better look in it!" he jeered. "P'r'aps you think your spondulics is pinched out of it!"

The Bounder did not heed him.

"Better look in it, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton, his lip curling. "We want to wind this up now—we don't want any more accusations of theft in the Remove. You may find that sort of thing amusing—other fellows don't!"

The Bounder flushed crimson. He opened the notecase, gave the contents a careless glance, and put it in his pocket.

"All right?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Yes!" muttered the Bounder.

"Then you'd better go and tell Quelch it's found!" said Wharton. "I don't envy you the interview."

The Bounder fixed his eyes on Bunter with a look that made the Owl of the Remove cringe.

"You!" he breathed. "You fat fool——"

"I say, you fellows, you keep him off!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "I say——"

"Don't you worry!" said Bob Cherry. "Smithy isn't riding the high horse any more after this. We'll jolly well see that he doesn't!"

"If that blithering idiot had had sense enough to tell us this before——" said Peter Todd.

"So I jolly well would, only Skinner said——"

"Did Skinner know?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"You see, I told him, and he said I should be flogged for causing all this row, and Smithy would be after me——" gasped Bunter.

"We'll talk to Skinner about this!" said Harry Wharton. "You fat ass, you ought to be jolly well booted for playing such a silly trick! Thank goodness, you had sense enough to own up! You'll have to tell Quelch——"

"I—I say, I—I'd rather not mention it to Quelch!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'd much rather not be flogged, you know!"

"You howling ass! Skinner was only pulling your leg to make use of you! You'd have known that if you had the brains of a bunny rabbit! Quelch will be jolly glad to hear that Smithy's rubbish wasn't pinched, after all!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Think so?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, I don't mind telling him, then," said Bunter. "If I ain't going to be flogged, I'm ready to tell Quelch that I put Smithy's notecase in that jar to pull his leg. But—but if it's going to be a flogging, I—I don't know anything about it!"

"What?"

"I—I mean——"

"What do you mean, you fat idiot?"

"I—I—I mean, I don't want to be flogged!" gasped Bunter. "That's what I mean, you know! That's important!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder gave him a black and bitter look.

"Bunter may get off with Quelch," he said, between his teeth, "but he won't get off with me! I'll smash the fat fool to a jelly!"

"I say, you fellows——" yelled Bunter, in alarm. He dodged behind the Famous Five. "I say——"

But Bunter was in no danger. The Famous Five collared the Bounder like one man as he made a stride at the fat Removite.

"Bump him!" said Bob Cherry.

The Bounder yelled as he snote the floor of Study No. 1 in the grasp of five pairs of hands.

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Not a hand was raised for his assistance. The crowd that had followed him to Study No. 1 looked on, many of them grinning.

Smithy had made a fool of himself, and had very nearly made fools of the whole Form. The Removites were fed-up with Smithy.

"That's a tip, Smithy!" said the captain of the Remove grimly. "Don't lay any more of your traps for pinchers! And if you do, don't catch the wrong man in them! You'd have landed the whole Form in a fearful row if Bunter hadn't owned up, and your rotten notecase would have turned up in your own study, after all. Give him one more, and chuck him out!"

Bump!

Then the Bounder hurtled through the doorway and landed in the passage.

He picked himself up there, breathless and enraged. With a savage glare round at a crowd of grinning faces, he tramped away up the passage, and the door of Study No. 4 slammed after him.

"And now," said Harry Wharton, "we'll go and tell Skinner what we think of him!"

"Hear, hear!"

Skinner was feeling very uneasy in his study. He had cause to feel uneasy. Nearly all the Remove came along to tell him what they thought of him. When they had told him—with emphasis—Skinner was left lying in a breathless, dusty, and dishevelled state, and realising, not for the first time, that the way of the transgressor was hard.

THE END.

Skip is cleared—but the majority of the Remove are still far from accepting him as one of themselves. Don't miss the rest of this grand series. There's another long cover-to-cover yarn next week.

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FOILED AT THE FINISH!

A Screamingly-Funny Story of Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's.

By DICKY NUGENT

I.
"Foooooeeep!"
"Hooray!"
The final whistle shrilled out across the Junior football field at St. Sam's and, amid loud cheers from the crowd, Jack Jolly and his merry men ceased play and streamed off the pitch—victors against St. Pete's by 10 goals to nil!
A cheering crowd of home supporters swarmed out to greet their favorites, as they returned. They surrounded Jack Jolly, who had distinguished himself by scoring all ten goals, and lifted him shoulder-high. They gave him a really warm welcome—to the tune of "Freeze a Jolly Good Fellow!"
It was dew to Jack Jolly that St. Pete's had been licked all hands down; and everybody applauded his grate feet!

While all eyes were centred on the captain of the Fourth, a bearded figger mite have been seen sneaking stealthily up the steps of the footer pavilion.

Doctor Birchermall—for it was he—gave a gloating chuckle as he gained the interior of the pavilion.
"Ha, ha!" he muttered. "Now to hide myself somewhere where they won't spot me—in the hoap of hearing where they've hidden all that tuck. I know very well that they've got a wacking grate feed hidden away somewhere. But the suspicious yung raskals won't give me a hint where they've put it. It will just serve them right if I find out for myself and nick all their tuck before they can get to it!"

With these words the Head opened the door of a store cupboard in the darkest corner of the pavilion and hopped inside.

A few minnits later the cheery footballers came clumping and clattering into the pavilion, larking and chattering with grate cheerfulness after the game. The St. Pete's fellows were there as well as the home team, and Doctor Birchermall's eyes gleamed in the darkness of the cupboard as he heard Jack Jolly's voice inviting the kaptin of the visiting team to a feed in the Junior Common-room before leaving in the sharry.
"Stay and have a feed with us, old chap," said the kaptin of the Fourth. "We've got in stacks of tuck and there'll be plenty for everybody."

"I hoap you put it somewhere safe from Tubby Barrell," grinned Fearless. "If that fat frog lays hands on it there won't be much left for us!"

"Trust me, old chap," larked Jolly. "I put it somewhere where he'd never think to look—in an old trunk up in the box-room."

In the old store cupboard the Head listened intently; and when Jolly gave out the secret he fairly hugged himself.

"What a bit of luck!" he muttered to himself. "He's let the cat out of the bag now—and I bet he wouldn't half be wild if he knew I'd heard him!"

The next thing to do was to get out of the pavilion unseen. The Head proceeded to do this without

delay. He opened the door of the cupboard just sufficiently to squeeze out of it; and then he went down on his hands and knees and crawled stealthily towards the side door.

Doctor Birchermall's luck seemed to be fairly in this bright and breezy afternoon. In spite of his fishy behaviour, he didn't meet a sole—and in a brace of shakes he was out of the place.

When he reached the open air he made straight for the Skool House. His mouth was fairly watering at the thought of the feed which Jolly had deposited in the box-room. He galloped across the footer field and across the quad;



he fairly bounded up the Skool House steps, and once inside the House he went up the stairs three at a time.

"Now for the giddy feed!" he grinned, as he reached the box-room and flung open the door.

And then he received a shock! The box-room was not, as he had anticipated, empty. Somebody was there already—a fat yungster! When Doctor Birchermall opened the door it collided with the fat youth with a bump—and the fat youth promptly pitched on to the floor, yelling.

Bump!
"Yarooooo!"
"Barrell!" gasped the Head. "Bust it!"

This was the worst possible thing that could have happened from Doctor Birchermall's point of view. It was Tubby Barrell—the biggest tell-tale in the skool. If the Head touched Jack Jolly's hidden hoard of tuck now, Tubby would soon make sure that the whole skool knew who had had it. On the other hand, if he left it alone he would have the mortification of knowing that Tubby had probably wolfed the lot!

Doctor Birchermall simply glared at the fat Fourth Former.

"What are you doing of, rooting about in this here box-room?" he wrapped out.

He eggpected Tubby to start cringing and wining at that stern question, his teeth chattering and his neeze nocking with fear as he did so.

But Tubby did nothing of the kind. Instead, he gave Doctor Birchermall a fat wink.

"What about yourself, sir?" he asked pointedly.

The Head culledered.
"Don't be disportinent, Barrell! I just came up here—ahem!—for a stroll!"

"He, he, he! I don't think!" sniggered Tubby Barrell. "You mean you came up here for the same thing that brought me—namely, Jolly's trunk of tuck!"

"Really, Barrell, I haven't the phoggiest notion of what you are—"

"Oh, yes, you have, sir!"

grinned the fat junior. "I happened to be lissening by an open window in the pavilion when Jolly was talking about it, and I saw you crawl out of the cupboard! I hopped it and came up at once, thinking to get away with the tuck before you arrived. But you

didn't give me time, sir!"

The Head took a step forward.

"Why, you cheeky yung raskel! I'll—"

"You lemme alone!" yelped Tubby Barrell. "If you don't, I'll tell all the chaps who hid in the cupboard and who came after the tuck!"

Doctor Birchermall bit his lips. He was on the horns of a dilemma, and he knew it! He decided to stop glaring at Tubby. He smiled a fawning smile instead.

"Now look here, Barrell, there's no need for you to be unplezzant about—"

"Of course there isn't, sir!" grinned Tubby. "And I'm not going to be unplezzant if you play the game! I've thought of a ripping wheeze, sir. Suppose we go halves with the tuck?"

The Head stroked his beard reflectively.

"Ahem! That's an idea, Barrell, certainly! But what happens when Jolly finds out that his tuck is missing?"

"That's where my wheeze comes in, sir!" grinned Tubby. "He's bound to ask me if I've had it, and I'll say 'yes'!"

"You'll say 'yes'?" The Head simply blinked. "But Jolly will simply slawter you!"

"No he won't, sir! Just at that moment, you'll arrive and take the matter out of his hands. You'll tell him that he's not to touch me, and that you'll give me a wacking instead!"

"Bless my sole!"

"After that, you can take me to your study, sir," eggplained Tubby. "You can flog the arm-

chair to make it sound real, and I'll do some yelling. And then we'll share the feed between us! What do you think about it, sir?"

Doctor Birchermall scratched his nose and pondered deeply for a few moments, and then he grinned.

"Very well, Barrell! I can't say that I approve entirely of the moral side of it, but seeing that I'm in need of a good tuck-in, I'll drop my principals for once and do it!"

"Good!" grinned Tubby. "Now to get the tuck down to your study!"

II.

"Here he is!"

Tubby Barrell grinned.

It was ten minnits later and the fat Fourth Former had adjerned to the Junior Common-room. He had hardly settled down in an armchair before the door was flung open and a crowd of Fourth Formers entered. They made a rush for Tubby, with Jack Jolly well to the four.

"Own up, you fat swindler!" cried the kaptin of the Fourth. "What have you done with my tuck?"

In the usual way, Tubby answered that question by promptly denying all nollidge of any tuck. But this time he altered his tackticks.

"Sorry, old chap!" he grinned. "I felt peckish, so I took the lot!"

"Well, of all the fat frauds—!" "Serag him!" "Slawter him!"

The fellows closed round Tubby Barrell threateningly. But before they could lay hands on him there was a rustling sound from the door and Doctor Birchermall's bee-inspiring figger appeared in the doorway.

"Now then, what's all the rum-pus about?" he cried. "Why are you all attacking Barrell in this cowardly fashion?"

The chums of the Fourth stood silent. Troo to their skoolboy code of honour, they would have died rather than sneaked. But Tubby Barrell made up for their backwardness by giving himself away.

"Please, sir, they're going for me because I took Jolly's tuck from the box-room!" he said, with a smirk.

The Head took advantage of the fellows' surprized stares being fixed on Tubby to give him a sly wink.

"Really, Barrell!" he claimed. "You calmly admit that you theved tuck belonging to another? Why, I've never heard the like! Boys, I am not going to allow you to undertake the punishment of this fat yung raskel—it's too serious for that. Instead, I propose to teach him a lesson myself!"

"Oh crums!"

"Follow me to my study, Bar-

rell!" thundered Doctor Birchermall, giving the fat junior another sly wink while the others were not looking. "I am going to birch you black and blew for this heinous crime!"

"All screen, sir!" grinned Tubby, taking that dredded sentence with remarkable cheerfulness. And he followed Doctor Birchermall to his study, while the curious brought up in the rear.

The Head and Tubby Barrell were inwardly nearly busting their sides with larfer when they found themselves alone in the former's study. But, with a mitey effort, they conkered their feelings.

"Bend over, Barrell!" cried Doctor Birchermall, loud enough for the fellows in the passidge outside to hear. "I am going to birch you till you simply shriek for mersy for your terrible crime of nicking Jolly's tuck! Here goes!"

A moment later Doctor Birchermall

all started lashing away at the arm-chair for all he was worth, raising such clouds of dust that you could hardly see across the study. Just to complete the illusion, Tubby Barrell started yelling and shrieking as if he were undergoing a fearful flogging.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

"Wooop! Yooop! Ow-wow-ow!"

Tubby Barrell's "flogging" could not possibly have been more realistic than it sounded to the crowd in the passidge.

What spoiled the realism was a peep through the keyhole. The Head had not counted on any of the juniors being so daring as to take that liberty. But Jolly and Fearless and one or two others did it, all the same, and they were rewarded by one of the most remarkable sites ever seen in the Head's study!

THEY ALL FELL DOWN!

Sad End to Weight-Lifting Stunt

Give Bulstrode his due, boys! He's a first-class showman!

When he told us that his weight-lifting exhibition in the gym was going to be the most amazing display of physical strength seen since the days of Samson, we told him to draw it mild. But when we got to the show, we had to admit at first that he wasn't exaggerating so much after all!

Joking aside, Bulstrode's a weight-lifter right enough; and he knows how to put it across to his audience. He makes an intentional fumble just at the right moment to impress the crowd with the weight he's lifting, and he has a real gift for theatrical poses. When he lifts a ten-pound weight, you might easily think it was a hundred-pound weight!

But the brightest piece of showmanship of the evening came when Bulstrode lifted above his head a long iron bar from which hung eleven fags—six on one side and five, including Sammy Bunter, on the other!

Experts who heard Bulstrode announce what he was going to do said it was impossible. So it was; but Bulstrode did it!

The audience gasped as Bulstrode's straining muscles lifted the bar and the kids right over his head.



Then they gasped again. So would you, if you'd been there! For the bar didn't stop going up when Bulstrode held it above him at arms length. It kept on travelling up towards the ceiling—AND BULSTRODE, INSTEAD OF HOLDING IT UP, WAS HIMSELF YANKED OFF HIS FEET!

Unfortunately, this miraculous state of affairs didn't last long. In fact, it was only about two seconds later when something seemed to snap and the whole crowd came tumbling down, Bulstrode included.

Inquiries established the fact that in order to assist him to "balance" the bar, Bulstrode had secretly suspended it by two unseen wire ropes which ran over an oak beam and out of the window. Still further to assist him, Bulstrode had arranged for two fellows outside the gym to turn a handle and lift the bar. The only drawback was, that they didn't know when to stop turning the handle!

Bulstrode concluded his show with a brief apology for the accident; and the audience showed their appreciation by rolling him on the floor and scragging him!

There was Doctor Birchermall flogging away as hard as he could at his armchair, while Tubby Barrell sat on the winder-seat grinning all over his dial and shrieking as if in aggerny!

It mite have been thought that that site would have made Jolly and his pals awfully wild. But, strangely enuff, it didn't. Instead of nashing their teeth with rage, they had to stuff their hankies into their mouths to stop themselves larking out loud. But, of course, the Head knew nothing of that, and he kept on flogging the arm-chair for a long time.

"There! I hoap that will teach you a lesson, Barrell!" he said at last, yelling out for the bennyfit of the fellows in the passidge. "You may rest in the chair until you are sufficiently recovered from this terrific flogging to crawl up to bed!"

Then, with yet another wink at his fellow-plotter, Doctor Birchermall opened the trunk which he and Tubby had brought down from the box-room.

"Wade in, Barrell!" he whispered.

And in another instant they were both diving into the good things in Jack Jolly's trunk!

But an instant after that the Head and Tubby Barrell had the shock of their lives! For the delicious-looking pies they both grabbed were only cardboard imitations—filled with shavings!

"Grooooo!" yelled Doctor Birchermall.

"Yarooo! Gug-gug-grooo!" shrieked Tubby Barrell.

Red with rage, the two plotters dived feverishly into the trunk and tried other samples of tuck. It was all the same! Pies, poodings, cakes and tarts were all cardboard or rubber imitations. Succulent-looking chickens were only rubber balloons!

"It's a jape!" yelled the Head at last. "We've been dished! Dished, diddled and done!"

He rushed to the door and flung it open—to be greeted with a howl of larfer from the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jevver get left, sir?" chortled Jolly. "The real tuck was in the Common-room all the time! We put all that property tuck in the trunk for Tubby's bennyfit—and put him on the track of it when we spotted him lissening at the pavilion winder! But we didn't think you'd fall for it, too."

Words failed Doctor Birchermall. He made a rush at the yelling Jack Jolly & Co.

The Fourth Formers turned round and ran for their lives. And for the next day or two they kept well out of the way of the would-be tuck-taker whom they had foiled at the Finish!

POET SUES "GREYFRIARS HERALD"!

Libel Action Over Rejected Manuscript

When is a poet not a poet? Judge Brown's verdict in the Remove Civil Court this week indicates one possible answer: WHEN HIS NAME IS HORACE COKER!

The famous Fifth Former was plaintiff in an action for libel against the Editor of this paper, alleged to be contained in a letter to his literary agents, Messrs. Potter & Greene. In rejecting the poem, the Editor said: "We regret that we are unable to use Mr. Coker's poems at present. We shall be glad if you will send us his MSS., however, when the paper-chasing season begins." This, plaintiff submitted, constituted a serious libel on him as a poet, warranting damages on a generous scale.

Mr. Coker, conducting his own case, said that this was a typical example of the fag cheek he was always having to endure; but he had decided to make an example of the cheeky young rotter who had written the letter because he was particularly jealous of his reputation as a poet.

Mr. Coker then proceeded to read extracts from one of the poems rejected on this occasion in order to prove his natural flair for poetry.

"All hail the mighty fighting-man
With the name of
Horace Coker.
He punches like a
battering-ram
When he biffs chaps
on the boko!"

After a brief interval, during which the learned judge had to be revived by smelling-salts, Coker recited the theme-verse of his poem:

"Then lift your cups to
this man of iron
And raise your gin-
ger-beers, boys!
For strength and
courage he's like a
lion
And he's worth
three hearty
cheers, boys!"

At this stage, Judge Brown hurriedly decided that he had heard enough and gave judgment for the defendant with costs.

Mr. Coker, shouting unintelligible remarks, promptly made a rush at the judge and was promptly frogmarched out of court.

The judge was then taken to the tuck shop by the defendants.