

WHO SACKED HACKER?—SENSATION AT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL—SEE INSIDE!

The Magnet 2^d

Billy Bunter's
Own Paper





**THIS WEEK BY
FISHER TARLETON FISH,
the American junior.**

ATTABOY! I've just stuck up the Ed. for two dollars to write this page, and I'll tell a man I wouldn't do it for less. He sure seemed to think I oughta work for nix. Did I laugh, or did I laugh? I guess I ain't no such ornery sucker as he allows.

I got him on Quelch's phone after his letter came.

"Say, about this hyer Page," I said, pretty crisply. "You sure forgot to mention sump'n about payment. What's your usual rate?"

"Payment!" He sorta choked. "I never pay Greyfriars fellows. They do it for fun."

Can you beat that?

"Forget it!" I scoffed. "This baby's eye-teeth are cut. If you get a page of copy outa me for nix, I'd sure like to be there to see you do it. Think I'm kinda daffy, huh? You gotta 'nother guess on the way, sir—yep!"

He chewed up the phone and got rid of some hard names.

"Shoot off your mouth all you want, baby," I said calmly. "Take it out in talk and get your money's worth. I opine the only talk that hits me is dollars, so come across with your proposition and let's talk turkey."

So I peeled ten bob off his wad, and left him as sore as a gumball. I should smile! I guess no pesky Britisher can bulldoze this infant into playing the goob. Not so's you'd notice it!

OVER THERE!

I'll tell the world this old island of yours is as slow as a lame snail. Over there, in New York, we kinda hustle. Look at your railroad service. Gee, it musta died about ten years ago, and nobody's noticed it yet. A guy waits at the depot while the ticket-clerk gets his afternoon nap and the station-master digs potatoes, and the whole shebang is as busy as the Sahara Desert on a wet Wednesday.

Over there our trains go so fast you can't see 'em. Boy, we got service! Why, gee, there's so many folks in the station that you can't get near it, and we gotta platoon of porters to pack 'em into the trains, and when you do get in, the crowd's so thick a guy can't get out till six miles past his depot. That's hustling, big boy!

Look at your autos! Carry me home to die! A pesky old thirty-mile speed limit through the town! Can you tie it? Why, boy, over there we reckon we're going backwards at thirty miles an hour. We got so many cars that they pack solid into the town, and can't move for a couple hours. You ain't seen nothing till you see our traffic.

And then there's your cops! Say, what are they, anyway? Where do they get that way? They spend all day in their gardens, or propping up a lamp-post. Is that progress? Go on, ask me!

Over there we run things kinda different. Our cops move. They have to be slick, or they're shuffled off the role with a skinful of warm lead. See 'em screeching about all over town in the cop-wagons—boy, it's great! We go in for guns and tear-gas, and make our cops earn their graft. I reckon you won't find a cop over there propping up a lamp-post—he makes too good a target. Yessie!

As for your business ideas—gee, one

weeps! Say, ain't you got any pesky business men in this mouldy old island? A guy can't rook a sucker outava cent but what there's a yell. Over there, I'll tell the world you have to sew up your pockets and watch that someone don't pinch your pants. It's business from the word "Go!" And you don't squeal to the cops if a guy rooks you, because the cop's already got his rake off of the profit, and he just slams you on the button and says: "On your way, sucker!"

Now that's the place for real go-ahead hustle. My popper

made a million dollars in two years. I guess he left 'em standing. The race is to the swift out there, and my popper hustled in first and left the other guys to jump outava forty-floor window. Get on or get out is our motto! You betcher!

HUSTLE!

That dumb cluck Skinner allows he can draw. Well, mebbe! If a guy likes to take six hours on a sketch, he oughter show sump'n for his trouble. I guess life's too fast to waste. The sketch on this page took me three minutes. That's hustle!

It shows the way we hustle in business over there. A guy fell off the roof of a forty-story building. He had a life insurance policy with a firm on the first floor—and they handed him his dollars as he passed the window. We don't waste time over there!

ADVERTISEMENTS

(Rates 10 cents per word. Apply F. T. F., Remove Study 14, Greyfriars.)

CHARLES CLEGG.

The Friardale Tuckshop.

Sweets, Hot or Cold Drinks, Home-made Cakes—

What the— Would you believe it? Not content with "bulldozing" me out of ten bob, Fishy is actually raising the wind by selling his Page to local tradesmen at 10 cents a word! Does he think he'll get away with it? Not so's he'd notice it! We cut our eye-teeth too early in London!—
EDITOR.)



THE FIRM OF FISH

Here's a great opportunity for guys with dollars. The modern go-ahead firm of Fish are ready to issue 100 shares of 1 dollar each to the first galoots who apply. Study the prospectus and then roll up with the greenbacks. A safe investment, personally guaranteed by F. T. F.

THE FIRM OF FISH.

Managing Director:

Fisher T. Fish, Esq., U.S.A.

Bankers:

The Fish New York Bank, Study 14 Branch.

Auditors:

Messrs. Fisher, Tarleton & Fish, Ltd.

OBJECTS OF THE COMPANY.—To acquire as rapidly as possible as many dollars as possible from as many galoots as possible.

BUSINESS. The Firm of Fish, buy, sell or lend anything that will separate jays from their dollars. This new loan is floated to increase the firm's profits by extending its operations to other branches of trade, among which are:

(1) **FISH, EGG AND POULTRY SUPPLY.**—Guys are allowed to keep pets in the old stables, and the firm propose to buy a dozen hens as pets, selling the eggs at the highest price to suckers in the school. The firm will also buy cheap foreign eggs in Court-



field, and advertise them as New Laid From Our Own Fowls—thus clearing top prices.

(2) **FISH'S BLENDED TEA.**—We propose to sell packets of tea at prices which will undercut Mrs. Mimble, and yet leave a nice profit. The tea will be obtained by collecting tea-leaves from guys' teapots and drying them, and putting them up in new packets, thus leaving the whole price as clear profit, except for the packets.

(3) **THE FISH SCHOOLBOOK LIBRARY.**—It is proposed to lay in a complete stock of school books and hire 'em out to guys who need them, at the rate of 3d. per vol. per day. Galoots have their own books, of course, but these will be hidden during the day, and some galoots will be needing books each evening for prep. Next day the hidden books will be left somewhere handy, and the books of some other guys hidden—and so on. Should show a good profit!

IT IS UNDERSTOOD that the fees and expenses of the Managing Director will be paid FIRST out of the profits (if any), and the rest divided up among the shareholders. Roll up, you jays, and get rich!

**FISHER T FISH,
Study No. 14, Remove.**

Fishy comes from the great U.S.A.—from New York itself. He thinks a lot of New York, and it is a great pity he ever left that wonderful spot. It may be said with truth that there is no fellow Greyfriars could more easily spare. To him, money or dollars!—is the beginning and end of all things. He is never tired of thinking up swindles to part fellows from their money. He will buy and sell anything from old books to bicycles, providing he can make at least 300 per cent profit on the article. Shylock had nothing on Fishy in that line. He lends money at interest to fags of the Second and Third, and rooks them of every cent. He has been flogged, kicked, bumped and ducked for swindling, and he looks forward eagerly to the time when he can leave school and return to New York, there to begin work on the widow and orphan.

(Cartoon By HAROLD SKINNER.)

UNHAPPY HORACE! Horace Hacker, master of the Shell Form at Greyfriars, is never happier than when he's dealing out punishment to some offender. But this week he wakes up the wrong passenger and it spells Trouble—with a capital "T"!

WHO SACKED HACKER?



The two masters gazed spellbound at the moving sack and the two slippered feet emerging therefrom. "Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Gig-gig-goodness gracious!" stuttered Mr. Prout faintly.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Listen To My Tale Of Woe!

"Ow! Wow! Yow!" "Bunter's signature tune," remarked Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter could be heard coming. Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting in a group by the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove when the sounds of woe preceded Billy Bunter up the Remove staircase.

"Ow! Yow! Wow! Wooh! Ow!" It sounded as if Bunter had hit trouble—and hit it hard.

He rolled into view across the Remove landing, and the Famous Five regarded him smilingly. They were not unsympathetic, but they knew their Bunter. Judging by the fat junior's sounds of woe, he might have been through something lingering, with boiling oil in it. But Billy Bunter was the man to make the biggest possible noise about the smallest possible damage.

"Ow!" Bunter blinked at five smiling faces through his big spectacles and moaned. "I say, you fellows—Ow! Wow!"

Bunter was holding a large ear with a fat hand. That ear, it seemed, had a pain in it. Apparently it had been pulled.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter. "Swab! Rotter!"

"Talking about yourself, as usual?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! That cad—that rotter—that—that—that—" Words seemed to fail Bunter. "That—that—Ow! Wow! Lugging at a fellow's ear! Wow! Tugging at it! Wow!"

"Loder?" asked Harry Wharton. "Ow! No! Wow! Not Loder; a beak!" moaned Bunter. "Ow!"

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull. "Beaks don't pull fellows' ears!"

"Oh, really, Bull! I suppose I know whether he pulled my ear or not!" roared Bunter. "I've got a fearful pain in it! I thought the beast was

Exciting School Story of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS, and JACK DRAKE, the Schoolboy Detective.

going to pull it off! I've a jolly good mind to go to Quelch and say—Ow! Oh crikey! Wow!"

Bunter rubbed that large ear tenderly. Probably there was an extensive pain in it, for it was an extensive ear and gave a good grip.

"But who—" asked Frank Nugent.

"Ow! That beast—that swab—that cad—that rotter—that beastly Acid Drop!" moaned Bunter.

"Oh, Hacker!"

Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, was called the "Acid Drop" in his Form. It seemed that it was Hacker who had pulled that fat ear.

The Famous Five sat up and took notice, as it were, as they heard that. Hacker was well known to be a Tartar in the Shell; but, whatever he did in his own Form, he had no right to pull Remove ears. Billy Bunter's ear, no doubt, was the least important ear in the Remove. Still, it was a Remove ear, and no Form-master but his own was entitled to introduce a pain into it.

"The cheeky ass!" said Bob Cherry warmly.

"The cheekfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But whyfully—"

"Ow! Nothing!" groaned Bunter. "You know Hacker! He pitches into fellows for nothing. I've heard that he whopped Hobson in the Form-room to-day for having a bag of bullseyes under his desk. He snooped the bullseyes and chucked them into the waste-paper-basket. I heard Hobson talking about it. Ow! That's the sort of—wow!—beast he is! Yow-ow!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Fellows aren't supposed to take bullseyes into the Form-room," he remarked. "Quelch would give a fellow lines for that."

"The Acid Drop whopped him. Ow! Now he's lugged at my ear. Wow! I

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did nothing—absolutely nothing, mind! I suppose a fellow can walk into a Form-room if he likes and no harm done!" moaned Bunter.

"Our Form-room?" asked Nugent.

"Owl! No; Hacker's. Wow! Of course, I never knew he was about. You know that creepy way he has of going about and not letting fellows hear him coming. He copped me in the Shell Form Room. Wow! I told him I'd only gone in because a fellow threw my cap in at the window and I had to go after it. He wouldn't believe me—"

"Well, Hacker's a suspicious sort of sweep," said Bob. "But I don't see why he shouldn't have believed that. Why didn't he?"

"Well, you see, I hadn't my cap with me—"

"What?" yelled the Famous Five.

"So he made out I wasn't telling the truth—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Like him, isn't it?" hooted Bunter. "He never takes a fellow's word! Beastly suspicious tick! Making a fellow out to be a liar, you know! He thought I was after something, and I hadn't been near the wastepaper-basket—"

"The wastepaper-basket?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Oh crumbs! The fat villain was after Hobby's bullseyes!" exclaimed Bob. "Was that it, you grub-raiding guzzler?"

"No, it wasn't!" roared Bunter. "I never heard Hobson say anything about the bullseyes, and I'd forgotten what he said, too. Besides, why shouldn't a fellow get Hobby's bullseyes back for him? Kind action, I call it! Ow?"

"Hobby would see a lot of those bullseyes if you got them back for him—I don't think!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Did Hacker know you were after the bullseyes?" grinned Nugent.

"Owl! No. Luckily, he'd forgotten all about the bullseyes. He just fancied I was up to something in his Form-room. Besides, I wasn't after them. I've told you so. I hope you're not going to make a fellow out a liar—like Hacker?"

"Oh crikey!"

"He grabbed hold of my ear!" hissed Bunter. "Grabbed it—clutched it like a vice! Dug his beastly finger and his beastly thumb into it and led me out of his Form-room—by the ear, you know! Wow! I was just going out, too, when he butted in. I should have been gone in another sec. Wow! I never heard him coming! Wooh! Look at my ear!"

The Famous Five looked at the extensive ear. It was scarlet. Evidently Hacker's finger and thumb had closed on that fat ear hard and fast.

"If Hacker did that for nothing you can go to Quelch about it," said Johnny Bull.

"Well, so I jolly well would, only Quelch might want to know what I was doing in the Shell-room. No good saying I wasn't there. Hacker would make out that I was as he copped me there."

"Make out!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Yes. He's mean enough. But, I say, you fellows—ow-wow!—fancy the Shell beak having the nerve to pull a Remove man's ear for nothing! He ought to be jolly well ragged! What about you fellows shipping his study? He's gone out."

"I can see us shipping a beak's study!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Well, he jolly well ought to be made to sit up for pulling a Remove man's ear—lugging and tugging at it!" hooted Bunter. "If you funk shipping his

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study, what about tipping his inkpot into his armchair? Ten to one he would sit in it before he spotted it—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you rag Hacker's study, and I'll jolly well whack out the bullseyes! There!"

"The bullseyes!" stuttered Bob.

"Yes. I mean it!" Billy Bunter ceased to caress that crimson ear and jerked a paper bag of bullseyes from his pocket. "Fair whacks all round if you rag the Acid Drop's study! See?"

"Hobby's bullseyes!" roared Johnny Bull. "Then you did bag Hobby's bullseyes out of the wastepaper-basket?"

"Eh? Oh, no! I mean—Wharrer you up to? Gimme my bullseyes, you beast!" roared Bunter, as Harry Wharton, reaching at the bag, jerked it from the fat paw. "You're not going to have the lot, you greedy pig! Look here—"

"You fat brigand, Hobby's going to have the lot!" said Harry Wharton. He tossed the bag of bullseyes through the open study doorway and landed them on the table.

"They ain't Hobby's bullseyes; they're another lot!" gasped Bunter. "I had them in a letter from Bunter Court this morning—I mean, in a parcel. Besides, I got them from the Shell-room to give back to Hobby. I'm going straight to his study to take them to him now. Gimme those bullseyes."

"Bow-wow!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. He seemed to forget even the pain in his fat ear in his consternation at the sudden loss of his loot. He advanced towards the study doorway; but the Famous Five blocked it, grinning—packing their goal, as it were. "I say, you fellows, let a fellow pass!"

"Pass on, friend—and all's well!" said Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, I—I want to go into the study and—and speak to Duck—"

"Duck isn't in the study."

"I mean, I want to look out a word in your Latin dic old chap! I've lost mine—it's not on the shelf in my study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, you beasts, if you jolly well snoop those bullseyes, I'll jolly well tell Hobson you've got them!" roared Bunter. "I'll jolly well go straight to Hobson, and say—Yaroooh! Leave off kicking me, you beast!"

"Stand steady!" said Bob Cherry. "I'm going to give you a few more to—"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter did not stay for a few more! One was enough! William George Bunter did not always know when he had had enough; but on this occasion, he had no doubts; and he departed in haste.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Out Of Bounds!

"BOY!"

Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, rapped out that word like a bullet from a rifle.

Hacker generally rapped. Hacker was a sharp gentleman. He had a sharp nose, a sharp temper, and a sharp voice.

James Duck, the new boy in the Remove, looked round.

Duck had a simple, sheepish face, adorned by bushy eyebrows, and a pair of steel-rimmed glasses. He blinked through those glasses at the master of the Shell.

Hacker, coming along from the school

gates, had spotted him at the corner of Friardale Lane.

At the corner lay the Abbot's Spinney, in which, a few weeks ago, Greyfriars fellows had been permitted to roam as they pleased. Now, however, the Abbot's Spinney, and the hut which stood on the site of the old stone cell there, was strictly out of bounds for the school.

Regardless, apparently, of the fact that it was out of bounds, James Duck was in the very act of pushing open the gate in the fence, when Hacker happened.

Evidently he was going in.

But he stopped as Hacker's sharp voice rapped at him.

Hacker came to a halt, and eyed him with severity.

"You are one of Mr. Quelch's boys?" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!" said the new junior meekly.

"Your name?"

"I'm Duck, sir."

"Duck!" repeated Mr. Hacker. He stared at the sheepish face. He had seen the new boy, but never heard his name. "Duck? Did you say Duck?"

"Yes, sir, Duck!"

"Your name is Duck?" rapped Mr. Hacker. It was, no doubt, an uncommon name; and perhaps Mr. Hacker suspected the new junior of pulling his leg. Hacker was a suspicious man.

"I'm not always called Duck, sir."

"What? What do you mean? You must be called Duck, if Duck is your name, I suppose?"

"Sometimes they call me 'Goose,' in the Remove, sir. But my name isn't Goose!" said the new junior innocently.

Mr. Hacker grunted.

"It is singular, if your name is Duck," he said.

"Oh, yes, sir, it is singular," said Duck. "If it were plural, it would be Ducks, of course."

Mr. Hacker stared at the new junior very hard. But James Duck only blinked at him with cheerful simplicity.

"I did not mean singular in that sense," grunted Mr. Hacker. "It is singular if your name is Duck. Not long ago there was a Remove boy named Drake. Both are odd."

"Oh, no, sir—even!" said James Duck.

"What? What do you mean by even?" yapped Mr. Hacker.

"Two are even, sir!" said Duck simply. "One would be odd, but two even. Three would be odd, but four even. I think that is right, sir. The fellows don't think me very bright in class, but I know that much."

Mr. Hacker breathed hard.

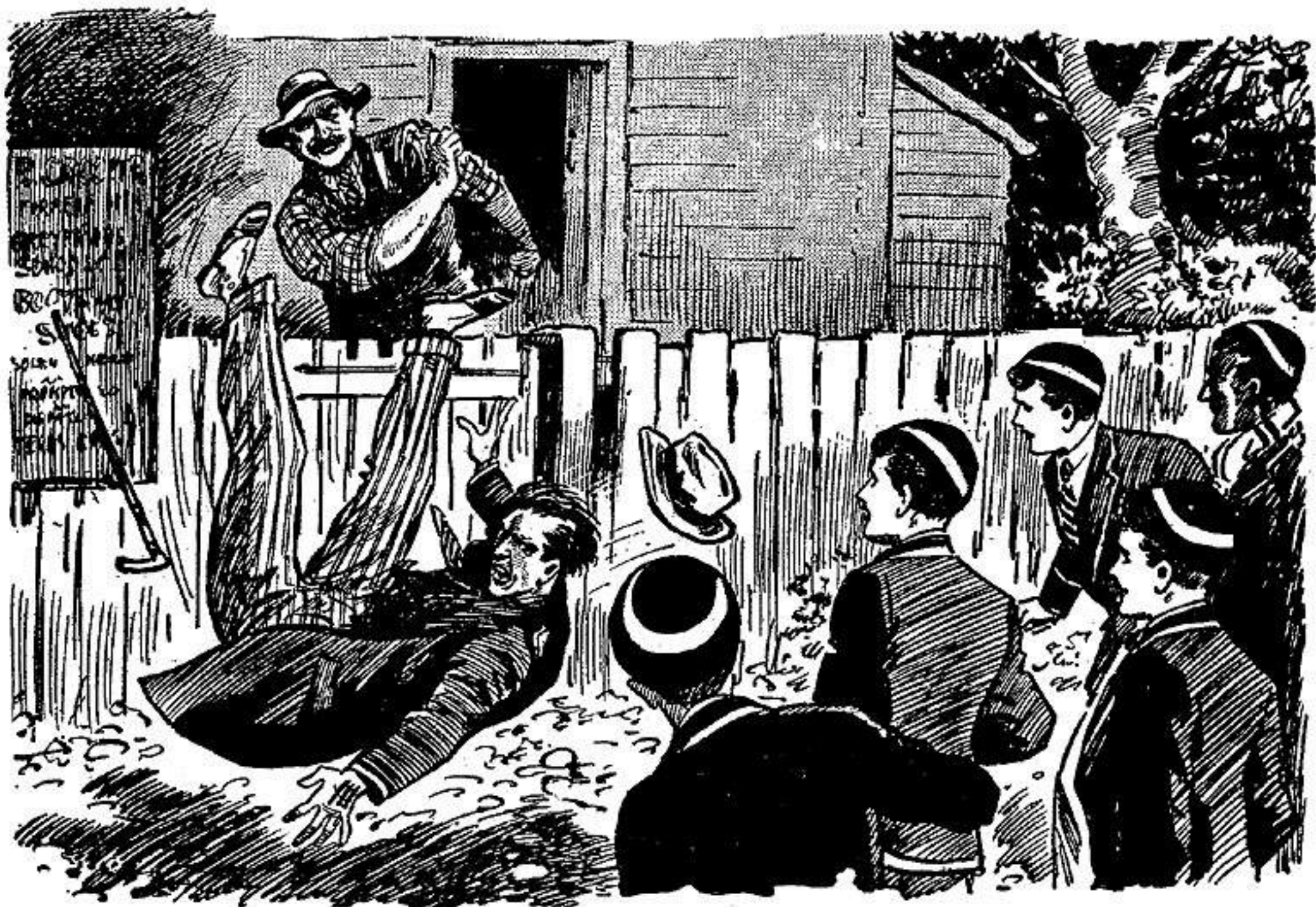
"If you are really so stupid as you appear to be, I do not envy your Form-master!" he said. "But, listen to me, Duck—if your name is Duck. You have not been at Greyfriars long, but you must be aware that this place is out of bounds. No Greyfriars boy is allowed to speak to the disreputable rascal who has taken up his residence in that hut."

Mr. Hacker pointed with his walking-stick towards the hut on the spinney—which had been built by an enterprising estate agent in Courtfield for the accommodation of hikers in summer days.

It had never before, in the winter-time, had a tenant; but it had one now, who was lounging in the doorway smoking a cigarette.

"Indeed, sir!" murmured James Duck. "Is it really out of bounds, sir?"

"As a new boy you may not have been aware of it," snapped Mr. Hacker. "But you are aware of it now that I have told you, Duck! There is a notice



"You getting out, you old bag of bones?" snarled Crocker. "Stand back! I—I—I shall charge you with assault and—
—and battery! I—goodness gracious! Oh! Oooooooh!" spluttered Hacker as the hefty sportsman grasped him
and tilted him over the gate. "Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

on the board, signed by the headmaster, placing the Abbot's Spinney out of bounds, and forbidding any communication with that man, Randolph Crocker."

"Mustn't I go in and buy a bootlace, sir?"

"A bootlace!" repeated Mr. Hacker. "Yes, sir; as the man is a cobbler, he—"

"The man is not a cobbler!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "He is an old boy of Greyfriars, who was expelled in disgraceful circumstances, and who has set up here to annoy the headmaster."

"But it says on the sign on the fence, sir—" James Duck pointed to the sign on the fence, and read out the inscription thereon: "'Randolph Crocker, formerly of Greyfriars School—Boots and Shoes soled and heeled.'"

"Silence!" rapped Mr. Hacker. "Go away at once, Duck! Greyfriars boys are not allowed to loiter here."

"Have you become master of the Remove, sir?"

"What? No! I am master of the Shell! What do you mean, you stupid boy?" exclaimed Mr. Hacker irritably.

"Oh! I thought that perhaps you had, sir, as I am a Remove boy, and you are telling me what to do!" said Duck innocently.

"Upon my word! Is that stupidity, or impertinence, Duck?" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "I shall not allow any Greyfriars boy, whether in my Form or not, to go out of bounds. I shall report you to Mr. Quelch."

"It is very kind of you, sir, to look after Mr. Quelch's boys for him," said the innocent Duck. "I suppose the boys in the Shell don't need looking after, as you have time to look after the Remove as well?"

Mr. Hacker had doubted, so far, whether James Duck's replies were dictated by stupidity or impertinence.

Now he was sure, or almost sure, that it was impertinence! He glared at the sheepish face.

"Go!" he thundered. "Go back to the school at once!"

"But mustn't I get a bootlace, sir?"

The Acid Drop's eyes glinted. He made a movement with his walking-stick.

James Duck, whether he was stupid or not, was not stupid enough to remain within reach of that walking-stick. He hopped out of range with swift activity.

"Return to the school at once!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

"Very well, sir!" murmured James Duck meekly.

He moved off slowly towards the gates of Greyfriars, visible at a little distance.

Mr. Hacker frowned after him, and then turned a bitter glance of contempt on that peculiar old boy of Greyfriars in the doorway of the hut on the spinney.

Randolph Crocker's presence in sight of the school gates annoyed all Greyfriars, and especially the Head and his staff.

Hacker was probably more irritated than any other, because he was more irritable.

But if Horace Hacker expected his contemptuous glance to produce any effect on the old boy, he was disappointed. Sportsman Crocker's skin was rather too thick for that.

Crocker waved his cigarette at the master of the Shell, leaving a blue trail of smoke in the air.

"Trickle in, old bean, if you've got any boots or shoes you want repaired!" he called out.

"Impertinent rascal!" spluttered Mr. Hacker.

"Calling a man names!" asked Mr. Crocker, coming out of the doorway. "Old Prout came along the other day

and asked for a jolt. He got it! Are you asking for one of the same?"

Mr. Hacker did not answer that. He turned his back and walked away quickly—quite quickly. He did not want a jolt from the man who had been a boxer in his Greyfriars days, and was said to have figured in the ring since. Very much indeed Mr. Hacker didn't.

Sportsman Crocker laughed, and lounged back into the hut.

Mr. Hacker walked on at a rapid pace. But he did not walk very far. At the first wayside trees that screened him from the spinney he stopped and stood looking back through the trees.

Hacker, who was always suspicious, was suspicious of that new boy, Duck. He had a very strong suspicion that that junior had only affected to go back to the school, and, as soon as the master's back was turned, would retrace his steps towards the forbidden spot.

Which, in point of fact, was exactly what James Duck did!

Watching through that clump of trees, Hacker spotted him. He was out of sight, and Duck, no doubt, supposed that he had walked on to the village, as had been his original intention. The Acid Drop's sour face became sourer and grimmer as he saw the junior in the steel-rimmed spectacles coming back to the gate of the spinney, opening the same, and walking through.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Hacker.

Fairly under his eyes, though unconscious of it, James Duck had deliberately gone out of bounds!

It was up to Mr. Hacker, at that stage of the proceedings, to make a note of the fact, for report to Duck's Form-master, Henry Samuel Quelch.

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But that was not Mr. Hacker's way. Interference was his long suit moreover, he had been deeply annoyed by Duck.

Instead of going on his way, and leaving Mr. Quelch's business for Mr. Quelch to mind, Horace Hacker strode, or rather hurred, back to the gate of the spinney.

Duck was just disappearing in at the doorway of the hut up the muddy path. "Duck!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

If the new junior heard, he heeded not. He disappeared from view within the hut, and the door closed after him. And Mr. Hacker, fairly gurgling wrath, flew up the path after him—with the fell intention of grabbing him by the ear and leading him out of that hut, as he had led Billy Bunter out of the Shell Form Room half an hour ago.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Admittance!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Knock, knock!"

"Hacker!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in amazement.

Knock!

"The esteemed and ridiculous Hacker!" grinned Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

Knock! Bang! Knock!

"The dear man's going it!" remarked Johnny Bull. "But what the thump does he want with that blackguard Crocker?"

"He may get what he doesn't want, if that ruffian comes out to him!" chuckled Frank Nugent.

Bang! Thump! Knock!

Mr. Hacker certainly was going it. Standing at the door of the hut on the

Abbot's Spinney, he smote that door with his walking-stick. He smote it often, and he smote it hard.

The knocking and banging on the door rang up and down Friardale Lane, and far across fields and meadows.

Harry Wharton & Co., coming along from the school gates, stopped to gaze at Hacker! He interested them!

The Famous Five were taking a walk before tea. But they forgot all about that walk! Hacker's performance chained their attention.

The master of the Shell had his back to them. But they glimpsed his face now and then, and saw that it was red with wrath.

Hacker, clearly, was in a state of the greatest annoyance and irritation. That was not an uncommon state for Hacker to be in. Very small offences were sufficient to rouse Hacker's ire. Only that day he had whopped Hobson, the captain of the Shell, for having bulls-eyes in class—an offence for which any other beak at Greyfriars would have given poor old Hobby lines.

It was not surprising to see Hacker in a shirty state. But it was quite surprising to see him kicking up a shindy—especially with Sportsman Crocker, the man who had been sacked from Greyfriars long years since, and had now turned up again like a bad penny.

Everybody knew that Crocker had a hefty punch—and nobody needed telling that Hacker had no use whatever for hefty punches!

So this was not merely surprising—it was astonishing! And the chums of the Remove were not going to miss it. They forgot—more or less—that Greyfriars fellows were forbidden to loiter at that spot, and stood in a cheery row at the gateway, watching Hacker.

Bang! Knock! Crash! Bang!

"That walking-stick will go, if he keeps that up!" remarked Bob Cherry. "I wonder why Crocker doesn't open the door! He's generally ripe for a row—and Hacker's jolly well asking for it."

"He is—he are!" grinned Nugent. "Let's watch, and carry home what's left of Hacker after he gets what he's asking for."

And the Famous Five chuckled and watched.

Bang, bang, bang! went the walking-stick on the door.

Bob Cherry's prediction was suddenly verified. A terrific bang cracked the walking-stick in two—one half flew through the air and dropped in the thickets of the spinney—the other half remaining in Hacker's grip.

"Oh!" the juniors heard Mr. Hacker gasp.

Still the door did not open.

It amazed the juniors. Randolph Crocker had once been a Greyfriars man, it was true; but he was not a creditable specimen of what the old school turned out. He liked a row—and he had been mixed up in several rows since he had set up his remarkable establishment near the school gates.

He had rowed with Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth—Prout had almost had to be carried home afterwards. He had walloped Coker of the Fifth, who had called on him in search of trouble, and found more than he could handle. He had butted in on the football field at Greyfriars, to make a scene there—and had pulled the majestic nose of Mr. Quelch, who had ordered him off! He had rowed with the Famous Five more than once—but he had not been lucky in his dealings with those cheery youths.

On one occasion, he had been ducked in a ditch; on another, whopped with a cricket stump. But he was always ready for more trouble—indeed, it was fairly plain that he delighted in rows and shindies—perhaps as a relief from the monotony in keeping up his pretended business as a cobbler.

So why he did not open his door and hurtle forth at Hacker like a lion from his lair was quite a puzzle. He could have handled Hacker with one hand—and he was generally willing to handle anybody, whether he could or not!

"Can't be at home!" suggested Harry.

"Must be!" answered Bob. "Hacker wouldn't stick there, banging at his door, if he was out!"

"No—I suppose not! But—my hat! Hacker will be jolly sorry if he rouses him out."

"The sorrowfulness will be terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hacker's turning on his chin, instead of his walking-stick! Hark!"

The sharp, shrill voice of the master of the Shell came loudly.

"Open this door! I insist upon entering! I know perfectly well that a Greyfriars boy is there! I know his name! I insist upon taking that boy away! Will you open this door, or not?"

No reply from the hut.

Bang! Knock, knock!

Hacker restarted after the interval with what remained of his walking-stick.

Bob Cherry gave a low whistle.

"He's spotted somebody there!" he murmured. "Some Shell-fish is booked for a fearful row, if Hacker gets him!"

"What the dickens would a chap want to be parked in there with Crocker for?" asked Nugent, puzzled.

Harry Wharton gave a shrug of the shoulders.

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"The man's a blackguard," he said. "He was a shady blackguard at Greyfriars twenty years ago, and he's the same still. He was sacked for blagging and pinching, and he's the same sort now! He's seen often enough at the Cross Keys and the Three Fishers and Wapshot races. And I've heard—"

"By gum, I've heard, too," said Bob. "Just the kind of blighter to do betting stunts for a black sheep—I heard a chap say he'd seen Price of the Fifth sneaking in there, and you know Price."

"I've seen Angel of the Fourth hanging about—and you know Angel!" said Harry Wharton dryly.

"Well, if there's a fellow in there getting Crocker to put money on horses for him, more power to Hacker's elbow!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I suppose that's why he doesn't open the door!" said Nugent, with a nod. "He doesn't want his jolly old client spotted."

"That's it, you bet!" said Bob.

Bang, bang, bang! went the stump of Mr. Hacker's walking-stick. The master of the Shell was growing more and more excited and angry.

"Will you send that boy out!" he thundered. "I order you to send that boy out at once! I shall take him back to the school with me!"

No answer.

"Duck!" shouted Mr. Hacker.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, and the Famous Five fairly jumped.

That there was some Greyfriars fellow in the hut, and that he was there for some sporting transactions with the Sportsman, they had guessed. But the name of Duck—the shy, awkward, clumsy, sheepish new junior, made them jump. James Duck was about the last fellow at Greyfriars whom they would have dreamed of suspecting of taking the slightest interest in racing matters.

"Duck!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Duck can't be there! That duffer—"

"That noodle!" said Johnny Bull.

"That silly ass!" said Nugent.

"That terrific fathead!" ejaculated Hurree Janiset Ram Singh.

"Like Hacker's cheek to get after a Remove man, if it is Duck," said Bob. "But it can't be Duck. The fellow hasn't nerve enough to say bo to a goose, let alone to back gee-gees with a bad hat."

"Duck!" came Mr. Hacker's roar. "Duck, I know you are there! I saw you enter! I order you to come out this instant! I shall take you back to the school—to your Form-master! Emerge at once!"

Knock, knock, knock!

Mr. Hacker fairly belaboured the door with the remnant of the walking-stick. He knocked, he crashed, and he banged. His face was crimson, and his eyes glinted. This disregard and defiance, from a boy whom he had seen walk out of bounds, was fearfully exasperating to Mr. Hacker.

"Duck!" he shouted, or rather hooted. "Duck, I repeat that I know you are there! If you do not emerge, I shall wait here for you! I shall wait till you come out, Duck! I shall wait any length of time that may be necessary! Do you hear that, Duck, you young rascal?"

"That ought to fetch him if he's there," murmured Bob. "Tain't very long to calling-over now. Duck will have to come out."

"Here he comes!"

The door of the hut swung suddenly open from within. But Duck, if Duck was there, did not appear.

It was Randolph Crocker who appeared in the doorway.

The juniors' eyes fixed on his hard

face, with its thick rugged moustache. There was angry irritation in that face.

Mr. Hacker made a sudden step back.

He wanted Duck. He seemed to want him badly. But he did not want Crocker. He backed away from Crocker quite rapidly.

"Now, then, what do you want, banging at a man's door?" demanded Sportsman Crocker aggressively.

"I have nothing to say to you!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "A Greyfriars boy is within, and I insist upon taking him back to the school with me! I shall not allow him to remain here one moment!"

Crocker made a forward stride; Mr. Hacker made a backward hop. The Sportsman's jaw jutted and his eyes gleamed—his look was altogether ugly. Hacker plainly did not like that look.

"Keep your distance!" he gasped. "If you dare to assault me, I shall give you into custody! I—"

Crocker made another stride. Hacker made another hop. Then there was another stride, and another hop. And the Famous Five at the fence watched with great interest and entertainment. Hacker was coming down the path towards them, backwards, in a series of hops, the Sportsman following him up, with jutting jaw and a threatening scowl.

"Keep your hands off, you—you ruffian!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "I desire no words with you—none whatever!" Another backward hop! "I insist upon taking away that Greyfriars boy—"

He reached the gate, and his back jammed on it. As the gate opened inwards, he was cornered there—evidently he did not care to turn his back on Crocker. He had the liveliest anticipation of a boot landing if he did.

"You getting out, you old bag of bones?" snarled Crocker.

"Stand back! I—I shall charge you with assault and—battery! I— Goodness gracious! Oh! Ooooooh!" spluttered Hacker, as the hefty Sportsman grasped him, and tilted him over the low gate, with hardly an effort, dropping him outside.

Bump!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob.

Crocker opened the gate.

"Now beat it!" he said. "I give you half a minute to beat it, and if you ain't gone, you old bony freak, I'll boot you all the way to your school!"

"You won't, Mr. Crocker!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

And the Famous Five lined up between the master of the Shell and the aggressive ruffian at the gate. They did not like Hacker, and had more than once had trouble with the Acid Drop, but they were not going to see a Greyfriars master manhandled by a blackguard like Crocker.

The old boy of Greyfriars gave them a surly glare. But he remained inside the gateway. Two, or even three, of the juniors, he might have handled, but the five were too many for him, as he had learned on the occasion when he had been dipped deep into the ditch.

But though the Sportsman was barred off, his threat seemed enough for Mr. Hacker. The Acid Drop scrambled up, panting for breath, and, without a look at either Crocker or the juniors, hurried off to the school.

"You'd better clear you cheeky young rascals!" growled Crocker.

"We shall clear exactly when we please!" retorted Harry Wharton.

Crocker gave him a scowl, tramped up the path to the hut, and went in, slamming the door after him.

The entertainment being over, the Famous Five walked on their way. Whether James Duck was, or was not, in the Sportsman's hut on the spinney, they did not know; but if he was, there was no doubt that bad trouble awaited him when he returned to the school.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Makes Discoveries!

BILLY BUNTER stopped at the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and, like Moses, saw no man. And he rolled into that study, and shut the door after him.

He blinked round the study through his big spectacles.

Bunter was after the bullseyes.

The Famous Five having gone out, and James Duck, who shared that study, not yet having come in, the coast was clear for the fat Owl. It was a chance for Bunter to recover possession of Hobby's bullseyes, and in matters of this kind, Bunter was not the man to let his chances, like the sunbeams, pass him by.

His first eager blink was at the study table, on which Harry Wharton had tossed the bag of bullseyes.

But no bag of bullseyes was to be seen there.

Evidently the captain of the Remove, before going out, had transferred the loot to a safer spot, to remain till it could be returned to the owner.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He rolled across to the study cupboard.

It was drawn blank. No bullseyes reposed therein. Neither was there anything else in the shape of tuck, except a few biscuits in a tin.

The biscuits occupied Bunter hardly a minute.

Then he resumed his quest.

The table-drawer, and the box-seat under the window, were also drawn blank, likewise a box, and a desk, and several other receptacles.

Billy Bunter breathed hard. He breathed deep. His little round eyes gleamed with wrath behind his big round spectacles.

Those bullseyes were his—at least, they had been his by nine points of the law. Possession was nine points of the law, and Bunter did not bother about the tenth point. He wanted his bullseyes. He wanted them very much. And they were gone from his gaze, like a beautiful dream.

He stood blinking round the study, with an exasperated blink.

A dreadful doubt was in his fat mind that the Co. might have eaten those bullseyes before they went out.

If that was the case, they were clearly gone beyond recovery. Bunter could not possibly have tracked them down to that destination.

It was an awful thought.

But Bunter was not going to believe the worst, while a chance remained. If those bullseyes, happily, were still in the study, Bunter was going to unearth them.

Only one receptacle in the study still remained unopened. This was a leather writing-case that lay on the shelf. Bunter had not looked into it.

for the good reason that it had a lock on it, and the lock was locked.

Now he took it in his fat hands and examined it. It was rather a bulky writing-case, and there was plenty of room inside it for a bag of bullseyes, as well as letters, envelopes, notepaper, and so on.

Bang!

Bunter dropped it on the floor—hard! He hoped that the bang on the old oak might make the lock come open—by accident, as it were.

But it didn't. He picked it up again, and blinked at the lock. It was intact. It was, in fact, a very strong lock of rather unusual design—quite proof against bangs.

Whether it belonged to Harry Wharton or to Frank Nugent, Bunter did not know. He did not remember having seen it about the study before. It was possible that it belonged to the new boy, Duck; but there was no name on it.

Bang!

Bunter dropped it again, or rather, he swiped the floor with it. But there was nothing doing. That strong, little steel lock came up smiling, as it were, undamaged by the bang.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter. "Locking up a writing-case—thinking a fellow might be after the stamps, perhaps. Yah!"

The fat Owl sorted two or three keys out of his pockets. He tried them, one after another, on that lock.

But he tried them in vain. Not one of them came near fitting.

With the leather case in his fat hands, Bunter paused and cogitated. If that case was Duck's it was not likely to conceal the plunder, for no doubt Duck had left it locked. If, on the other hand, it was Wharton's, or Nugent's, it was a very likely spot.

Bunter had to know. There was so much at stake.

He sorted a bread-knife out of the study cupboard. It was clear that if the bullseyes were in that study at all, they were locked up in that case. The lock defied Bunter's efforts, but the leather round it was amenable to a knife.

He hesitated.

Billy Bunter was not much given to considering consequences, especially when he was on the track of tuck; but even Bunter realised that the owner of that case would be fearfully exasperated if he found it gashed open.

Still, he would not know that it was Bunter who had done it. And if he was hiding Bunter's bullseyes away from him, the damage would serve him jolly well right!

The fat Owl of the Remove hesitated, but the lure of bullseyes was too strong, and he jabbed at the leather with the bread-knife.

He jabbed and jabbed and jabbed.

He got through at last. Jabbed and sliced and slashed, the writing-case came open in his fat hands.

Eagerly he examined the contents.

There were—alas!—no bullseyes. That leather case was not the hiding-place of the loot, and so it was clear that the bullseyes were not in the study at all, and Bunter was driven to the dismaying conclusion that those beasts, after all, must have scoffed them.

Notepaper and envelopes did not interest him much. Neither did stamps, as he was not, at the moment, in want of any; but, having the writing-case open in his fat hands, it was like Bunter to pry through it. Inquisitiveness was his besetting sin. Anything that did not concern Billy Bunter interested him deeply.

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"Oh crikey!" he ejaculated, as he sorted out a newspaper cutting.

He blinked at it.

It revealed the photograph of a hard-faced, clean-shaven man. Under the picture was a paragraph referring to Rupert Crook, convict, who had escaped from Highmoor Prison, and was still at large.

Bunter had heard of that elusive character.

More than once the missing man of Highmoor had been mentioned in the news given out on the radio, and Bunter had seen him referred to in newspapers.

But why any Greyfriars junior should cut out his photograph and keep it was quite a mystery to Bunter. It was not the sort of thing that might be expected to interest any schoolboy.

Bunter, at all events, was not interested.

He blinked at the picture of the missing convict in astonishment at finding it there, and shoved it back into the case.

But something else was of much more interest to the prying Owl. It was a folded page from a newspaper of pink hue.

Bunter unfolded it and fixed his eyes and his spectacles on it, his eyes growing wider and wider behind the spectacles.

It was a page from "Racing Tips." It gave lists of horses entered for the races at Wapshot, a few miles from Greyfriars School, with selections by the tipsters.

Against one name was a pencil mark: Peep o' Day. That looked—and, in fact, could only mean—that the owner of the writing-case had picked out Peep o' Day to back.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

Had that locked writing-case belonged to Loder of the Sixth, to Price of the Fifth, or to Angel of the Fourth, Bunter would not have been surprised. Something was known, and more was suspected, about those sportsmen. But it was quite an amazing discovery in Study No. 1.

One of the three fellows there was dabbling in racing matters—the kind of thing for which a fellow was sacked if he was found out.

Which one was it?

Bunter did not even consider the possibility that it was James Duck—the duffer of the Remove; more or less a butt in the Form; shy and sheepish and generally fatheaded. He would have grinned at the idea of that moon-faced ass dabbling in racing matters.

Wharton or Nugent! Which? Wharton, of course! Nugent was too soft—indeed, in Bunter's valuable opinion, rather a milkshop. Wharton had plenty of go in him, though certainly if his go had led him in this particular direction it was rather a surprise.

"Oh, the awful rotter!" gasped Bunter.

Evidently, to Bunter, that leather case was Wharton's, and this was why he had kept it so carefully locked—because some of the contents were enough to get him sacked, if seen.

"Shady cad!" murmured Bunter.

There seemed nothing else of interest in the case—no letters for Bunter to peruse. But that pink page interested him deeply. That beast who had taken his bullseyes was backing gee-gees—just like Vernon-Smith—and he had always made out that he was down on the Bounder's dingy manners and customs. Frightful humbug, Bunter thought!

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

Quite a bright thought penetrated his pedgy brain. The bullseyes were not in that leather case; he had sliced it open for nothing. The beast might not guess

that he had done it; but, on the other hand, he might. It was simply sickening, in fact, the way fellows suspected Bunter of things!

But that pink page would put paid to him if he made a fuss—as he was only too likely to do when he saw that slashed and dismantled writing-case.

The fat Owl slipped the pink page into his pocket.

Then he closed the case and replaced it on the shelf. He piled several books on top of it, so that the damage would not immediately meet the eye of any fellow coming into the study. The later the discovery was made, the less likely Bunter was to be suspected.

Then he rolled out of the study, disappointed in the matter of the bullseyes, but quite bucked by the power that was now in his fat hands to make the captain of the Remove sit up and squirm—if he jolly well chose!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows What He Knows!

"A DSUM!" bleated James Duck, as his name was called in Hall.

Several Remove fellows glanced round at Duck.

He had come in in time for calling-over, and was in his place in the ranks of the Remove. He looked as sheepish as ever and owlish, in his steel-rimmed glasses.

Looking at him, Harry Wharton & Co. could hardly believe that Hacker had been right, and that that moony-looking ass really had been out of bounds, in Randolph Crocker's hut, in reckless defiance of Dr. Locke's orders on that subject.

Other fellows looked at Duck, being aware that the Acid Drop had come in some time ago in a raging bait, and gone to Queleh; and that Mr. Queleh had immediately inquired for Duck.

Duck, it seemed, was up for a row, though what that burbling ass could have done to land in a row was hard to guess.

"I say, old chap, you're for it!" Billy Bunter whispered to him.

"Oh dear!" said Duck. "Do you think so, Bunter?"

"Hacker's been to Queleh about you," grinned Bunter. "Everybody knows. I say, what have you done to the Acid Drop?"

"Nothing that I know of."

"He, he, he! He seems to think you have!" chuckled Bunter. "Look at him!"

James Duck's steel-rimmed glasses turned on Mr. Hacker at a distance.

The master of the Shell was looking at him with a fixed grim look.

Hacker's look indicated only too plainly that Duck had given dire offence, and that he was going to have as warm a time as Hacker could arrange for his benefit.

"Looks shirty, don't he?" grinned Bunter. "Of course, he's always shirty. Beastly temper! He grabbed me by the ear this afternoon, fairly lugged at it, nearly lugged it off, the swab! He's been ragging them in the Shell to-day. Look at old Hobby! He, he, he!"

Hobson of the Shell was glancing at his Form-master, with a look almost as grim as Hacker's at James Duck.

Hobby, no doubt, still felt twinges of the cane, and was not, at that moment, one of those nice boys who love their teachers.

Hobby's honest, rugged face was, in fact, fearfully savage, and it was just as well for Hobby that the Acid Drop's attention was fixed on James Duck, and



"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter, as he held up the photograph and read the inscription underneath which referred to Rupert Crook, convict, who had escaped from prison and was still at large.

that he did not notice Hobby's expressive looks.

"I say, I hope you made the beast sit up somehow!" said Bunter. "But I say, what did you do to him?"

"Silence!" called out Wingate of the Sixth, and Billy Bunter's burbling died away.

The roll finished, and as the school were dismissed, Mr. Quelch made Duck a sign to follow him.

Duck followed him, and some sympathetic glances from the Removites followed Duck.

"He's for it!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Serve him jolly well right, if he was blagging with that blackguard Crocker!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, I don't know," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "The fellow's such an absolute ass, he doesn't seem to know enough to go in when it rains! Such a blithering idiot—"

"Every fellow knows right from wrong!" grunted Johnny, who was, perhaps, a trifle rhadamanthine in his judgments on the weak and erring.

"Yes; but he's such a fool!" said Nugent. "Look at what he did the day he came. Smithy told him to call Quelch 'Henry,' and he went and did it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A fellow who would do that would do anything," said Bob. "If he's got mixed up with that cad Crocker it's just idiocy, poor chap."

"Oh, rot!" growled Johnny. "I know he's a fool—a bigger fool than Bunter, even, if possible!"

"Not possible!" grinned Bob.

"But, fool or not, he knows that decent chaps don't go blagging with shady rotters. And that's why he went to Crocker's, if he went at all."

"I—I suppose so," said Harry Wharton slowly. "But he's such an

ass—I hope Quelch won't scalp him!"

"The scalpfulness will probably be terrific!" remarked Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"I say, you fellows—"

A fat squeak intervened.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I never finished booting you, Bunt; you cleared off so quick this afternoon!" exclaimed Bob. "Have the rest now?"

"Beast—I mean, look here, no larks, old chap! I say, you fellows, if you've got any of those bullseyes left—"

Billy Bunter blinked anxiously at the Famous Five. He still nourished a faint, faint hope that all those bullseyes might not have gone on the downward path.

"You fat ass!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "They're all left! I'm going to give them back to Hobby!"

"Oh! Haven't you scoffed them?" exclaimed Bunter, his fat face brightening. "They were in your study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! What have you jolly well done with them if you haven't jolly well scoffed them?" demanded Bunter. "I jolly well know you never left them in the study!"

"So you rooted in the study after them?" chuckled Nugent.

"Oh, no! I never went near your study, old chap!" said Bunter hastily, as he remembered the damaged writing-case. "The fact is, I forgot all about the bullseyes, and I—I've only just remembered them. I—I want to take them back to old Hobby, you know! Where are they?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, stop that silly cackling, and give me those bullseyes to take back to Hobby!" yapped Bunter.

"Wouldn't dream of giving you the trouble, old fat bean!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It might take

you a fearfully long time to carry those bullseyes back to Hobby! In fact, they might never reach him at all!"

"The mightfulness is—"

"Terrific!" chuckled Bob.

"Look here, Wharton"—Billy Bunter gave the captain of the Remove a devastating look—"look here, this won't do! I'm not having this! You've got my bullseyes—"

"Whose?"

"I—I mean, Hobby's! You've got to hand them over, and you've got to do it now—see?"

Harry Wharton stared at the fat Owl. Bunter's manner was quite aggressive and threatening. This was rather new from Bunter.

"Or else—" said Bunter, still more aggressively.

"Or else you're going to whop me?" asked Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wouldn't soil my hands on you!" said Bunter contemptuously. "I'm rather particular whom I touch!"

"Wha-at?"

"I remember the fellows said you went pub-haunting at the beginning of the term!" said Bunter. "I see you're keeping it up!"

"What?" yelled Wharton.

"Mind, I'm no sneak!" said Bunter. "I'm not going to give you away to Quelch—"

"Give me away to Quelch?" repeated the captain of the Remove, almost dazedly.

"I wouldn't," said Bunter. "I'm not that sort. Still, I know what I know! You can't deny that!"

"Is the knowfulness terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," inquired Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh, gazing at the Owl's fat face in wonder.

"What does the howling ass mean?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Wharton jolly well knows what I mean!" sneered Bunter. "I'm not going to say anything, but he jolly well knows! I wonder what Quelch would say if he knew? He would jolly well be ragging you instead of that fathead Duck if he jolly well knew, and you jolly well know it!"

"If he knew what?" howled Wharton. "What about Peep o' Day?" jeered Bunter.

"Peep o' Day?" repeated Harry blankly.

"Your horse——"

"Mum-mum-my horse?"

"The horse you're backing at Wapshot, as you jolly well know!"

"The horse I'm backing at Wapshot?" repeated Wharton, like a fellow in a dream. "Oh crumbs! You potty porpoise! I don't know who's been pulling your silly leg, but you can't be allowed to gabble that stuff! Sit down!"

Bump!

"Yarooop! Beast!" roared Bunter, as he sat. "I'll jolly well tell Quelch——"

"Go ahead!" said the captain of the Remove. "Tell him at the same time that I pulled your silly ear—like that——"

"Yarooop!"

"And the other silly ear—like that——"

"Yoo-hoop! Leggo! Whoop!"

The Famous Five walked on, leaving Billy Bunter sitting and roaring, and rubbing two fat ears. It was like his sad experience of the afternoon over again, only worse—in fact, twice as bad. Hacker had pulled only one fat ear; the captain of the Remove had pulled two! And Bunter, with a pulled ear on each side of his fat head, sat and roared.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Called On The Carpet!

MR. QUELCH stood by the desk in his study, his eyes fixed on the new junior in his Form, his face set and stern.

James Duck let his steel-rimmed glasses slip down his nose a little, and looked at his Form-master over them with a pair of eyes that were as keen as an eagle's.

No fellow in the Remove suspected that Duck's specs were of plain glass, and worn to make him look as different as possible from Jack Drake, formerly a member of the Greyfriars Remove; now the assistant of Ferrers Locke, the famous detective.

No one at Greyfriars, apart from the Remove master and his chief, knew that Jack Drake had returned to his old school, under a new name and a new guise, to investigate the mystery of the prowler of Greyfriars.

"Drake!" When they were alone, safe from other ears, the Remove master always addressed the schoolboy detective by his real name.

"Yes, sir," said the new junior quietly.

"I have received a report from Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, that troubles and shocks me very severely!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I hope, sir, that you have faith in me, and can rely upon me to play the game while I am at my old school and in my old Form?" said Jack Drake. "I can assure you, sir, that James Duck is exactly the same as Jack Drake, and that Ferrers Locke would have no use for Jack Drake if he were not a decent fellow."

"I hope so—I trust so!" said Mr. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,621.

Quelch. "But no doubt your experiences, Drake, have been very different from those of a Greyfriars boy since you joined Mr. Locke in Baker Street."

Drake smiled faintly.

"Very!" he said.

"I had not, perhaps, fully considered this when I advised the Head to send for you," said Mr. Quelch. "I was thinking of you, naturally, as the boy I had known in my Form—little older now than when I knew you as a Remove boy—and certainly, at that time, a credit to your Form in all ways."

"Thank you, sir!" said James Duck.

"You have been here now some weeks," continued the Remove master.

"I will admit that I was to some extent disappointed—and, indeed, am still so at your failure—or, at least, delay—to detect the secret prowler who has haunted the school almost all this term and pilfered in the studies undetected."

"I have not been idle, sir."

"I know—I know! You have made at least one discovery—and a very gratifying one—that the prowling pilferer does not belong to Greyfriars," said Mr. Quelch. "By tracing the currency notes that were taken from my study, and ascertaining that they were in the hands of some man outside the school, you have made your case fairly clear in that respect; and it is a great relief, both to the Head and to myself, to know that there is, after all, no dishonest boy in the school."

"That is something, sir, if only to go on with," murmured Drake.

"Quite!" said Mr. Quelch. "But——" He paused. "Here, Drake, you are known by another name than your own, and no Greyfriars boy knows that you have ever been here before. To Mr. Hacker, of course, you are simply a new junior in the Lower Fourth Form."

"Mr. Hacker, sir, has nothing to do with the Lower Fourth Form!" suggested Drake.

"That is correct, of course; but any master seeing a Greyfriars boy going out of bounds would have no choice but to intervene! Your conduct this afternoon appears to have involved him in a very unpleasant scene."

"If Mr. Hacker, sir, had been satisfied with reporting me to my Form-master, no scene need have occurred."

"That also is quite correct, Drake! But now—I must speak plainly—whether Mr. Hacker was justified in intervening to the extent that he did, or not, that does not alter the fact that you went out of bounds, under his eyes——"

Drake smiled again.

"A Remove boy, sir, ought not to go out of school bounds—but a detective must have a little more scope!" he said. "You, yourself, sir, mentioned, when I first came, that school bounds would not apply to me, or even lock-up or lights-out."

"Perfectly so!" said Mr. Quelch. "As Ferrers Locke's assistant, acting here as a detective, you have an absolutely free hand; but it was understood, or at least, should have been understood, that this freedom was within certain limits—the limits of good conduct."

Drake coloured.

"You visited," went on Mr. Quelch, "the Abbot's Spinney, placed strictly out of bounds by the headmaster. You are quite aware that Randolph Crocker, who has impudently set up his residence there, is an old Greyfriars man who was expelled from this school for dishonesty, many years ago. His presence in this neighbourhood is an offence to every decent mind."

"I knew, sir!"

"He is a man of extremely doubtful

character," went on Mr. Quelch. "According to his own tale, he has spent many years, since he left this school, in America—but I do not trust his word, in that or anything else. I do not know where he has been, or how he has been occupied—but I greatly fear that after leaving school he went from bad to worse. Indeed, I have no doubt of it."

"It is more than likely, sir."

"Although he affects to carry on a cobbler's business, it is well known that he does no honest work," continued Mr. Quelch. "He haunts the low resorts of the neighbourhood—he has been seen at the races at Wapshot, and at the greyhound races at Lantham—he is, in fact, the same gambling blackguard that he was in youth, as a Sixth Former of Greyfriars."

"I know, sir."

"And yet you have disregarded the known orders of the headmaster and visited this man!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You do not deny that you were seen to enter his hut on the spinney?"

"No, sir!"

"It is already suspected," went on Mr. Quelch, "that this unscrupulous man has had dealings with Greyfriars boys. Whether there is any boy in the school who would enter into disgraceful transactions of a so-called sporting kind with him I do not know—but there is suspicion abroad to that effect."

Drake looked at his Form-master, suppressing a smile.

Mr. Quelch did not know; but Drake could have told him that there were several such black sheep in the Greyfriars community.

He did not think of doing so, however.

He was at Greyfriars to discover the secret of the night-prowler, not to sneak about Greyfriars fellows. Little as he liked Loder, or Price, or Aubrey Angel, he certainly did not dream for one moment of giving them away to a boak.

The prowler was his game; matters of school discipline did not concern him. Excepting his hunt for the mystery man, he was, in all respects, a Remove junior on the same footing as other Removites.

Mr. Quelch looked at him sharply, but read nothing in the face of Ferrers Locke's assistant.

"I am disturbed and troubled by this, Drake," he went on slowly. "I repeat that as a detective you have a free hand; but as a Remove boy, I am responsible for you. I must, therefore, question you, as if you were an ordinary member of my Form. What dealings have you had with this disreputable man Crocker?"

Drake was silent.

"Am I to understand?"—Quelch's voice rose a little—"that you have had any racing transactions with this man, Drake?"

Still Drake did not answer.

The Remove master breathed hard.

"I must have a reply!" he said. "You must answer me fully and frankly, Drake."

"I can only give you one answer, sir!" said Jack Drake quietly. "When the time comes, I shall render a full report; but until that time I cannot give account of my actions. I ask you to trust me."

"I do trust you! I cannot think that Ferrers Locke would have sent you here unless he at least believed that you were to be trusted. Yet——"

"Ferrers Locke is not often mistaken, sir."

"That is true! But—I require you to answer the questions I have put to you, Drake!"

"I can make no other answer, sir!" Mr. Quelch's face, which had been stern already, assumed an expression that was almost petrifying. He fairly glared at the schoolboy detective.

For a long moment there was silence. "Drake!" said Mr. Quelch at last. "This will not do! Your detective work here is a matter for your own concern; your conduct, as a schoolboy, is my concern. Unless you satisfy me, you must take the consequences."

"I have said all that I can, sir!" said Drake quietly.

Quelch's lips set hard.

"You have no more to say?" he asked.

"At present, no, sir."

"Then I fear," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "that you must expect the treatment of any other Remove boy who disobeys his headmaster's injunctions. I shall give you an imposition of five hundred lines, Drake, and you will be detained on Wednesday afternoon."

Jack Drake looked at him. He did not speak.

"And if this conduct should be repeated, Drake, I shall have no resource but to cane you, with great severity. Bear that in mind! You may now leave my study."

Jack Drake left his Form-master's study in silence. He was breathing very hard as he went down the passage.

Mr. Quelch was left frowning. He was annoyed with Hacker, and annoyed with things generally. One thing was quite certain—Ferrers Locke's assistant, so long as he was in the Remove at Greyfriars, was going to toe the line; and Henry Samuel Quelch was going to see that he did!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

No Bullseyes For Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent were in Study No. 1, sorting out their books for prep, when James Duck came in.

If Jack Drake had been disconcerted, or irritated, by his peculiar interview with Quelch, the simple, sheepish face of James Duck gave no sign of it.

He gave his study-mates an owl's glance as he came in, and both of them looked at him inquiringly.

"Had it bad?" asked Nugent.

"No, thanks!" bleated Duck.

"Not a licking?" asked Wharton.

"Oh, no!"

"Look here, you ass!" said the captain of the Remove. "I've very little doubt that you were at Crocker's—Hacker can't have been mistaken about that, jumpy old ass as he is. If you've got off with Quelch, I'm glad—it would be cruelty to animals to whop a blithering duffer like you! But you can't carry on with that kind of thing."

"Don't you think so?" asked Duck, with an owl's blink.

"That man Crocker is a bad egg all through!" said Harry. "If he lets you into his place, he's on the make. I know perfectly well that he has smuggled cigarettes for at least one fellow—and I've a pretty clear idea that he has taken bots with some fellows. Was that your game?"

"Where did I put my Virgil?" said Duck.

"Never mind your Virgil for a minute—"

"But I want it for prep!"

Harry Wharton looked at him.

"Does that mean you want me to mind my own business, Duck?" he asked.

"It means that I've got to do my prep."

"Well, look here, I'm making this my business," said the captain of the Remove angrily. "If you were a fellow like Smithy, with all your wits about you, it would be different—but it's up to any sensible chap to stop a born fool when he's heading for trouble."

"Are you heading for trouble?" asked Duck meekly.

"I? No! What the dickens do you mean?"

"I mean, if you were, I'd stop you, if I could, as you say it's up to any sensible chap—"

Frank Nugent burst into a sudden laugh.

Harry Wharton looked at the simple new junior as if he could have eaten him.

"I suppose that's meant for cheek!" said Wharton, after a pause. "Well, look here, Duck, I happen to be captain and head boy of the Form, and you happen to be a new kid, and the biggest fool that ever came to Greyfriars. I'm going to see that you're not kicked out. Let me catch you playing the goat again, and I'll give you something that will stop you. If you haven't sense enough to steer clear of bad trouble, and it's pretty clear you haven't, I'll see what a boot can do to keep you out of it. Now shut up!"

And Wharton, with a ruffled brow, sat down to prep.

James Duck went to the shelf to take down his books.

Having taken them down, he naturally observed the leather writing-case that lay under them; and the state of that leather case was not likely to escape his eye.

He uttered a sharp exclamation, and grabbed up the case. He turned on his studymates with an expression on his face that was quite unlike the usual expression of the duffer of the Remove!

"Who did this?" he shouted.

Wharton and Nugent, starting, turned round from the table to look at him in astonishment.

"Who did what?" inquired Frank.

Duck held up the gashed, slashed case.

"That!" he snapped.

The two juniors stared at it. They knew, of course, though Billy Bunter did not, that that leather writing-case belonged to the new junior.

"By gum!" Nugent whistled. "That looks a bit damaged—"

"Who did it?"

"How the dickens should I know?"

"Do you fancy that either of us pried into your case?" snapped Harry Wharton disdainfully. "I've noticed that you always keep it locked—I dare say you have something there you don't want seen, after what's happened to-day. But if you fancy that either of us—"

The new junior controlled his anger.

"No, of course not," he said. His

(Continued on next page.)

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usual manner had returned immediately. "I feel sure you wouldn't."

"All the better for you!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "If you don't feel quite sure, I'm ready to jam your silly head in the coal-locker till you do."

"Please don't trouble, thanks; I do feel quite sure! But I want to know who did it, all the same."

"Better find out, then!" grunted Wharton, and he turned back to his prep.

James Duck made no rejoinder to that. He sat down—not at the table—with the leather case on his knees, and proceeded to make an examination of the contents. These, with one exception, were intact. Duck missed the pink page at once.

Whoever had gashed open the leather case had removed that racing paper page from it.

Why, even the keen-witted boy detective could not fathom.

A master or a prefect, of course, would have snaffled such a thing if he had seen it, but no master or prefect would have dreamed of gashing open a locked writing-case. This could not have been done by an official hand. This was the work of some junior—and a particularly obtuse and unthinking junior at that.

The loss mattered little or nothing. Drake needed that pink page, or something similar, for reference, in the peculiar game he was playing with Sportsman Crocker. But it was easy enough to replace it.

But he very carefully removed the newspaper photograph of Rupert Crook, the convict, from the case, and packed it safe into his pocket-book. Evidently it was not safe in that case, carefully locked as the latter had been. And Drake had no desire for his interest in the Highmoor convict to transpire. Until he had come to Greyfriars he had been engaged, with Ferrers Locke, in the search for the missing man from Highmoor, but that, of course, was a circumstance that James Duck desired to keep strictly to himself.

He replaced the gashed case on the shelf, and sat down at the study table to prep.

Preparation in Study No. 1 was not over when the door opened and a fat face looked in.

Billy Bunter, it seemed, had cut prep rather short.

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Bunter.

"Oh, cut!" rapped Wharton.

"About those bullseyes—"

"You fat owl!" roared Wharton. "Cut, before I chuck the Latin die at you!"

Bunter prepared to dodge the Latin dictionary. But he did not cut.

"Look here, you made out that you hadn't scoffed them!" he expostulated. "Well, if you haven't—"

"Buzz!"

"If you haven't, where are they? I want to take them back to old Hobby—they're his, ain't they?" demanded Bunter.

"If that's what you want, all right! I'm going to take them back to Hobby after prep."

"I'll take them, old chap! The fact is, I've chucked prep, just to take them back to Hobby—"

"You'll get your hair combed, if you're spotted out of your study in prep."

"I'll chance that, old chap, just to get old Hobby's bullseyes back to him! Where are they? Has Bob got them?"

"Ask him!"

"Beast! I've asked him, and he chucked a book at me."

"I'll chuck another, if you don't clear!"

"I know they ain't in this study!" said Bunter. "I know that all right. Are they in Bob's study, you beast?"

Whiz!

Billy Bunter dodged just in time, and the Latin dictionary hit the door.

Bunter dodged out of the doorway.

"Beast!" he roared. "Rotter! Swab! Gimme my bullseyes! You can't put them on Peep o' Day, you beast! Yah! Who backs horses at Wapshot?"

Harry Wharton jumped up. But before he could reach the study door a voice was heard from the passage, and he stopped. It was the voice of Walker of the Sixth, who was keeping an official eye—more or less—on the Remove in prep.

"What are you doing out of your study, Bunter?"

"Oh! Nothing, Walker! I—I came to borrow Wharton's Latin die—"

"Touch your toes."

"I—I say, Walker, I—I had to come out of my study," wailed Bunter. "I—I lost my Virgil, Walker, and I was going to borrow Nugent's—"

"Did you hear me say touch your toes?" inquired Walker.

"Oh crikey!"

Whop!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"If you're not back in your study under a second—" said Walker.

There was a hurried patter of feet. Billy Bunter was back in Study No. 7 under the second!

Wharton sat down again, and prep in Study No. 1 went on to the finish. After which Harry Wharton went along to Study No. 13, Bob Cherry's study, for the bag of bullseyes that had been parked there, to convey them back to their rightful owner—much to the satisfaction of Hobson of the Shell. There were, after all, no bullseyes for Bunter!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Hard Cheese For Hobby!

"H AVE a bullseye?" said Hobson. It was morning break—a bright and sunny spring morning.

There were many faces in the old Greyfriars quad, as bright as the spring sunshine, and one face that was as cloudy as a November sky.

That one was Mr. Hacker's.

The Acid Drop was in one of his most acid tempers. That disrespectful and impertinent Remove boy, Duck, had caused Mr. Hacker to go through a quite unpleasant and painful scene at the spinney the day before—or, at least, Hacker's own interference had caused it.

To Hacker's mind, only the most severe and condign punishment could possibly meet the case!

Instead of which Duck had an impot and a detention—a mere drop in the ocean compared with what he deserved, in Hacker's acid opinion.

This annoyed Hacker extremely. He had, indeed, remonstrated with Quelch. Quelch, however, had pointed out that the unpleasant scene at the spinney need not have occurred at all had Mr. Hacker been contented to report that Remove boy to the Remove master, instead of intervening personally. This only annoyed Hacker all the more!

Hacker was thinking this over—he had a way of thinking over disagreeable incidents and real or fancied offences long after any other man would

have forgotten them. His face was clouded, frowning, and extremely acid and, as Hobby's voice reached him, he glanced round unpleasantly.

Hobby had been caned yesterday for taking bullseyes into the Form-room. Hobby's words reminded Hacker of the offence.

Three Shell fellows were standing by one of the old elms, not looking towards Hacker, and not seeing him. Hobson, taking a bag of bullseyes from his pocket, was offering the same to Hoskins and Stewart of the Shell.

"Have some!" said Hobby hospitably. "I've got lots."

Mr. Hacker did not suspect—at the moment—that these were the very bullseyes that he had taken away from Hobby the previous day, and tossed into his wastepaper-basket. So far as Hacker knew, that lot had been thrown away with the wastepaper.

But Mr. Hacker, in the objectionable way he had, gave ear to what came next, so he made a discovery.

"What-ho!" said Stewart, helping himself from the bag. "Don't let Hacker cop you with this lot in the Form-room, in third school, old man."

"I'll take jolly good care of that!" said Hobson. "He won't get hold of them again, I promise you."

"Eh? They ain't the same lot, are they?" asked Hoskins.

"They jolly well are!" grinned Hobson.

Mr. Hacker stopped dead. Already annoyed and disgruntled, this was more than enough to rouse the Acid Drop's deepest ire.

This boy of his Form had, evidently, recovered possession of confiscated tack! He must have got those bullseyes back from the wastepaper-basket in the Form-room. It was disrespect—it was defiance of authority—it was, indeed, in Hacker's disgruntled opinion, a deed of darkness almost calculated to set gods and men aghast!

"Hobson!" hooted the Acid Drop.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Hobson, spinning round in dismay, at the rap of that familiar voice, that rather resembled the music of a saw on wood.

"Hobson! I heard what you said to Hoskins!" Mr. Hacker strode towards the dismayed three. "I heard every word, Hobson."

"I—I didn't know you were listening behind me, sir!" stammered Hobson.

That was putting it rather unfortunately.

"What?" hooted Mr. Hacker. "What? How dare you, Hobson! I repeat, how dare you! I heard you by chance, as I was passing! How dare you suggest—"

"I—I—I mean—" stammered the hapless Hobby.

"Give me that bag of disgusting sweetmeats at once!"

In dismal silence Hobson passed over the bag of bullseyes.

"Hobson! You entered the Form-room and took this bag of—of—of bullseyes away after I had confiscated it."

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Hobby.

"Do not dare to prevaricate, Hobson—"

"I'm telling the truth!" snorted Hobson, his patience and caution nearly failing him. "A Remove chap got them, without my knowing it, and gave them back to me, that's all."

"A Remove boy? His name?"

No answer.

"Was it Duck?"

Mr. Hacker really hoped that it was Duck! If so, Duck surely was booked for the whopping he so richly deserved!

"No, sir!"



"It's up to any sensible chap to stop a born fool when he's heading for trouble!" said Harry Wharton angrily. "Are you heading for trouble, then?" asked Duck meekly. "If so, I'll stop you, as you say it's up to any sensible chap!"

"Then who was it?" snapped Mr. Hacker.

Hobson did not answer.

"Will you answer me at once, Hobson?"

Hobby's rugged face reddened, and he shut his teeth. His friends looked at him uneasily and anxiously. Hobby was not going to give away a fellow who had done him a good turn. He was ready to face punishment himself; he was not going to land it on the Remove fellow who had handed that bag of bullseyes over to him after prep the night before.

Often and often, Hobby's friends had heard him declare that, some day, he would tell the Acid Drop what he thought of him! Now he looked as if he was going to do it—which was more than enough to make his pals anxious.

"Do you hear me, Hobson? I demand to know the name of the Remove boy who abstracted a confiscated article from my Form-room, so that I can immediately lay the matter before Mr. Quelch. His name?"

Hobby was grimly silent.

"Was it Bunter?" demanded Mr. Hacker, remembering his encounter with the Owl of the Remove the previous afternoon in his Form-room.

"No!" grunted Hobby. It was Harry Wharton who had handed over the bullseyes to Hobby, and he had not mentioned the Remove grub-raider. So Hobby was unaware of Bunter's part in the matter.

"Then who was it? Give me his name at once!" Mr. Hacker's acid voice rose shrilly. "Hobson! Do you dare to refuse to answer me?"

"I'm not going to give a chap away!" said Hobson stubbornly.

"Unless you immediately give me the name of the Remove boy concerned, Hobson, I shall order you to follow me to my study and cane you severely."

"You'll do as you like, sir!" said the goaded Hobby. "No other master here would listen to what a fellow was saying behind his back!"

Hoskins and Stewart almost groaned. Hobby had done it now! Often and often he had said that he would! Now he had!

Mr. Hacker stood as if petrified. He gazed at the captain of his Form—he goggled at him, as if thunderstruck.

The Acid Drop, to do him justice, did not realise how his peculiar methods appeared in the eyes of his Form. He would have been quite surprised and shocked had anyone called him an eavesdropper.

Mr. Hacker despised eavesdroppers as much as anybody, and never realised how very closely his own manners and customs resembled eavesdropping.

"Hobson!" he gasped at last. "Boy! How—how dare you? You—you—you dare—Upon my word! Follow me to the House at once, Hobson!"

Almost trembling with wrath and indignation, Mr. Hacker whisked away to the House.

Hobson followed him, accompanied by his dismayed friends.

Hoskins and Stewart waited outside, while Hobby went in, at Hacker's heels. They waited with glum faces.

"Poor old Hobby!" murmured Hoskins.

"Somebody will punch that swab Hacker, one of these days!" breathed Stewart fiercely. "Oh crumbs! If it wasn't for the sack, wouldn't I, just!"

It was five minutes before Hobson of the Shell came out. His face was quite pale when he came: his lips were set, and he was breathing hard. His sympathetic friends did not need telling that he had been through it severely.

They walked him away across the quad, in silent sympathy.

Hobson did not utter a word till the

bell was ringing for third school. Then he spoke, in a low voice:

"He's going to have it!"

"Hacker?"

"That listening worm! He's going to have it! I tell you, he's going to have it!" Hobby choked. "You wait a bit—you'll see!"

"It's rough luck, old man, but don't be a goat!" said Stewart anxiously. "You can't get back on a beak."

"Can't I?" said Hobson. "You'll see! It won't be the sack—I know how! I've thought of it before—since that prowler, whoever he is, got Quelch and tied him up in his blankets! I've thought of it, more than once—now I'm going to do it! You wait and see!"

"But—" muttered Hoskins.

"He's going to have it!" said Hobson, in a tone of finality.

In the Shell, in third school, Hobby sat very uncomfortably. But he drew consolation, as his rather worried friends could see, from the prospect that Hacker was going to have it—though what Hacker was going to have was as yet known only to Hobby.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Sack!

JAMES DUCK—otherwise Jack Drake—sat in the Remove Form Room, that afternoon, on his lonely own.

He was not looking happy.

That Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday, was a fine spring afternoon, and every fellow, or nearly every fellow, felt the call of the open spaces.

Even Lord Mauleverer had toddled out for a walk; even Billy Bunter was not frowsting over the fire in the Rag.

(Continued on page 16.)

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Who Sacked Hacker?



(Continued from page 13.)

James Duck was probably the only junior in the House just then.

Harry Wharton & Co were playing football. Jack Drake had been a footballer, in his former days in the Remove, but James Duck had to give the game a miss, in playing his part as duffer, and dud, and general fathead.

Drake had adopted that part in coming to Greyfriars not only to differ as much as possible from the Jack Drake who was well known to the Remove fellows, but in order to make assurance doubly sure that the prowler would not be on his guard against him.

He had, when he came, supposed, as all the school supposed, that the night-prowler was a Greyfriars man, who had taken to bad ways, like Sportsman Crocker in earlier days. And it was very necessary not to let the mystery-man suspect that there was a detective in the school. No one, certainly, would have dreamed that the dud of the Remove was a keen-witted boy detective, trained by Ferrers Locke.

Drake had made discoveries since then. He had discovered that the prowler was not a Greyfriars man at all. Now he suspected, or, rather, knew, the prowler's identity—that he was, in point of fact, Randolph Crocker, the old boy who had set up at the hut on the Abbot's Spinney.

That knowledge he was keeping to himself—until he had his man pinned down! And the pinning-down process, he hoped, would take place as soon as the mysterious prowler prowled again.

It was for that reason that Drake, who played the part of a dud in the Remove, played the part of a simple gull at the Sportsman's hut.

In Crocker's eyes, he seemed a fool, with more money than was good for him—just the fellow the Sportsman wanted to meet, in fact!

The rascal was quite unaware that, in changing a five-pound note for that simpleton, who seemed to have a fat-headed fancy for backing losers, he had enabled a detective to get hold of a pound note, of which the number was known to him—a pound note that could be identified as one of a bunch that had been pilfered from a Greyfriars study!

That the schoolboy detective suspected Crocker, that he was watching him, Mr. Quelch did not know and did not dream. Drake had no intention of telling him.

That would have cleared him of doubt and suspicion in his Form-master's eyes, but it would have been very far from helping on his work as a detective. And Ferrers Locke's assistant was a detective first and a schoolboy afterwards.

But it was as a schoolboy that he now sat in the deserted Form-room: under detention, with Latin lines to keep him company.

Quelch, from his own point of view, could hardly be blamed. Detective or not, no Greyfriars boy could be allowed

to mix in disreputable and undesirable company.

But it was irritating enough to Drake. James Duck could not join the Remove footballers, though Jack Drake would have been very glad to do so. But he would have been glad enough to be out of doors like the other fellows; and he had his own work to do—not school work, but the work of cornering a law-breaker.

That afternoon, he had learned, Crocker was going to the races, and he had intended to search the place while the Sportsman was gone.

That was knocked on the head by his sentence of detention, and had to be left for another opportunity. Mr. Quelch, who had been the cause of the boy detective coming to Greyfriars, little dreamed that he was placing obstacles in the way of his success.

Drake was, indeed, tempted to disregard the order of detention and carry on in his own way. But if he were to remain in Quelch's Form he could hardly disregard Quelch's authority. Now here he was, sitting at his desk, grinding out Latin lines, as if he actually was a schoolboy and had never joined the staff of the famous Baker Street detective.

Five hundred lines was a heavy impost. Still, he had plenty of time for it, as he was detained until five o'clock.

Not in the cheeriest of moods, or in the best of tempers, he scribbled line after line, grinning once or twice as he wondered what Ferrers Locke would have thought had he seen him at that occupation.

Quelch had gone out that afternoon for a walk with Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. Hacker and other masters had gone out. The House seemed silent and deserted. Shouts from the football field came floating in through the open window, that was all.

Plop!

That sudden sound startled the detained junior.

Something rather heavy had flown in at the open window and dropped on the floor—such an unusual happening that it made him jump and scatter two or three blots from his pen.

"What the thump——" ejaculated Drake.

He stared round.

He could hardly believe his eyes at what he saw. On the Form-room floor, just inside the open window, lay a large sack!

It was an empty sack. There were several such sacks in Gosling's woodshed, and apparently it was from that quarter that this particular sack had come. But why any fellow should get a sack out of Gosling's woodshed and chuck it in at a Form-room window was a mystery.

Drake blinked at it.

Leaving his desk, he went to the window, pulled himself up, and looked out into the sunny quad. Peering over the broad stone sill, he had a glimpse of three heads.

Three fellows were there, though he could not see who they were, having a view only of the tops of their caps.

But he could guess, as a voice reached his ears—that of Hobson, the captain of the Shell.

"That's that!"

"All right so far!" This was Stewart's voice. "But——"

"Nobody spotted us with that sack. But somebody would have spotted it, you can bet, if we'd carried it into the House."

"You bet!" Hoskins was the speaker now. "But——"

"It's all right," said Hobson. "A bit

of luck nudging a Form-room window left open on a half-holiday—what?"

"But we've got to get it out of the Form-room, you ass!" said Stewart. "That's the Remove-room, and Quelch always locks his Form-room."

"I know that—and I know he hangs the key up in his study!" retorted Hobson. "And I know he's gone out with Prout! What's to stop me from bagging the key and getting in and putting it back again?"

James Duck grinned.

For some mysterious reason or other Hobson & Co wanted to smuggle that big sack unseen into the House.

Hobby—like the old ass that he was—fancied it was luck to find a Form-room window left open—not guessing, from that circumstance, that the Form-room was occupied, half holiday as it was!

That was old Hobby all over. Hobby was one of the best fellows breathing, and everybody liked him, but nobody had ever fancied that he was very bright in the intellectual line.

James Duck pulled himself a little higher and leaned his face over the sill so that he could see the Shell fellows.

"I say——" he said in his mild, meek voice.

Three fellows jumped as if they had been electrified. Three startled faces stared suddenly up at the simple face looking down at them with its steel-rimmed glasses.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Hobson.

"Oh scissors!" ejaculated Hoskins. "Somebody's there!"

"Only a tag!" said Stewart, in relief. "That new kid—that booby Duck! Anybody else there, Duck?"

"Oh, no!" bleated Duck. "But I say, you needn't go to my Form-master's study for the key, Hobson—the door ain't locked. I'm in detention here."

"Oh!" said Hobson. "Good!"

Drake, grinning, returned to his desk and his lines.

What Hobson & Co. were up to he did not know, and did not care very much; but he was more than willing to give that popular old ass Hobby a helping hand. Hobby, if he had gone to Quelch's study for the key, was the fellow to walk right into another beak, or to knock over a chair and bring somebody to the study, or to come away with the wrong key! It was quite probable that that spot of information from the window had saved old Hobby from a row.

A few minutes later the door of the Remove-room opened cautiously, and Hobson came in.

He glanced at James Duck, who gave him a nod and a grin. Hobby crossed to the window, picked up the sack, folded it as small as possible, put it under his arm, and went back to the door.

There he stopped, and gave Duck another glance.

"Keep this dark, kid!" he said.

"Oh, yes! Certainly!" said Duck.

"You're a bit of a booby, from what I hear, but you've got sense enough not to give a man away," said Hobson.

"I won't say a word," assured Duck.

"I'll punch your head if you do," said Hobson.

"But I won't!"

"Mind you don't!" said Hobson.

And he disappeared from the Form-room, with the sack under his arm, and shut the door.

Drake stared after him, wondering for a minute or two what old Hobby could possibly be up to with that sack. Then, as he resumed grinding Latin lines, he forgot all about Hobson and the sack—though he was destined to be reminded of both later, and in a very startling way.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Knocked Out!

DID I mention that I was expecting a postal order?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I think I did," said Bunter.

Harry Wharton stared at him.

"Yes," he agreed, "I think you did! I can't remember exactly how many times, but I fancy it was somewhere near the million mark."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Are you going to mention it for the million and first time," inquired the captain of the Remove, "or what are you driving at, you fat ass?"

"It hasn't come!" said Bunter.

"I could guess that one!"

"I want a pal to lend me the five bob."

"Then why the dickens not buzz off and look for a pal instead of wagging your podgy old chin at me?" suggested Wharton.

"What I mean is this—I'm not the fellow to stick a fellow for money I can't pay, as you know—"

"Yo gods!"

"But if you hand me the five bob, you take the postal order when it comes in the morning. That's all right, ain't it?"

Harry Wharton laughed. It did not seem to him all right—not quite!

But he was puzzled. He had heard all this before—not once, but many times. But though Billy Bunter's tale was not new, there was something now in the manner in which he told it. There was, in fact, a certain determination, a spot of aggressiveness about Bunter that was rather new and rather puzzling.

The football match was over. The Remove had beaten Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth by a comfortable margin of four goals to one. Harry Wharton, coming out of the changing-room, had been nobbled by the fat Owl, who had evidently been on the watch for him.

How he was hearing about Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order once more; a subject with which he was well acquainted—too well acquainted, in fact. Really and truly, he did not want to hear any more about that postal order.

"There's no doubt about the postal order coming to-morrow," went on Bunter. "You needn't worry about that! It's from one of my titled relations—and it's all right—as right as rain. I shall hand it to you immediately it comes. But I'd like the five bob now."

"Is that the lot?" asked Harry.

"Yes, that's all."

"Thank goodness! Now roll off, like a good barrel."

"I want that five bob, you ass!"

"It's a free country, old fat man! Go on wanting, as long as you like!"

"Oh! All right!" said Bunter.

"You refuse to oblige a pal! All right! You pinch my bullseyes one day, and refuse to lend me five bob the next! All right! I shan't keep your shady secrets for you, after that! You can't expect it."

Harry Wharton, who was turning away, turned back.

He had forgotten Bunter's remarks after calling over the previous evening, and his equally mysterious references to Peep o' Day at prep. Now he was reminded of the same.

"You fat chump!" he said. "What do you mean?"

"I know what I know!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I'm not the man to give a pal away! Kindest friend and noblest foe—that's me, and always was! But if a fellow doesn't treat a fellow

as a pal, a fellow can't expect a fellow to keep a fellow's shady secrets, and a fellow—"

"Never mind all those fellows—tell me what you mean, you bloated bloater?"

"Who's backing Peep o' Day at Wapshot?" sneered Bunter.

"Nobody that I know of, you burbling image! Angel of the Fourth may be, for all I know. Or Price of the Fifth. Or Smithy, perhaps. Have you got it into your silly head that I've done anything of the kind?" asked Harry, half-angry and half-amused.

"Oh, come off!" jeered Bunter. "A fellow doesn't take a list of horses and mark one of them with a pencil unless he's picked out that horse to back. Think I'm a fool?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But what do you mean about a list of horses?" hooted Wharton. "Are you dreaming, or are you making all this up out of your fat head?"

"Oh, pile it on!" jeered Bunter. "Stack it on! You've made out more than once that I'm untruthful. You needn't deny it—you know you have! Now hark at you!"

Harry Wharton looked at him. He was getting less amused and more angry as Bunter proceeded. But he could see that the fat Owl, for some mysterious reason, had the idea in his head that he had been backing horses in general, and Peep o' Day in particular. It was really mystifying.

"Has Skinner been pulling your leg, you fat ass?" he asked.

"Skinner doesn't know anything about it. Nobody knows, so far, except me," said Bunter. "I haven't told anybody, except that I mentioned it to Toddy in the study last evening—"

"You've told Peter Todd that I've been backing horses?" gasped Wharton.

"I just mentioned it. I never told him all about it, though—the beast interrupted me, chucking a Latin grammar at my head, I don't know why. I may have mentioned it to one or two other fellows—only just mentioned it. As I said, I'm not the man to give a chap away."

"You burbling cuckoo—"

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter, "but you know jolly well what you'd get if Quelch knew! I ain't going to tell Quelch. But there's such a thing as gratitude, though you don't seem to know it. One good turn deserves another. There's been talk of fellows going round to the Abbot's Spinney, and making bets with that blackguard Crocker. I fancy you're one of them—"

"What?" yelled Wharton.

"You needn't roar at me. I suppose you don't trot over to Wapshot and deal with the bookies there!" said Bunter sarcastically. "You have to get somebody to lay the money on for you, don't you?"

Wharton did not answer that. He stared, with gathering wrath in his brow. Bunter evidently had this weird idea fixed in his fat head. What had put it there, the captain of the Remove could not guess. But his inclination was to knock it out!

"You pinched my bullseyes yesterday!" went on the indignant Owl. "You know you did. Now I'm stony, because my postal order never came today. Now you refuse to lend me a few bob, though you jolly well know my postal order's coming to-morrow! All right! If you want all the fellows in the Form to know about your backing Peep o' Day—all right! You can't expect me to keep your disgraceful secrets, Wharton. I shan't tell Quelch

—but I'm going straight to the fellows in the Rag, to say— Yaroooh! Yoo-hoop!"

Billy Bunter roared, as the exasperated captain of the Remove grasped him by a fat neck.

"Leggo!" roared Bunter.

"You've got the idea in your head that I back horses at Wapshot!" said Harry. "I'm going to knock it out."

There was an old stone buttress handy. Billy Bunter's fat head tapped on it. It tapped rather hard.

Bunter's yell woke the echoes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The Co. came out of the changing-room. "What's that game, old bean? Trying to damage Greyfriars property?"

"Yaroooh! Make him leggo!" roared Bunter.

Tap!

"Yoo-hoop!"

"Harry, old chap—" exclaimed Nugent.

"It's all right!" said Harry.

"Bunter's got a potty idea in his nut, and I'm knocking it out!"

Tap!

"Yow! Ow! Wow! Ooop!"

"Still got it?" asked Harry.

"Ow! Yes, you beast! Ow! Leggo!"

Tap!

"Oh crikey! Wow!"

"But what the thump!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "What has the fat ass got in his head, you duffer? What do you mean?"

"He's got it into his head that I've been blagging, like Smithy!" explained Wharton. "Goodness knows how, or why; but he has! Haven't you, Bunter?"

"Ow! Yes! Beast! Ow!"

Tap!

"Yarooooooop!"

Tap!

"Yoo-hoop! Help! Wow!"

"I'm going to keep this up, till I've knocked that idea out of your nut! Tell me when it's gone."

Tap!

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Wow! Will you leggo?" shrieked Bunter. "I'll jolly well go and tell Quelch if you don't leggo!"

"Still got it in your nut?"

"Yes, you beast!"

Tap!

"Ow! I mean, no!" roared Bunter, in anguish. "No! I mean— Yaroooh! No! Not at all! Leggo!"

"Sure you've got rid of it?" inquired the captain of the Remove. "I'm getting tired of banging your silly head; but I'll keep it up till you're quite sure it's gone! How about it?"

"Ow! Yes! No! Beast! Wow! Leggo!"

"Have I been backing horses?"

"Yes—"

Tap!

"I mean no! Certainly not! Nothing of the kind!" yelled Bunter. "Oh, my napper! I don't know what I know—I mean, I never found you out— Yaroooh! Leggo! No! Oh! No! Nothing of the sort! Wow!"

"Good! If I've knocked it out of your nut, all right! Mind, if you get it back there, I shall knock it out again! That's a tip!"

And Harry Wharton walked away with the Co., leaving Billy Bunter rubbing a fat head and blinking after him with a perfectly petrifying blink. Whether that idea was still inside Bunter's fat head or not, it was the outside that worried him now—and he rubbed the outside, and gurgled wrath and indignation.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Horrid For Hacker!

MR. HACKER awoke. The hour was late. It was very dark; but dark as it was, Mr. Hacker could see the time, on a clock with luminous figures at his bedside. It was half-past eleven.

At that hour there should have been no sound in the House to disturb the slumbers of the master of the Shell.

But there had been a sound—several sounds. Sounds were still audible as Mr. Hacker sat up in bed.

The sounds proceeded from his door. The door-handle was being turned. It rattled as it turned.

Hacker listened, and felt a thrill of excitement. He did not suppose that it was a burglar. He guessed at once that it was the prowler.

It was some time since the prowler of Greyfriars had prowled. But nobody supposed that he had given up prowling for good.

Whoever the mystery man was, he was an unscrupulous rascal, and his object in night prowling was pilfering.

He had pilfered from the Head's study, and from Quelch's study. He had pilfered in Quelch's bed-room, and on that occasion he had collared the master of the Remove, rolled him in his blankets, and left him tied up. At the sound of his door-handle, at half-past eleven at night, Hacker, of course, had no doubts—it was the prowler again, and this time he had selected the master of the Shell as his destined victim.

Hacker's first thought was that he was glad he had locked his door. He had locked it every night since what had happened to Quelch. Hacker was not the man to run unnecessary risks.

The door-handle rattled again. The prowler, perhaps, had not expected to find the door locked on the inside. He seemed to be trying to open it, in spite of the fact that it was locked, unless, indeed, he wanted to wake up the Acid Drop, which did not seem probable.

For a long minute Hacker sat, his heart beating rather uncomfortably.

That prowler, whoever he was, was supposed to be a senior, and a very powerful senior from the strength he had displayed in handling, on one occasion Loder of the Sixth, and on another the Remove master. Horace Hacker did not like, in the least, the idea of coming to grips with him.

Jack Drake's discovery that the prowler was a man outside the school was known only to Quelch and the Head. His discovery, that the man was Randolph Crocker was known only to himself. To all the rest of Greyfriars the prowler was some hefty man in the Fifth or the Sixth. Hacker had looked over many members of both Forms with a suspicious eye, but he had never been able to guess who it was.

Now the prowler was within a few yards of him in the dark—a locked door between.

Hacker stepped from his bed. He draped himself in a dressing-gown, and put on his slippers. Then he stepped to the door.

There he paused, to listen.

The door-handle ceased to rattle. Perhaps the prowler had heard him, or perhaps he had realised that the door was locked and given it up as a bad job.

Mr. Hacker breathed hard.

He did not like, in the very least, the idea of encountering that midnight prowler, who had been too strong for Quelch, and would undoubtedly have been too strong for Horace Hacker. But he was very keen on discovering him.

The mysterious prowling had gone on for weeks. There had been several undetected pilferings. Any member of the staff who succeeded in revealing that prowler's identity, and thus enabling the Head to deal with him, would have been sure of Dr. Locke's gratitude and esteem.

Hacker was a member of the staff whom the Head, somehow, liked least. He did not know why. He would have been very glad to earn his chief's favour and esteem. It had always surprised and annoyed Hacker that the Head seemed to regard Quelch as his right-hand man—rather a friend than a subordinate. The Acid Drop would have been very glad to oust Quelch from that favoured position, which he felt he deserved more than Quelch did.

If he succeeded in clearing up the strange and troublesome mystery of Greyfriars, and putting an end to the prowlings of the prowler, undoubtedly it would give him a lift in the desired direction.

On the other hand, he did not like—in fact, he hated the idea of running into that hefty prowler.

He stood uncertain, listening.

In the deep silence of the night he caught a sound from without—that of stealthy footfalls going up the passage.

Hacker's eyes gleamed in the dark, rather like a cat's.

From that sound he could draw only one conclusion—that the prowler, finding his door locked, had given it up, and passed on to another.

He was, therefore, gone from Hacker's door.

Hacker listened intently.

There was no sound of returning footsteps. He allowed a long minute to pass, and another. Still no sound!

Other masters, he knew, did not bother about locking their doors. Doubtless the prowler was already in another room—Prout's or Capper's, or perhaps Quelch's again. Mr. Prout, indeed, had been heard to declare in Common-room that he hoped—he only hoped—that the scoundrel would venture to visit his quarters, as he had once visited Quelch's. Prout was portly, but he was pugnacious. Certainly Prout had not locked his door. As likely as not—more likely than not—the prowler was now in Prout's room.

Hacker, slowly and silently, turned back the key in the lock.

Slowly and silently, he opened the door a few inches.

Silence, and dense darkness.

He opened the door a few more inches, and put out his head, rather like a tortoise from a shell.

The darkness was deep, the silence was unbroken. Obviously it was safe to venture out, as he was quite certain that those stealthy footsteps had not returned.

Hacker was as unwilling as ever to encounter the prowler. He was, in fact, determined not to do so. But it looked safe. To step silently to the electric switch at the end of the passage, to switch on the light—that was the idea.

The prowler, in whichever room he was, would doubtless rush out to escape when the light flashed on. Hacker could not fail to see him. His identity would be no longer a secret.

If he did not rush out, he would be cornered in the room he had entered.

In either case, or any case, his game was up, and Hacker was the man who would have solved the mystery.

And whatever that prowler did, Hacker was going to take the greatest care not to establish personal contact.

Once the passage light was on the fellow's game was up, and if he went for Hacker, which was unlikely after he had been recognised, Hacker knew how to dodge.

With hardly a sound, Hacker set his door wide open, and stepped out into the passage. With outstretched hands in the dark he groped along towards the corner where the lighting switch was. And then—

Then it happened.

Hacker hardly knew what happened. From the darkness something suddenly descended over his head.

He hardly knew that he was enveloped in a large sack, inverted over him, and descending to his knees. He hardly knew that a slip-knot was tugged tight round the sack's neck, which circled his bony knees, knotting it round his legs. But he knew that he was suddenly and unexpectedly imprisoned inside something, and that his arms, as he threw them out, met with resistance, and were pinned down to his sides. The next thing he knew was that he was up-ended, sprawling on the passage floor.

He gasped!

He gurgled!

He howled!

But his gasps and gurgles and howls came muffled through the thick sacking, and were choked off as he was rolled bodily back into his room. Half-suffocated, wholly scared, breathless, dizzy, Horace Hacker rolled in the sack, helpless in the hands of the Greyfriars prowler—if, indeed, his sudden assailant was the Greyfriars prowler.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Sacked!

MR. PROUT, the master of the Fifth Form stirred, and his portly nose ceased to rumble with the booming sound which announced, to all within forty rods, that Prout was slumbering.

Prout was disturbed.

For some time in the mists and shadows of sleep, Prout had had a dreaming impression of vague sounds from somewhere; and now that he had awakened, he heard those sounds, and realised that they were real.

He was quite perplexed.

Switching on his bedside light, he discerned the fact that it was half-past twelve. No sound should have been disturbing the stilly night, but some strange sound certainly was.

It sounded, to Prout, like bumping. Who, or what, could be bumping about at half an hour after midnight was quite mysterious.

Sitting up in bed, listening, Prout blinked and wondered. His room was next to Mr. Hacker's, and it seemed to him that those strange sounds came from Hacker's room.

Bump, bump!

Prout heard it distinctly.

It was hardly possible to believe that the master of the Shell had turned out in the middle of the night to bump on the wall that separated his room from Prout's.

But that was what it sounded like.

Bump came again. Bump! Thud!

It sounded like a fall. "Bless my soul!" murmured the amazed Prout. "How very, very singular!"



Billy Bunter's fat head tapped rather hard on the stone buttress and his yell woke the echoes. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" inquired Bob Cherry. "Trying to damage Greyfriars property?" "It's all right!" said Wharton. "Bunter's got a potty idea in his nut, and I'm knocking it out!"

Bump! came from the next room—undoubtedly from the next room. It was—it must be—Hacker—Hacker, bumping about and around in the middle of the night, amazingly and inexplicably.

Prout turned out and encased his portly form in a dressing-gown. This midnight mystery was extraordinary, amazing, inexplicable. It had to be investigated. Something, clearly, was wrong with Hacker.

Prout emerged from his room into the passage.

But he did not immediately roll along to Hacker's room. The thing was so strange, so inexplicable, that he felt the need of company before he started his investigations. He stepped along to Quelch's room, and called the Remove master.

"Quelch! My dear Quelch—"

Quelch awoke at once.

"What—"

"Something is wrong with Hacker! I fear that he is ill or—or something. Will you come with me?"

"But what—" came Quelch's voice, not in its pleasantest tones.

"He seems to be rolling about his room. Quelch!"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Hurling himself against the wall—"

"Prout!"

"Is it not amazing, Quelch? But such, I assure you, is the case. If you step out of your room you will hear him from the passage."

Quelch was not long in stepping out of his room.

In the passage, by the side of the agitated Prout, he could hear the sound from Hacker's room—a distinct sound of heavy bumping.

Bump, bump! Then thud! It was a fall!

"Goodness gracious!" breathed Quelch.

"Had we not better go to Hacker, Quelch?"

"Most decidedly."

They hurried along to Hacker's door. It was closed, but not locked. It opened to Quelch's hand.

Within, all was dark. From the darkness came a bumping, squirming sound, and now that the door was open the two masters could hear another sound—a strange sound of half-suffocated gurgling. It was amazing and alarming.

Quelch reached in to the lighting-switch inside the doorway and switched on the electric light.

Then the two masters had a view!

They gazed at it with popping eyes.

What they saw first was a large, well-filled sack—merely a sack, which seemed endued, however, with a principle of life, for it was in active motion. At the first glance it was amazing to see that sack shifting about of its own accord.

But two thin calves, a pair of bony ankles, and two slippered feet emerging from the neck of the sack explained that mystery. There was someone inside the sack, covered by it down to the knees!

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Gig-gig-goodness gracious!" stultored Mr. Prout faintly.

They gazed spellbound.

The sack and its contents seemed to be rolling over. But the feet picked themselves up, as it were, and the strange object stood on end. Then it bumped itself against the wall—Prout's wall!

That was what had awakened Prout, though not immediately. The prisoner in the sack, unable to escape, was bumping on the wall in order to attract attention to his plight! He had, after long delay, succeeded.

Bump, bump! went the sacked figure on the wall! Thud! as it stumbled, and came down on the floor.

"Oooooogh!" came a gasp from within the sack.

"Is—is—is that Hacker?" breathed Prout. "Can that be Hacker? In the name of all that is absurd, Quelch, why has Hacker got into that sack? What, Quelch, can be the meaning of these amazing, these extraordinary antics, at such an hour of the night?"

Quelch was rather quicker on the uptake than the portly Prout. He stepped into the room.

"Hacker!" he exclaimed.

"Urrggh!" came from the sack.

"I am here, Hacker—pray keep still! I will release you immediately!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"Gurrrrggh!"

The figure in the sack remained where it had tumbled. Quelch bent over it and wrestled with knots.

There were quite a number of knots with which to wrestle. One cord was knotted on the neck of the sack, round the victim's bony knees. Another was knotted round the occupant's waist, another round his shoulders. Whoever had sacked Hacker seemed to have taken plenty of care that the Acid Drop should not emerge from the sack unassisted.

Knot after knot was dragged loose. Mr. Prout, standing and watching the untying process, almost like a man in a dream.

"Bless my soul!" It dawned on Prout. "Someone has—someone has done this! Can it be that the prowler has attacked Hacker, Quelch, as he attacked you one night a couple of weeks ago?"

"I should think that that was sufficiently clear, Prout!" snapped the Remove master, labouring with knots.

"Goodness gracious!"

"Please give me assistance with this
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sack, Prout! It is not easy to remove it!"

"Oh, certainly! Bless my soul!"

The two masters grasped the sack, the cords having been unloosened, and dragged at it. It was dragged over Hacker's head.

The Acid Drop was revealed, at last. The face revealed was crimson with fury, though the crimson was partially masked by dust from the interior of the sack. Hacker, in the worst temper ever, gasped for breath.

"Hacker!" gurgled Prout. "Who did this?"

"My dear Hacker——"

"Wurrghh!"

"No doubt the prowler," said Mr. Prout. "Undoubtedly, in fact, the prowler! But did you see him, Hacker?"

"I am not a cat!" hissed Hacker.

"A cat? I fail to comprehend you, Hacker. I did not suggest that you were a cat, or any other animal," said Prout, blinking at him. "If your mind is wandering a little, my dear fellow, after that harrowing experience, pray, pray calm yourself——"

"Hacker means that he cannot see in the dark, I imagine!" interpreted Mr. Quelch, suppressing a smile.

"Oh!" said Mr. Prout.

"I saw no one. The sack was suddenly thrown over my head!" hissed Hacker. "It was, of course, the prowler, and I have no doubt that he has pilfered my room while I lay helpless. What is the time? Good heavens—a quarter to one! I have been more than an hour in that dreadful sack!"

"Poor fellow!" boomed the sympathetic Prout.

"It is almost inconceivable to me, Prout, that I did not succeed in attracting your attention sooner. I could do nothing but bump on your wall—I hoped to awaken you——"

"But why did you not come out of the room, Hacker? You could move—and the door was not locked——"

"And how could I unlatch the door, Prout, with my hands imprisoned in that sack?" hissed Hacker.

"Dear me! I did not think of that! I really regret that I did not awaken sooner——"

"You do not regret it so much as I do," said Mr. Hacker bitterly. "I have been a prisoner over an hour, in a state of the most dreadful discomfort. In that time the prowling rascal has had ample opportunity to escape. He is safe now—with his loot! I really think——"

"Perhaps you had better ascertain what, if anything, has been taken, Hacker," suggested Mr. Quelch. "I fear that, after such a lapse of time, it is futile to think of looking for the prowler."

"If Prout had awakened sooner——"

"Really, Hacker——"

Snort from Hacker! But he proceeded without delay to ascertain, as Mr. Quelch suggested, what, if anything, was missing. To his surprise and relief, nothing was missing. There was a notecase in a pocket—untouched! There was loose cash in a drawer unopened. The prowler, it seemed, had gone with empty hands.

"Nothing is missing?" asked Mr. Quelch, puzzled.

"Nothing! I suppose the scoundrel was alarmed, and left at once after securing me. It is odd, for certainly he had every opportunity. But it is fortunately the case."

"If you do not feel disposed to sleep, Hacker, after this painful experience, I will remain," said Mr. Prout. "I will sit in this chair, and perhaps a little conversation——"

"I shall lock my door and go back to bed," said Mr. Hacker, who probably

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did not expect to derive much comfort from Prout's conversation.

"Oh, very well!" said Mr. Prout, with dignity.

And the two masters left Hacker—to lock his door and go back to bed; though, after an hour of painful wriggling in the sack, and in a state of fury to which words could never have done justice, it was likely to be long before Hacker's eyes closed once more in balmy slumber.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Thrilling!

"I SAY, you fellows! Heard?"

Billy Bunter squeaked with excitement.

"Which and what?" asked Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five were punting a footer before breakfast, and if there was news they had not heard it yet. But Bunter evidently had!

"The prowler!" gasped Bunter.

"The jolly old prowler at it again?" exclaimed Bob. "My hat! What has he bagged this time—your rolled-gold watch?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, the howler bagged Pracker——"

"What?"

"I mean the prowler bagged Hacker!" gasped Bunter. "Got him in his room last night, just as he did Quelch once. I haven't seen Hacker yet; he's fearfully injured, from what I hear——"

"Hacker is?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Cough it up!" said Frank Nugent.

The Famous Five left the footer where it was and gathered round Bunter for news—as did a dozen other fellows. Among them was James Duck, who eyed the fat Owl curiously through his steel-rimmed glasses. Every fellow was interested in the latest news of the prowler, but none quite so much as Jack Drake.

"I've just heard!" Bunter liked to be the fellow with the news—and no news ever lost its thrill when told by Bunter. If it wasn't thrilling, Bunter could always make it so. "I heard Quelch and Prout jawing—they know all about it. It was pretty awful, from what I hear. They were woke up in the middle of the night by fearful screams from Hacker's room——"

"Gammon!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Shut up, Smithy! Get on with the washing, Bunter!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "What happened to Hacker?"

"Has anything happened to Hacker?" It was Hobson of the Shell who asked that question as he came along with Hoskins and Stewart and joined the group in the quad.

There was a lurking grin on Hobby's rugged face, as if he saw something amusing in something having happened to Hacker.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter. "It seems that Quelch and Prout woke up, hearing bloodcurdling shrieks from Hacker's room——"

"What rot!" said Hobson.

"Perhaps you know more about it than I do!" hooted Bunter. "I tell you I heard the beaks talking about it. Awful, fearful screams in the silence of the night, you know! Prout and Quelch jumped up at once——"

"Quelch may have!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Prout couldn't! Too much weight to lift!"

"Shut up, Cherry! Get on with it, Bunter!"

"They rushed to Hacker's room."

continued Bunter. "They looked in, and there, was Hacker weltering in his gore——"

"Weltering in his which?" gasped Bob.

"Gore!" said Bunter firmly. "From what I hear, he was fearfully injured. He lay speechless at their feet, calling for help——"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The speechlessness must have been terrific."

"I mean to say, he was nearly speechless; not quite, of course, or he couldn't have called for help. Covered with blood——"

"You fat, frabjous frumpious, footling fathead!" roared Hobson of the Shell. "Stop telling whoppers!"

"Do you know what's happened, Hobby?" asked Harry Wharton. "Bunter's telling whoppers, of course, but something must have happened."

"Oh, I—I—I haven't been told anything yet!" stammered Hobson, apparently a little confused by the question. "But I jolly well know that Hacker wasn't hurt! Why should anybody hurt him?"

"I jolly well know all about it, and you jolly well don't!" hooted Bunter. "I tell you the prowler got Hacker and fairly smashed him——"

"He didn't!" roared Hobson.

"How do you know he didn't?" demanded Bunter. "You don't know anything about it! Hacker cut prayers this morning—you fellows must have noticed that—he never does! He can't stir a limb."

"By gum!" said the Bouncer. "So he did!"

"He did!" agreed Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked triumphantly at Hobson of the Shell. Bunter scored there. Plenty of fellows knew that Hacker had cut prayers, contrary to his usual custom. This gave colour to the fat Owl's thrilling story.

"He can't move; he's so fearfully injured," declared Bunter. "He's lying in the House——"

"While you're lying in the quad!" said Smithy.

"Beast! He's lying dilapidated—I mean, disabled—absolutely knocked out and smashed up by that awful villain of——"

"That what?" exclaimed Hobson. He made a movement towards the Owl of the Remove, but Stewart hastily caught his sleeve and pulled him back.

"That awful prowling scoundrel!" said Bunter. "After smashing Hacker he pinched lots of money——"

"He didn't!" shrieked Hobson.

"He did!" yelled Bunter. "Hundreds of pounds!"

"You fat freak, he never pinched anything," roared Hobson.

"Shut up, Hobby, you ass!" hissed Stewart in his ear. And Claude Hoskins grabbed Hobby's other arm. Both Hobby's chums seemed to be needed to keep him from hurtling himself at Bunter.

"Burgled the room, all over the shop," pursued Bunter. "Smashed open locks and drawers, all sorts of things; the room was a wreck. And in the midst of the awful wreck lay Hacker, weltering in his gore!" concluded Bunter dramatically.

"By gum! I—I—I'll——" gasped Hobson.

"Shut up!" hissed Stewart again.

"I tell you——"

"Shut up!"

"They may be able to trace the missing banknotes," added Bunter, "by the bloodstains on them!"

"Oh crikey!"

"How does he do it?" asked Peter Todd. "I say, I wonder if anything's happened to Hacker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Toddy! Has anybody seen him this morning?" demanded Bunter. "Has anybody seen Hacker yet?"

Nobody had! Hacker had cut prayers, and had not been seen. Some of the fellows began to wonder whether Bunter had got it right, after all.

The prowler, it was well known, was not a fellow to stick at trifles if in danger of being spotted. Once he had knocked out Loder of the Sixth, leaving him with two black eyes. Once he had banged a door on Prout's majestic nose. Once he had tied up Quelch in his blankets. There really was no telling what the prowler might do next.

"You won't see him at brekker," said Bunter. "I fancy he's been put in sanny—in fact, I know he has. The doctor's been sent for—I mean, the doctor was rung up in the night, and came buzzing over from Friardale in his car. Didn't you fellows hear the car? It woke me up."

Bunter's thrilling tale was improving as he went along.

"Well, there's the bell for brekker," said Harry Wharton. "We shall soon see whether the Acid Drop doesn't turn up."

"He jolly well won't!" said Bunter. "Being in sanny, with his nut cracked and his collar bone fractured, you know—"

"You fat idiot!" raved Hobson. "His nut ain't cracked and his collar bone ain't broken—"

"It is—and his leg, too!" retorted Bunter. "And one arm—I mean, both arms, and—"

"Hacker will want glueing together again, at this rate," remarked the Bounder. "You Shell-fish will have a good time if Bunter's got it anything like right. Still, I expect we shall see him at brekker—"

"I say, you fellows, I tell you—"

"Bow-wow!"

Bunter rolled in to breakfast with the Remove fellows, considerably annoyed. His startling tale had not made the proper impression, in spite of its thrilling details—or, perhaps, because of its thrilling details.

And that Mr. Hacker was not laid up in sanny with a variety of dislocated bones was clear as soon as the juniors came into Hall; for there they saw him, standing talking to Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth.

Hacker looked pale and upset, and was clearly in his bitterest humour; but otherwise there seemed nothing amiss with Hacker.

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned as they saw him, aware now that a very considerable discount had to be taken off Bunter's stirring story. But the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not see Hacker and he rattled on.

"I say, you fellows, you won't see him here! You can bet on that! I tell you he was knocked out—smashed up! Can't move a limb—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

To the fellows who could see Hacker standing only a dozen paces away this information was rather entertaining than harrowing.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "I don't like the Acid Drop any more than you do, but—"

"Dry up, you born idiot!" breathed Bob Cherry, as Mr. Hacker, catching the words, glanced round. Hacker was not unaware that he was often alluded to as the Acid Drop.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. "I call it unfeeling sniggering while old Hacker is knocked out and smashed up, and all that! I don't like the brute any more than you fellows do. Look how he grabbed my ear the other day, and tugged at it, the swipe! But now the poor brute's had his bony nut cracked, I really must say—Wow!"

What seemed like a pair of pincers closed on Bunter's fat ear.

He roared.

"Wow! Ow! -Leggo! Who—Oh crikey!" Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles at Hacker. "Oh, I say—Oh crikey!"

Hacker twisted that fat ear. He twisted it even more energetically than he twisted it in the Shell Form Room on Tuesday.

Bunter howled. He roared. He squealed.

"You impertinent young rascal!" Twist. "How dare you—" Twist! "I shall report this insolence"—twist!—"to your Form-master!" Twist!

"Yaroooooh!"

Bunter got his ear loose at last, and rolled to the Remove table, squeaking, and clasping a fat hand to that suffering ear. Hacker, it seemed, was not, after all, knocked out and smashed up and all that! But Billy Bunter, as he rubbed that fat ear, really wished that Hacker was!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Twenty-four Hours!

"DRAKE!"

"Yes, sir!"

"James Duck" was in Mr. Quelch's study after breakfast.

By that time the prowler's latest exploit was all over the school, and from the Sixth Form to the Second the fellows were buzzing with excitement over it.

Hacker, though plainly upset, and still feeling the effects of his wild night, had breakfasted as usual, and was going to take his Form as usual. There was a rumour that he had requested the Head to call in official aid from the police station at Courtfield, which, the fellows agreed, was just like the Acid Drop!

Nobody wanted the police in the school rooting after a Greyfriars man, even such a bad hat as the prowler.

Others had suffered at his hands without wanting to squeal for aid outside the school. But if Hacker really had made that request, Dr. Locke was not likely to accede to it. The Acid Drop had to take what came to him like anyone else.

But Mr. Quelch, eyeing the schoolboy detective in his study, had a grim brow. His faith in Ferrers Locke's assistant had wavered; but had been, so to speak, revived again by Drake's discovery that the prowler was some unknown outsider, who in some unknown way penetrated into the school to carry on his prowlings and pilferings. Now he wavered again, and doubted.

"You know what happened last night, Drake?" said Mr. Quelch abruptly. "You have, of course, heard of—"

"Only as much as the other fellows so far, sir!" said Drake.

"As Mr. Hacker has not been informed that you are here as a detective, Drake, you can scarcely ask him for details. I have therefore learned all the details from him to repeat to you."

"Thank you, sir."

"And I am bound to say," continued Mr. Quelch, "that what has occurred

casts very considerable doubt on your theory that the prowler is some unknown person working from outside the school."

"That is not a theory, sir!" answered Drake quietly. "It is a fact!"

Grunt from Mr. Quelch.

"It would appear so from the circumstances that you traced the notes, pilfered from my study, outside Greyfriars," he said. "Nevertheless, it seems now that too much has been taken for granted. You would suggest, I suppose, that there are two persons outside the school, engaged in this nefarious work."

"Certainly not, sir!"

"There were two persons, if not more than two, engaged in the occurrence of last night, Drake."

Drake did not answer that.

"I will repeat," said Mr. Quelch, "what I learned from Mr. Hacker. He was awakened by a noise at his door—the person was trying to enter, but could not do so as the door was locked. Mr. Hacker, listening inside the door, heard him move away in the direction of Mr. Prout's room. In the belief that he was gone, Mr. Hacker unlocked his door, and stepped out, intending to switch on the light in the passage."

Mr. Quelch paused a moment.

"Understand me, Drake! Mr. Hacker is quite certain that the prowler had gone. He heard him go, and did not hear him return—and it is scarcely possible that he can have been mistaken on this point. He would not have opened his door had he been in any doubt."

Jack Drake smiled faintly.

"I have no doubt of that, sir!" he said.

Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp look. Then he went on:

"The person Mr. Hacker had heard at his door was gone—that is definite. Yet, when he came out, he was immediately seized by some unseen person in the dark, and the sack thrown over his head. Obviously a second person was on the spot."

"The prowler works alone, sir."

"Really, Drake—"

"He is a man outside the school—and he works alone!" repeated the schoolboy detective calmly.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"I repeat, Drake, that obviously there was a second person on the spot—who waited in the dark with the sack in his hands after Mr. Hacker had been deluded by the sound of departing footsteps. The man could not have crept back so noiselessly that Mr. Hacker did not hear a sound—in the silence of midnight, and with his ears on the strain. Is that what you think?"

"No, sir!" said Drake, after a pause. "That is not what I think!"

There was a slightly perplexed expression on the schoolboy detective's face. The details he was learning from Mr. Quelch seemed to give him food for thought.

"If the person who crept away did not return noiselessly, and wait for Mr. Hacker outside his door, there must have been another person on the spot, Drake."

"It would seem so, sir."

Drake spoke slowly. He knew Hacker; and he could not doubt that the Acid Drop had listened like a cat, and made absolutely certain that the prowler was not at hand before he ventured out of his room.

But, if that was the case, it was clear, as Mr. Quelch said, that a second person must have been there, unsuspected by Hacker.

Yet, if the prowler was Randolph

Crocker, as Drake believed, he worked alone! That the Sportsman had admitted any associate to such a secret, Drake did not believe for one moment.

Apart from his natural caution and cunning, he was under no necessity to do so. He did not need aid in his prowlings and pilferings; neither, certainly, could he have desired to share the loot with another: the loot was, after all, little in amount, hardly more than enough to keep the hard-up Sportsman going.

Drake was, for the moment, non-plussed, and he stood silent.

"What I have feared, and what the headmaster has feared, appears to have happened at last!" said Mr. Quelch. "Some other boy has now followed the example of that unknown rascal, and seems to have joined with him."

Drake shook his head.

He did not think so. He was sure that it was not so. But, for the moment, he had nothing to say.

"What was taken from Mr. Hacker's room, sir?" he asked.

"Nothing!"

Drake raised his eyebrows.

"Nothing?" he repeated.

"The rascals appear to have taken the alarm, and, after securing Mr. Hacker in the sack, left immediately!" explained Mr. Quelch. "It was an hour before Mr. Hacker succeeded in awakening Mr. Prout by knocking on the wall between their rooms. By that time, of course, it was futile to search."

"Nothing was taken?" said Drake again. "Was there anything to take?"

"There was—loose cash, Mr. Hacker says, amounting to about ten pounds, if they had stayed for it."

"And he—or they—did not?"

"As I have said, no! But that is an immaterial point," said Mr. Quelch. "There can be no doubt, Drake, that at least two persons were engaged in the affair. What now becomes of your theory, on which you led me to place reliance, that these pilferings were the work of some man outside the school?"

Drake drew a deep breath.

"I can only repeat, sir, that that is not a theory, but a fact!" he answered. "Of what happened last night I can say nothing until I have investigated. May I be excused from first school this morning?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Mr. Quelch. "Your school work here must not be allowed to interfere with your detective work." There was a sarcastic note in Mr. Quelch's voice that brought the colour to Drake's cheeks.

Evidently the Remove master's faith in him was down to zero again!

"You may, if you choose, make any investigation in Mr. Hacker's room," continued Mr. Quelch. "Mr. Hacker will be in his Form-room. Everything has been left as it was left last night. Mr. Hacker hopes that the headmaster may consent to call in police assistance, and he has very carefully left everything that might assist an official detective."

He paused.

"Drake," he went on at last, "the matter has now become too serious for further delays. I had faith in you, and in Ferrers Locke's opinion of you. It does not seem to have been justified. Mr. Hacker is convinced that official assistance should be called in. He is, I may say, somewhat obstinate on that point, and, indeed, I hardly know how he can be refused."

Drake set his lips a little.

"Everyone here," said Mr. Quelch, "shrinks from the thought of calling in the police—"

"Except Mr. Hacker," said Drake.

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"Except, in the circumstances, Mr. Hacker," he said. "Dr. Locke dislikes the idea as much as anyone. But what is he to say to Mr. Hacker? For the moment no such step is being taken; but unless a discovery is made, Drake, Dr. Locke cannot permanently refuse what is, after all, a reasonable request, and, in fact, this miserable mystery must somehow be cleared up. To be brief, you have twenty-four hours, Drake."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I am bound to speak plainly," said Mr. Quelch. "If you would prefer to resign the matter at once, and leave, I shall raise no objection, and the headmaster will raise no objection. If otherwise, you have an interval of twenty-four hours in which to deal with the matter. If by to-morrow morning you cannot place the facts before Dr. Locke, the case will pass into other—and older—hands."

"Very well, sir," said Jack Drake quietly. "Leave it at that, sir."

He left Mr. Quelch's study with a rather set face. There was a time-limit now, and if he failed within that time-limit, he had to return to Ferrers Locke and report failure.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Detective Or Schoolboy!

"FATHEAD!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ass!" remarked Harry Wharton.

"Chump!" said Johnny Bull.

"Hurt?" asked Nugent.

It was, of course, just like that duffer Duck. Some of the juniors were punting a ball while they waited for the bell to ring. That clumsy ass, Duck, stumbled over the ball and went down—whop!

He tottered to his feet, limping.

"Ow!" he mumbled. "Wow! Ow!"

"Of all the clumsy asses that fellow takes the cake!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith. "What did you fall over that ball for, Duck?"

"Ow!"

"Well, a silly ass can't help being a silly ass!" said Bob Cherry tolerantly. "Not hurt, are you, kid?"

"I've knocked my ankle."

"Made of putty?" asked the Bounder derisively.

"Oh, shut up, Smithy!" said the good-natured Bob. "If the kid's had a knock, he's had a knock, and he can't help being soft if he's soft. Cut off to the house-dame, kid, and ask her for something for it."

Duck limped away to the House, most of the juniors laughing as he went. They were not unsympathetic, but really James Duck seemed the limit for clumsiness, fatheadedness, and softness.

Many of them grinned when the bell rang and they went into the Form-room and found that Duck's place was vacant. That soft ass, it seemed, was making the most of a little knock.

As Mr. Quelch made no remark on his absence, it seemed that he had been excused from first school. Most of the Removites rather prided themselves on being tough, and they grinned at the idea of that noodle Duck sitting in the house-dame's room, having attention given to some inconsiderable tap of which even Billy Bunter would hardly have taken heed.

But that noodle Duck was not sitting in the house-dame's room. That noodle Duck had changed into that keen-witted youth, Jack Drake, as soon as the Greyfriars fellows were in their Form-rooms.

And his limp had quite disappeared when he went up the stairs and headed for the masters' rooms.

Hacker, in the Shell Form Room, was thinking more of his wild night than of imparting knowledge to Hobson & Co. He was thinking of the probability that Dr. Locke could scarcely continue to refuse his request to call in the official aid of a police detective. But certainly he was not thinking that a detective was already on the spot, investigating. That, however, was what was happening.

James Duck entered Mr. Hacker's room—the scene of the Acid Drop's harrowing experience of the night before.

Everything, as Mr. Quelch had told him, had been left untouched. That, of course, was necessary if a police detective was to be called in.

On the floor lay the sack in which the hapless Acid Drop had been encased, wriggling, for over an hour. By it lay the three cords that Mr. Quelch had untied to release the prisoner from the sack.

What a police detective might have discovered from these clues was doubtful. Possibly he might have traced finger-prints on the sack, for it could hardly be supposed that a Greyfriars man had worn gloves for his nefarious work like an experienced crook.

But whatever discoveries a police detective might, or might not, have made, Ferrers Locke's assistant did not need to search for finger-prints, or any other such clue.

He stared at the sack.

His eyes bulged as he stared at it.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Drake.

"Oh, my only hat!"

And, what would probably have surprised Mr. Quelch very much, had he been there, he burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake's laugh rang merrily through Mr. Hacker's room. He laughed and laughed, and laughed again.

He knew that sack!

It was the sack that had been tossed in at the Remove Form Room window while James Duck had sat there in detention the previous afternoon!

It was the same size; it was the same shape; it was the same material and the same hue! And there were stencilled letters on it—they were the same. It was Hobson's sack!

"Oh, my hat!" repeated Drake.

He chuckled explosively.

He had no doubt now that "at least two persons" had been engaged in the sacking of Hacker. Probably there had been three, as Hobson, Stewart, and Hoskins of the Shell always went about in a bunch.

Drake had been puzzled the previous afternoon to know why old Hobby had secretly smuggled that sack into the House. He knew now!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Drake.

Everybody knew how old Hobby had gone through it the previous day at the hands of the Acid Drop. Drake now knew what had resulted. Old Hobby had got his own back, astutely taking advantage of the existence of the prowler in order to cover up his tracks.

Drake chortled.

He pictured the three young rascals creeping out of their dormitory in the silent watches of the night, tricking Hacker out of his room by the simplest of devices to overcome the obstacle of the locked door, then sacking him and tying him up, and leaving him, like the young man of Ilythe, to wriggle and writhe.

"Oh erikay!" murmured Drake. He chuckled again. "What a jolly old



"Wow! Ow! Leggo! Who—oh crikey!" Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles at Hacker. "Oh! I say—oh crikey!" "You impertinent young rascal!" raved the master of the Shell. Twist! "How dare you?" Twist! "I shall report this insolence"—Twist—"to your Form-master!" Twist!

mystery for Inspector Grimes to handle! Ha, ha, ha!"

He turned to the door. His investigations in Hacker's room had not taken Ferrers Locke's assistant long.

But he turned back.

He had elucidated the mystery of the attack on Hacker quite easily and rapidly. But the discovery he had made was not one that he could report to the headmaster.

Drake was a detective, but he was a schoolboy, too; and no consideration would have induced him to give old Hobby away.

Hacker, no doubt, had asked for it, but it meant expulsion for old Hobby if he was found out. He would be bunked from Greyfriars like a shot—likely enough, Hoskins and Stewart, too. That was not the kind of work Jack Drake was at Greyfriars to do.

Neither was it going to be done by anyone else, if he could help it.

If Hacker had his way, and a police detective was called in, it was very likely that that sack would be tracked down to Hobson of the Shell. Nobody, so far, seemed to have guessed that it was one of the old sacks from Gosling's woodshed. But a policeman, of course, would soon root out facts like that.

Likely enough, Hobby might have been seen prowling round that woodshed on Wednesday afternoon. Artfulness had been left out of poor old Hobby's composition, and he might have scattered clues right and left.

Hobby, no doubt, was feeling abso-lutely secure; but Jack Drake did not feel that Hobby was secure, by any means.

He did not hesitate. He picked up the sack, folded it into the smallest possible compass, and put it under his arm. The cords he put in his pockets.

Then he left Hacker's room—leaving no clue of any kind to assist an official

investigator if called in by the Acid Drop!

A minute later he was in his study in the Remove passage. There the cords were carefully burned in the study fire-place.

After which Drake put on an overcoat, roomy enough to conceal a sack parked under it, and went out of the House. Had fellows been about, no doubt some of them would have noticed that there was something under James Duck's overcoat. But with school on nobody was about.

Gosling, in the doorway of his lodge, at a distance, stared at him, no doubt surprised to see a Remove boy out of class. But James Duck did not linger in Gosling's view.

He disappeared round the buildings and arrived at the door of the woodshed. The door was locked, but a shed lock did not give Ferrers Locke's assistant much trouble. He was very soon in the shed; the sack was unpacked from under his coat and placed at the bottom of a heap of half a dozen others of a similar kind.

When Drake left the woodshed the door was locked again after him, and he strolled back to the House, smiling.

A few minutes later he entered the Remove Form Room.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him, but made no remark; and he went to his place, many grinning faces turning towards him as he did so.

"Still got a pain, Goose?" whispered the Bounder.

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

James Duck sat down in his place. He was, after all, only twenty minutes late for class! In that twenty minutes he had discovered that the prowler had not, after all, prowled, as everyone else believed, and it was probable that he had saved old Hobby from getting bunked.

Mr. Quelch's glance lingered on him

several times, and probably Quelch was not feeling satisfied. But the schoolboy detective, at all events, was satisfied.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Once Too Often!

WHIZ!

Squash!

Billy Bunter liked jam tarts. But it was in his capacious mouth that he liked them—not on his fat little nose.

On that fat little nose he disliked them—extremely.

It was on his nose that Bunter received that jam tart! It squashed there, sticky and clammy.

At tea-time Bunter looked into Study No. 1. That beast Wharton had been unpleasant of late. But Bunter was not the fellow to remember grudges—at tea-time, at all events! Bunter knew that jam tarts graced the tea-table in Study No. 1, and he looked in, prepared to forget and forgive everything.

Apparently he was not persona grata in that study! The Famous Five glanced round at him, and Harry Wharton picked up a tart from the dish and hurled it with unerring aim.

Billy Bunter tottered back into the passage with the jam-tart plastering his fat face, gurgling.

"Oh! Beast! Ow! Beast!" spluttered Bunter "Wow! Beast!"

"Have another?" called out the captain of the Remove.

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "Swab! Rotter!" He dabbed and clawed at jam.

There was a chortle from fellows in the Remove passage.

Bunter extracted a handkerchief from his pocket. It was already sticky—and

soon it was stickier. A foot inside the study kicked the door shut. Billy Bunter did not open it again. He did not want any more of those jam tarts—not in the same way!

"I say, you fellows! Look at me!" gasped Bunter, as he dabbed at stickiness. "Chuckling jam tarts at a fellow—just look! That beast Wharton—just because I found him out, you know."

"You howling ass!" said Peter Todd. "Do you expect a fellow to let you talk such rot about him?"

"Tain't rot!" hooted Bunter. "I can tell you I know what I know! He banged my head the other day just because I'd found him out! Now he's chucked a jam tart at me when I was going in to tea in a perfectly friendly way—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look at me—all jammy!" hooted the indignant fat Owl. "I've a jolly good mind to tell Quelch. I would, only I ain't a sneak! I'm all sticky! I can jolly well tell you fellows Wharton's a shady blackguard just like Smithy—"

"What's that?" came the Bounder's voice from the doorway of Study No. 4, while the juniors in the passage roared with laughter. Bunter, as usual, was unaware of anything a few yards from his fat nose, and he had not observed Herbert Vernon-Smith in the offing.

He blinked round in alarm.

"Oh! I didn't mean you, Smithy!" he exclaimed hastily. "I—I wonder what made me say Smithy! I meant to say Skinner!"

"Mo!" exclaimed Skinner, who was almost at Bunter's elbow.

Bunter blinked round again.

"Oh! I didn't see you, Skinner. No! What I meant to say was, Wharton's a shady sweep just like Angel of the Fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He backs horses," said Bunter. "He was backing Peep o' Day at Wapshot the other day! I shouldn't wonder if he's the chap they think sneaks in at Crocker's! Looks like it to me. I know he backs gee-gees—"

"You fat ass!" said Tom Redwing. "He does nothing of the kind."

"That's all you know!" sneered Bunter. "I've found him out—you haven't! I've got his list of horses in my pocket, with Peep o' Day marked. I found it in his study. What about that?"

"Rubbish!"

"Oh, really, Redwing—"

"Bunter, old man, you talk too much," said Lord Mauleverer. "and you always talk rot! Why not shut up till you can talk sense?"

"The old porpoise would never open his mouth again at that rate," remarked Squiff.

"Yah! I jolly well know!" snorted Bunter. "I've got him spotted, the shady sweep! And I'll jolly well tell him so, too!"

Having transferred most of the jam to the handkerchief, Bunter shoved it back into a sticky pocket. Then he stooped to the keyhole of Study No. 1.

The Removites watched him with grinning faces.

Bunter was going to hurl defiance through the keyhole! There was no doubt that he would get into rapid motion at the sound of a footstep approaching the door from within. But so long as that door was shut Bunter was full of beans!

"I say, Wharton," squeaked Bunter through the keyhole. "I know all about you, you cad! Who backs gee-gees at Wapshot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shady sweep! You'll get bunked if you're found out. You'll be up before the Head when you get spotted. Yah!"

There was a footstep in the study.

Bunter shot away from the door like an arrow from a bow.

A fat figure bolted into Study No. 2 by the time the door of Study No. 1 opened, and Harry Wharton's face looked out.

In the passage a dozen fellows yelled with laughter.

Harry Wharton glanced along the passage.

"Where's that fat freak?" he demanded.

"O where and O where can he be?" sang Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton stepped back into the study and shut the door.

A minute later a fat face emerged from Study No. 2, and Bunter blinked cautiously towards Study No. 1.

There was a gurgle of merriment in the passage as the vengeful fat Owl rolled out and rolled along to Wharton's door. Once more he stooped at the keyhole. Through that orifice he hurled a defiant squeak.

"Yah! Pub-crawler! Who backs gee-gees? Who's going to be sacked when he's spotted? Yah!"

Again there was a footstep in the study; but Bunter did not wait for it to approach the door. He shot into Study No. 2 and vanished, leaving the juniors shrieking with laughter.

Wharton's door flew open, and Wharton, red with anger, stared out at a dozen grinning faces.

"That fat swab—" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where has he gone?" roared the captain of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door of Study No. 2, which belonged to Tom Brown and Hazel, was shut. Wharton passed it and tramped along to Study No. 7 which was Bunter's quarters. But only Tom Dutton was to be seen there, and he tramped back, with a crimson face, through a mob of laughing Removites.

He went into Study No. 1 again and closed the door with a bang.

"By gum! What a giddy entertainment!" chuckled the Bounder. "Hallo, here's the porpoise again!"

Billy Bunter blinked out of Study No. 2, and, seeing that the coast was clear, rolled along again to Study No. 1. All eyes were on him as he stooped to the keyhole once more. Everybody but Harry Wharton was finding this peculiar performance fearfully amusing.

"Yah!" Bunter was squeaking through the keyhole again. "Cad! Swab! Horry cad! Who's going to be bunked for pub-crawling? Who's going to be sacked for backing gee-gees? Yah!"

Bunter paused—to listen.

A footstep would have sent him scuttling in hot haste. But there was no sound from the study.

Thus encouraged, Bunter proceeded.

"I've spotted you, you shady sweep! I know all about your little games! I've got you tabbed, you pub-crawling rotter! I jolly well know!"

Still silence from the study. It looked as if the captain of the Remove had decided to take no heed of the fat squeak at the door. So that fat squeak went on:

"Like me to tell Quelch? You'd be up before the Big Beak if I did! You'd be bunked like a shot! The sooner the better, you swab! Yah! Who backed Peep o' Day at Wapshot? How much did you put on him? What sort of a shady swab do you call yourself? I say—Oh!"

There was no sound from the study; but the door suddenly opened, and a hand shot out and grasped the fat neck bent at the keyhole.

Bunter gave a yell of dismay. The onlookers gave a yell of merriment. This time Wharton had not walked to the door and put the fat Owl on his guard; he had evidently tiptoed to the door, unheard by Bunter, and thus caught him fairly in the act.

"Oh!" roared Bunter. "Ow!"

That grip on his fat neck hooked Bunter into the study. There was a bump as he landed on the carpet. The door was slammed again, leaving Bunter like Daniel in the lion's den, and the other fellows howling with laughter in the passage.

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THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Wharton's!

"**N**OW, you fat frump!" roared Harry Wharton.

"Oooooogh!"

"You blithering bloater!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton stood glaring down at the fat Owl, who sat up on the floor of Study No. 1, spluttering.

Bunter cast a longing blink towards the door. But the captain of the Remove was between him and the door, and he had, to Bunter's alarm, taken a cricket stump from the shelf.

Four fellows sitting round the table grinned. Harry Wharton was frowning. What had put that extraordinary idea into Bunter's head he did not know, but it was clear that he had not knocked it out yet. Now he was going to try the effect of a cricket stump.

Billy Bunter tottered to his feet. He eyed Wharton and the stump uneasily, and backed round the table.

"I say, you fellows, keep that beast off!" gasped Bunter. "I ain't going to give him away to Quelch—I ain't, really!"

"You fat chump!" said Frank Nugent. "There's nothing to give away, you frabjous foozler!"

"That's all you know! Keep off, you beast!" yelled Bunter, dodging as the captain of the Remove followed him round the table, stump in hand. "I'll jolly well go to Quelch, and say—Keep off, you rotter! I'll go to him, and say—Will you keep off, you cad? I'll say you've been backing gee-gees—and I'll jolly well prove it, too—if you touch me with that stump! Yaroooooh!" added Bunter in a frantic roar, as Wharton touched him with the stump—rather hard. "Oh crikey! Wow!"

"Hold on!" said Bob Cherry, laughing. "Look here, somebody must have been pulling that fat idiot's leg. Who was it, Bunter?"

"Nobody! I jolly well know!" roared Bunter. "If that beast whops me again I'll go to Quelch!"

Whop!

"Yaroooooh!"

Whop!

"Oh crikey! Wow!" Bunter flew for the door; but he was headed off from the door, and he went round the table again, with the stump close behind.

"Oh! Ow! Rescue! Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you I'll go to Quelch!" roared Bunter. "I'll show him your list of horses! You just wait! You'll be sacked! Wow!"

"You'll show him what?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Your list of horses, you beast!" roared Bunter. "Think Quelch won't know what you've been up to when he sees it, same as I did?"

"What on earth does the fat Owl mean?" asked Johnny Bull. "Nobody's had a list of horses in this study, I suppose?"

"Fathead!" answered Harry politely.

"Wharton has!" roared Bunter.

"I've got it in my pocket now! I jolly well know! Oh crikey! You keep that stump away, or I'll go straight to Quelch!"

"You found a list of horses in this study?" roared Wharton.

"Yes, you beast! You jolly well thought it was safe, locked up in that writing-case, didn't you? Well, I found it, and I jolly well know!"

"That writing-case?" gasped Harry.

"So it was Bunter!" exclaimed Nugent. "You fat scoundrel! What

did you burst open that writing-case for?"

"I was looking for the bullseyes! I jolly well found Wharton's list of horses, and Peep o' Day marked, too! Yah!"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

He understood now.

"You keep off, you beast!" Bunter eyed him warily across the table. "You keep that stump to yourself, you cad! I could get you sacked if I liked! I've only got to say a word, and you'd be bunked out of the school! Yah!"

"You fat, frabjous, foozling frump!" said Harry Wharton. "That writing-case doesn't belong to me, you footling fathead!"

"Eh?"

"Anything you found in it isn't mine, you portly porpoise!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Is that straight? Fancy Nugent backing horses—"

"I?" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"Well, it's yours if it ain't Wharton's! I thought it was Wharton's, of course, as you're too soft for that kind of thing—"

"You fat idiot!"

"Still, if it ain't Wharton's, it's yours!" said Bunter. "I thought it was his. But if it's yours—"

"You burbling idiot!" roared Wharton. "That writing-case you busted belongs to the new kid!"

Bunter jumped.

"Duck?" he gasped.

"Yes, Duck, fathead!"

"Gammon! You can't get out of it like that!" Bunter shook his head. "That moon-faced booby don't go in for backing horses! That's rot! It's yours or Nugent's!"

"Give me what you have taken from Duck's case at once!" snapped the captain of the Remove.

"Shan't!"

Whop!

"I—I mean, here it is! If it's yours you can have it!" yelled Bunter. "I was just going to give it to you, you beast! Keep off! Wow!"

A crumpled, rumpled, rather sticky pink page was produced.

Harry Wharton caught it from Bunter's fat paw and looked at it. His friends looked at it, too, in surprise. Wharton's brow darkened.

"By gum!" said Bob Cherry, with a whistle. "You remember Hacker spotted that booby at Crocker's the other day, and now—"

"Pretty clear!" said Johnny Bull.

"You found this in Duck's writing-case?" demanded Wharton.

"In yours—"

"You howling fathead! I tell you it's Duck's! Did you find this page from a racing paper in it?"

"Yes; I jolly well did!" hooted Bunter. "And if it was Duck's, how was I to know? Who'd have thought that booby—"

"You spying, prowling worm!"

"I wasn't!" howled Bunter. "I was looking for those bullseyes! I couldn't find them anywhere else in the study. You took my bullseyes! I was looking for them! I never saw anything in the case! I wasn't looking for anything but the bullseyes! I never noticed that there was a photograph of the convict chap—"

"What?"

"I never noticed anything at all; I'm not a fellow to pry, I hope! I was looking for my bullseyes. How was I to know that you kept racing papers in Duck's case?"

"It's not mine!" shrieked Wharton.

"Well, Nugent's, then!"

"It's not Nugent's, you blitherer!"

"Well, it must be one of you!" declared Bunter. "I don't believe that booby Duck has anything of the kind. Lot he knows about gee-gees! Yah! And I can tell you this—I think it's pretty mean of you to land that sort of thing on a booby like Duck! Suppose it was spotted on him? Not playing the game, I think!"

"I tell you that neither of us has ever seen it before!" yelled Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

The captain of the Remove came round the table.

Bunter shot doorward. The stump landed three times on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars before he reached the door.

It landed again as he got the door open. For a fifth time it landed, with a terrific whop, as Bunter shot out. A sixth whop barely missed, as he flew up the passage.

Harry Wharton shut the study door, and threw down the stump. His brow was grim.

"That settles it!" he said. "That fool, Duck, has got mixed up with that rascal, Crocker—this paper proves it plainly enough." He threw the pink page into the study fire. "That's that! The fellow's a fool, but he would be bunked, all the same, for this kind of thing, if it came out."

"He's a fool all right!" said Johnny Bull. "But he must be a good bit of a sweep, as well as a fool."

"Well, he's an utter idiot, and that man Crocker is a cunning rascal. We're not letting this go on!" said Harry. "Duck had detention on Wednesday, and I've no doubt it was because the Acid Drop spotted him at Crocker's. He may be bunked next time! We're going to stop it."

To which the Co. agreed—all of them quite concerned about that ass, James Duck, who seemed to have fallen into bad hands—though doubtless they would not have been so concerned had they known a little more about that ass, Duck!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Drake's Report!

"**D**RAKE! You have something to tell me!"

"Yes, sir!"

Dr. Locke laid down his pen. Mr. Quelch, standing by the Head's table, gave the schoolboy detective a scrutinising look.

"Does that mean that you have made a discovery, Drake?" asked the Remove master.

"Yes, sir!"

"Your headmaster will be glad to hear it," said Mr. Quelch, a little dryly. He did not seem much impressed.

Jack Drake smiled. He had arrived at the Head's study, while the Remove fellows had mostly gone to their own quarters to tea, in order to avoid drawing attention to the fact that he was seeing the Head. He could have reported that discovery a good deal earlier, otherwise.

"Mr. Quelch was kind enough to give me leave from class this morning to investigate what happened in Mr. Hacker's room last night!" he said. "I did not need to be very late for class, as it happened."

Mr. Quelch started.

"Do you mean, Drake, that you made this discovery, whatever it is, during the quarter of an hour or so—"

"Yes, sir; it was not a difficult matter."

"Indeed!" Quelch's tone was dryer.

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than ever. "Then perhaps you can tell your headmaster the name of the boy, or boys, concerned in the attack on Mr. Hacker."

"I certainly could, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke. "Is that really so, Drake?"

"Yes, sir! But—"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. "It appears that there is a 'but.' The Sahara desert had nothing on Mr. Quelch's manner for dryness!"

"One moment," said the Head. "No doubt you are aware, Drake, that, for the first time since this strange mystery has troubled our peace of mind, the person called the prowler has acted in the day-time—"

"I was certainly not aware of that, sir."

"Such is the case, Drake! Mr. Hacker informed me, earlier in the day, that the sack in which he was enveloped last night has been removed from his room—"

"Oh!"

"It was left, as I think you know, to assist in official investigation, if I decided to accede to Mr. Hacker's request to call in a police detective!" said Dr. Locke. "Mr. Hacker hoped that some such clue as finger-prints might be obtained—and doubtless this may have occurred to the mind of the rascal himself—for when Mr. Hacker happened to go to his room after lunch, he found that the sack and the cords had disappeared. This, of course, was not foreseen, as hitherto the prowler has only acted in the hours of darkness."

Jack Drake did not reply to that.

It was, in fact, rather a difficult matter to make a reply.

"This incident," said Mr. Quelch, "is as clear a proof as could be desired that the prowler is an inhabitant of Greyfriars."

"Do you think so, sir?" asked Drake demurely.

"I cannot doubt it! You would not suggest that some unknown outside person walked into the school, in broad daylight, and removed the sack from Mr. Hacker's room, unobserved!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"No, sir!" murmured Drake. "I certainly should not suggest that!"

"What, then, becomes of the theory you stated with so much confidence?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Let Drake tell us what he has discovered," interposed Dr. Locke. "If he can give us the name of the offender, that is all we desire."

"I am placed in a rather difficult position, sir!" said Drake. "I know the offender's name, but I cannot give it—"

"Drake!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I am here, sir, as a detective, but I am also here as a schoolboy. I am bound to report to you any discovery I make with regard to the prowler, whether he is a Greyfriars man or not, but I am bound not to report to you any breach of discipline that may come to my knowledge in the course of my investigations!" said Drake.

"That is certainly correct!" said the Head, with a stare. "I should be very much annoyed, Drake, if you supposed that I desired you to act as a spy on the boys in this school—apart from the person who has been guilty of dishonesty."

"Exactly, sir! So I can tell you nothing, unless you give me your assurance that no breach of discipline, even a serious one, will be inquired into or punished if it should reach you from me."

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"You do not need such an assurance!" said Dr. Locke. "I should never dream of acting upon any information that reached me in that way."

"May I take that as an assurance, sir?"

"Certainly, you may!"

"Very well, sir!" said Drake. "I can now speak freely. I visited Mr. Hacker's room during first school this morning, and in a very few minutes learned all I wanted to know. It was not the prowler who prowled last night—"

"Drake!"

"What was done, was done by either two, or three, Greyfriars boys!" said Drake. "It was what they would call a rag!"

"A rag!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"Mr. Hacker was deliberately awakened, sir, and tricked into coming out of his room. He was headed up in the sack, and left. Nothing was taken. Nothing was intended to be taken. Had it been the prowler, there would have been the usual pilfering. It was nothing of the kind."

Dr. Locke and the Remove master stared blankly at the schoolboy detective. There was a long silence in the study.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, at last. "Such an outrage—a member of my staff—bless my soul! Do you know the names of the boys concerned, Drake?"

"Yes, sir; but you will not ask me to give them."

"Certainly not! In the circumstances, most certainly not! But—upon my word—such an outrageous action!" There was thunder in the headmaster's brow. "You are sure of this, Drake?"

"Quite, sir!"

"Then—then it was some Greyfriars boy who removed the sack from Mr. Hacker's room to-day—"

"Undoubtedly, sir!" Drake suppressed a grin. "Certainly it was not anyone from outside the school—least of all the prowler."

"Then—then—then—you think that, had a detective been called in, as Mr. Hacker desired, and had he found finger-prints and traced them to some Greyfriars boy, it would have led, not to the prowler, but to some foolish and unthinking boy who was, as you call it, ragging—"

"I am certain of that, sir! That is the fact," said Jack Drake, "and that, sir—a schoolboy rag—is not a matter for the police!"

"Certainly not! I am glad that I did not accede to Mr. Hacker's request, if the matter is as you state! Since the sack has disappeared, and no clue remains, Mr. Hacker no longer desires the police to be called in, as obviously there is nothing that they can do. But—but—these disrespectful boys—"

The Head paused.

"You have given me your assurance, sir! Nothing is to be said on the subject, especially to Mr. Hacker—you would not place me in the position of having spied and informed!" said Drake.

"Nothing shall be said! I am bound to take no disciplinary measures, on information supplied by you. I must accept your positive statement, Drake, that this is what happened last night."

"Thank you, sir!" said Drake.

He left the study, leaving Mr. Quelch and the Head exchanging glances.

"You believe that Drake is right in this matter, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head.

"I do not feel at all sure, sir."

"We are bound, at all events, to

accept his statement, and it seems to be borne out by the fact that nothing was taken from Mr. Hacker's room."

"That is certainly true!" agreed Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Quelch left the Head's study in a very thoughtful mood. There were, he realised, many circumstances that bore out Drake's explanation of the night's happenings. He had—if he was right—solved that little mystery, well within the time limit set him! But Mr. Quelch did not feel sure, as he paced, in a deeply thoughtful mood, in the quadrangle.

A sound of laughter reached his ears, and he glanced round. Three Shell fellows, walking under the elms, were laughing and talking, not noticing the Remove master in the offing.

"Didn't I say he was going to have it?" chuckled Hobson.

Mr. Quelch turned quickly away.

His manners and customs were quite different from Hacker's; nothing would have induced him to listen to words not intended for his ears, or to take note of such words, carelessly uttered. But there was a very curious expression on his face as he walked away. He knew exactly how popular the Acid Drop was in the Shell; and he had noticed Hobson, the previous day, in a state of woe and anguish after a severe whopping.

It was no business of Quelch's, and he was, moreover, bound by the Head's assurance to Drake. But though, a few minutes ago, he had not felt sure that Jack Drake had it right, he was feeling sure now!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

A Ducking For Duck!

"GOING out?"
"Yes!"
"Like a fellow to come?"
"Oh!"

Bob Cherry grinned, and winked at his chums. Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned, too. Johnny Bull grunted, and Harry Wharton frowned.

On Saturday afternoon, James Duck—spectacled and moon-faced as usual—ambled down to the gates, obviously going out. He seemed a little disconcerted when Bob Cherry hailed him, in his cheery voice.

"I'm quite good company, old bean!" assured Bob. "Quite the best! Fellows compete for walks with me."

"The goodness of Bob's esteemed company is terrific, my absurd Duck!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh! You are really very good!" said Duck. "But ain't you going to play football?"

"Oh, I'd cut games practice, with pleasure, to trot along with a nice chap like you!" declared Bob. "That is, of course, if you're not going out of bounds. We bar that!"

"Oh! I—thank you so much, Cherry; it's really very nice of you," said Duck. "I shall tell my Uncle Percy when I write to him what a very nice boy you are, Cherry!"

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Do! I should like Uncle Percy to have a really good opinion of me! No end! Well, shall we walk?"

"It would be delightful!" said Duck. "But now I think of it, I think I had better do that problem for Mr. Lascelles before I go out. Perhaps you would like to come and help me with my mathematics."

"Lot of perhaps about that!" said Bob.

James Duck ambled back to the House, leaving Bob grinning cheerily,

Bob's offer to accompany him in his walk had caused him to change his mind about going out!

He liked the cheery Bob; but he did not want his company that afternoon. There were races on again at Wapshot that afternoon, and he was fairly sure that Randolph Crocker would be absent from the hut on the spinney. In the Sportsman's absence, the schoolboy detective had certain investigations to make; but that, of course, was not a matter he could confide to Remove fellows. He left it until the Famous Five should have joined other fellows on the football ground.

"Deep card, ain't he?" grinned Bob, when he was gone. "Guess where he was going, my infants?"

"Not much guessing required!" said Harry Wharton, frowning. "He was going to the spinney, of course."

"Of course!" agreed Bob. "And he's going to do maths for Larry, till we're out of the offing. Perhaps he's found some more gee-gees, since Bunter nobbled that list out of his writing-case. Sort of philanthropist, helping that tick Crocker to live without doing any work."

"Well, what about games-practice?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Wash it out!" answered Bob. "Haven't we all agreed to keep that potty nincompoop out of mischief?"

"We can't hang about watching for the fathead to go out, and stop him every time!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"No fear—especially as he won't go out so long as we're hanging about. But we can go out first and wait for him at the giddy rendezvous!"

"Oh! It's out of bounds at the spinney—"

"We can stretch a point, to keep that silly sheep from wandering out of the fold! I'm sure our kind teachers would approve!" grinned Bob.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Let's!" he said. "There's not much doubt where he was going—and that brute Crocker isn't going to be allowed to fleece him—and Duck isn't going to be bunked, to amuse the swab. Let's get along to the spinney—and if he turns up there, we'll give him a lesson about going into bad company."

"Hear, hear!" And the Famous Five walked out of gates, and turned into Friardale Lane, where they stopped at the corner and looked over the fence of the spinney, at the hut tenanted by the old boy of Greyfriars.

Doors and windows were closed, and there was no smoke from the chimney. Crocker, when he was there, was generally on view; he liked to make himself conspicuous, apparently, as a part of his strange game in annoying and persecuting his old headmaster. So the Famous Five concluded that he had gone out for the afternoon.

"Coast's clear!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Looks to me as if the rotter's gone out—Duck wouldn't be able to see him if he came. He'll see us instead—and I'm sure every fellow present will agree that we're much nicer."

The juniors glanced up and down, and round about, before they ventured into the forbidden precincts. Good as their intentions were—really, such as their Form-master might have approved—that did not alter the fact that they were going out of bounds: which meant lines if spotted.

But there was no one, at the moment, at hand; and they passed through the gateway, and cut along to the hut. In a few moments they were round the corner of the wooden building, screened from sight from the lane.

It was a bright spring afternoon; but

(Continued on next page.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS—AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

A VERY large proportion of the readers who have written me recently make favourable mention of our new feature under the heading of "My Page." Thanks, chums—glad you like it! I've got another interesting page feature "in the making"—but I'll tell you more about it later.

It isn't often I publish a reader's letter, but by way of a change I thought I would this week. It comes from John Rice, of Coventry, and is typical of the many I receive. John's letter, which is not very long, runs as follows:

"Dear Editor,—Having been a constant reader of the MAGNET for a number of years, I feel that I must write and let you know what a great pleasure it is to me to look forward to every Saturday, when I can buy my copy of the MAGNET. I read it and cannot put it down until I have read it from cover to cover. I think the stories of Harry Wharton & Co. are ideal for resting one's mind after the day's work is done. I hope the Old Paper will carry on the good work for all time, for among all the books published to-day I cannot find a story to interest me so much as those dealing with Harry Wharton & Co. I have succeeded in getting many a new reader, and all my friends join me in thanking our Editor for giving us such wholesome reading.

"I remain yours sincerely,
"JOHN RICE."

Thank you, John. My best wishes to you and your reader pals.

In reply to J. Witcombe (Bournemouth) and others, we have no binding schemes under which we undertake to bind readers' copies of the MAGNET. I suggest you get a local bookbinder to do the work for you. If you have any difficulty in this direction your regular newsagent will be pleased to assist you.

Almost every week I receive a letter asking me to run a "Pen-Pals" Corner in the MAGNET. I regret that space makes it impossible for me to run this feature. I suggest my chums get a copy of the "Gem," our companion paper, in which they will find a coupon enabling them to insert a notice in the "Pen-Pals" Corner in that paper. What's more, they will be able to enjoy reading the rattling fine yarn of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, to be found in the "Gem." This week's yarn, "Cardew Cuts

Loose!" is a real top-notch. The other splendid features are well worth reading, too.

"T. A. (Birmingham), who has omitted to send me his address, wants to know how to stop his eyes watering after he has been reading for a while. It is evident that my chum's eyes are rather weak, otherwise they would not water. He should have his eyes tested by some local eye specialist—the nearest hospital is the best place to go for this purpose—because it is possible that his eyes have some structural weakness which spectacles might remedy. If they are merely weak eyes, and perfectly right in other respects, bathing them in cold water night and morning should prove beneficial. The method of doing this is to fill a basin with clean, cold water, dip the face into it, and open and shut the eyes under the water.

— — —

Space is running short, so I cannot reply to any more queries this week, but I must thank the following readers for their kind letters and suggestions: L. G. Stevens (Birmingham), H. King (Luton), Princess Sunita Warkmanaka (Calcutta), R. Baty (Surrey).

Room for a word about next week's programme? Just about, I think.

"HARRY WHARTON'S SECRET!"

By Frank Richards

is the title of the Greyfriars yarn. By a strange and startling discovery, Harry Wharton learns that James Duck is none other than Jack Drake, and also for what reason Ferrers Locke's assistant has come to Greyfriars. But Harry does not "spill the beans"; he knows only too well that if anyone can track down the mysterious prowler who has been causing so much trouble at Greyfriars of late, it is the famous crime-investigator's right-hand man—Drake. Don't miss next week's exciting events, whatever you do. George Tubb, the inky-fingered, self-styled captain of the Third Form, has been asked to dabble in a spot of literary work, so look out for his effort in our opening feature under the heading of "My Page." To wind up this bumper programme, there will be another snappy issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," in which will be chronicled the exciting events of the week at Greyfriars. Take my tip and order your copy of next Saturday's MAGNET early, chum.

YOUR EDITOR.

it was rather cold, and it was rather windy. Waiting in a row along the side wall of the hut was not exactly an enjoyable way of passing a half-holiday.

But they had not very long to wait.

In a minute or two they heard the creak of the gate! They heard quick footsteps on the muddy path! Even Duck, duffer as he was, seemed to understand that he had better not linger, in view from the road!

Knock!

Duck was knocking at the door. He did not seem to have observed what the Famous Five had observed; that the hut looked unoccupied. They supposed that he was knocking for Crocker to come to the door; and did not think of guessing that he was knocking to make sure that Crocker was not there to come to the door!

Bob Cherry winked at his chums.

"This is where we weigh in!" he murmured.

"Go it!" grinned Johnny Bull.

And, with a sudden rush, the Famous Five came round the corner and circled round James Duck at the door.

Duck gave a startled jump, his eyes popping behind his steel-rimmed glasses at the sudden surprise.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"Fancy meeting you again!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Pleasant surprise, what?"

"Oh!" stammered Duck. "Yes!"

"Yes, we can guess exactly how pleasant it is, you shady sweep!" said the captain of the Remove. "You needn't knock at that door—Crocker's not at home. But if he was, you wouldn't see him, you cad!"

"Don't stand there to be spotted!" said Bob. "Hook him round the corner!"

"Oh, I say—" bleated Duck.

But James Duck had no time to say anything. The Famous Five grabbed him, hooked him away from the door, and hooked him round the corner of the hut.

They did not stop there. They hooked him on, wriggling and expostulating, right round the hut so that the building hid them from the road.

"All serene!" said Bob. "Now we can begin educating him! Duck—I mean, Goose—you are a bad boy!"

"Oh, I say—" mumbled Duck.

"A bold, bad, bounding bounder!" said Bob severely. "Anybody, to look at you, would say that you were a silly sheep. You don't look a giddy goat! Now we want to make it clear to you, Duck, that when a fellow's born a

sheep, he should stay a sheep, and not try to be a goat! Do you get me, Duck?"

James Duck blinked from one to the other of the Famous Five. He was surrounded—and he was in the hands of the Amalekites, so to speak.

"Mustn't back gee-gees!" said Bob, shaking his head. "It's naughty—and still worse, it's no class! Not up to Greyfriars style, Duck! And when you keep racing papers about, fatheads like Bunter are apt to think that they belong to other fellows in your study! Get me?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Duck.

"There are lots of ways of dealing with a born idiot who fancies himself as a bad hat!" said Bob thoughtfully. "Quelch believes in lines and detentions. We can't give you lines and detentions, Ducky! But we can sit you in a puddle—to meditate on your bold, bad bounderishness! What about that?"

"Look here—"

Splash!

"Ooooooogh!"

There were several puddles in the field behind Crocker's hut! James Duck, suddenly up-ended, sat in one of the largest of them—a couple of inches of water over a bed of rich, oozy mud! He sat and splashed!

"Ow! Oh! You silly ass!" roared Jack Drake, in a voice that was quite unlike James Duck's mild bleat. "You silly duffers—fatheads—asses! Ow!"

James Duck struggled up. He was promptly shoved down again, and he sat, with another loud splash, in the puddle.

"Feel up to blagging now?" asked Bob. "Still want to be a bold, bad bounder? Or would you rather go in and change your bags?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

James Duck bounded out of the puddle. He made a rush to escape. But five fellows collared him at once.

He struggled, with a vigour and activity that were astonishing in the dud of the Remove. For two or three minutes the Famous Five had their hands full.

Then Duck was up-ended again; and this time his face approached the puddle. Duck had to be made tired of blagging—that was how the Famous Five looked at it. They proceeded to make him tired.

"Stoppit!" gasped Duck. "I say—stoppit! I— Gooooooooogh!"

His face disappeared in the puddle.

"Urrrrrgh!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stood back, and Duck was allowed to scramble up. His face was streaming with water and thick with clinging mud. His steel-rimmed glasses were caked. He blinked over them, a muddy blink.

"You—you—you—" he gasped. "Tired of blagging yet?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"You—you silly ass—you blithering idiot—you—you—"

"Getting quite eloquent, ain't he?" grinned Bob. "I never thought the Goose had so much pep in him. Now, Ducky, we're not bold bad boys like you, and we can't stick here out of bounds! So we're going to boot you all the way back to the school. Get going!"

"I—I— Oooooogh—"

"As jolly old Shakespeare remarks, thus bad begins, but worse remains behind," said Bob cheerily. "This is what remains behind, old bad bean!"

Thud!

"Yaroooh!"

"All together!" said Bob. "Hook it, Ducky! The quicker you hook it, the less booting you'll get! Scud!"

There was no help for it. Jack Drake's investigations, obviously, could not take place that afternoon—not while Harry Wharton & Co. were bringing up James Duck in the way he should go! James Duck ran for the lane, with the Famous Five whooping behind him.

He cleared the gate at a bound—with surprising agility for the duffer of the Remove. The Famous Five jumped it after him; but Duck had a start, as he raced for the school gates. He scudded—with five laughing juniors scudding after him—putting on a quite surprising turn of speed. Only one kick landed, before he dodged in at the school gates; but as it came from Bob Cherry's foot, the biggest in the Remove, it was as much as James Duck wanted—or rather more.

Then he shot in at the gates and vanished.

Harry Wharton & Co. dropped into a walk, and strolled in after him, laughing. They went down to games practice, with that happy feeling of a good deed well done—a feeling not in the least shared by James Duck—washing a muddy face, and changing muddy clothes, in the Remove dormitory.

THE END.

(Don't miss "HARRY WHARTON'S SECRET!" next week's great Greyfriars yarn. You'll enjoy every line of it!)

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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS
:: PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER. ::

LAST MATCH MAY DECIDE CHAMPIONSHIP!

Will Greyfriars Do The Trick?
Let's Hope So!

Says H. VERNON-SMITH

Thank goodness we got back to form this week! Another lapse like last week's and it would have been all U.P. with our chances of pulling off the footer championship. But we made no mistake about Abbotsford, and even our sternest critics must agree that our 4-1 win on the Abbotsford ground was fully deserved.

Wharton read out the riot act in the Abbotsford dressing-room before the game started.

"If we come unstuck to-day, the chances are that we shan't be able to make up for it," he told us. "St. Jim's are giving nothing away, and if I'm not mistaken, they'll win at Rookwood to-day. Defeat for us, therefore, might mean that we'd be three points down on the table—and, barring a miracle, we could never hope then to be champions. We simply must win!"

I don't often find myself in agreement with His Magnificence—especially when he's in a lecturing mood. On this occasion, how-

ever, I must say that his plea found an echo in my heart, and I went out on the field as full of determination as any man in the team.

The pitch was just as we could have wished it, and we were in the mood to play any team right off their feet. After the first ten minutes, we had taken the measure of Abbotsford, and, though we had to wait till just before half-time for our first goal, we never had any doubt that it would come. Wharton scored it, and it was a smasher, scored on the run from just outside the penalty area.

In the second half we set about completing the job with a good heart, and three more goals were added before half an hour had passed. Towards the finish Abbotsford staged a revival and attacked quite strongly, scoring their solitary goal five minutes from full time. When the whistle went, however, we were back at the other

end again, retaliating with increased vigour, and the result was never really in doubt.

Well, that was that! When the results came through, later in the day, we found that Wharton had been a true prophet. St. Jim's having won on the Rookwood ground—by the narrow margin, he it said, of 1 goal to nil. So the Saints were still ahead of us!

With their defeat on this occasion, Rookwood's last hope of winning the championship goes west. Let us pause, fellow sportsmen, in passing, to raise our hats to a very gallant team. Jimmy Silver's lads, after a disastrous start last September, worked with splendid resolution to get very near to the top of the table; and before meeting their Waterloo at the hands of St. Jim's this week, they had played ten consecutive games

without suffering defeat. Well tried, Rookwood!

But now—what of St. Jim's and ourselves? Which of the two is going to finish up at the top?

St. Jim's are undoubtedly in a happier position than Greyfriars at the moment. Their game against Claremont next week is an absolute gift; it's practically impossible for them to lose it. On the other hand, in playing Bagshot away, we shall be visiting a team which has done particularly well at home all through the season. Our great consolation is that Highcliff beat them decisively this week. What Highcliff have done, surely we can do! Against this, it must be remembered that Highcliff are the first team to beat them on their own ground this season.

Let's suppose, anyway, that we do it and that Claremont are beaten at St. Jim's. The championship in that case will be decided in the last league game between Greyfriars and St. Jim's on Little Sile; and a draw or a win for us will then do the trick, though on the basis of a draw we should be champions on goal average only.

This time next week we shall know how we stand—so watch out for this column! But what a game it will be, if it turns out as I think!

RESULTS:

(Home teams are shown first)
Saturday.

Rylecombe G. S. 2 Redclyffe 3

Wednesday.

Abbotsford 1 Greyfriars 4
Rookwood 0 St. Jim's 1
Bagshot 1 Highcliff 4
St. Jude's 3 Rylecombe 1

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Ms.
St. Jim's	16	13	1	2	39	16	27
Greyfriars	16	11	4	1	52	12	26
Rookwood	16	9	3	4	34	19	21
Bagshot	16	8	3	5	25	21	19
Highcliff	17	6	4	7	33	32	16
St. Jude's	16	5	3	8	26	33	13
Abbotsford	16	4	4	8	24	36	12
Rylecombe	17	4	3	10	22	38	11
G.S.							
Redclyffe	16	4	2	10	15	34	10
Claremont	16	1	5	10	12	44	

IS IT TRUE THAT—

When Temple puts on his latest fancy in expensively scented brillantino, Dabney and Fry put on their gas-masks?

Loder's bag bought him the wrong size in collars, and was promptly rewarded with a couple of cuffs.

Coker's prowess as a fisherman is proved when he's an oarsman—by the record number of "crabs" he catches?

BUNTER WINS BIG FIGHT!

By TOM REDWING

(Assistant Sporting Editor)

This really is the biggest sensation of the term, chaps! Bunter has won his fight against Bolsover major in the eliminating contests to find an opponent to challenge Wharton for the Form championship!

The way he won it made the big crowd that assembled in the gym rock with laughter. But win it he did, and he won't let us forget it in a hurry, either!

The Bunter-Bolsover clash was the last of the three bouts arranged for the evening, and before we came to the big laugh, we had the pleasure of watching two first-class contests between Bulstrode and Vernon-Smith and Cherry and Russell.

The first fight went the full six rounds—but only just! Although Smithy did not administer the K.O., he had, by the sixth round, reduced Bulstrode to a pretty sorry plight, and the bout could scarcely have lasted another round, anyway. Mr. Larry Lascelles, who acted as judge, awarded the fight to Smithy without hesitation, and the verdict was greeted with loud cheers—which were followed by equally loud applause for Bulstrode for his very plucky effort!

The match between Bob Cherry and Dick Russell, which followed, was a stirring affair between two skilful exponents of the noble art. Both used the straight left, as Larry put it afterwards, "strictly according to the book," and, in defensive tactics, it was difficult to say which was the better man of the two. Cherry, however, began to show to advantage in the second round, and in the third session it could clearly be seen that he had superior strength as well as speed. The second half-way through the fourth round, when Cherry finished up a strong attack with a jarring blow to the jaw that sent Russell down for the full count.

Bob's win, of course, was tremendously popular, and he received a great ovation for his fine display of boxing. And then came Bunter v. Bolsover!

To do justice to this extraordinary encounter, I should need the pen of a Stephen Leacock!

For a kick-off, Bunter

repented of his rash entry into the competition and said he couldn't go into the ring because of an attack of several alarming diseases, coupled with a number of minor disabilities such as sprained ankles and dislocated elbows!

His seconds, Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, however, treating his awe-inspiring symptoms with remarkable lightness, pushed him forcibly into the ring on the sound of the gong, and the fun began!



Bolsover, rushing in with a tigerish grin, promptly reduced Bunter to such a state of panic that he turned with a howl and fled; and for the next half-minute, the boxing-ring was turned into a race-track!

To the accompaniment of shrieks of mirth from the crowd, Bunter eventually turned and dived between his opponent's legs. This moment Bolsover spinning across the ring like a top, and when he did come to rest against the ropes, his exertions had made him puff like a grampus!

Bunter took advantage of the interval to try to climb out of the ring, but a pin, inserted in his anatomy by Toddy, made him change his mind, and he leaped back into the ring again, yelling fiendishly.

This happened at the exact moment when Bolsover, having got back his breath, started another bull-like rush. As a result, the two met in the middle of the ring with a concussion that shook the gym. Bunter bounced back to the ropes and hung on to them gasping. Bolsover, who got more of the shock, crashed to the boards and lay there, half-stunned, till the call of "eight" aroused him just in

time to avoid taking the full count.

Bolsover had, however, only postponed the evil hour. Jumping up in a fury, he chased Bunter round the ring till he cornered him.

He made ready to knock the Porpoise right into the middle of next week. But before he could do so, an amazing thing happened. Bunter, in sheer desperation, lifted his podgy fist and let fly.

And, by sheer blind luck, he landed on the point of Bolsover's chin and knocked him out in real earnest!

There can be no two points of view about whether it was

a fluke or not. It was! But it was a knock-out, all the same, and roars of cheering mingled with the roars of laughter, as Bunter rolled dizzily out of the ring—the victor of the funniest fight ever seen at Greyfriars!

So the search for a challenger to Wharton is narrowed now down to three men—Vernon-Smith, Cherry and Bunter—and one of these will eventually meet the present holder of the championship with a view to wresting it from him.

Next week, I hope to tell you which of the three wins the right to the challenge—and how he wins it!

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

G.H. (Shell).—"I am told that Johnny Bull is very blunt."

Yes; and, strange as it may seem, he's also exceedingly sharp!

H.J.C. (Fifth).—"Do you take me for a phool?"

Nothing of the kind, you phathead! We only think you're a phunny phreak. Phact!

CRITIC'S CRITICISMS!

Your Editor's Reply

An Editor has to put up with a lot of criticism. I never mind it myself—especially when the criticism is of the constructive kind. When criticism turns into personal abuse, however, I object!

This week, I have received an anonymous letter, to the contents of which I object very strongly. In the ordinary way, as the letter is anonymous and abusive, I should not trouble to mention it.

The writer, however—who is, I suppose, a Greyfriars man, the postmark on the envelope being "Friarsdale"—raises one or two points on which I happen to be a little touchy. So although he isn't really worth it, I am going to reply to him.

The points in question are contained in these three questions:

"Why do you treat the harmless and necessary pastime of cigarette-smoking as a deadly sin? Why do you turn up your nose at fellows who play penny naps? And why, in general, are you so dashed superior and condescending to the rest of the school?"

Here are my answers:

1. I certainly do not treat cigarette-smoking as a deadly sin; I look on it simply as a silly-ass method of apeing grown-ups, indulged in by chaps who haven't sufficient intelligence to appear grown-up in any other way. Furthermore, I refuse to admit that it's "harmless and necessary." On the contrary, I think it's very harmful and most unnecessary in fellows of my age, whatever it may be to my elders.

2. I sincerely hope I don't "turn up my nose" at anybody, though I admit that I am not attracted by the particular set at Greyfriars who can think of nothing better to do with their spare time than play cards for money. I suppose there's nothing very terrible about losing or winning a few coppers in a game of chance, so long as it goes no further than that. The trouble is that it usually does go further than that; and, in any case, it seems a sheer waste of time which could be spent much more profitably in the gym or on the footer field or in one's study, reading a book—or even just talking with one's pals!

3. If I really am "dashed superior and condescending" to the rest of the school, then I'm genuinely sorry. This particular question rather touches me on a raw spot, for I know that I suffer from a quick temper and perhaps at times a little arrogance. On the other hand, I am sure that these characteristics only show themselves at rare intervals when I have a jolly good reason for feeling annoyed. Most of the time, I'm just a normal Lower School man, with as friendly an outlook as the next chap and with no consciousness that I'm better than anybody else!

So that's that—and I hope I've now dealt with my critic's criticisms effectively! Whether I have done or not, I can at any rate derive satisfaction from the fact that, as skipper of the Remove, I enjoy the confidence of most fellows in the Form. Even more important than that, as I can tell from my postbag, I have the loyal support and friendship of countless readers of the "Greyfriars Herald" all over the world—and that I value more highly than anything else I possess.

Meet you all again next week, chums.

HARRY WHARTON.

THIS WEEK'S DOMESTIC HINT

Fellows entertaining Mr. Quelch to tea should remember that he has a peculiar horror of tea-leaves in his cup.

Mr. Quelch's tea should therefore be strained—if you want to avoid a "strained" atmosphere!

SLEUTH SOLVES MILK MYSTERY!

Nanny-Goat Owner's Secret Exposed

Dick Penfold, the poet who adds variety to life by doing an occasional spot of detective work, added another feather to his cap this week, when he solved the Great Milk Mystery.

Fellows with a liking for facts and figures have been puzzling over this for weeks.

How was it, they asked themselves, that Fisher T. Fish was selling ten times as much goat's milk as when he first bought his nanny-goat, with only that same solitary nanny-goat to supply the milk?

High-pressure salesmanship by the lad from New York had sent up the sales tremendously. Half the chaps in the school were taking daily deliveries of a bottle of goat's milk—"the all-food drink for athletes," as Fishy's ads put it. Yet Fishy had not, as you would have expected, purchased another dozen nanny-goats to meet the increased demand. Not a bit of it! He still went down to the school "menagerie" every morning with the same milkpail on his arm. The only difference was that he filled about a hundred bottles with milk instead of a mere ten or so!

Really, it was quite surprising, when you came to think about it. As Bob Cherry remarked, it reminded you of the trick you see performed by illusionists on the stage when they pour unlimited quantities of drink out of one small jug.

Penfold made up his mind to solve the puzzle. Disguising himself neatly as a laurel bush, one morning this week, he watched Fishy milk the goat. By the time the operation was over, the amateur milkman had just about sufficient milk to supply ten of his customers.

When Fishy proceeded to take the milk to a shed at the back of the playing-fields, the mystery thickened. But that's more than you could say about the milk, for, in bottling it, he just put a fractional drop in each bottle and filled up the rest of the bottle with water!

Finally, Penfold saw him add a spoonful of powder to each bottle. The powder he took from



a tin marked "Goat's Milk Essence," which he carefully hid under a pile of junk in the corner of the shed after using it.

Penfold, grinning cheerfully, then shed his disguise and announced himself.

"Doing well out of the old nanny-goat, Fishy?" he asked. Fishy jumped.

"Say, what's the big idea, you moseyin' around myer?" he yawned. "Can't a guy see to his milk trade without interferin' galeots hornin' in this way?"

"My dear old chap, surely you don't mind a food inspector giving your dairy the once-over?" Dick Penfold said elidingly. "You've got nothing to hide, have you? Your milk's pure and unadulterated, isn't it? You say so in your ads, anyway!"

"I'll say I do—an' it's Jake, I guess. Wanl, what's funny about that?" Fishy protested, as Penfold began to read.

"Nothing much!" gasped Penfold. "Only I think you ought to change your labels. Instead of calling the stuff you sell 'Pure Goat's Milk,' you should call it 'Pure Water with a dash of Goat's Milk and Powder'! Ha, ha, ha!"

The game, Fishy saw, was up! Our transatlantic genius tried to save the business by offering Penfold a partnership. But there was nothing doing.

"It's too good a yarn to keep to myself, old bean," Penfold told him. "And, besides, I've got a conscience!"

Fisher T. Fish made the best of a bad job. He unloaded the stock on to his unsuspecting clients before the truth came out and even managed to collect most of his outstanding debts. Then he made himself scarce.

What Fishy's customers have been telling him since the truth came out would fill an entire number of the "Herald"—if it were printable. But Fishy takes it all philosophically.

"Hard words break no bones," as he says.

He is now training the nanny-goat to draw a midget carriage for children. We can see him making a lot of money on Pegg Beach when the summer comes!